

Northeast Asian Security :

Perspectives, Bargaining, and Issues in the US Alliances*

Lawrence E. Grinter

(Air War College)

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[ABSTRACT]

United States security relations with its allies in Northeast Asia—Japan, South Korea and Taiwan—underwritten by US mutual defense treaties, or Congressional law, are changing. Each alliance, or security partnership, also reveals instances of strong bargaining between the members. However these partnerships also show continuity. Each alliance is now over a half century old and continues in a period of obvious US financial difficulties, and ongoing combat commitments elsewhere. Therefore this paper explores several questions: What are the principal issues, and their background, that are currently challenging each alliance? Could any of these alliances be outmoded now? Or, where utility continues, what adjustments seem appropriate?

*These views are solely those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Air Force, the Department of Defense, or any other US government agency.

While exploring numerous issues challenging each of the three alliances or partnerships, this paper gives particular attention to the US Marine/Futenma basing issue in Japan, the ongoing US-ROK “Op Con” transfer in Seoul as the DPRK threat continues, and the Taiwan Relations Act and US arms sales, as they signify American underwriting of a peaceful transition between Taiwan and China.

Suggestions for US policies conclude the paper.

I . Introduction

United States security relations with its allies in Northeast Asia—Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—underwritten by US mutual defense treaties or Congressional law, are changing. But these security partnerships also show continuity. Each of these three partnerships is now over half a century old, and continues in an era of obvious US financial difficulties, and ongoing US combat commitments elsewhere. Interestingly, each alliance has also been characterized by bargaining between the members, sometimes rough bargaining—an experience evident in many political-military relationships.¹⁾ Therefore this paper explores several questions: What are the principal issues, and their background, that are currently challenging each alliance? Could any of these three alliances be outmoded now? Or, where utility continues, what adjustments make sense?

The US-Japan security alliance grew out of the Japanese empire’s total defeat in WWII and the subsequent US occupation and basic reforms of Japan’s political and economic systems. The US-South Korean alliance, and the US – Taiwan security relationship both grew out of the Cold War and anti-communism. Each of the three security partnerships is different, has its

1) See, for example, Robert O. Keohane, “The Big Influence of Small Allies,” *Foreign Policy* 2 (Spring 1971). This author has extended professor Keohane’s approach in his own detailed examination, for example, of the struggle for leverage and counter leverage between the United States and South Vietnam during the Second Indochina War. See Lawrence E. Grinter, “Bargaining Between Saigon and Washington: Dilemmas of Linkage Politics During War,” *Orbis* (Fall 1974), pp. 837-867.

own internal dynamics, and each also is remarkably asymmetrical (no one believes that Japanese, South Korean or Taiwanese forces, even if capable, would launch across the Pacific to help defend the United States.) Nevertheless each alliance or partnership persists with implications for each side given the decades of fundamental internal and external changes, and over 60 years of US guarantees, assistance, and force deployments in Northeast Asia.

II. Japan and the United States

This is a strange and anomalous alliance between two countries of utterly different histories and values, born out of a bitter and merciless war and out of an unnatural intimacy that began with the U.S. occupation of Japan ... Kenneth Pyle, 2010²⁾

Destroyed and prostrate by August 1945, Japan formally surrendered to the United States and its allies on 2 September 1945 aboard the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. Not only had two Japanese cities been obliterated by American atomic bombs, and Tokyo repeatedly fire-bombed, but at least 50 other Japanese cities had come under US air attack. It is safe to say, given the two side's ignorance of each other, except for the horrors of war, that each country was starting from scratch in the new, post-war, victor-vanquished relationship.

The defining architects of what eventually became the United States' second most important security alliance, after Great Britain, were Japan's post war Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida and the American five – star General Douglas MacArthur. Each man had obvious respect for the other. But they also had disagreements. And both sought to gain leverage and influence with each other. In the background was Emperor Hirohito, now divested of his divinity, but a figure of continuing social coherence and pride for much of the stricken Japanese population.

January 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the signing of the revised “Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and

2) Kenneth Pyle in “Roundtable: A New Stage for the U.S.-Japan Alliance?” *Asia Policy* 10 (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research, July 2010), p. 4.

Japan.” The original San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed on 8 September 1951, then renewed in 1960. These documents stipulated that Japan would guarantee the United States exclusive operational use of Japanese military facilities in return for US protection in the event of an external threat to Japan. In short, after WWII, Japan, led by Prime Minister Yoshida, tucked itself under the American eagle in return for US access, assistance and protection. The vast majority of Japan’s citizens—millions homeless and many starving after the war—saw no alternative but to cooperate with the US military occupation, particularly since the Emperor, with General MacArthur’s support, was left on the Chrysanthemum Throne. This was the “bargain;” and, despite recurrent Japanese longing for more autonomy and self mastery of its situation, the bargain has remained central to Japanese security thinking in the 66 years since the end of WWII.

The US-Japan security relationship and American tutelage of Japan’s post-war democracy were controversial from the start. In Japan, socialist and communist agitation to nullify the treaty in 1960 descended into riots, but failed to fundamentally move Japan away from the “bargain,” and the Japanese, with American assistance, continued their protected economic recovery that would reproduce a major industrial state by the mid 1960s. The transformation from the unnatural alliance of the post WWII era to a modern strategic partnership was striking.

It was during the Korean War, from June 1950 to July 1953, that the special utility of post war Japan to US security interests in Asia became clear – when pacifist Japan served as the US logistics and deployment backdrop to the US/United Nations fight against North Korean aggression and Chinese intervention on the Korean peninsula. The international rescue of South Korea proved of major utility to Japan, as American military spending helped jump start Japan’s economy. Prime Minister Yoshida is reputed to have called it “a gift from the gods.”

The formal US martial law occupation of Japan ended on 28 April 1952, however, the island of Okinawa, the largest of the Ryukyu Islands, was kept under direct US military control for 20 more years until 15 May 1972 when it also reverted to Japanese sovereignty. Most critical to the American military in Japan has been the large Yokosuka Naval Base, in Tokyo Bay, which headquarters the US 7th Fleet.³⁾ Also important to US military operations in Asia and the Pacific are two other bases on Japanese soil, both on Okinawa:

Kadena Air Base,⁴⁾ and the US Marine Corps Air Station at Futenma.⁵⁾

Given Japan's obvious dependency on and inequality with the United States, Tokyo, under Yoshida's original crafting, nevertheless created policies that, while deliberately self – abnegating, also allowed Japan to recover economically and, equally important, to avoid direct participation in America's conflicts. Thus the “bargain” had several aspects to it, and more than one advantage to the Japanese. In short, the weaker member of the alliance found ways to deflect some of the stronger member's pressures. Accordingly the Japanese government shied away from a combined military command with the United States, resisted integration of forces and, in some instances, interoperability, and sought to limit consultation with Washington. Japanese defense spending was kept very low, at about 1% of GDP (which continues today) and military issues had little priority since a cabinet level Ministry of Defense was not even stood up until January 2007, 62 years after WWII ended.

In 1990/1991 came Japan's slow response to the US/UK/Arab military counter to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Pressed by Washington, Tokyo eventually contributed some \$11 to \$12 billion in subsidies.⁶⁾ The 2001

3) The US 7th Fleet is the Navy's permanent forward deployed force based in Yokosuka, Japan, with units positioned near South Korea, in and around Japan, and also at Guam. The 7th Fleet is the largest of the US Navy's forward deployed fleets, with some 50 to 60 ships, 350 aircraft and some 40,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel. Eighteen ships are permanently based in Japan and at Guam with about 50% routinely deployed at sea. The 7th Fleet includes cruisers, nuclear submarines, destroyers, and at least one aircraft carrier. See <<http://www.c7f.navy.mil/force.htm>> (accessed on 13 November 2011).

4) Kadena Air Base is a key operational hub of US airpower in East Asia, and home of the 18th Wing, and some 18,000 Americans and over 4,000 Japanese employees and contractors. USAF aircraft at Kadena include F-15s, KC-135s, and E-3s. Kadena was critical to US air operations in both the Korean War and the Vietnam War, and would be key to any future airpower staging against North Korea. “Kadena Air Base,” available at <<http://www.kadena.af.mil/>> (accessed on 13 November 2011).

5) The US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma (MACS Futenma) is situated in the very center of crowded Ginowan City, a densely populated Okinawan city of about 95,000 people. Futenma occupies about 25% of Ginowan City's land space. For 20 years Tokyo and Washington have been discussing, and periodically negotiating, plans to move the functions at Futenma either to Guam, or to another area in Okinawa-possibly Henoko, on Okinawa's east coast. No action to date.

6) US Department of Defense, “Conduct of the Persian Gulf War,” Final Report to the US Congress, April 1992, Appendix P., available at <<http://people.psych.cornell.edu/~fhoran/gulf/GW/>> (accessed on 23 September 2011).

US/UK led attacks on the Afghan Taliban and then the 2003 allied invasion of Iraq again saw some US impatience with Tokyo. However, Japan's pro-American Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, authorized a modernization of the Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF) as well as resupply of allied operations in the Indian Ocean. In the last few years of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rule Tokyo seemed to eschew its historic self-abnegation. In Kenneth Pyle's view:

“The SDF were dispatched to aid in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts; the principle of collective self-defense was about to be acknowledged; the taboo on discussion of nuclear weapons ended; power projection ability was quietly acquired through Boeing refueling tankers and proto aircraft carriers; cooperation in ballistic missile defense with the United States began in earnest, which breached the principles of not exporting military technology; spy satellites were put up; and a new law provided for a national security strategy relating to space and the development of rockets and satellites for information gathering communications. The LDP administrations in short began to remilitarize and to become a stronger and more engaged ally, and in this way carved out a new activist foreign policy.”⁷⁾

However, all of this was characterized by the incoming Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government in August and September 2009 as even worse catering to the US, and a further degradation of Japan's autonomy. At first the DPJ tried to fashion security policies different from the LDP and more “equal” (i.e., more autonomous) with the United States: In short, a recalibration of the “bargain.” However, the DPJ soon stumbled and PM Yukio Hatoyama had to resign over a failed promise to transfer the US marines out of Okinawa to the American administered island of Guam. His successor, PM Naoto Kan, coping with the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor disaster, sought to steer the US-Japan Okinawa Futenma base controversy back toward some indefinite future resolution.⁸⁾ Then Kan resigned in

7) Kenneth Pyle, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

8) See Gavan McCormack, *et. al.*, “New Year 2011: Okinawa and the Future of East Asia,” *Asia – Pacific Journal* 10 (January 2011), available at <<http://www.japanfocus-Nori.atsusatoko/3468>> (accessed on 18 May 2011), pp. 3-4. Also of interest are comments by Kan in the Prime Minister's official “blog” site: <<http://kansblog.kanlei.go.jp/>> (accessed on 30

September 2011 and was followed by Yoshihiko Noda, a previous finance minister and a conservative.

As Richard Bush observed:

“The DPJ government is struggling to find the right balance concerning the U.S.-Japan alliance. Generally, it has focused on the problems that stem from the presence of American forces rather than the strategic realities that have made that presence necessary.”⁹⁾

Today a number of issues, old and more recent, challenge the US-Japanese alliance. They include: Japanese subsidies of the costs of US military basing in Japan (“Host Nation Support”), the F-22 jet fighter acquisition debate, Article 9 restrictions in the Japanese constitution, the role of the JSDF overseas in conjunction with out of area UN operations and, of course, the US Marines presence at Futenma in Okinawa.

Regarding Host Nation Support the Kan government decided in December 2010 to continue subsidizing US troop deployment costs for the next 5 years. Called the “Special Measures Agreement,” the US and Japan signed a five-year plan in January 2011 that maintains Japan’s current spending support of US forces in Japan. The sum is about \$2 billion annually, down from about \$3 billion in 1999. The money includes, but is not limited to, facilities upgrades, training for US F-15 fighters on Okinawa, and base utilities costs.¹⁰⁾

Regarding potential American F-22 jet fighter sales to the Japanese, the Lockheed Martin/Boeing F-22 is the premier fifth generation air to air superiority jet fighter in the world. However it is prohibited from foreign sales by the US Congress, although a modified version someday might be manufactured for external sale. The Japanese air force desires a platform that could counter the Russian manufactured SU-30 and its follow-on, the SU-35, although, to date, very few have been delivered into Chinese or Russian

August 2011). On 23 September the new Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshihiko Noda, indicated he favored the Henoko alternative rather than Guam, See *Stars and Stripes* (25 September 2011), available at <<http://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/okinawa/japan-s-prime-minister-to-urge-okinawa>> (accessed on 26 September 2011).

9) Richard Bush, “The U.S. Policy of Extended Deterrence in East Asia: History, Current Views, and Implications,” *Arms Control Series*, Paper #5 (Brookings, February 2011), p. 11.

10) Hana Kusumoto, “U.S., Japan sign new five year ‘host nation support’ agreement,” *Stars and Stripes* (21 January 2011), p. 1.

inventories. Then again, Washington probably will make available the Lockheed Martin F-35 which is appealing in terms of lower costs and a significant air to air combat capability.¹¹⁾

Another familiar bilateral challenge is Article 9 of the US authored post WWII Japanese constitution which states that “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.”¹²⁾ Nevertheless despite years of contentious interpretations, political rhetoric, and judicial decisions, weapons sales by the United States to Japan have seen the Japanese build a sophisticated high tech defense establishment largely equipped with American armaments and exhibiting the most sophisticated maritime forces in Northeast Asia. Yet Tokyo has kept collective defense (i.e., fighting alongside the US against another country) off the table.

Finally, as mentioned, there is the long running US Marines Futenma base relocation dispute. Okinawa, in the Ryukyu Islands, historically has been a political, cultural, and geographic “stepchild” of mainland Japan.¹³⁾ Okinawan nationalism has been pointed at both Tokyo and Washington. The most violent episode was the December 1970 “Koza riot” when over 70 vehicles were set on fire near Kadena Air Base. During 2010 and 2011 there were repeated peaceful demonstrations against the US Marine presence on Okinawa. Today some 25,000 American service personnel, many with families, continue to be stationed on Okinawa, principally at a cluster of US Marine Corps camps and bases, and at the US Air Force base at Kadena. While Okinawa constitutes less than 1% of Japan’s land mass, almost one-fifth of the island is covered by US military bases constituting nearly 70% of US military personnel in Japan. Futenma presently is the most aggravating factor in US-Japan security relations.¹⁴⁾

Issues at Futenma include jet aircraft noise, pollution, periodic US troop

11) Aviation, “Lockheed Martin/Boeing F-22 Raptor,” accessed on 25 July 2011, <<http://www.webaviation.blogspot.com/2008/06lockheed-martinboeing>> (accessed on 13 November 2011).

12) Japanese Constitution, article 9. See <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/constitution_and_government_of_Japan/constitution_ehtml> (accessed on 9 November 2011).

13) There is the historical example of a “Ryukyu Kingdom” on Okinawa which, in the 1850s, evidently sought to negotiate treaties with foreign governments, but then became subordinate to the Japanese (Meiji) state in 1879. See Gavan McCormack, *et. al., op. cit.*, p. 8.

14) Also see III Marine Expedition Force, Japan, available at <<http://www.marines/mil/unit/mcbjapan>> (accessed on 19 May 2011).

incidents, reversion of land, cultural issues, and Japanese financial support to US military basing. The sensitivity of hosting American forces on Okinawa strikes a poignant chord with Japanese critics as this 2010 remark by Yoshio Shimoji underscores:

“From Okinawa’s perspective, Japan’s independence appears only an illusion. Japan is still a semi-independent client nation unable to challenge Uncle Sam’s demands...”¹⁵⁾

And Professor Glenn Hook, a Japanese specialist at the University of Sheffield, in the UK, has also weighed in:

“Although the [US] bases are viewed by supporters of the alliance as beneficial to the security of Japan, their existence and operation pose risks to the population, with the overwhelming burden imposed on the inhabitants of Okinawa, whether in terms of crimes, noise and environmental pollution, or the erosion of solidarity among Okinawans due to the divisive role foreign bases play.”¹⁶⁾

Given a May 2006 “Roadmap Agreement” (and a 1996 earlier negotiation), the 8,600 US Marines at Futenma were to relocate to facilities on Guam with the Japanese government paying about 60% of the then estimated US \$10.3 billion relocation costs, thus returning thousands of acres of land to Japanese control. However, more recent US Government Accounting Office (GAO) studies now put the total “full cost of the shift” at over \$24 billion over the next 10 years.¹⁷⁾ After 15 years of negotiations Washington and Tokyo also

15) Yoshio Shimoji, “The Futenma Base and the U.S.-Japan Controversy: an Okinawan Perspective,” *The Asia-Pacific journal: Japan Focus* (18 May 2010), available at <<http://www.japanfocus.org/-yoshio-shimoji/3354>> (accessed on 18 May 2011).

16) Glenn D. Hook, “Intersecting risks and governing Okinawa: American bases and the unfinished war,” *Japan Forum* (March-June 2010), p. 197. Professor Hook’s analysis on the origins and impact of the US Marine Corps bases on Okinawa is the most detailed appraisal I have encountered.

17) See Travis J. Tritten, “Top U.S., Japan officials to discuss Futenma plans as opposition in Congress grows,” *Stars and Stripes* (17 June 2011), and Travis J. Tritten, “Guam buildup could cost \$23.9 billion over next decade, GAO says,” *Stars and Stripes* (28 June 2011), accessed 22 September 2011.

seemed to agree on placing other US Marines at enlarged facilities in the Henoko coastal area, a less congested part of Okinawa, but still an area of obvious marine ecological sensitivity, and local opposition. Prime Minister Hatoyama staked his office on carrying out a Futenma relocation. When he could not, he was forced to resign. Important US senators also had a hand in it calling the plan “flawed,” “not necessary,” and “an illusion.” A possible fallback is to integrate Futenma’s functions into Kadena Air Base.¹⁸⁾ So the issue remains stalemated. As a June 2011 Congressional Research Report, in understatement, summarized it:

“The fundamental problem of hosting foreign troops on a crowded urban landscape, and the sense of grievance that the Okinawans in particular have harbored for decades, seems unlikely to fade.”¹⁹⁾

This observer has concluded that Washington should grant its strategic Japanese ally a long overdue consideration by relocating the US Marines either out of Futenma and back to Guam or into the Kadena air base. The issue has gone on far too long, has become a destabilizing factor in the very viability of Japanese national governments, and should be terminated.²⁰⁾ Japan is too valuable an American ally to continue being treated this way.

18) Weekly Japan Update, “Senate panel rejects Marines relocation plan” (23 June 2011), available at <<http://japanupdate.com/?id=11249>> (accessed on 9 September 2011). Evidently more sensitivities emerged in discussions between PM Noda and President Obama on the sidelines at the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York in mid-September 2011. See Hitoshi Tanaka, “Prime Minister Noda and Fixing the Futenma Impasse,” *East Asia Forum* 8 (November 2011), available at <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/11/08/prime-minister-noda-and-fixing-the-futenma-impasse>> (accessed on 15 November 2011).

19) Emma Chanlett-Avery, *et. al.*, “Japan-US Relations: Issues for Congress,” CRS Report # RL33436, Washington, DC, 8 June 2011, p. 12.

20) As one retired US flag officer, with extensive experience with Japan, told this author: “Futenma is an accident waiting to happen.”

III. South Korea and the United States

“Our mission remains to deter North Korean provocations and aggression and, if deterrence fails, to fight and win” ... Gen Walter Sharp, USA, Commander UNC/CFC/USFK²¹⁾

The Korean War, launched by North Korean dictator Kim Il-sung with the help of the Soviet Union’s Joseph Stalin, was ruinous for the Korean people. Some 2 million Korean citizens perished in the conflict as did hundreds of thousands of Chinese Communist “Volunteers.” US forces lost about 36,500 killed.²²⁾ When the war ended in June 1953, the Korean peninsula was devastated. Since the war an armistice agreement has been in effect between north and south, but no formal peace treaty has been signed.

While the North Korean threat to South Korea and Japan continues and, since the mid-1980s, includes a rudimentary DPRK nuclear weapons capability, relations between Seoul and Washington have moved from junior-senior to a more equal partnership. The key change has been South Korea’s extraordinary emergence from a war torn, poverty stricken country at the end of the Korean War to possibly the most robust and energetic newly developed country in the world today, with a modern military establishment.

South Korea’s climb to global prominence has been astonishing. The ROK now has a GDP approaching \$1 trillion, and a per capita income at about \$21,000. Seoul burst onto the global stage by hosting the 1988 summer Olympics, 20 years before Beijing hosted the Olympics. By contrast North Korea, a country ruined by 60 years of the Kim family regime’s proto-Stalinist policies, has a GDP estimated to be about \$29 billion and a per capita income that might be as low as \$1,250 per year.²³⁾ In short North Korea, in the midst of the rest of Northeast Asia’s extraordinary development, is a failed state, but one with a large army, and a handful of nuclear weapons.

The 1954 “Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the

21) Walter Sharp, USA, Commander UNC/CFC/USFK, “The New Korea,” in *Strategic Digest, Strategic Alliance, 2015* (October 2010), p. 1.

22) Korean War Educator, “Korean War Casualty/Fatality Information,” using DoD data. Not dated. <<http://www.koreanwar-educator.org>> (accessed on 9 September 2011).

23) Jane’s Sentinel, Country Risk Assessment, “China and Northeast Asia, 2011,” Jane’s Information Group, Alexandria, VA, p. 636 and p. 523.

United States of America” is supported by both peace time force arrangements and, in case of war or imminent hostilities, a combined binational fighting command that is unique to American security commitments. US Forces, Korea (USFK) is the joint service American command led by a US four star general. It is through USFK that American forces would be provided to the ground, air, sea, and marine, and special forces components of the combined US-South Korean wartime structure, called the ROK/US Combined Forces Command (or CFC). The CFC was established on 7 November 1978, and is designed to operate in time of conflict, and is commanded by a US four star general with a South Korean four star general as deputy. About 600,000 forces (90% South Korean) would be assigned to the CFC, although augmentation also could include hundreds of thousands of ROK reservists and additional US forces from outside South Korea. Established by joint agreement of both governments to deter and, if necessary, repel external aggression, the CFC is subordinate to the senior defense officials or officers in both countries, who in turn, report to their elected civilian presidents.²⁴⁾ Under CFC arrangements, the United States and South Korea agreed to place substantial military units under CFC control, but not all military units, and each nation’s highest leadership retains the “national right of command,” and “the right to remove” units from CFC operational control (called “OP CON”) upon notification. In 2010, amidst new North Korean provocations these arrangements came under some strain.

Over the years of the US-ROK alliance, strong sometimes tense bargaining has occurred between the two allies. For example Washington, reacting to other contingencies in Asia, has reduced its troop deployments in South Korea. One of the most controversial decisions was President Nixon’s 1971 removal of the US 7th Infantry Division, about 26,000 troops, from South Korea to reinforce the American combat presence in South Vietnam. President Park Chung Hee was furious about the decision, but he had no choice but to acquiesce. About this time American intelligence concluded that President Park had authorized a secret nuclear weapons program,²⁵⁾ perhaps as

24) US Forces Korea, “Mission of the ROK/US Combined Forces Command,” available at <<http://www.usfk.mil/usfk>> (accessed on 3 August 2011), and GlobalSecurity.org, U.S. Forces, Korea/Combined Forces Command, Combined Ground Components (GCC), available at <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/usfk.htm>> (accessed on 8 November 2011).

a bargaining chip against Washington further reducing troops in the ROK. However, Washington learned about it and the program was eventually terminated. Then came President Jimmy Carter's 1977-1978 declared intentions to remove *all* US ground troops from South Korea, a proposal vigorously opposed in both the US Congress and in South Korea. Carter's proposal was defeated.

But perhaps the most tension to occur in the US-ROK alliance occurred in late 1979 and continued through 1980, during a Martial Law period in South Korea which culminated in the so called "Kwangju Uprising" in May 1980, in the southwestern corner of South Korea. On 26 October 1979 President Park Chung Hee was assassinated at a dinner party by his central intelligence chief. On 12 December, Major General Chun Do Hwan staged a coup detat, and South Korea soon went under Martial Law. Civil unrest and protests spread in South Korean cities, the most serious being in Kwangju. Tensions also occurred between Seoul and Washington as the Carter administration reacted to the suppression of legitimate dissent, and because South Korean special forces and other ROK infantry units were removed from the US-ROK command arrangements to deal with internal disturbances.

For years afterward South Korean critics, and US skeptics, argued that Washington had authorized Seoul to use force against the protestors, a charge never proven. Indeed following numerous US and South Korean investigations, Washington made a strong case that it was not only not involved in Kwangju and the use of force there, but had actively and repeatedly protested to South Korean authorities about the coup detat, Martial Law, and the use of ROK military forces to deal with civilian protests.²⁶⁾ Other tensions have occurred in the alliance but none as serious as 1979-1980.

In the early 2000s Washington moved to further consolidate its military presence in South Korea, relocating some US forces south, amidst a simultaneous negotiation with the ROK government on conversion of the

25) GlobalSecurity.org., "South Korea Special Weapons," available at <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/rok/index.html>> (accessed on 1 September 2011). Also see SIPRI, South Korea Country Profile: Past Nuclear Policies, July 2004, available at <<http://archives.sipri.org/content/expcon/cnsc2kos.html>> (accessed on 10 November 2011).

26) "United States Government Statement on the Events in Kwangju, Republic of Korea, in May 1980," Background, Press Office, United States Information Agency (USIS), US Embassy, Seoul, Korea, 19 June 1989, paper copy, "Summary," p. 1-A.

Combined Forces Command to a new structure where a four star South Korean Army general would be in charge, but with the US Air Force and Naval assets evidently remaining under separate American control, and not a part of a new CFC. This long negotiated “OpCon Transfer” has been delayed and, as of this writing, may not occur until December 2015, having slid back three years from the original target of April 2012. A key issue is whether in wartime any US forces would actually come under South Korean control. Another issue is whether other US assets, including intelligence and surveillance capabilities, could be directed by South Korea authorities.

Events in 2010 impacted the US-ROK alliance when the North Korean regime conducted two violent actions against South Korea. How to respond to the two principal provocations by North Korea...sinking of the ROK navy’s *Choenen* corvette, and the shelling of Yeongyang Island...had US and ROK officials at odds. US force contributions into the CFC were not activated because Washington did not raise the US military alert level to “DEFCON 3,”²⁷⁾ which would begin assignment of American forces to the CFC combatant elements. This fact, and other differences in the two governments alert levels, intelligence collection, and threat perceptions, remain bilateral issues being worked between Washington and Seoul.

Interestingly, while North Korea was not deterred from the two short violent incidents in 2010, neither did subsequent South Korean retaliation, including the shelling of North Korean army barracks, command systems and artillery positions near the border, provoke any further actions by North Korea.²⁸⁾ However, the difficulties with North Korea did spark some public discussion in South Korea about reintroducing American nuclear weapons as a deterrent.²⁹⁾

And so, over nearly 60 years of the US-ROK security partnership, challenges, tensions, and bargaining have occurred between the two partners. However the alliance has held and has remained vigilant against the North

27) The US Defense Department uses a 5-stage alert posture ranging from the lowest (DEFCON 5) to the highest (DEFCON 1) with DEFCON 3 signaling anticipation of hostilities. See Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense, “Dictionary of military and Associated Terms,” 12 April 2001 (as amended through 19 August 2009).

28) Ken Jimbo, “Did Deterrence against North Korea fail in 2010?” Center for U.S.-Korea Policy (info@centerforUSKoreapolicy.org), p. 2 (accessed on 21 July 2011). This author presumes Pyongyang was very explicitly warned not to conduct more hostilities.

29) See Ralph A. Coosa, “US Nuclear Weapons to South Korea?” PacNet #39, 26 July 2011, PacNet@hawaiiibiz.rr.com (accessed on 5 August 2011).

Korean threat. A mature relationship is now clearly evident.

While exact figures cannot be produced, it is possible that in the 58 years since July 1953, the United States government may have spent over \$2 trillion helping to defend South Korea, and the ROK government perhaps some \$300 billion. Relevant questions occur: Why cannot South Korea, with a GDP possibly 30 times the size of North Korea's, maintain effective deterrence without the US military presence? Or is it cheaper to keep the US forces in South Korea than return them to US territory? Should a final US force withdrawal wait for a peace treaty between North Korea and South Korea? These are fundamental alliance questions. However, this author has seen no serious desire to explore them either in Washington or in Seoul. And, of course, the continuing North Korean threat periodically re-galvanizes the US-ROK alliance. Nevertheless, a mature evolution of war fighting arrangements in the alliance is occurring. Given all the investment, and lives, to date, this author sees no reason to pull US troops out of South Korea unless and until a North Korean government makes peace with its neighbors and eliminates its nuclear weapons.

IV. Taiwan and the United States

“To abandon a democratic country to an authoritarian government with an abysmal human rights record is a repudiation of all that the United States stands for” ... Professor June Teufel Dreyer, June, 2011³⁰⁾

The Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan was a formal security treaty ally of the United States for 25 years, from 1954 to 1980, by means of the “Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China.” The bilateral security relationship deepened during the Cold War when the ROC held the “China seat” in the United Nations Security Council as a result of being one of the five “victors” at the end of World War II. When the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang (KMT) government fled mainland

30) June Teufel Dreyer, “Why Taiwan Matters,” testifying before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC, 16 June 2011.

China for Taiwan in 1949, following Mao Tse-tung's Communist Party takeover of the mainland, US security ties continued with the ROC government and, in 1954, were formally codified in the above mentioned US Senate ratified mutual defense treaty.

When the People's Republic of China (PRC) was granted the United Nations Security Council "China seat" in 1971, after Taiwan had already left the UN, Washington continued to recognize the Taipei government until the Carter Administration downgraded Taiwan and switched the US embassy from Taipei to Beijing on 1 January 1979 as part of normalization with the PRC. Soon after, in April 1979 the Republican dominated US Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) which became a de facto substitute for the languished US-ROC 1954 mutual defense treaty.

As allies, both formal and de facto, Taiwan and the United States have weathered various Chinese challenges to, even attacks on, Taiwan occupied territory to include the Quemoy-Matsu crises of 1958 to 1962 (primarily PRC artillery shelling of offshore areas), and the 1995-1996 PRC missile firings, which bracketed waters off Taiwan's northern and southern coasts. After 1996, and the election of Lee Deng-hui, an indigenous Taiwan politician to the ROC presidency, as Taiwan matured toward a political democracy, Beijing reassessed its coercion policy and adopted a less threatening posture toward Taiwan. Then, after the 2000 Taiwan election of pro-independence Democratic People's Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bian, when Taipei began to push the pro-independence envelope, it prompted difficulties and serious talks between Washington and Taipei. Beijing pressed Washington to help "rein in" Chen.

With the victory of KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou in the May 2008 Taiwan Presidential election, Taiwan's mainland policy seems to have come full circle: President Ma put aside pro-independence rhetoric, and discussions of future unification scenarios. Moreover, in what seems almost like mutual tutelage between Taipei and Beijing, Ma and Chinese President Hu Jintao have calmed the cross-Strait atmosphere. As such, the evolving Taiwan-PRC security relationship demonstrates how gradually changing external policies and internal realities among the two principal countries can reduce tensions and, so it would seem, make the need less relevant for a continuing US defense commitment to Taiwan. However, the TRA remains on the books.

Chinese policy toward Taiwan in late 2011 is now seemingly at its most

benign and least threatening in 30 years—if, of course, one discounts the continuing buildup of Chinese short range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), in particular the CSS-6 and CSS-7, with about 1,000 to 1,200 of them now, across from Taiwan,³¹⁾ while the Chinese navy (PLAN) also extends its operational reach around the island, and new Russian high tech jet fighters gradually come into the Chinese Air Force (PLAAF) inventory.

The ongoing rapprochement between Taiwan and China has coincided with a sense of relaxation among security planners in Washington, as the Obama Administration, like Bush before it, has its attention preoccupied with military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and recently, for Obama, the additional commitment to NATO's military campaign against Qaddafi in Libya.

Nevertheless the Congressional Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of April 1979 pledges, and requires, every US administration to come to the aid of Taiwan should China attack. Specifically the TRA reads in Section 3301(b) (4):

“It is the policy of the United States to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including boycotts and embargoes, a threat to the peace of the Western Pacific and of grave concern to the United States.”³²⁾

Chinese pressure against Taiwan could involve a wide spectrum of coercive options, and clearly the Chinese are masters of nuance. Would, for example, cyber activities—which have long been a part of PRC operations directed at the island—approach the US threshold of “grave concern?”³³⁾

One of the more controversial issues between Beijing and Washington continues to be US arms sales to the ROC government. The Sino-US communiqué of 17 August 1982 saw the Reagan Administration state in paragraph 6 that:

31) US Department of Defense, Annual Report to Congress, “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2011,” Appendix I, p. 78 (accessed on 23 September 2011).

32) Taiwan Relations Act (U.S. Code Title 22, Chapter 48, Sections 3301-3316), available at <<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/tra01>> (accessed on 21 September 2011).

33) See Lawrence E. Grinter, *Chinese Military Scenarios Against Taiwan: Premises, Options, Implications*, USAF Counterproliferation Center, Paper No. 19, Maxwell AFB, AL, dtd December 2002.

“the United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution. In so stating, the United States acknowledges China’s consistent position regarding the thorough settlement of this issue.”

Paragraph 7, pertaining to both China’s and the US positions stated:

“In order to bring about, over a period of time, a final settlement of the question of United States arms sales to Taiwan, which is an issue rooted in history, the two governments will make every effort to adopt measures and create conditions conducive to the thorough settlement of this issue.”³⁴⁾

Almost immediately Beijing began complaining that US arms sales were not “defensive.” Washington responded that Chinese weapons purchases from Moscow, especially the SU-27 fighters, meant that Washington had to make F-16s available to Taipei to keep a “balance” across the Strait.

Since 1990, US arms sales to Taipei indeed have been primarily defensive as this list of big ticket items indicates:

- 1992 150 F-16A/B fighters valued at \$5.8 billion
- 1992 3 Patriot Air Defense System fire units valued at \$1.3 billion
- 1993 4 E-2T Hawkeye airborne early warning aircraft valued at \$700 million
- 1996 1299 Stinger surface-to-air missiles valued at (with other items) \$420 million
- 1999 2 E-2 Hawkeye 200E airborne early warning aircraft valued at \$1.4 billion
- 2001 50 Joint Tactical Information Distribution System terminals valued at \$725 million

34) Text of Sino-US Joint Communiqué of 17 August 1982, as reprinted in NTI Research Library, available at <<http://www.nti.org/db/china/engdoc>> (accessed on 23 September 2011).

- 2002 4 Kidd class naval destroyers valued at \$875 million
- 2004 2 Ultra High Long Range Early Warning Radars valued at \$1.776 billion
- 2007 12 P-3C ASW aircraft valued at \$1.96 billion
- 2008 and 2010 444 PAC-3 missile defense missiles valued at \$5.91 billion³⁵⁾

During this 20 year period, the PRC has also acquired Russian Sovremenny destroyers, Sunburn missiles, and today points about 1,100 short range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) at Taiwan. Proposals to Beijing by Washington and Taipei to negotiate arms withdrawals from the Strait area have been rebuffed.

Some analysts of the deepening PRC-ROC embrace now contend that it cannot be reversed, and that even if a DPP candidate wins the ROC presidency in 2012, such an event would only slow down, rather than reverse, the island eventually coming under mainland custody. Then again, straight line projections, while comforting, often get ambushed in international security affairs.

Furthermore, is the “erosion of US support for Taiwan”—argued, for example, by Professor Robert Sutter³⁶⁾—if true, a deliberate decision of the Obama administration, or the result of preoccupations elsewhere accompanied by hopes that the currently benign cross-Strait situation might continue indefinitely?

These questions and trends, while interesting, are nevertheless separate from what the Taiwan Relations Act states, and what US and ROC conflict planning should be prepared for if the Chinese decide to attack Taiwan, either flat out, or through a staged coercion campaign short of all-out war. Accordingly, certain questions have to be asked: How would the United States come to the defense of Taiwan? Would US forces fight in coordination

35) Shirley A. Kan, “Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990,” CRS Report #RL30957, 30 June 2011, pp. 65-69.

36) Robert Sutter, “Taiwan’s Future: Narrowing Straits,” *NBR Analysis* (May 2011), p. 5 and pp. 20-21. In contrast to professor Sutter’s generally somber analysis is the latent popularity in Taiwan about the deepening economic and trade links between Taiwan and mainland China. Details are in Hsien-chao Chang, “An Assessment of the Development and Progress of Cross-Strait Economic and Trade Cooperation, post EFCA,” *Taiwan Perspective* 188 (15 November 2011), available at <<http://www.inpr.org.tw>> (accessed on 15 November 2011).

with ROC armed forces? Or in parallel with them? Or without them? Framed by the State Department's position on Taiwan, and no official US recognition of Taiwan, regular US military coordination and communication, and advance training for purposes of force interoperability, are not permitted by Washington. Evidently the kind of war fighting links between Washington and Seoul for example and, to a lesser extent, between Tokyo and Washington, simply do not exist between Taipei and Washington.

This reality, if true, constitutes a clear peacetime versus wartime mismatch, something I assume all three governments understand. Moreover, US restraints on arms sales to Taipei, done for a variety of reasons, have not been met with similar restraints, much less force pull backs, by Beijing. In short, if "Taiwan is being handed to Beijing on a silver platter"³⁷⁾, Beijing keeps its sword drawn to ensure the platter transfer continues.

V. Conclusion

Each of the three US-Asian alliances or security partnerships examined here shows historical patterns of divergent interests, but also continuing utility. They also demonstrate complications for American security interests and US financial capabilities. First, each country the US has undertaken to protect, at years of major expense to the American taxpayer, has emerged into a democracy and each has a capitalist economic system, and is an important trade partner of the United States. Second, these alliances remain notably asymmetrical, except for the periodic financial assistance or force deployments that Japan and South Korea have contributed to US operations or costs. Third, the United States continues its protection of these three countries in a period of obvious US financial difficulties, debts, and other serious international commitments. Fourth, this paper concludes that each alliance does have continuing utilities for the United States, both as hedges against China's rise and as stabilizing factors in Northeast Asia. However, in each case, some sensible adjustments, whose responsibility is principally Washington's, are needed.

First, the US Marines should be removed from Futenma Air Station on

37) China-Taiwan specialist to author, April 2011.

Okinawa. They can go back to Guam, or be integrated into Kadena Air Base without a significant reduction in US mission capabilities. This long festering issue is a wholly unnecessary irritant in Japanese-US relations, and it should be ended. Second, in South Korea, the US combat consolidation and the alteration of command and control arrangements with Washington's ROK ally, are appropriate and can be accomplished with more work ahead, while keeping the North Korean government clearly reminded that if it ever starts a new war it will cease to exist. Third, regarding Taiwan, US constraints on arms sales to Taiwan are logical, since highly advanced military technology should not be provided to Taiwan as it could someday become China's. However, the Taiwan Relations Act has resonance beyond Taiwan and across the Western Pacific, and the TRA reflects the steadiness and unselfishness of the US commitment to a small country that cannot defend itself alone against China. However, closer US operational arrangements with the ROC government are necessary. Moreover, as long as Beijing does not renounce the possible use of force against Taiwan, Beijing should be reminded that the Taiwan Relations Act remains in force, and that the United States is pledged to come to Taiwan's aid if the ROC is attacked directly or by other means.

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