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**Against Us or with Us?
The Chinese Perspective of
America's Alliances with
Japan and Korea**

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China's attitude toward the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea alliances, particularly the former, has drawn a lot of attention in the post-Cold War era. How China views the utility and function of these two security alliances and reacts to them could well shape the dynamics of the alliances. From a historical perspective, however, this is not a new issue. China has lived with these alliances for almost half a century. To better understand China's current concerns about the alliances and to predict its future posture, we might look for clues in what China has done in the past. This paper attempts to provide a broad survey of Chinese perceptions of the two security alliances in the Cold War period to elucidate Beijing's post-Cold War policy orientation. By tracing the evolution of the Chinese calculus of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea alliances, it hopes to find answers to the following questions. What are some of the important variables or conditions that defined China's attitudes and approaches to dealing with these two alliances? How do these variables or conditions interact with each other? Have they been constant or changing over time? Are they still relevant in the post-Cold War era, and to what extent?

The paper draws its findings mainly from the Chinese official media. While this may not be an ideal source, it nevertheless provides a systematic data basis for a historical analysis of continuity and change. There is no question that the official Chinese media, particularly before the 1980s, was full of rhetoric and propaganda. There has always been a gap between rhetoric and behavior in Chinese foreign policy, as in other countries. Nevertheless it is equally true that behind rhetoric always lie perceptions, self-serving or not, that provide "diagnostic propensities" and "choice propensities" of the Chinese leaders and elites, and thus have policy implications.

The findings of the paper suggest that China's perceptions of the targets, internal structures, and functions of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korean alliances have changed remark-

ably over time, from extreme hostility to high tolerance. These changes resulted from the interactions of such factors as China's assessment of the world balance of power, the well-being of its relationship with both indigenous and outside powers, and the priority of its national policy. The evolution of Chinese perceptions also illustrates that China need not view the two security alliances as inherently hostile to its interests. Under some circumstances they can be considered useful or at least harmless. Beijing's attitudes are often determined not by the two alliances per se but rather by its perception of the sources of threat to its security and whether these security alliances can alleviate or aggravate the threat. On the other hand, given the nature of China's foreign policy, Beijing does not have intrinsic love for these alliances. Since the 1980s, China has not particularly endorsed any bilateral or multilateral military alliance in the region. Normatively China is also uneasy with the reality of the American military presence in the region and tends to see it as a short-term arrangement rather than a long-term phenomenon. During the Cold War, the Chinese perceived the two security alliances as either against China or with China. In the post-Cold War period, they have yet to be convinced that the function of the two alliances could be neither.

The Formation of the Two Alliances and China's Response

The Chinese view of the U.S.-Japan security alliance cemented in 1951 was informed by a series of prior developments, including the adjustments of U.S. policy toward Japan in the late 1940s, the U.S. involvement in China's civil war between 1946 and 1949, and the Korean War.

From the Chinese perspective, 1947 witnessed an obvious flip-flop in U.S. postwar policy toward Japan. The postwar arrangement in the Far East, as envisioned by Franklin Roosevelt, featured a relatively strong, democratic, and pro-America China which was supposed to play a more prominent role in East Asia, while Japan was to be kept nonmilitarized, relatively weak, and in a low profile in regional affairs. Along these lines, MacArthur's occupation headquarters carried out a series of reforms in the wake of Japan's surrender aimed at turning Japan into a nonmilitarized and democratic state. As the Cold War unfolded and, more importantly, the Chinese Communists seemed to be gaining the upper hand in China's civil war, however, policymakers in Washington had to rethink this strategy and redirect America's Japan policy. Beginning in 1947, the U.S. Japan policy was no longer intended to constrain Japan but to foster a strong, pro-America ally and to make Japan a powerful fortress against the expansion of communism in the Far East. The founding of the People's Republic of China and the outbreak of the Korean War further prompted this policy shift. According to Chinese analysts, measures adopted by the United States to assist Japan's resurgence included reducing Japan's war reparations and promoting its economic recovery, suppressing Japanese leftists and communists while treating militarists with leniency, rearming Japan by building its police forces, and finally, after the Korean War broke out, turning Japan into America's strategic base in the Far East.¹

China voiced strong concern over this policy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) asserted in a statement on June 12, 1950, that America's Japan policy aimed to turn Japan into America's colony and a base for launching a new war.² A *People's Daily* editorial of September 3, 1950, launched an even more ferocious attack on America's Japan policy:

The American occupant, who violated the Potsdam Declaration, not only failed to make efforts to liquidate the Japanese aggressive influence and safeguard the democratic forces of the Japanese people, but also preserved the Japanese aggressive influence as an instrument of oppressing the Japanese people and fostered it as a tool of aggressing the Asian people. For its part, the Japanese aggressive forces used the protection of the U.S. occupant to maintain their reactionary rule over the Japanese people, and attempted to resume their aggression toward Far Eastern countries. Japan, under the occupation of the United States, is once again becoming the base for Asian imperialist aggression and a fascist reactionary center.³

On August 15, 1951, Premier Zhou Enlai issued a statement on the draft peace treaty with Japan put forward by America and Britain and the proposed San Francisco peace conference. In this statement, Zhou condemned General MacArthur's failure to enforce democratization in Japan and his policy of rebuilding Japanese militarism, and accused the United States of mobilizing Japan's manpower and military industry for the Korean War. Zhou asserted that the intent of U.S. policy toward Japan was to turn Japan into America's aggressive outpost in the Far East.⁴

U.S. assistance to the Kuomintang government in China's civil war from 1946 and 1949, while failing to change the outcome of the war, caused the Chinese Communists to view the United States as China's archenemy. In fact, as early as the spring of 1949, the CCP was prepared for possible direct U.S. military intervention once the Communist troops crossed the Yangtze River and captured Shanghai.⁵ After coming to power, the leaders of the PRC strongly suspected that the thrust of U.S. strategic deployments in East Asia was to strangle the nascent Communist China. The outbreak of the Korean War further aggravated this concern. A *People's Daily* editorial on September 3, 1950, painted a gray picture of the U.S. Far Eastern strategy:

Japan's surrender didn't put an end to the imperialist aggression toward the Orient, and even failed to eliminate the likelihood of the resurgence of Japanese aggressive influence. The American imperialists grabbed a large part of the fruits of the triumph in the anti-Fascist war, and took the place of Japan as the prime aggressor. American imperialists invaded South Korea and launched an aggressive war against the North Korean people. After the failure of intervention on China's mainland, American imperialists intervened and sought to control Taiwan by force. Meanwhile, they overtly intervened in the Philippines and Vietnam, and endeavored to extend their aggression to Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, India, Pakistan and others. As American imperialists carried out in Japan the policy of turning it into America's colony and military base, they have become the enemy of the Japanese people.⁶

In mid-1949, concerned with the U.S. military adventures, Mao proposed that the new China should tilt toward the Soviet Union in its foreign policy, and this led to the forging of the Sino-Soviet Alliance of Friendship and Mutual Assistance on February 14, 1950. The alliance treaty stipulated that China and the Soviet Union would jointly take all the necessary steps to prevent the resurgence of Japanese imperialism, and put an end to any aggression by Japan or any other country that might align with Japan.⁷ Obviously, Japan was merely a pretext here; the real purpose of the alliance was to guard against the United States. To some

extent, the Sino-Soviet alliance was a preemptive measure against the forthcoming Japan-U.S. alliance.

Against this backdrop, China's response to the U.S.-Japan security treaty concluded on September 18, 1951, was critical. Beijing's comments on this alliance included the following:⁸

Background: It is believed that as the U.S. suffered serious setbacks in the Korean War, Washington calculated that by terminating the state of war between the U.S. and Japan it would be able to legitimately rearm Japan and make use of Japan's human resources in the Korean War and other aggressive warfare in Asia.

Purpose: The U.S. attempted to make a rearmed Japan the key link in its chain of strategic arrangements in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Washington's intention was to turn Japan into the core and bridgehead of its Far Eastern military network and to prepare for launching a new aggressive war in the Far East aimed at China and the Soviet Union.

Impact: First, the alliance serves to pave the way for rearming Japan and turning Japan completely into America's military base,⁹ and the U.S.-Japan security treaty, along with the U.S.-Philippines treaty and the U.S.-Australia-New Zealand trilateral treaty, is nothing but an instrument for the U.S. to enslave the Asian people and to prepare for launching another aggressive war against Asia. Second, this alliance stands hostile to China and the Soviet Union and seriously threatens the security of China and other Asian countries. Third, this treaty also harms Japan's interests across a broad range of fronts: militarily, it revives Japanese militarism and turns Japan into America's military bridgehead in the Far East; economically, Japan's economy has to serve the needs of the U.S. war machine and hence becomes an appendage to the U.S. economy; politically, it fixes Japan's status as a U.S. colony; internationally, it causes Japan to be isolated in Asia by placing Japan in an overtly confrontational position vis-à-vis China, the Soviet Union, and other Asian states.

China reacted to the establishment of the U.S.-Japan alliance by taking a series of countermeasures. First, Beijing announced—after consulting Moscow—that it would extend the deadline for the Soviet navy's withdrawal from China's Lushun navy base as stipulated by the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty until the conclusion of a peace treaty between China and Japan and between the USSR and Japan.¹⁰ Obviously, Beijing expected that continued Soviet military presence in northeast China would help to undermine U.S. efforts to strengthen its Far Eastern strategic position as embodied by the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Second, Beijing endeavored to mobilize international consensus to condemn the conclusion of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan security treaty. The World Peace Council and the Asia-Pacific Region Peace Conference passed resolutions deploring the U.S. attempts to revive Japanese militarism and the adverse impact the two treaties would have on peace in East Asia.¹¹

Third, as the Japan-U.S. alliance also was strongly opposed by many Japanese people, especially leftist students and labor union activists, Beijing extended its strong support, through the media and its links to some Japanese leftist organizations, especially the Japanese Communist Party, to their protest movements. Beijing's support was entirely moral and political; no material assistance was given.

Even though Japan had been brought into the U.S. Far Eastern strategic orbit, given Japan's geostrategic and economic importance the PRC still endeavored to improve relations with it. Beijing indicated that should Japan cut its ties with Taiwan, shed its status as America's vassal and follower, and become a peaceful and independent state, China would like to establish and develop normal relations with it. Even further, the PRC wished to sign a non-aggression treaty with Japan.¹² As diplomatic relations with Japan were unlikely to materialize in a short period of time, PRC leaders adopted a more realistic approach—to encourage nongovernmental economic and cultural ties between the two states and to use people-to-people exchanges to promote official relations.

A number of developments in the 1950s intensified the PRC's bitter feelings about the U.S.-Japan alliance. One was the development of relations between Japan and Taiwan. On December 24, 1951, Japanese prime minister Yoshida Shigeru indicated in a letter to U.S. secretary of state John Foster Dulles that Japan was ready to conclude a peace treaty with the KMT government in Taiwan so as to normalize relations between Japan and the Republic of China. On April 28, 1952, Japan signed the peace treaty with Taiwan. This touched one of Beijing's most sensitive nerves. In a strongly worded statement, Zhou Enlai asserted that the United States, by manipulating the peace accord between Taiwan and Japan, intended to get these two followers into alignment in order to pose a military threat to the PRC. Zhou also condemned the Japanese government for failing to repent its aggressive past and for following the United States to plot a new aggressive war against China.¹³

After the truce of the Korean War, Washington stepped up its strategic deployments in East Asia. In August 1953, the United States and South Korea concluded a mutual defense treaty. Beijing viewed the treaty as a military alliance forged between Washington and Seoul, and interpreted it as intending to enable the United States to maintain its military presence indefinitely on the Korean peninsula in direct violation of the truce treaty signed by China, North Korea, and the United States requiring the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the peninsula. Beijing also asserted that since Syngman Rhee rejected the truce treaty, the U.S.-South Korea security treaty would only serve to encourage him to carry out his plan of unifying Korea by force. Beijing expressed its concern that in the event of the South launching a war against the North, the United States would extend its assistance to the ROK as required by the security treaty. From the Chinese perspective, the U.S.-ROK alliance constituted a major obstacle to the peaceful settlement of the Korean issue.¹⁴

Beijing reacted by concluding the Treaty of Economic and Cultural Cooperation with Pyongyang on November 23, 1953. This treaty stood as a quasi-alliance between the PRC and the DPRK. As Zhou Enlai commented at the signing ceremony, the treaty "expressed the common determination of the peoples of the two countries to strive to the end for a complete implementation of the truce treaty as well as the peaceful settlement of the Korean issue. It also indicates the Chinese people's endorsement of the just cause of the DPRK people until the ultimate victory."¹⁵

The Eisenhower administration relentlessly endeavored to create a crescent-shaped encirclement around the PRC. In September 1954, Washington sponsored the founding of the five-nation Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the signing of the Southeast Asian Collective Defense Treaty. Beijing viewed this organization as one more military alliance targeted at China, and was very concerned that it would facilitate aggressive U.S. behavior in Asia. Three months later, Washington signed a mutual defense treaty with Taipei. Beijing accused Washington of using this alliance along with the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-South Korean alliances to forge a Northeast Asian defense coalition, which, in conjunction

with SEATO, would come to form a Far Eastern system of aggression which would allow the United States to prepare to start a new world war.¹⁶

The PRC's efforts to develop closer ties with Japan also suffered a setback when Kishi Nobusuke came to power in 1957. Nobusuke adopted a tough stance toward China; on various occasions he reiterated his position of non-recognition of the PRC and endorsement of attack by the KMT of the mainland. In addition, the Nobusuke government took an indifferent and non-cooperative attitude toward the economic exchanges between China and Japan. Meanwhile, impelled by Washington, Tokyo opened its talks with Seoul on issues in bilateral relations. The Japanese chief negotiator Sawada made a provocative comment that it was the task of the Japanese diplomacy to push the 38th parallel north of the Yalu River. Nobusuke's conservative foreign policy drew strong criticism from China. Beijing lashed the Nobusuke government for creating "two Chinas" and being hostile to the PRC, and accused it of attempting to revive Japanese militarism. A *People's Daily* editorial asserted that the Japan-ROK talks were part of an effort to form a Northeast Asian anti-communist military coalition comprising Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and South Vietnam, and warned of the danger of "potential Japanese imperialism."¹⁷

The Revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and China's Interpretation

The revision of U.S.-Japan security treaty initiated in 1958 led to the signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan in 1960. This event occurred at a time when China was plagued by both external and internal difficulties. Although Mao suggested in 1957 that "the East Wind prevails over the West Wind"—i.e., the power balance between the Eastern bloc and the Western bloc had shifted to the advantage of the former—this optimism was short-lived. Mao was unhappy with Soviet leader Khrushchev's efforts to secure détente with the United States and a schism arose between Beijing and Moscow. The Middle East crisis and the second Taiwan Strait crisis occurred simultaneously, giving China serious concerns about the strategic intentions of the United States. Internally, China was confronted with severe economic hardship caused by Mao's Great Leap movement.

Beijing viewed the revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty as foremost an attempt by Washington to alleviate the political, military, and economic difficulties it was facing. It suggested that due to its pursuit of an aggressive and expansionist policy Uncle Sam was politically isolated, militarily overextended, and financially strained. To escape this dilemma, the United States tried to get Japan to share its military and financial burdens, as it did with West Germany in Europe. At the same time, Beijing noted that the Kishi Nobusuke government in Japan, which to it represented the potential for Japanese imperialism, sought to further collaborate with the United States in order to revive Japanese militarism, relieve the growing economic crisis, and realize the ambition of Japanese monopoly capitalism to expand into Southeast Asia.¹⁸

Beijing further suggested that Washington sought to achieve the following goals by revising the security treaty with Japan: to obligate Japan to defend the U.S. military bases in Japan on the pretext of mutual defense; to broaden the scope of mutual defense to cover the entire Western Pacific; and, when necessary, to involve Japan in a nuclear war for U.S. interests.¹⁹

Based on the above judgment, China perceived a series of negative consequences emanating from the revision of the treaty.²⁰

First, under the auspices of the United States, Japanese militarism would rebuild unchecked its armament and develop its offensive capability; Japan would not only help the United States defend its military bases in Japan, but also dispatch troops overseas to fight along with U.S. soldiers. This treaty indicated that Japan had been enlisted as a regular member of the military bloc headed by the United States, and Japanese militarism had been revived as a result of America's long fostering of it.

Second, the treaty enabled the United States to put Japanese forces into joint operations with troops from Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines on the pretext of "maintaining peace and stability in the Far East." In addition, the effective range of the treaty overlapped those of the U.S.-Taiwan, U.S.-South Korea, and U.S.-Philippines treaties. This implied that a Northeast Asian military coalition, long planned by the United States, had come into being with the conclusion of the U.S.-Japan security treaty.

Third, the scope of mutual defense as stipulated in the treaty covered a wide range, from the north of the Philippines and the coast of China to the Pacific coast of the Soviet Union and other areas around Japan. Hence it constituted a serious provocation to the PRC, the USSR, the DPRK, and other Asian states, and severely threatened peace and stability in the Far East.

Finally, the new U.S.-Japan security treaty was not just a military bloc; it also harbored a malicious intention of economic aggression. Japan intended to exchange its entering into military alliance with the United States for the U.S.'s endorsement of its overseas economic expansion, especially to Southeast Asia, in order that Japan could envelop Southeast Asia in its economic sphere of influence and revive its dream of a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere."

Unlike its views of the prior decade, China's perception of the revision of the Japan-U.S. alliance treaty was characterized by a strong concern over the revival of Japanese militarism and the impact of the treaty on Southeast Asia. During the 1950s, China repeatedly warned of the possibility of a revival of Japanese militarism, but Beijing did not suggest it had become a reality; with the signing of the new security treaty between Washington and Tokyo, however, China affirmed that Japanese militarism had been revived. Obviously, the tough China policy pursued by the Kishi Nobusuke government contributed to Beijing's alarmist conclusion. Japan would massively build up its military capability and under some circumstances dispatch the Self-Defense Force overseas. Since the United States had been escalating its intervention in Indochina since the late 1950s, China was worried that the new U.S.-Japan security treaty might directly serve U.S. strategic needs in Southeast Asia.

Although China reacted to the new U.S.-Japan security treaty with an immediate bombardment of rhetoric, it did not take any action until July 11, 1961, when Beijing signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with Pyongyang. Several days earlier, a similar treaty was concluded between the DPRK and the USSR. Both Moscow and Beijing stated that their entering into alliance with Pyongyang was a countermeasure against the attempt by the United States to actively revive Japanese militarism and forge a Northeast Asian military coalition.²¹ Obviously, China, the USSR, and the DPRK premeditated this significant action. As noted earlier, China had signed the Treaty of Economic and Cultural Cooperation with North Korea in the wake of the Korean War, but that was not a formal alliance treaty. Even when China completely withdrew its troops from North Korea in 1958, Beijing did not immediately enter into a security alliance with Pyongyang. It was the new

U.S.-Japan security treaty that greatly aggravated China's concern over the regional security environment and prompted the Chinese to formally ally with North Korea, although it is yet unclear why it took a year and a half for Beijing and Pyongyang to conclude a formal alliance.

Beijing's concern with the new U.S.-Japan security treaty was further aggravated by several succeeding developments. In June 1960, foreign ministers from the eight SEATO nations gathered in Washington to discuss the situation in Southeast Asia. The conference reportedly applauded the new U.S.-Japan security treaty as "the key to the Far Eastern collective defense system." Against the background of intensified U.S. intervention in South Vietnam and Laos, Beijing asserted that Washington, in order to carry out its war scheme in Southeast Asia, was planning to get the Japan-U.S. military alliance closely linked to SEATO. Although Japan was not a member of SEATO, China held that for the purpose of making use of the Japanese militarist forces as well as Japan's economic potential the United States had defined Japan as the backbone of this organization.²²

The resumption of Japan-ROK negotiations came as another alarming development to Beijing. The Japan-ROK bilateral talks were opened in 1951 in an effort to normalize relations between the two countries. However, mainly because of South Korea's deep-rooted hatred of Japan due to its colonization of the Korean peninsula, the talks were held intermittently for ten years without bearing fruit. After the signing of the new U.S.-Japan alliance treaty, Washington urged Tokyo and Seoul to resume their bilateral negotiation. Beijing viewed this as an important step taken by the United States to form a "Northeast Asian coalition of aggression." It suggested that although the United States had long attempted to forge such a coalition, due to the opposition of the Asian people as well as various tensions among Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan this scheme failed to materialize. As the aggressive policy of the United States suffered more and more setbacks in Asia and the political and economic difficulties it faced mounted, Washington found it all the more urgent to piece together a Northeast Asian military coalition. For the United States, the purpose of this coalition was twofold: to borrow Japan's economic power to buttress the Park Chung-Hee military dictatorship, which was experiencing a serious political and economic crisis, and, when necessary, to get Japan to dispatch its SDF overseas to fight shoulder to shoulder with the U.S. army. With regard to Japan's motives, Beijing believed it sought to open Korea's doors for the massive invasion of Japanese militarism and monopoly capitalism.²³

Beijing's concern over Japan's growing interest in the Korean peninsula proved not totally groundless. In early 1965, a "three-arrow battle plan" drafted in June 1963 by Japan's Self-Defense Agency was revealed. The plan envisaged that once the second Korean war broke out, Japan would join the United States and South Korea to fight China and North Korea.²⁴ China was alarmed by this audacious scheme and viewed it as an embodiment of the Japan-U.S. security treaty as well as part of the U.S. strategic deployments in Asia requiring Japan to play a larger role in containing China. Beijing also held that the plan was a dangerous sign that Japanese militarists, after building up their influence in Japan itself, had embarked upon expansion to Korea and China.²⁵

In February 1965, the Japan-ROK negotiations that had lasted for fourteen years wound up with the initialing of a "Japan-ROK basic treaty" and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Seoul. In Beijing's opinion, by accelerating the conclusion of the Japan-ROK talks and collaboration between Japanese militarists and the Park Chung-Hee regime, Washington was endeavoring to form a Northeast Asia military bloc and use it to buttress the tottering Southeast Asia military bloc so as to strengthen America's strategic

position in Asia. Specifically, the conclusion of the Japan-ROC basic treaty met the needs of the United States in fighting the Vietnam War: by getting Japan and South Korea to reconcile with one another, the United States would drive them to provide manpower and logistical support to U.S. operations in Vietnam. Beijing warned that the Japan-ROK treaty would seriously obstruct the peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula and greatly increase the possibility of a second Korean war. Some comments carried by China's newspapers went even further: they viewed the treaty as a sign that the United States and Japan were plotting to escalate the Indochina war and to attack China and the DPRK.²⁶

In fact, as the United States stepped up its military intervention in Vietnam, the possibility of its spillover into China increasingly preoccupied Beijing.²⁷ The PRC leadership held that escalation of the Vietnam War indicated that Washington had shifted its global strategic emphasis from Europe to Asia, and from dealing with the USSR to coping with China. To carry out this new strategy that viewed China as its archenemy, the United States, Beijing noted, not only had remarkably increased its military deployments in Asia but also was endeavoring to set up an "anti-China coalition" centered around Japan, the USSR, and India.²⁸

Under such circumstances, Beijing argued, Japan had become more important to the United States. Japan's increasing role in U.S. strategy was reflected in its growing involvement in the Vietnam War. As Japanese prime minister Sato suggested, Japan "should fully, completely and thoroughly fulfill its obligations as stipulated by the Japan-U.S. security treaty." Japan's involvement in the Vietnam War included allowing the United States direct access to its military bases in Japan; supplying the U.S. army with a huge amount of military materials, ranging from ammunition to medicines; and providing technical, engineering, and management assistance to the U.S. troops fighting in Vietnam. As a result, Beijing asserted, Japan had turned itself into an indispensable part of the U.S. war machine.²⁹

Beijing's sense of security was further strained by the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement. Beginning in 1965, Moscow moved to improve relations with Tokyo, which led to the establishment of the "Soviet-Japan Economic Cooperation Commission" and the opening of Soviet-Japan talks. Although the discord between Beijing and Moscow had been eroding their bilateral ties since the late 1950s, their relations did not break up until 1966, when the Cultural Revolution cast China's domestic and foreign policies to extremes. Driven by the internal political need to "stand against the revision of Marxism-Leninism," China adopted an overt anti-Soviet posture. Beijing asserted that efforts made by the Soviet leaders to cooperate with Japanese "counterrevolutionaries" were in close concert with the U.S. policy of vigorously fostering the militarists in Japan. Soviet-Japan collaboration, it suggested, was a product of the U.S. policy of "containing China," and the Soviet-Japan Economic Cooperation Commission, along with the U.S.-Japan alliance, had come to form a U.S.-USSR-Japan anti-China "sacred alliance" which would seek to dominate Asia.³⁰

The "Automatic Extension" of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and China's Intensified Criticism

The end of the 1960s presaged a grim international security environment for China. The Sino-Soviet border conflict in March 1969 presented China with the real possibility of war with a superpower that had the nuclear capability to annihilate China by a "surgical strike."

Although China had long declared that it was ready for a combined attack from “all imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries,” when China’s survival was at stake rational calculation prevailed over rhetoric. China’s contemplation of a strategic readjustment of its foreign policy was met by President Nixon’s strong desire to pull the U.S. troops from the mire in Vietnam and to stop the Soviet global expansion. The U.S.-China tango that began in 1969 eventually led to the dramatic Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japan rapprochement. In the short run, however, the imminent security threat from the north did not immediately modify China’s perception of the two security alliances. Instead China’s criticism of the two alliances intensified and continued until mid-1971. There were several reasons for this lag.

First of all, after Richard Nixon took office in 1969, although Beijing noticed that he “has chanted a lot of ‘prayers for peace’ and played a lot of ‘talks’ tricks,”³¹ it had yet to be convinced that the Nixon administration was ready to pursue a China and Asia policy substantially different from those of his predecessors. In October 1969, the PLA air force shot down a pilotless U.S. high-altitude military reconnaissance plane over south-central China. Beijing related this incident by stating that “recently U.S. imperialism has repeatedly dispatched military aircraft and warships to carry out frenzied armed provocations against Chinese fishing fleets on the high seas in the Gulf of Bac Bo and flagrantly sent military aircraft into China’s airspace to conduct reconnaissance and harassment.” These episodes seemed to suggest that Washington was not prepared to give up its hostile policy toward China. In Beijing’s words, they “once again give the lie to the peace hoax of the Nixon government and testify to the great truth of the concept of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought that imperialism means war.”³² Also, in early 1970, the United States seemed to be intensifying its war effort in Indochina by invading Cambodia. On May 20, Mao Zedong issued a statement to call the peoples of the world to unite against U.S. imperialism and all its “running dogs.” The Sino-U.S. ambassadorial talks in Warsaw were canceled. In sum, by early 1970, the United States was still considered “the main force of aggression and war and the most ferocious common enemy of the peoples of the world.”³³

Second, as mentioned earlier, for a while the United States and Japan were perceived to be in the same anti-Chinese boat as the Soviet Union. Even an aviation agreement signed between Moscow and Tokyo in 1969 was perceived as evidence that “Soviet-Japan collusion [had] intensified” simply because the agreement allowed Japanese aircraft unrestricted flights over Siberia.³⁴ In Beijing’s eyes, the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan, and others were forming “a ring of encirclement around China.”³⁵ A *Beijing Review* article alleged that “[t]he U.S. capitalism and Soviet revisionism are working hand in glove in opposing China” with the United States directing Japan to establish a crescent of anti-China encirclement and the Soviet Union instructing India to establish a system of collective security.³⁶

Third, what upset Beijing most was the “automatic extension” of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. In October 1969, the Japanese government decided that the U.S.-Japan security treaty would be automatically extended when it expired in June 1970. One month later, Japanese prime minister Eisaku Sato paid a visit to Washington. In Sato’s talks with Nixon, both sides agreed to further strengthen their security ties. The joint communiqué between Sato and Nixon was perceived as a manifesto of a new stage of U.S.-Japanese military collaboration.

Beijing asserted that the automatically extended Japan-U.S. security treaty strengthened the military alliance by broadening its scope and upgrading its intensity in several ways.

First, China still took the U.S.-Japan security treaty as an “unequal treaty imposed on the Japanese people” by the United States. The United States was carrying out the quasi-occupation of Japan, turning the country into its biggest military and nuclear base.³⁷ During

the U.S.-Japan summit, the United States agreed to return the “administrative rights” of Okinawa to Japan. Beijing viewed this as a cheap trick. Since the United States could still freely use the military bases on Okinawa and keep nuclear weapons there after the island was “returned” to Japan and became a part of Japan proper, what would stop the United States from doing the same in the whole of Japan? Therefore the net result was not the conversion of Okinawa into part of Japan proper but rather the “Okinawanization” of Japan proper.³⁸

What China saw was the intensification of U.S. military activities in both Okinawa and Japan proper. The United States further reinforced its military bases in March 1969 when it engineered the coup d’etat in Cambodia and extended its war of aggression to the whole of Indochina. U.S. B-52 bombers from the Kadena base in Okinawa wantonly bombed the Indochina region twice a day. Warships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet participating in the Indochina war kept moving in and out of Yokosuka, Sasebo, and other naval bases. The number of U.S. warships stationed at the Sasebo naval base had increased by 50 percent in two years. The U.S. Defense Department announced on June 5, 1970, that U.S. logistics departments in the Far East would move from Hawaii to Okinawa to concentrate supplies for all the U.S. troops stationed in Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia. The United States also turned the whole of Japan into its biggest communication and radar base in Asia. It set up thirty-two communications and radar bases there for carrying out espionage activities and directing missile attacks.³⁹ Overall the United States established 126 military bases and establishments in Japan proper, occupying an area of more than 300 square kilometers.⁴⁰

Second, the automatic extension of the U.S.-Japan security treaty was designed to serve Nixon’s “new Asia policy” or “Nixon Doctrine.” While China recognized that this new Asia policy reflected that “the U.S. strength cannot meet its ambitions to some extent,”⁴¹ its essence was to use “Asians to fight Asians.” What bothered Beijing most was the prospect that Japan would be assigned a greater role in U.S. strategy in East Asia. The intent of the United States in expanding the alliance, Beijing charged, was to create a U.S.-backed and Japan-headed Asian “counterreactionary military coalition.”⁴² In other words, the United States intended to “let loose” Japanese militarism.⁴³ It was placing “greater reliance on the Japanese reactionaries and making them serve as its shock troops against the people of the Asian countries.”⁴⁴ Consequently Japan would become “a gendarme in Asia and the fugleman in opposition to the Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and all the other peoples of Asia.”⁴⁵

Third, Japan was seen as more than willing and eager to serve the strategic interests of the United States with its own evil scheme in mind. In Beijing’s words, the Japanese reactionaries “eagerly throw themselves into the arms of U.S. imperialism” and tie “the whole of Japan to the war chariot of U.S. imperialism.”⁴⁶ The government of Eisaku Sato was referred to as “the most reactionary and aggressive Japanese government since the end of World War II.”⁴⁷ Its foreign policy was described as “subservience to U.S. imperialism, collaboration with Soviet revisionism, and opposition to China, communism, and revolution.”⁴⁸ Under the Sato government, “the revival of Japanese militarism is no longer a question of a so-called existing danger, but is, beyond all doubt, a matter of reality.”⁴⁹ The Chinese media assailed the Japanese “national defense white paper” and its third and fourth military buildup programs, regarding them as concrete steps to turn Japan from an “economic power” into a “military power.”⁵⁰

China was particularly alarmed by Sato's desire to include Taiwan, as well as Korea and Indochina, in the Japanese sphere of influence.⁵¹ Sato was quoted as saying that Taiwan was "a most important factor for the security of Japan," that Korea was "essential to Japan's own security," and that Japan wanted to play a "role" in Indochina.⁵² These expressions, in Beijing's opinion, once more indicated that Japan was attempting to use the U.S.-Japanese alliance to rebuild the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere." This scheme made the alliance more aggressive and more dangerous to the peace and security of the Asia Pacific.

Here again China saw linkages between the U.S.-Japan security treaty and other U.S. security arrangements in the region. China was very nervous about the "Taiwan factor" in the U.S.-Japanese security alliance. A *People's Daily* editorial related Sato's visit to the United States to Nobusuke Kishi's provocative comment that Japan should support Chiang Kai-shek's "counteroffensive against the mainland." It asserted that "the Japanese reactionaries' wolfish ambition to obstruct by armed force the Chinese people's liberation of Taiwan and to support the attempt of the Chiang Kai-shek bandit gang to make inroads into the mainland in exchange for their annexation of Taiwan is all too obvious."⁵³ The connection between the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-ROK alliance was also explored. Here Japan was seen as helping and backing the Park Chung-hee regime in South Korea against North Korea. Militarily South Korea was being turned into a base of aggression against the DPRK. Economically South Korea became a colony of both U.S. imperialism and Japanese militarism.⁵⁴ The Japanese willingness to dispatch "self-defense forces" to South Korea under the pretext of "protecting" its "rights and interests" was considered particularly offensive.⁵⁵ As in the case of Taiwan, this revealed that Japan wanted to annex South Korea and turn it into a Japanese colony.⁵⁶ The Japanese were described as "leaving no stone unturned in stretching their tentacles of aggression into South Korea and energetically girding for active participation in U.S. imperialism's plots of new war adventures in Korea."⁵⁷

Chinese premier Zhou Enlai summarized in April 1970 China's position on the extension of the U.S.-Japan pact: "Our policy is to resolutely oppose the collusion of the American and Japanese reactionaries and the revival of Japanese militarism, the further development of the U.S.-Japanese military alliance, the formation of the Northeastern Asia military alliance, and the conspiracy of creating two 'Chinas.'"⁵⁸ In part to counteract the further strengthening of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, Zhou Enlai paid an official visit to the DPRK in April 1970, following a long period of uneasiness in the relationship. The joint communiqué issued in the wake of the visit attacked the United States but even more vehemently attacked Japan. Both sides concluded that the United States was actively pursuing a tactic of "using Asians to fight Asians" by "mobilizing the Japanese militarist forces and [America's] other vassals and puppets."⁵⁹ Therefore "the struggle against Japanese militarism is a part of the struggle against U.S. imperialism."⁶⁰

On July 11, 1971, three major Chinese official publications, the *People's Daily*, *PLA Daily*, and *Red Flag*, jointly issued an editorial titled "Firm Alliance against Imperialist Aggression" to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Sino-Korean Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. In the article China again charged that "Japanese militarism, which is being revived under the aegis of U.S. imperialism, is burning with ambition to renew its fond dream of annexing Korea, invading China, and dominating Asia." It accused the United States of trying to bring Japanese military forces into South Korea to strengthen the U.S.-Japan-Park joint operation system and conducting provocative U.S.-Japan joint military exercises in the sea east of Korea.⁶¹

As late as July 1971, therefore, China continued to hold very negative views of the two security alliances. While both the United State and Japan were targeted for criticism, Beijing's main concern was the revival of Japanese militarism. One *People's Daily* editorial alleged:

Only by abolishing the Japan-U.S. "security treaty" system, driving out the U.S. aggressors and overthrowing the Japanese militarist forces can the independence, democracy, peace, neutrality and prosperity of Japan be realized. This is the only bright road for the Japanese nation.⁶²

The Impact of Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japan Rapprochement

The volume and intensity of China's public criticism of the two security alliances plunged noticeably after Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China in July 1971, which set the stage for President Nixon's historic visit in 1972. By early 1972, the two security alliances had to the Chinese lost their aggressive teeth. China started talking more about the decline of American power. *Peking Review* defined 1971 as a "year of decline for U.S. imperialism" in which "U.S. imperialism has suffered repeated setbacks in its policies of aggression, subversion, control and intervention." Nixon's "new economic policy" was also perceived as a failure. The decline of American power was said to be first and foremost the result of the perseverance of the world's people in revolutionary struggle. It was also considered a result of the law of uneven development in the capitalist world. Japan and the countries of Western Europe had swiftly restored and developed their strength. Finally, it was attributed to the fierce competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for world hegemony.⁶³ Beijing now emphasized the contention rather than collusion between the two superpowers. It also paid more attention to the economic and trade contradictions between the United States and Japan that resulted from Nixon's "new economic policy," which brought shock waves to Japan's economy. Instead of warning of the "holly alliance" between the United States and Japan against China and other Asian countries, Beijing asserted that "their conflicts of interest on a series of questions are insoluble."⁶⁴

China's worry over Japanese militarism remained, however, irrespective of the thaw in Sino-U.S. relations. While Beijing refrained from directly attacking the U.S.-Japan alliance, it continued to express its concerns to Japanese visitors over the revival of Japanese militarism.⁶⁵ Such a mentality was also reflected in the Shanghai communiqué signed following Nixon's visit in 1972. In the document, China once again declared that it "firmly opposes the revival and outward expansion of Japanese militarism and firmly supports the Japanese people's desire to build an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral Japan."⁶⁶ In his talk with the Chinese, Nixon had to assure the Chinese leaders that Japan would not replace the United States in East Asia as it withdrew its military forces from Taiwan.⁶⁷

Nixon's China initiative, carried out without advance consultation with Tokyo, shocked Japan and dealt a setback to the American-Japanese alliance. Partially as a result of the "Nixon shock," the Sato government lost popular support and had to step down in July 1972. Kakuei Tanaka formed a new cabinet. To offset the aftermath of the "overhead" diplomacy of the United States, Tanaka decided to employ "catch up" diplomacy. In his first

press conference in July, Tanaka defined China as “the biggest diplomatic question.” He believed that the time was ripe for the two countries to normalize their relations.⁶⁸ China immediately noticed Tanaka’s different attitude and responded swiftly and positively. Zhou Enlai told a Japanese guest in the same month that normalization of relations between China and Japan was not intended to oppose a particularly country, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union. The Beijing airport, he said, would welcome Prime Minister Tanaka with open arms if he wished to visit China.⁶⁹ Sino-Japanese rapprochement moved at a staggering pace. Just two months after Tanaka took office, he was in Beijing to sign a joint statement with China to establish diplomatic relations. In the joint statement, just like the Shanghai communiqué, both sides pledged not to seek hegemony in the Asia Pacific region and to oppose efforts by any country or group of countries to establish such hegemony. Both sides also agreed to hold negotiations aimed at the conclusion of a treaty of peace and friendship. In the meantime, China renounced its demand for war indemnities from Japan.⁷⁰

So, although the United States took the lead in rapprochement with China, Japan came from behind and took only 82 days to finish the course of normalization that had taken the United States more than six years to accomplish. Suddenly the Sino-Japanese relationship was closer than the Sino-U.S. relationship. Travel and trade between China and Japan soon surpassed that between China and the United States. Naturally China’s perception of the U.S.-Japan alliance was affected by this dramatic development. With Tanaka’s visit, the image of the vicious “Japanese militarism” almost completely disappeared from the Chinese press, along with criticism of the U.S.-Japanese security alliance. While Beijing did not publicly endorse the U.S.-Japan security pact, in private conversations Chinese officials expressed the opinion that it was for the Japanese and American people to define their own security relationships, hence sanctioning the U.S.-Japanese security pact.⁷¹

After the signing in April 1973 of the Paris agreement on Vietnam and the consequent withdrawal of U.S. troops from Indochina, China’s perception of the U.S.-Japanese threat to its national security further diminished. Instead the Soviet threat loomed larger and larger in its eyes. The Chinese media was flooded with articles about the ruthless Soviet expansion and the U.S.-Soviet contention.⁷² Détente between the United States and the Soviet Union was labeled a “hoax.”⁷³ In 1974, Deng Xiaoping in his only speech at the United Nations described the two superpowers as “vainly seeking world hegemony” and as “the source of a new world war.” The contradiction between them is irreconcilable, he said: “Their compromise and collusion can only be partial, temporary, and relative, while their contention is all-embracing, permanent, and absolute.”⁷⁴ By 1975 or so, China had concluded that the Soviet Union was more dangerous than the United States since the former was on the offensive while the latter was on the defensive. Deng Xiaoping pointed out in his toast to welcome President Ford in 1975 that “Today it is the country which most zealously preaches peace that is the most dangerous source of war.”⁷⁵ This perception was formalized in a long essay on Mao’s theory of “the three worlds” by the editors of the *People’s Daily* in 1977. While it declared that “the two hegemonist powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, are the common enemies of the people of the world,” it clearly defined the Soviet Union as “the most dangerous source of world war.”⁷⁶

In the Asia Pacific region, China saw the Soviet Union “taking advantage of the reduced U.S. presence in Asia after defeat in the war of aggression against Vietnam” and “intensifying expansion in the region to fill the ‘vacuum.’”⁷⁷ Based on this judgment, China for the first time wished to see the continuation of the American military presence in the region. Zhou Enlai reportedly told two American congressmen that the United States should retain

military forces in Asia to maintain a stable balance of power.⁷⁸ Interestingly, Japan became the main beneficiary of China's new perception of the structure of the international balance of power. Not only was Japan exempted from the Chinese assaults, but its image in the Chinese media was transformed from an accomplice of the two superpowers against China to a victim of Soviet hegemony and the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in East Asia; from that of a reckless and ambitious "Japanese militarism" to that of a Japan bullied and pushed around by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was seen as "handling Japan with both kid gloves and a mailed fist in an attempt to put Japan into its orbit of hegemony";⁷⁹ it used both "cajolery and coercion, the carrot and the stick, in an attempt to control Japan."⁸⁰ The conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union was categorized as "the Japanese people fighting Soviet hegemony."⁸¹

China backed Japan on almost every issue in its dealings with the USSR. During most of the 1970s, Beijing strongly supported Japan's claim to the Northern Territories. These four islands, Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri, and Etorofu, were said to have been Japanese territory since ancient times. They were occupied by the Soviet Union, which refused to return them to Japan.⁸² The "struggle" of the Japanese people for the return of these islands was regularly reported and praised by the Chinese media. It described how the Soviet Union militarized the four islands to integrate them into the Soviet Union's Far East and Pacific strategic system by linking the military bases on the islands with those in Vladivostok and other places in the Far East so that the Soviet Pacific fleet and military aircraft could control the Soya and Tsugaru straits and the Japan Sea and roam the north and west Pacific. This was directed first and foremost against the U.S. Seventh Fleet and at the same time threatened Japanese security.⁸³ In the meantime, Japan's territorial air space and territorial waters were subjected to frequent violations by Soviet military forces.⁸⁴

China was also sympathetic to Japan in its fishery disputes with the Soviet Union. According to a Chinese report, Soviet fishing fleets not only conducted reconnaissance activities around the main Japanese islands but also intensively drained Japan's offshore resources.⁸⁵ The unilateral Soviet declaration of its establishment of a "200-mile exclusive fishing zone" in March 1977 to incorporate Japan's four northern islands was interpreted by Beijing as a hostile action against Japan. The Soviet Union tried to compel Japan to recognize its occupation of the Northern Territories as "legal" by accepting its 200-mile exclusive fishing zone. Beijing called this "the new tsar's fresh blackmail of Japan."⁸⁶

According to Beijing, "One of the Soviet aims in coaxing and coercing Japan is to put it in the orbit of a Soviet 'Asian collective security system.'" ⁸⁷ Opposition to the "Asian collective system" therefore formed "an important part of the Japanese people's struggle against Soviet hegemony."⁸⁸ The Kremlin's calculation, as Beijing saw it, was that as soon as "Japan bites the hook of this so-called 'Asian security system,' the Soviet Union will gain the upper hand in its rivalry with the United States in Asia."⁸⁹ In 1976, the Chinese declared that the struggle of the Japanese for the return of the Northern Territories, for safety in fishing operations, and against the "Asian collective security system" "has grown into a nationwide mass campaign."⁹⁰

Just as Beijing often complained that the United States was too soft in its dealings with the Soviet Union, it also wanted to see Japan taking tough stands against the Kremlin on all these issues. To some Japanese politicians, Beijing appeared overzealous in this regard. Japanese foreign minister Kiichi Miyazawa complained that China's support for Japan's demand for the recovery of the Northern Territories was an "interference" in "Japanese-Soviet affairs," that China's support was "unwelcome," and that it was "not helpful to the

amicable settlement of the dispute.” China tended to characterize the Soviet military exercises and other activities around Japan as “gross intimidation in the form of naval and air force exercises” and “the Soviet hegemonic act of making a show of force to Japan.” But Miyazawa defined them as “routine” operations. Needless to say, the Chinese were annoyed by Miyazawa’s remarks. He was condemned as “maligning the Chinese people in order to curry favor with the Soviet revisionists,” and dismissed as one who “dared not take a stand to defend Japan’s national interests,” but “poured cold water on the Japanese people and even attacked the Chinese people for their just stand of supporting the Japanese people’s struggle.”⁹¹

The Soviet Union and China competed to influence Japan. Each side saw the other’s effort as sabotaging its relations with Japan. The negotiations over the China-Japan peace and friendship treaty best illustrate this interaction among the three countries. The negotiations started soon after the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, but dragged on for many years. The main roadblock was China’s insistence on including a so-called “anti-hegemony” clause in the treaty. Japan, unwilling to take sides in the Sino-Soviet rivalry, worried that inclusion of the clause would unnecessarily offend the Soviet Union. The United States, however, supported China’s demand and sent this message directly to the Japanese government.⁹² In the meantime China noted that the Soviet Union was exerting a lot of pressure on the Japanese government not to give in. It issued a TASS statement to threaten Japan.⁹³ It attacked by name and tried to intimidate certain Diet members and leaders of Japanese political parties and even applied crude pressure on the Japanese government.⁹⁴ The Soviet foreign minister was reported to have threatened the Japanese prime minister that the Soviet Union might “have to review its relations with Japan” if the Japanese government agreed to inclusion of the anti-hegemony clause in the projected Japan-China peace and friendship treaty. Prime Minister Miki retorted, “The conclusion of the Japan-China peace and friendship treaty is a matter between the two countries of Japan and China and the talks on the treaty have nothing to do with the Soviet Union.”⁹⁵ This time it was China that denounced the Soviet attempt to “interfere in Japan’s internal affairs.”⁹⁶ The Chinese media described the Japanese people as taking “a firm stand against the despicable Soviet attempt to sow discord in Japan-China relations and thus undermine the friendship between the two countries.”⁹⁷ In early 1976, Chinese media reported a campaign in Japan for the early conclusion of the Japan-China treaty of peace and friendship, including the anti-hegemony clause.⁹⁸

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and China’s Reaction

The Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japan rapprochement reached another climax in 1978 with the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between China and the United States and the signing of the China-Japan Peace and Friendship Treaty. A *People’s Daily* editorial pointed out that “the treaty is a political summation of relations between the two countries up until now, and a new starting point for the development of good-neighborly and friendly relations between the two countries.”⁹⁹ Obviously China saw the treaty as a victory over the USSR. Beijing declared that the treaty was welcomed by all peace-loving countries and peoples the world over. “Only Soviet social-imperialism is not happy” because the treaty “put a thorn in the flesh of the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁰ For the Chinese, the inclusion of the “anti-hegemony”

clause had the function of “killing two birds with one stone.” First, it dealt the Soviet Union a heavy blow by drawing Japan closer to the Chinese side. Second, it also served as a legally binding check on the possible revival of Japanese militarism. In his subsequent visit to Japan, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that both China and Japan faced the real threat of hegemony.¹⁰¹ He added that it was the first time that such an anti-hegemony clause was included in an international treaty. “This stipulation is first of all a pledge of self-restraint on the part of China and Japan, which undertake not to seek hegemony. At the same time it is a heavy blow to hegemony, which is today’s main threat to international security and world peace.”¹⁰² Deng told the Japanese leaders that given the current international turbulence, “China needs to be friendly with Japan and Japan needs to be friendly with China too.”¹⁰³

Therefore, by the end of 1978 China had established a parallel strategic partnership with both the United States and Japan. The interests of this partnership coincided with the interests of the two security alliances in terms of outbalancing the Soviet position in the region. At his first press conference after issuing the communiqué on U.S.-China normalization, Chinese premier Hua Guofeng defined the nature of this triangular relationship: “We think that the normalization of relations between China and the United States and the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan are conducive to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a whole. Does this mean the formation of an axis or alliance of China, Japan, and the United States? We say that it is neither an alliance nor an axis.”¹⁰⁴ For the moment, China’s perception of the two security alliance was conditioned by this new geopolitical structure and overshadowed by its overriding concern with the Soviet threat.

This quasi-alliance was soon put to the test by a series of events that seemed to validate the point made repeatedly by Chinese leaders during those years that a new world war was inevitable and that the Soviet Union was the most dangerous source of war. In January 1978, Vietnam signed a security treaty with the Soviet Union and in December its troops marched into Cambodia. In February 1979, China launched a limited border war to punish the Vietnamese. At the end of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Deng Xiaoping had predicted that the 1980s were going to be a particularly dangerous decade.¹⁰⁵ The top priority for China’s diplomacy in the late 1970s and early 1980s therefore was to form a united front, including the United States and Japan, to thwart Soviet expansion.

Before and during his historic trip to the United States in January 1979, Deng Xiaoping warned that the United States had been in strategic retreat since the early 1970s and was on the defensive, while the Soviet Union was on the offensive.¹⁰⁶ He told Americans that the Vietnamese aggression against Cambodia was not an isolated event but part of a global strategy of great power hegemony. Its impact was not limited to the Asian and Pacific region but affected the world situation as a whole.¹⁰⁷ He took pride in that “whether it be global hegemony or local hegemony, China always adopts a firm position, a firm attitude.”¹⁰⁸ He was even reported to advocate a formal pact between Japan, the United States, and China to curtail Soviet hegemony. Although he denied that he had formally proposed such a pact, he nevertheless said that “in order to oppose hegemony and to safeguard world peace, security, and stability, the United States, Europe, Japan, China, and other third-world countries should unite and earnestly deal with this challenge of the danger of war. We do not need any kind of pact or an alliance. What we need is a common understanding of the situation and common efforts.”¹⁰⁹

U.S.-China relations entered a stage of quasi-alliance in January 1980 when U.S. secretary of defense Harold Brown arrived in Beijing to discuss possible military cooperation

between the two countries. This was the first formal contact between military leaders of the two countries. Both sides held that the Soviet Union's pursuit of hegemony and expansion abroad constituted the main danger to the world and expressed the desire to strengthen their own defense capabilities and take parallel actions on the basis of equality and mutual benefit in order to safeguard world peace.¹¹⁰ In early April, the Chinese National People's Conference decided not to extend the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the PRC and USSR, which was due to expire on April 11.¹¹¹ China reasoned that with the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations and the signing of the peace treaty, the main anti-Japanese clause in the treaty was out of date.¹¹² These developments indicated that China's alliance structure, established in the 1950s and 1960s to counteract the United States and Japan, had largely disintegrated. The former ally had become an enemy while the former adversaries had become quasi-allies. Consequently the two security alliances, particularly the U.S.-Japan alliance, were regarded as an integral part of the anti-Soviet united front. By the same token, China no longer perceived the increase in Japanese defense capacity in negative terms. Instead China both publicly and privately encouraged the Japanese to develop their independent military force.

In May 1980, Hua Guofeng visited Japan. This was the first visit to Japan ever paid by the head of the Chinese government. When asked about Japanese national defense at a press conference, he said: "An independent and sovereign state should have the right to maintain its own defense so as to safeguard its independence and sovereignty. As to what Japan will do, we do not interfere in its internal affairs." He also for the first time publicly endorsed the U.S.-Japanese security alliance by saying, "We appreciate Japan's efforts to strengthen its alliance with the United States."¹¹³ Before the visit, he met in Beijing with Yasuhiro Nakasone, former secretary-general of the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party. Nakasone said that both Japan and China had a great responsibility for safeguarding peace in Asia and the rest of the world. He added that this made it necessary for Japan to further strengthen its defense, especially in Hokkaido. Hua said that under the present circumstances China was in favor of Japan's efforts to strengthen its defenses.¹¹⁴ This was the nearest a Chinese leader had ever come to publicly endorsing the U.S.-Japan alliance and Japan's military buildup. Chinese military leaders also repeatedly told the Japanese that China did not oppose increases in Japan's military spending.¹¹⁵

For a while the Chinese media reported Japan's efforts to enhance its security and its defense capability uncritically. The *Beijing Review* reported in 1980 that four days after Zenko Suzuki took office as prime minister he established a comprehensive national security council to study the question of Japan's security from a wider perspective which included diplomacy, energy, and food in addition to defense. It also reported that Japan's finance ministry and defense agency agreed that defense expenditure in fiscal 1981 should be increased by 9.7 percent over the current outlay to a record 10.97 billion U.S. dollars. The need to increase defense spending to cope with the changing world was stressed in the 1980 Japanese Defense White Paper. According to it the Soviet military buildup in the Northern Territories and the activities of the Soviet Far East forces had begun to "to pose an increased potential threat to Japan's security."¹¹⁶ Beijing also noticed the increase in the so-called "defense consciousness" in Japan. According to one article in *Beijing Review*, "Defense is now very much on the minds of the Japanese people... For the first time since World War II, leading Japanese political figures have publicly expressed their determination to strengthen the country's defense." It went on to say that "[m]any Japanese have expressed the fear that should a crisis occur, the self-defense forces would not be able to fulfill their role. They feel

that it is important to maintain an independent defense capability which can stand up to the Soviet military threat..."¹¹⁷ China also viewed with favor the efforts by Japan and the United States to strengthen their military alliance. One analyst commented on the summit meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki and President Ronald Reagan in 1981 thus:

In their talks, both sides acknowledged the desirability of an appropriate division of roles between Japan and the United States on defense matters to ensure peace and stability in Asia. Prime Minister Suzuki made it clear that Japan will seek within the limits allowed by its constitution to make ever greater efforts to improve its defense capabilities in Japanese territory and its surrounding sea and air space and to help reduce the financial burden of U. S. forces in Japan.¹¹⁸

Sino-Japanese relations reached a new high in 1983 when Hu Yaobang, the CCP general secretary, paid a historic visit to Japan. Hu particularly admired Japan for its successful modernization and postwar economic miracle. Devoted to finding an optimal path for China's modernization, he believed that Japan's experience might be more relevant than that of Western countries because of the common cultural and ethnic background of the two countries.¹¹⁹ During his visit, Hu accepted Japanese prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's suggestion that "mutual trust" be added to the principles of "peace and friendship, equality and mutual benefit, and long-term stability" formulated by China for guiding Sino-Japanese relations. More symbolic was Nakasone's proposal to establish a "21st Century Committee for Sino-Japanese Friendship" with the purpose of promoting better understanding between the younger generation of both countries.¹²⁰ As a friendly gesture, Hu immediately invited three thousand Japanese youth to visit China.¹²¹ It was reported that Hu was so overwhelmed by his warm experience in Japan that he declared that China's trust in Japan was so deep that he was confident Japan would never invade Chinese territory again, even if Japanese military power were to expand.¹²² Hu's visit was followed by Nakasone's visit to China in 1984, during which he offered China a second long-term loan of 478 billion Japanese yen and 5 billion yen of free economic assistance. International observers at that time were very confident about the future of Sino-Japanese relations. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* declared that "with or without a treaty or alliance, the combination of manpower, resources and technology—'a Japanese head on Chinese shoulders'—is the obvious combination for maintenance of security in the region" and "in what China increasingly sees as a multipolar world, Japan looks increasingly to be China's most reliable friend."¹²³

The change in China's perception of the U.S.-ROK alliance was not as dramatic as that regarding the U.S.-Japan alliance. China seldom explicitly addressed the U.S.-Korean alliance; the modification of its attitude was reflected more in its views of the situation on the Korean peninsula and in its relations with North Korea. One important change was that with the improvement in Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relations, Beijing preferred to see a decrease in tensions on the Korean peninsula and the reconciliation of North and South. Beginning in the 1970s, limited contact and dialogue between the North and South was initiated. China actively supported every peace proposal put forward by Kim Il Sung and endorsed any progress in this regard.¹²⁴ In 1984, Hu Yaobang declared in Tokyo that "China genuinely and unswervingly favors enduring stability on the Korean peninsula and holds that whatever actions likely to aggravate tension there, no matter where they originate, should be avoided,"¹²⁵ clearly implying that China would not endorse any military adven-

tures by the North. After 1985, Beijing saw the international environment as favorable for reconciliation between the two sides in Korea since major power relations between the United States, Japan, the USSR, and China were in much better shape.¹²⁶

Another noticeable change in China's handling of the Korean issue was that China no longer automatically lumped the two security alliances together, which was traditionally the practice in the 1950s and 1960s. Beginning in the early 1970s, the issue of the U.S.-Japanese security treaty and Japanese militarism disappeared from the official joint communiqués and statements between China and the DPRK.¹²⁷ They were not mentioned in the *People's Daily* editorial celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the signing of the China-Korea Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance.¹²⁸ Rhetorically Beijing had reduced the importance it attached to the China-DPRK treaty.

Nevertheless, due both to historical reasons and the constraints imposed by China's treaty with North Korea China's position on the U.S. military presence in South Korea remained fairly consistent. Publicly China held that the main obstacle to the reunification of the two Koreas was the American troops in South Korea and that the United States should withdraw them.¹²⁹ To a large extent the U.S.-ROK treaty was not the issue here, since the American troops had long been stationed in South Korea under the banner of the United Nations. China supported various UN resolutions proposed by other countries requesting "withdrawal of all the foreign troops stationed in South Korea under the flag of the United Nations."¹³⁰ In response to the U.S. argument that most American troops were stationed in South Korea under the terms of the U.S.-ROK security treaty rather than under the flag of the UN, Huang Hua, China's permanent representative to the UN Security Council, rebutted, "Who does not know that the U.S. troops invaded Korea under the flag of the United Nations at the outset? Over the past two decades and more, it has never dropped that UN flag. And now all of a sudden, it invokes the bilateral 'US-ROK treaty,' asserting that the tens of thousands of U.S. troops do not belong to the so-called 'UN command' and are not UN troops in the first place. There are two labels, but no matter how it changes the label, from one to the other, its purpose remains the same—that is, to prolong its stay in Korea, continue its interference in the internal affairs of Korea, and perpetuate the division of that country."¹³¹ Whatever the label and pretext, China asserted that the U.S. troops had no reason whatsoever to hang on in South Korea any longer.¹³² Senior Chinese leaders aired this criticism personally to American leaders during the Reagan years when signs of strain surfaced in the relationship. In 1984, Hu Yaobang told a visiting Reagan that China opposed the stationing of American troops in South Korea. "That does no good to your reputation," Hu said.¹³³ In his meeting with Zbigniew Brzezinski in March 1984, Deng Xiaoping said that unless the United States stepped out of its mindset of regarding South Korea, Taiwan, Israel, and South Africa as four "aircraft carriers," it would be impossible for the United States to "gain the initiative in global strategy."¹³⁴ China also facilitated the U.S.-DPRK dialogue on the issue of U.S. troop withdrawal by passing messages from the DPRK to the U.S. government.¹³⁵ As a result, low-level contacts between American and North Korean diplomats took place in the mid 1980s in Beijing.¹³⁶

China's "Independent Foreign Policy" and Its Reassessment of the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance

The "honeymoon" in Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s did not last long. Beneath the surface of friendship and common interest, cold currents were developing.

U.S.-China relations were soon haunted by the Taiwan issue. From the outset, Beijing was unhappy with the Taiwan Relations Act passed by the U.S. Congress at the same time diplomatic relations with China were established.¹³⁷ Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan's advocacy of restoring official relations with Taiwan put the Chinese on alert.¹³⁸ The remark of his senior advisor Raymond Cline that China was too weak militarily to serve as a useful ally in dealing with the Soviet Union hurt China even more.¹³⁹ The Chinese were fed up with the American "arrogance."¹⁴⁰ In the early years of the Reagan administration, Sino-U.S. relations were torpedoed by a series of incidents such as the intended sale of a new fighter jet to Taiwan, trade disputes, financial claims against the PRC for bonds issued under previous Chinese regimes, and the defection of Chinese tennis player Hu Na. The issue of arms sales to Taiwan was particularly acute during 1981 and 1982.¹⁴¹

While Sino-American relations showed signs of trouble, China noticed some lightening in its relations with the Soviet Union. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, China expected that the USSR would engineer more international incidents. This did not happen, however. In 1981, the Chinese media had already begun to question whether the Soviet Union was declining. The various economic and political difficulties in the Soviet Union were noted although China concluded that the Soviet Union had not yet declined and the Chinese should remain vigilant.¹⁴² Just as the discussion of declining American power in the early 1970s signaled a change in China's foreign policy, the discussion of the decline of Soviet power also pointed to a possible policy adjustment. On March 24, 1982, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev announced in Tashkent that the USSR was ready to improve Sino-Soviet relations. The spokesman for the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs immediately "noted" the remarks.¹⁴³ The Chinese press also observed that Brezhnev chose a troubled moment in Sino-U.S. relations (resulting from U.S. arms sales to Taiwan) to state the Soviet opposition to the "concept of two Chinas," and commented that "this provides food for thought."¹⁴⁴ The result of China's "thinking" was the declaration by Hu Yaobang of China's "independent foreign policy" at the 12th CCP Congress in September 1982, meaning the pursuit of a more "equidistant" policy toward the two superpowers. China would not align with any other country nor attach itself to any country or bloc of countries. In 1985, Hu further refined this foreign policy: China would never attach itself to, nor foster strategic relations nor an alliance with, any big power or bloc of powers.¹⁴⁵

This new policy resulted from the combined effect of China's reassessment of the world balance of power and its frustration with the United States. First, China noticed that after Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 the United States began expanding its armaments and seeking military superiority over the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union found itself facing an onslaught of U.S. offensives and repeatedly lost to the United States. So "the strategic situations were transformed from Soviet offensives into bilateral confrontation."¹⁴⁶ Since the two superpowers were now on an equal footing power-wise, China lacked objective grounds on which to unite with one against the other.

Second, the perceived U.S. retrogression on the Taiwan issue dashed China's high expectations of the U.S.-China relationship. One Chinese scholar commented: "From the signals of the U.S. government, the Chinese people sense that Washington did not treat China as an equal. The U.S. government thought that as China had to look to it for help, it could act as it pleased on the Taiwan issue while China had no option but to accept all the bitter results."¹⁴⁷ Deng Xiaoping made it clear to the Americans that China had changed its views on global strategy due mainly to the change in the U.S. attitude toward Taiwan.¹⁴⁸

Under the guidance of its "independent foreign policy," China slowly started its détente with the Soviet Union. With the consultations between the vice foreign ministers under way in 1982, bilateral trade and personal contacts began to pick up. After Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the pace of improvement accelerated. In October 1985, Deng Xiaoping offered to visit Moscow to hold a summit meeting with Gorbachev. In July 1986, Gorbachev responded in Vladivostok that the Soviet Union was willing to discuss its relationship with China at any level.¹⁴⁹ Although normalization did not come until 1989, China's perception of the Soviet threat was diminishing.

Misfortunes never arrive singly; Sino-Japanese relations also ran aground. To begin with, the "textbook issue" in 1982 saw the emergence of the bitter history of Japan's wartime aggression in China emerge as a sensitive issue for the first time since normalization in 1972. The Japanese Education Ministry revised parts of a high school textbook concerning the Japanese invasion of China and the World War II massacre in Nanjing. The revision was rejected by China. Beijing declared that "the censorship of textbooks by the Japanese Education Ministry is indeed Japan's internal affair, but Japan's invasion of China and Southeast Asia certainly was not its internal affair, nor is its distortion of the history of Japanese aggression."¹⁵⁰ Even worse, Beijing saw the episode as a "serious signal that there exists the danger of a revival of Japanese militarism."¹⁵¹

The flood of Japanese goods into China in the early 1980s reminded many Chinese of the Japanese aggression of the 1930s. They talked about "the second invasion by Japan" and "economic aggression."¹⁵² The uncoordinated expansion of imports from Japan brought the problem of trade deficits to the fore. In 1985, China's trade deficit with Japan reached a peak of U.S. \$5.9 billion.¹⁵³ Chinese leaders began to express serious concerns about these issues when they met Japanese guests. News reports about the poor quality of some Japanese products and the resulting demand for compensation further embittered the Chinese.¹⁵⁴ Against this backdrop, in September 1985 an anti-Japanese student demonstration broke out in Beijing and other cities in response to Japanese prime minister Nakasone's official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine to honor the Japanese war dead of World War II. The students shouted slogans such as "Oppose the revival of Japanese militarism," "Oppose economic aggression," "Down with Nakasone," and "Boycott Japanese goods." They also accused Beijing of being too soft in response to the provocative actions of Japan.¹⁵⁵ Hu's lavish invitation to Japanese youth to visit China was widely criticized by students as a stupid emotional gesture which did not take into account the real interests of the Chinese people.¹⁵⁶ The student demonstrations were the first public anti-Japanese event since diplomatic normalization with Japan in 1972. A similar demonstration of discontent was carried out by Japanese in Tokyo outside the Chinese embassy.¹⁵⁷ Sino-Japanese relations in the following several years never completely recovered from the wave of mutual hostility experienced at the end of 1985. On January 16, 1987, Hu Yaobang was forced to resign as party general secretary. Among his political mistakes was his "pro-Japan" foreign policy and a "too close" personal relationship with Nakasone.¹⁵⁸

The Taiwan issue also came to irritate the relationship. For instance, on February 7, 1987, the Japanese government sent a special plane with officials from its ministry of foreign affairs to escort eleven North Korean defectors from the ship *Qingjin* to Taiwan. Chinese diplomatic officials called the action a “Pearl Harbor” in Sino-Japanese relations: by the time Chinese diplomatic officials in Tokyo were informed of the Japanese action, the military airplane was already on its way to Taiwan. Beijing sharply criticized the incident as a serious violation of the Sino-Japanese agreement limiting Japanese relations with Taiwan to the private sector.¹⁵⁹ More detrimental was the case of the Kokorio dormitory. The dormitory was purchased in 1950 by the KMT government in Taiwan for Chinese students in Japan. After the normalization of relations between Japan and China, the local court in Kyoto decided that ownership of Kokorio should be transferred to the PRC. Taiwan refused to accept the ruling and appealed to the Osaka Higher Court. In 1982, the Osaka Higher Court returned the case to the Kyoto local court for reconsideration. In February 1986, the Kyoto local court rescinded its original ruling and decided that Kokorio belonged to the Taiwanese authorities. On February 26, 1987, the Osaka Higher Court upheld the ruling by rejecting China’s claim to Kokorio, awarding it instead to Taiwan. From Beijing’s perspective, this decision was nothing but an intentional provocation. The Chinese foreign minister presented a strong protest to the Japanese government, declaring that the ruling was wrong both politically and legally and aimed at openly creating “two Chinas.”¹⁶⁰ Japan argued that given its adherence to the principle of separation of powers in its three branches of government, Tokyo had no right to interfere in a judiciary matter.¹⁶¹ But China did not accept this explanation, replying that “no country should make use of the provisions of its domestic law to justify its violation of international law.”¹⁶² Even Deng Xiaoping joined the fray by denouncing the Kokorio decision and asking Japan not to follow the U.S. example on Taiwan.¹⁶³ He declared that unless Taiwan was reunited with China, it might be “taken away” by other powers such as the United States or Japan.¹⁶⁴

Nineteen eighty-seven marked the fifteenth anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan. At the fifth meeting of cabinet members representing the Chinese and Japanese governments, Chinese state councilor and foreign minister Wu Xueqian, while characterizing the relationship over the previous fifteen years as on the whole “normal and good,” pointed out that “some problems have cropped up, especially those that involve major principles of bilateral relations and that have nothing to do with social systems.” These problems fell roughly into two categories: how to correctly approach the unfortunate evens of the past, and how to properly handle relations between Japan and Taiwan. He warned that these issues demanded immediate attention and should be dealt with seriously.¹⁶⁵

These squabbles nurtured some bad feelings between the Chinese and Japanese. Referring in his meeting with Japanese officials in 1987 to past hitches in Sino-Japanese relations, Deng Xiaoping said, “Frankly speaking, the responsibility was never China’s. Not one of the past and present troubles was caused by China.”¹⁶⁶ He also reminded the Japanese that “Japan is the country in world that is most indebted to China. But we are close neighbors. Considering the long-term interest of both peoples, we decided not to ask for reparation. But we Orientals appreciate feelings and reason (*qingli*). Based on these two words, Japan should make contributions to help China’s development.”¹⁶⁷ In Japan his remarks were taken as reclaiming reparation from Japan. A senior official in the Japanese foreign ministry asserted that Deng Xiaoping was “in the clouds” and “does not understand the real situation of Sino-Japanese relations.” He declared that “the need for restoring diplomatic relations has

reached a saturation point.”¹⁶⁸ Beijing was furious with these “unfriendly” remarks. The Chinese foreign ministry protested the “malicious attacks” upon China’s top leader. Under pressure from Beijing, Tokyo eventually apologized for the “discourteous” remarks about Deng.¹⁶⁹ This sequence of actions and reactions brought the political relationship between the two countries to its lowest point since 1972.

The souring of Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japan bilateral relations, coupled with China’s reassessment of the international situation, caused China to retreat from its perceptions of the U.S.-Japan security alliance and Japan’s role in the alliance in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

First of all, China once again picked up the theme of the revival of Japanese militarism. As noted earlier, after the “textbook incident” in 1982 Chinese leaders warned in their meetings with Japanese leaders that there were indeed some in Japan who wanted to revive Japanese militarism. They hoped, they said, that the Japanese people would not let those individuals prevail. They also mentioned that because of history Asian countries were quite sensitive to the Japanese military. The increase in the Japanese military force should have limits, should not be more than required by the need for defense, and should not pose threats to its neighbors.¹⁷⁰ China was also bothered by several political events in Japan, including proposals to amend Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the visit of the prime minister and cabinet members to the Yasukuni Shrine, and the provision of military technology to the United States. The Chinese were particularly sickened by the so-called “war-responsibility-phobia,” referring to the frequent speeches made by Japanese politicians to deny Japan’s wartime aggression and atrocities against China and other countries.¹⁷¹ According to one article, “The peoples in Asia and the Pacific region, including the Chinese, have not forgotten the sufferings brought by Japanese militarism in the past. They are closely following developments in Japan. They would be worried by any sign of a revival of militarism in Japan. They hope that Japan will contribute to the stability and prosperity of the region and avoid any return to militarism.”¹⁷² In his meeting with Japanese special envoy Masayoshi Ito in April 1988, Deng Xiaoping mentioned that “several troubling incidents have cropped up in recent years.”¹⁷³ He advised the Japanese government to pay more attention and to take tougher measures to deal with the “right-wing forces” in Japan. “Dealing with them too leniently might encourage their arrogance,” he advised. The incidents, considered separately, were not major, Deng said. But when seen together, they represented a kind of tendency and a force which could easily sabotage Sino-Japanese friendship and almost certainly arouse a strong reaction from the Chinese people.¹⁷⁴

At the regional level, as it witnessed Reagan’s effort to rebuild the U.S. predominance in East Asia China was no longer worried that the United States might withdraw from the Asia Pacific. While Carter had considered a reduction in U.S. troops stationed in South Korea, Reagan increased the U.S. military presence in the Pacific Ocean, strengthening the Seventh Fleet with nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines equipped with cruise missiles. U.S. troops in the area had been increased to 150,000 and more combat aircraft were sent to Asia. It also strengthened its intelligence forces and reconnaissance to keep a close watch on Soviet air and naval movements in the northwestern Pacific.¹⁷⁵ By 1985–1986, China noted a reduction in tension among the major powers in the region, including U.S.-USSR and USSR-Japan relations.¹⁷⁶ After Gorbachev came to power, China viewed him as making major adjustments in Soviet Asia-Pacific policy by improving relations with the United States, Japan, and China.¹⁷⁷ Since there was no imminent Soviet threat to the security of Japan and China, it was less imperative to strengthen the U.S.-Japan security alliance as well

as Sino-Japanese strategic coordination against the USSR. By the same logic, the further increase of Japanese military capability was deemed unnecessary if not immediately harmful.

Therefore Beijing viewed with apprehension Tokyo's energetic adoption of several measures to increase defense spending. In 1982, its military spending reached its highest postwar level and would increase by 7 percent annually for the next five years. In 1983, Chinese foreign minister Wu Xueqian told Japanese special envoy Susumu Nikaido that national defense was Japan's internal affair. As an independent and sovereign country, Japan was entitled to maintain an armed force for defense against external threats. "But such an armed force should be defense-oriented and of appropriate size so it does not constitute a threat to its friendly neighbors."¹⁷⁸

At the end of 1986, the Japanese government decided to abandon its limit on defense spending of 1 percent of GNP by allocating \$22 billion for military expenditure for fiscal 1987. This made up 1.004 percent of Japan's GNP. Chinese analysts cited many reasons for this decision, such as increasing U.S. pressure on Japan to shoulder more of Asia's defense burden and a conservative trend in Japan for the rebuilding of the country's military forces and its regrowth as a strong power. The Chinese government expressed its concern. A spokesman said on January 2 that "there has to be a limit to the growth of Japanese defense forces, which should not exceed its defense needs and make its neighbors feel uneasy."¹⁷⁹

During the Kokario crisis in 1987, Deng Xiaoping complained to Japanese visitors of Japan's "chauvinism" and "mounting militarism." To keep distance from the Japanese military, he refused to meet Yuko Kurihara, the first director-general of Japan's defense agency to visit China since normalization. At the same time, he met with Junya Yano, the chief of Japan's opposition Komei party, for a long talk. He expressed great concern over the trend in Japan toward a revival of militarism, stating that there was no need for Tokyo to increase its defense spending beyond the decade-long ceiling of 1 percent of GNP. He feared that "such a precedent will be repeated twice or three times."¹⁸⁰

In 1988, China called the decision by Japan's cabinet to keep its military budget above the ceiling of 1 percent of GNP "a strike against world hopes for peace and development." Japan's budget allocated about \$28 billion for defense spending, a 5.2 percent increase over the 1987 figure and 1.013 percent of Japan's estimated GNP. Chinese analysts noted that Japanese defense spending had doubled in the past decade. One article quoted the U.S. ambassador in Tokyo, Mike Mansfield, as saying that "no other country has shown such a large increase in defense spending." It went on to declare that Japan's continued increases in defense spending had aroused concern and vigilance among neighboring Asian countries. Japan's defense spending was just below that of the Soviet Union and the United States. If this level of spending were to continue without restraint, Japan would undoubtedly become one of the world's major military powers. It concluded that Japan's defense programs already far exceeded Japan's need to defend its territory.¹⁸¹

In conjunction with military spending, Beijing also worried about Japan's projection of military power within and beyond the U.S.-Japanese security alliance and its tendency to "seek an independent big power status."¹⁸² Commenting on the Nakasone-Reagan summit in 1983, a Chinese analyst pointed out that "[w]hat is noteworthy is that Nakasone went a step further than his predecessors on the topic of the Japan-U.S. alliance. While former prime minister Masayoshi Ohira mentioned the Japan-U.S. alliance during his trip to Washington in 1980 and former prime minister Zenko Suzuki referred to the "relations of alliance" in a 1981 visit to the United States, Nakasone stressed that the two countries are "a community of destiny on both sides of the Pacific." He also said in unequivocal terms that Japan-U.S.

alliance relations involve military aspects. The analyst wondered “whether the military element in the Japan-U.S. alliance will be expanded, how much it will be expanded, and what impact it will have on the Asian and Pacific region.”¹⁸³

For Beijing, some answers to these questions were already to be found in the change in Japan’s defense policy. Since World War II, Japan had adhered to the principle of self-defense and had strictly limited the range of defense to its own territory. The prevention of enemy attacks on its territory and occupation of its key areas were its guiding principle. Beijing noted, however, that in recent years this policy had undergone major changes. The Nakasone government was willing to turn the territory of Japan into an unsinkable aircraft carrier and safeguard the security of its transportation lanes for 1,000 nautical miles. At the same time, to blockade the straits of Soya Kaikyo, Tsugaru Kaikyo, and Tsushima Kaikyo in time of war had become a target of defense. The Nakasone government further stated that “self-defense actions” beyond 1,000 nautical miles were now considered constitutional. This would not only expand the range of Japanese defense but would also overstep the protective boundaries designated by the Japanese-U.S. security treaty. In other words, Japan’s guiding ideology of passive defense had transformed itself into one of active prewar preparations to defeat an enemy at first blow. The strategy of wiping out the enemy at the beachhead had become one of attacking the enemy in the distant sea.¹⁸⁴ In addition, Japan’s decision in 1983 to transfer military technology to the United States and to formally participate in the research work of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative was also considered a departure from its traditional principle of shunning collective defense and its three principles on prohibiting the export of arms.¹⁸⁵ In short, although the Japanese constitution had not been formally revised, in practice the constitution and related laws and policies gradually became null and void.

By 1988 China had begun to worry about the possibility that Japan would send troops overseas. Beijing noted a report submitted by the Strategic Research Center in Japan that called on the Japanese government to dispatch minesweeper and escort vessels to the Persian Gulf. It perceived that “Japan has been steadily escalating its efforts to mobilize public opinion for dispatching troops overseas.” Beijing felt that this could be traced to Japan’s strategic aim of continuously expanding its influence and the scope of the Self-Defense Forces.¹⁸⁶

All in all, as the 1980s drew to an end China viewed as unnecessary and undesirable Japan’s effort to increase its military strength and enhance its military function in the framework of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. In particular, as the international situation eased in the wake of the 1987 signing of the treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union eliminating intermediate-range nuclear missiles, any boost of the U.S.-Japan military alliance, such as Japan’s promise to finance the labor allowances for U.S. troops stationed in Japan, was viewed negatively by Beijing.¹⁸⁷ Although Beijing often attributed the Japanese military buildup to American pressure, it was also seen as a reflection of Tokyo’s desire to become a political and military power. Therefore, from the Chinese perspective, if the U.S.-Japanese alliance was able to play any positive role it was to constrain Japan from moving too far and too fast on the road toward militarization. After all, in the early 1970s China dropped its opposition to the U.S.-Japan alliance after the Americans told Beijing that the Japanese-American alliance could prevent Tokyo from developing its own nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁸ China wanted to see this function of the U.S.-Japan alliance enhanced. The Chinese media reported that Japan’s trend toward developing its armed forces had aroused anxieties not only in Asian countries but also in the United States. The U.S. leadership was “keeping a

close watch on Japan's military expansion."¹⁸⁹ One article reported that Japan was under repeated U.S. pressure to increase its foreign aid programs instead of its military program. As Washington saw it, Japan had profited from the nuclear umbrella provided by the United States, under which it had been able to devote itself to its postwar reconstruction. Now that Japan was among the top economic powers, it ought to share more international responsibility for economic assistance. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz was reported to have testified before Congress in January 1986 that since some Asian countries were worried about Japan's militarization, it would be better for Japan to replace the United States in filling the aid gap than to increase its military spending.¹⁹⁰ The American wariness over the growing trend toward militarism in Japan was indicated by a report that the U.S. Defense Department had conducted a trial exercise, in an extremely secret manner, targeted against Japan.¹⁹¹ In a 1989 analysis in *Beijing Review* of Bush's strategy in the Asia Pacific, the author summarized the two dimensions of the U.S. attitude toward Japan:

[The United States] will ask Japan to share the military burden by pressing Japan to increase its military budget and to take over part of the U.S. military aid to Asia. But at the same time, the U.S. will guard against Japanese military expansion so as to keep Asian countries as well as itself free from the worry that Japan may become a military giant.¹⁹²

China and the Redefinition of the Japan-U.S. Alliance in the Post-Cold War Era

In the wake of the Cold War, Chinese strategists expected that as a result of the disappearance of the Soviet threat, as well as the relative decline of American power brought about by decades of arms race with the Soviets, Washington would have to adjust its East Asian security strategy and scale down its strategic deployments in the region. This judgment seemed to be proven out by U.S. policy in the early 1990s. In 1990, the Bush administration proposed a staged reduction of the U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula throughout the 1990s. In the meantime, the Philippines refused to extend the contract of the two U.S. military bases on its soil, which led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia by the end of 1992. With the easing of tensions between the two Koreas in the early 1990s and the amelioration of the regional security outlook since the end of the Cold War, Chinese analysts believed that the U.S. security alliances in Northeast Asia would become less relevant even as they remained in place for the foreseeable future.

The turning point came in 1994 when the Clinton administration reexamined the new security situation in East Asia and in February 1995 released a report on the U.S. East Asian security strategy. The report, known as the "Nye Initiative," announced that the Clinton administration had decided to suspend further reductions in the American forward deployment on the Korean peninsula, and would maintain its military presence in the Western Pacific at the level of about 100,000 for the foreseeable future. The report reaffirmed the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance to U.S. security strategy in the Asia Pacific as well as to regional stability.¹⁹³ In fact, the Nye initiative was the prelude to the redefinition of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The Chinese perspective on the redefinition of the U.S.-Japan alliance was informed by a number of factors. First, the strained Sino-U.S. relations during Clinton's first term fueled Beijing's suspicion of the strengthening of Washington-Tokyo security ties. Beginning in 1993 Beijing and Washington clashed over a number of issues, including China's human rights behaviors, its most-favored-nation (MFN) trading status, and Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell University in 1995. The diplomatic tensions between the two countries were further complicated by the hot debate in the United States over the policy options available to cope with a strengthening and seemingly more "assertive" China. In China, scholars and strategists tried to understand the tenet of America's China policy: containment, engagement, soft containment, selective containment, conditioned engagement, or a combination of containment and engagement. A consensus was reached that the United States would alternate between containment and engagement with the aim of preventing a full-fledged China from challenging the U.S. interests and position in the Asia Pacific and bringing it into a U.S.-dominated international system. The U.S. diplomatic and security policies in the Asia Pacific were viewed in China through this macro lens.

Coinciding with the persistent strains in Sino-U.S. relations, China-Japan relations also entered a difficult period in 1994. China's nuclear tests, Tokyo's attempt to develop closer official relations with Taipei, the rhetoric of Japanese conservative politicians defending Japan's aggressive past, and the sovereignty dispute over Diaoyu Island highlighted by the construction of a lighthouse there by a group of Japanese rightists all cast shadows on the bilateral ties. Since normalization, Japan, out of a "sense of guilt" toward China, had been keeping a relatively low profile in dealing with its huge but poor neighbor. As China grew in wealth and power, however, Japan began to worry about the implications of its rise and hence toughen its China policy. This, combined with the increasing influence of conservative forces in Japanese politics, has caused Beijing much concern. It believes that Japan, unwilling to see China getting stronger, is intentionally spreading the notion of a "China threat" so as to form an environment unfavorable to the growth of China's power. Against this backdrop, Japan's efforts in strengthening its security ties with the United States are viewed as an attempt to tighten the strategic noose on a rising China.

The Taiwan issue always figures prominently in the security thinking of the leaders of the PRC. In recent years, Beijing has been increasingly concerned with the internal dynamics on the island of declining support for unification and rising preference for independence. This concern has been aggravated by the fact that international society in general and the United States and Japan in particular are more willing to accommodate Taiwan's desire for increased international stature. Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell in 1995 alarmed Beijing and caused a series of crises in cross-strait as well as Sino-U.S. relations. Beijing accused Washington, driven by "Cold War thinking," of continuing to view Taiwan as America's "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the Western Pacific and wishing to see the island permanently separated from the mainland. Chinese analysts hold that the U.S. attempts to use the Taiwan card as leverage in bilateral dealings and a strategic check on an ascending China.

In a time that saw the growth of suspicion and distrust between China on the one hand and the United States and Japan on the other, it is no surprise that the Clinton-Hashimoto declaration on April 16, 1996, aroused strong concern in China's policy and academic circles. Numerous commentaries, articles, and research papers were produced to analyze the motives and ramifications of this significant step in Washington-Tokyo interactions.

Although the redefinition was initiated by Washington, the Chinese believe that Japan and the United States accentuated their security ties out of common needs. One is to reduce

the tensions in their bilateral relations created by the first Clinton administration's high-handed approach to Japan's ever-growing trade surplus with the United States. The periodic and sometimes intense trade frictions between Washington and Tokyo in 1993 and 1994 did at certain points sour their bilateral relations and posed the risk of eroding the foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance. This caused much concern in both capitals. Under such circumstances, it was considered advisable to shift the stress of bilateral relations from the economic arena to the security dimension.¹⁹⁴ The other common purpose for the redefinition, according to the Chinese, is to deal with security challenges posed by a potentially explosive Korean peninsula, a rising China, and an uncertain Russia. Some Chinese analysts believe that both Japan and the United States have taken China as the primary destabilizing factor in East Asia and therefore find it necessary to constrain the awakened dragon with a stronger Japan-U.S. security collaboration.¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, the Chinese observed that both Japan and the United States have their respective rationales in jointly taking this step.¹⁹⁶ Japan, for its part, continues to need the U.S. security umbrella even though it has developed advanced conventional forces. Alliance with the United States has been providing Japan with low-cost, low-risk security. Besides, U.S. support is indispensable to Japan's bid for permanent membership in the UN Security Council, which is essential to the materialization of Japan's long-standing dream of becoming a major political power. Furthermore, a strengthened U.S.-Japan alliance will provide more legitimacy to Japan's military buildup. As far as the United States is concerned, the alliance allows it to maintain a military presence in Japan which is crucial to the preservation of U.S. political, economic, and strategic interests in East Asia. Redefinition of the security arrangements with Tokyo was also expected to elicit more assistance from the Japanese when the United States comes to respond to contingencies on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait. In a broad context, a robust Japan-U.S. alliance will enhance cooperation between Washington and Tokyo on the global level and hence strengthen the U.S. "leadership" in the post-Cold War era. Last but not least, a strong U.S.-Japan alliance will keep Japan from pursuing an independent security policy and becoming a major military power to the detriment of the U.S. position in the region.

Given the above perceptions, Chinese observers believe the redefinition of the Japan-U.S. alliance will likely produce a wide range of negative consequences for the regional security environment as well as for the security interests of China.¹⁹⁷

First, by expanding the scope of the alliance from defending Japan to covering the entire Far East, Tokyo and Washington intend to establish an Asia-Pacific security structure based on U.S.-Japan security ties, which in essence is nothing but U.S.-Japan joint domination of the regional security order. Such a move, aimed at strengthening the status of the United States as the sole superpower and the singular hegemon in the post-Cold war era, runs against the ongoing multipolarization process in the Asia Pacific and the world. In seeking U.S.-Japan condominium in Asia and attempting to check other major powers in the region, the alliance makes difficult the building of a security mechanism of mutual trust in Northeast Asia.

Second, the strengthened U.S.-Japan security cooperation focuses on China as its primary target. In the restructured triangular relations among China, the United States, and Japan, Tokyo has been turned into the "bridgehead" against Beijing. As a result, the United States and Japan are in a better position to cope with China's growing power. This significant change in the security environment will impose greater strategic pressure upon China and curtail its influence in regional security affairs.

Third, by including the Taiwan Strait in the parameters of the alliance, the United States and Japan have created one more excuse to interfere in Taiwan's affairs and thus increase the likelihood of American-Japanese joint military intervention should a crisis arise in the area. This will fuel the secessionist momentum in Taiwan and make it even harder to secure peaceful unification. Out of this concern Beijing has been pushing Tokyo and Washington to announce that Taiwan does not fall into the operational parameters of the revised guidelines of U.S.-Japan defense cooperation. However, both the United States and Japan claim that the scope of their defense cooperation is not geographically determined but scenario-specific, thus rejecting to clarify whether or not it will include Taiwan. This intentional ambiguity only deepens Beijing's suspicion and aggravates its concern over the alliance. China was particularly offended by Japanese chief cabinet secretary Seiroku Kajiyama's comment that Taiwan is clearly included in the scope of U.S.-Japan security cooperation according to the 1960 Japan-U.S. security treaty. The Chinese vice foreign minister pointed out that Japanese foreign minister Sunao Sonoda declared as early as 1978 that it was no longer valid to include Taiwan in the area to be covered by the security pact.¹⁹⁸ Why are the Japanese so eager to retreat to the old definition formed when China and Japan were hostile powers?

Finally, the U.S.-Japan alliance will no longer constrain Japan's military buildup, which since the late 1980s was supposed to be the only acceptable justification for the alliance. According to the prior U.S.-Japan security arrangements, the United States was a "sword" while Japan remained the "shield." The latest round of redefinition, however, has turned Japan into another sword. Japan, justified by its new commitments to the alliance, will probably seek to further develop its already formidable conventional military capability and play a larger role in regional security affairs. To foster Japan as a more competent security partner, Washington will facilitate Tokyo's efforts through the transfer of advanced military technology and weapons systems and the provision of political patronage. Japan's growing military might and rising profile in regional security affairs has the potential to destabilize the balance of power in the Asia Pacific. In this regard, Beijing is particularly concerned that Japan will seek to revise its Peace Constitution and seek to exercise the "right of collective self-defense." If that happens, it will mean that Japan will likely fight shoulder to shoulder with the United States when the latter is involved in a military conflict in East Asia.

In spite of these concerns, people in China's policy and academic circles differ over the extent to which China is a target of the redefined U.S.-Japan alliance and how it will affect China's security interests. The alarmists describe the Clinton-Hashimoto Joint Declaration on Security as "expansionist and aggressive," a product of "Cold War thinking" in a post-Cold War era, and regard the redefined alliance as a major element of the U.S. "containment" strategy toward China.¹⁹⁹ In their opinion, the alliance has China as its primary target and will inevitably result in a major negative impact on China's security interests. The moderates, however, tend to view this issue in a broader context and believe that there are some uncertainties in the alliance. They understand that China was a factor in the minds of policymakers in Washington and Tokyo in their readjustment of the bilateral security ties, but they believe there are also other factors—and maybe more important ones—driving this process. In addition, they are cautious with the argument that the redefined alliance will be largely used to contain China. The thrust of the alliance is still in flux, contingent largely on developments in the regional security situation. So far as China is concerned, it should promote positive interactions with the United States and Japan—especially with the former—to prevent the alliance from being geared against China.

While the military generally takes an alarmist position on the redefinition of the alliance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) is relatively moderate. A MoFA spokesman commented that the Japan-U.S. alliance was a bilateral arrangement that was formed during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War and the relaxation of the international situation in general, such an arrangement should not go beyond its bilateral framework. What most concerns China, according to the spokesman, is the possibility that Taiwan falls into the parameters of the U.S.-Japan defense cooperation and that Tokyo will deploy its forces outside of Japan.²⁰⁰ China's vice premier and foreign minister Qian Qichen pointed out that if the Japan-U.S. alliance becomes a regional security arrangement or targets a third party, it will not be accepted by countries in the region. Nonetheless, Qian indicated that China would like to listen to the explanations by the United States and Japan and will adopt a wait-and-see attitude regarding future developments.²⁰¹

There are several indicators by which Beijing can judge whether the alliance will produce a serious impact on the security environment for China. One is whether there will be strong evidence that Taiwan is covered by Japan-U.S. defense cooperation. If both the United States and Japan develop closer security links with Taiwan and deepen their cooperation with Taiwan in areas such as intelligence sharing and transfer of weapons systems and military technology, for instance, Beijing will view this as a very serious development. Another indicator is whether Tokyo and Washington will jointly build a theater missile defense (TMD) system in Japan. Although the Japanese claim that the development of TMD would be intended to defend Japan against a North Korean ballistic missile attack, Chinese officials and analysts believe that TMD would be intended primarily to protect Japan from Chinese missiles. In Beijing's opinion, a TMD system, despite its defensive nature, will undermine the strategic stability in East Asia. For one thing, a TMD system may nullify China's limited strategic deterrence and place it in a disadvantageous strategic position. The Chinese are also worried that the joint U.S.-Japan development of TMD will serve to raise the level of Japan's defense technology and further enhance its military capability. Besides, a sea-based TMD system can also be deployed to shield Taiwan from Chinese missiles in some contingencies. Still another important indicator is whether Japan departs further from its declared route of peaceful development by substantially building up its military capability, revising its Peace Constitution, and formally acquiring the "right of collective self-defense."

If none of the above developments materialize and relations between China and the United States and China and Japan are stable, Beijing may take a more tolerant attitude toward the two security alliances and may not make them a defining issues in its relations with the United States and Japan. After all, Beijing has never formally requested the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the region. The fact that China continues to allow U.S. navy ships to pay port calls to Hong Kong after the handover indicates that at least in the short run China does not intend to challenge the U.S. military presence in the region. China's reaction to the new guidelines for U.S.-Japan defense cooperation published in September 1997 was unhappy but restrained. It realized that the guidelines, which define "areas surrounding Japan" as a situational rather than geographic concept, might be the best it can get under the circumstances.

On the other hand, if one or all of the indicators loom large on Beijing's horizon while its ties with Washington and Tokyo continue to be plagued by issues such as human rights, Taiwan, nonproliferation, and so on, then Beijing will probably make an outcry against the alliances and use its available resources to undermine their political and moral basis. China will demand a total withdrawal of the U.S. military presence from the region and seek

alternative strategic alignments with Russia and other countries as it did in the 1950s and 1960s. In that case, an arms race is highly likely to occur in the Asia Pacific and regional stability will suffer a serious setback.

Conclusion

China's perspective on the origins and evolution of the U.S.-Japanese and U.S.-Korean alliances experienced significant changes in the last fifty years. These changes may be generally summarized as the following.

First, China's perception of the target of these two security alliances changed over time. In the 1950s, China viewed the alliances primarily from the vantage point of East-West confrontation. Accordingly they were seen as directed at socialist countries in East Asia including China, the Soviet Union, and the DPRK. This image was modified to some extent in the 1960s. During this period, the United States, Japan, and the Soviet Union were perceived as ganging up on China and North Korea. The function of the two alliances consequently was considered exclusively to be containment of these two countries. This understanding changed dramatically in the 1970s and early 1980s. With the Soviet threat looming large and Sino-American and Sino-Japanese relations undergoing rapprochement, Beijing no longer regarded the two alliances as detrimental to its national security. Rather, they were regarded as instrumental counterweights against Soviet expansion. For a brief period following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Beijing defined its national interest as parallel to the interest of the two alliances in terms of constraining the Soviet encroachment in East Asia. In other words, the Soviet Union rather than China became the primary target of the two alliances. China's perception of the target of the alliances became less clear-cut in the mid and late 1980s, however. While previously China saw the alliances as either anti-Chinese or anti-Soviet, now it seemed that the target could be moving. Although the alliances still more or less served the U.S. interest in competition with the USSR, China did not necessarily identify itself with this function. By the end of the 1980s, China more consciously favored the possible function of the U.S.-Japan alliance to restrain Japan. Although China worried about the increasing military might of Japan, it did not for the remainder of the Cold War period once again view the two alliances as targeted at China. In the post-Cold War period, however, China once again perceives the possibility that the U.S. security alliance structure, particularly the U.S.-Japan alliance, may become an instrument of containing China rather than curbing any other major powers in the region.

Second, China's perception of the internal structure of each alliance also changed considerably. For a long time, China viewed the structure of the two alliances as characterized by a hierarchy. In other words, China did not see them as relationships between equal partners. To the contrary, the United States was perceived as the overlord in the two alliances. Japan and South Korea were puppets dancing in the rhythm dictated by America. Such an image was dominant during the 1950s and 1960s, but had been significantly modified during the 1970s and 1980s particularly with respect to the U.S.-Japan alliance. According to one Chinese analyst, U.S. political and strategic relations with Japan have gone through three stages. During the 1960s the relationship was that between a superior and a subordinate. From 1969 to 1977 it developed into a fraternal relationship between an elder

and a younger brother. And after 1977 the United States and Japan became more or less equal partners.²⁰²

Interestingly, although normatively a more equal partnership in the two alliances should be more acceptable to the Chinese, in practice such a structure was not necessarily in China's best interest. In the late 1960s, China was very much concerned that the United States would let the Japanese "loose" and give them more roles to play in the region. In the late 1980s, China was again apprehensive about the increasing role of Japan in the alliance. Consciously or unconsciously, China would like to see Japan continue to be subject to American oversight in the framework of the U.S.-Japanese alliance. This logic of this thinking has resurfaced recently in China's reaction to the redefinition of the U.S.-Japan alliance. To some extent, what worries China more in this alliance structure is Japan rather than the United States.

Third, China's approach to dealing with these two security alliances also has evolved over time. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, China countered alliance with alliance, sometimes even in a preemptive way. The Sino-Soviet alliance and Sino-DPRK alliance were formed to oppose the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances. The result was far from satisfactory. A country with no permanent alliances, China proved an uncomfortable partner in both alliances. China soon broke away from the Sino-Soviet alliance. The Sino-Korean alliance did not have much of a military element after China withdrew its troops from North Korea in 1958. During the 1970s, although China advocated a united front against the Soviet Union it was reluctant to forge a formal alliance structure with the United States and Japan. What China wanted was merely "parallel actions" based on common interests. In the 1980s, China moved further away from alliance strategy by adopting a so-called "independent foreign policy." Even a loose "strategic relationship" with the United States was considered undesirable. In its dealings with the two alliances after they became less "hostile" in the 1970s, China preferred to deal with the parties separately rather than together. In the late 1980s, although China did not see the utility of the two alliances in achieving its foreign policy goals, so long as the alliances were not directed at China Beijing did not feel compelled to take countermeasures. In this regard, the recent Chinese move to cultivate a "strategic partnership" with Russia can be seen as a moderate departure from the "independent foreign policy" of the 1980s. As indicated earlier, the possibility cannot be ruled out that China will return to the alliance strategy of the 1950s and 1960s if it concludes that a U.S.-Japan alliance structure of "containing" China has been institutionalized.

One caveat to keep in mind is that from the very beginning China perceived the legitimacy of each alliance somewhat differently. China more or less acknowledged that the U.S.-Japanese alliance was an alliance between two sovereign countries. From this viewpoint, China had no reason to oppose the alliance per se, since China itself also formed alliances with other countries. But for a long time, China perceived the U.S.-ROK alliance, as it did the U.S.-Taiwan alliance, as interference into a sovereign country's internal affairs. Therefore although China could under some circumstances publicly support the U.S.-Japan alliance, it was more difficult for China to endorse the U.S.-ROK alliance due to its treaty commitment to North Korea. Although China might from a global strategic perspective have accepted that there was a positive function of the American military presence in South Korea, publicly it had consistently demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea. On the other hand, China always considered the U.S.-Japan alliance more directly related to its national interests, whether in a positive or negative way.

The evolution of China's perceptions of the two alliances was determined by many factors and it was often the result of interactions of multiple causes. Several of the more important factors deserve a closer look.

China's perception was influenced by its understanding of the global power structure and the general characteristics of world politics. When China perceived the world through a bipolar lens of East and West, for instance, it tended to evaluate the two security alliances in a black-or-white fashion. Since China belonged to the East camp, an alliance between capitalist countries was by definition hostile to socialist countries. In the 1970s China held that a new world war was inevitable no matter what compromises could be reached among major powers. The only way to postpone the war was to disrupt the arrangement of the global strategy of the principal source of the war—the Soviet Union. For this purpose, the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances could be useful and their reinforcement could be justified. When China saw signs of relaxation of international tensions and consequently discarded its belief in the inevitability of a new war, however, it saw less rationale to support the military alliances. China's perception of the utility of the two alliances also had something to do with its estimation of the balance of power between the two superpowers. When China believed that the USSR was on the offensive and the United States on the defensive, it took a more tolerant attitude toward the alliances. When China figured that the two superpowers had reached strategic parity and the United States was even on the offensive, it saw less necessity to further strengthen the alliances. When China witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, conceptually the two alliances became obsolete to Beijing and only reflected Washington and Tokyo's "Cold War thinking."

China's perceptions of the alliances were also contingent on the state of its relations with the two pivotal outside powers—the United States and the Soviet Union, particularly the former. For example, the U.S. involvement in China's civil war and the Korean War caused China to view the intention and purpose of the two alliances negatively. When China defined the United States as enemy number one, any move of the two alliances could be interpreted as hostile to China. After Nixon visited China in 1972, however, the attacks on the U.S.-Japanese alliance died out almost overnight. Because the Soviet Union was not directly a party in these two alliances, China's relations with the Soviet Union had less impact on its perception of them. China's relations with the Soviet Union transformed from closest ally to bitter rival during the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless this did not cause substantial changes in China's perception of the alliances. Only when the security threat from the Soviet Union became overwhelming in the early 1970s did China began to reevaluate the function of the alliances. Here its understanding of the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States was also crucial. When China thought that the two superpowers were colluding against it, bad relations with the Soviet Union did not necessarily lead to China's positive evaluation of the two alliances. That is why the border clash with the Soviet Union in 1969 did not immediately make China more receptive to the alliances. In the post-Cold War circumstances, the state of Sino-U.S. relations again defined China's basic stand on the issue. As analyzed earlier, China's negative view of the alliances is heavily influenced by its suspicion of the U.S. intention toward China.

China's relations with the three indigenous players—Japan, South Korea, and North Korea—also had considerable impact on its attitudes toward the two security pacts. Here the Sino-Japanese relationship is of particularly importance. As Sino-Japanese relations proceeded smoothly throughout most of the 1970s, China did not worry too much about the

implications of the U.S.-Japan alliance and the increase in Japan's military capability. The emergence of various issues in bilateral relations during the late 1980s obviously hardened China's position toward Japan's military function in the alliance. Although the relationship between China and Japan was often described by the Chinese as "two countries that are only divided by a strip of water," for historical reasons mutual trust between them was thin. Deng Xiaoping considered the Tanaka and Ohira periods the "golden age" of Sino-Japanese relations because there existed mutual trust between the leaders of the two countries.²⁰³ Hu Yaobang tried hard to cultivate the same degree of trust between himself and Nakasone. His effort backfired, however. The importance of China's relations with indigenous powers can also be observed in China's ties with North Korea. China's ideological and treaty commitment to North Korea defined its attitude toward the U.S. military presence in South Korea. At the official level China under no circumstances wavered from its demand for the withdrawal of the U.S. troops even during the heyday of the struggle against Soviet hegemony. On the other hand, the normalization of relations between Beijing and Seoul in the early 1990s effectively modified the former's perception of the target of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Finally, China was extremely sensitive to the implications of the two security alliances for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. China often used the Taiwan issue as its touchstone to test the purpose of the alliances. China was furious with the autonomous extension of the U.S.-Japanese security treaty in 1969 largely because the Sato government included Taiwan in Japan's sphere of security. In both Sino-U.S. relations and Sino-Japan relations, it was the Taiwan issue that ultimately bogged the relationships down. The recent Chinese concern over the redefinition of the U.S.-Japan security guidelines has also focused on whether Taiwan is explicitly or implicitly included. China may accept the expansion of the scope of the two security alliances beyond bilateral relations to cover other regional issues, but it is unlikely to tolerate their jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait and to a lesser extent over the Diaoyu islands and the South China Sea.

Notes

¹ Lin Daizhao, *A History of Sino-Japanese Relations After World War II* (Beijing University Press, 1992), 26; Wu Xuewen et al., *Sino-Japan Relations, 1945-1994* (Beijing: Current Affairs Press, 1995), 5-6.

² "CCP Central Committee Statement on the Situation In Japan," June 12, 1950. *Collection of Documents on Japan* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1955), 46-47.

³ "Now Is the Time for Japanese People to be United against the Enemy." *People's Daily*, 3 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴ Zhou Enlai, "Statement on American-British Draft of Peace Treaty with Japan and the San Francisco Conference." In *Selections of Diplomatic Works of Zhou Enlai* (Beijing: Central Document Press, 1990), 41-46.

⁵ Mao Zedong, "War Plan Should Take into Consideration U.S. Direct Military Intervention," January 8, 1949. In *Selections of Diplomatic Works of Mao Zedong* (Beijing: Central Document Press and World Knowledge Press, 1994), p. 76.

⁶ “Now Is the Time for Japanese People to be United against the Enemy.” *People’s Daily*, 3 September 1950, p. 1.

⁷ *Collection of Documents Relating to the People’s Republic of China’s Foreign Relations, 1949–1950* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1957), 76.

⁸ Zhou Enlai, “Statement on the Signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan by the U.S. and Other Countries,” September 18, 1951; Zhou Enlai, “Political Report at the 3rd Session of the 1st Chinese People’s Consultative Conference,” October 23, 1951; Zhou Enlai, “Statement on the U.S. Announcement That the Illegal and Partial Peace Treaty with Japan Came into Effect,” May 5, 1952; *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1951–1953* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1958), 38–39, 49, 67–68. Zhuang Tao, “It Has Been America’s Consistent Policy to Rearm Japan and Commit Aggression against Asia,” *People’s Daily*, 11 September 1951, p. 4. “Firmly Stop the U.S. Scheme of Preparing to Launch a New Aggressive War in the Far East,” *People’s Daily*, 7 May 1952, p. 1.

⁹ The *People’s Daily* published an article explaining why it was America’s consistent policy to rearm Japan. Geographically, while the United States is distant from the Asian continent, Japan is situated close to the central part of China and the Asian part of the Soviet Union, and its location thus meets U.S. strategic needs. Materially, after the Second World War, Japan still maintains the largest navy and air force equipment and military industry in Asia, and these are just what the U.S. needs to launch an aggressive war. On the human resources front, Japan once mobilized as many as 7 million soldiers during World War II, and is therefore the only country among America’s Asian vassals that can provide a huge amount of manpower for the U.S. aggressive war. Zhuang Tao, “It Has Been America’s Consistent Policy to Rearm Japan and Commit Aggression against Asia,” *People’s Daily*, 11 September 1951, p. 4.

¹⁰ “Sino-U.S. Exchange of Notes Regarding the Extension of the Time Limit for Joint Use of Lushun Navy Base,” *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1951–1953* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1958), 89–90.

¹¹ World Peace Council, “Resolution passed at the Berlin special meeting on opposing remilitarizing Japan and striving for a democratic Japan,” July 6, 1952; Asia-Pacific Conference, “Resolution on Japan,” October 12, 1952. *Collection of Documents on Japan* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1955), 282–285.

¹² “On Sino-Japan Relations.” *People’s Daily*, 30 October 1953, p. 1.

¹³ Zhou Enlai, “Statement on the U.S. Announcement That the Illegal and Partial Peace Treaty with Japan Came into Effect,” May 5, 1952; *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1951–1953* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1958), 68–69.

¹⁴ “Break the Plot of the Enemy of Peace to Obstruct the Political Conference,” *People’s Daily*, 12 August 1953, p. 1.

¹⁵ Zhou Enlai, “Speech at the Signing Ceremony of the Sino-DPRK Treaty of Economic and Cultural Cooperation.” *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1951–1953* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1958), 170.

¹⁶ Zhou Enlai, “Diplomatic Report at the 33rd Session of the Committee of the Central People’s Government,” August 11, 1954; Zhou Enlai, “Statement on U.S.-Chiang Kai-shek Mutual Defense Treaty,” December 8, 1954. *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1954–1955* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1958), 136, 211–213.

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¹⁸ “Firmly Oppose Japan-U.S. Military Alliance.” *People’s Daily*, 15 January 1960, p. 1; Chen Yi, “Statement on Japan and the U.S. Revising ‘Peace Treaty’,” November 19, 1958. *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1958* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1959), 203.

¹⁹ Chen Yi, “Statement on Japan and the U.S. Revising ‘Peace Treaty’,” November 19, 1958. *Collection of Documents Relating to the PRC’s Foreign Relations, 1958* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1959), 202.

²⁰ “Crush the U.S. and Japanese Reactionaries’ New Scheme of War and Aggression,” *People’s Daily*, 24 January 1960, p. 1; *Xinhua* News Agency, “The New Japan-U.S. Treaty Harbors Ambition of Economic Aggression,” 12 January 1960; *Xinhua* News Agency, “Japanese Militarism Has Been Revived,” 15 January 1960; *Xinhua* News Agency, “Each Article of the New Japan-U.S. ‘Security Treaty’ Has a Strong Smell of Gunpowder,” 19 January 1960.

²¹ “A Guarantee of Peace in Asia and the World,” *People’s Daily*, 12 July 1961, p. 1.

²² “Smash the U.S. New War Scheme in Asia,” *People’s Daily*, 5 June 1960, p. 4.

²³ Wan Feng and Wu Delie, “What Does the Resumption of ‘Japan-ROK’ Talks Imply?” *People’s Daily*, 21 November 1961, p. 5.

²⁴ The plan stipulated that implementation of the U.S.-Japan security treaty was Japan’s national policy and Japan should work to strengthen it; the United States could ship nuclear weapons into Japan and to use them for the purpose of defending Japan; when the U.S. troops fought China and North Korea, Japan would cooperate with the United States, and the Japanese SDF would be brought under the command of the U.S. army stationed in Japan; if necessary, Japan could send its troops overseas, and its theater of war could cover Northeast China and North Korea. *Xinhua* News Agency, “Japanese Militarism Is Rapidly Revived and Threatens Peace in Asia,” 19 August 1965.

²⁵ Li Hong, “‘3-arrow Battle Plan’—The Product of U.S.-Japan Collaboration,” *People’s Daily*, 3 March 1965, p. 4; *Xinhua* News Agency, “Japanese Militarism Is Rapidly Revived and Threatens Peace in Asia,” 19 August 1965.

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²⁹ Wang Zhiguang, “The Sato Government Stands As the Accomplice to the U.S. Aggressive War in Vietnam,” *People’s Daily*, 2 March 1966, p. 3.

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- ³¹ *People’s Daily* and *PLA Daily* commentator, “Resolutely Wipe Out Any Enemy Who Dares to Intrude,” *Peking Review*, 31 October 1969, p. 4.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ “Joint Communiqué of the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” *Peking Review*, 9 April 1970, p. 4.
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- ³⁶ “‘System of Collective Security in Asia’—Soviet Revisionism’s Tattered Flag for Anti-China Military Alliance,” *Peking Review*, 4 August 1969, p. 23.
- ³⁷ “Speech by Premier Chou En-lai at the Banquet,” *Peking Review*, 10 April 1970, p. 14.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ³⁹ “Japan—The Base for U.S. Imperialist Aggression in Asia,” *Peking Review*, 4 September 1970, pp. 29, 32.
- ⁴⁰ “U.S. Military Bases in Japan,” *Peking Review*, 4 September 1970, p. 30.
- ⁴¹ “Speech by Premier Chou En-lai at the Banquet,” *Peking Review*, 10 April 1970, p. 13.
- ⁴² “Resolutely Smash the Aggressive U.S.-Japan Military Alliance,” *People’s Daily*, June 23, 1970, p. 1.
- ⁴³ The Fighters’ Commentaries Groups of the “Dagger” Company of a Unit of the P.L.A. Wuhan Command, “Aggressive Designs of the Japanese Reactionaries Will End in Bubbles,” *Peking Review*, 20 March 1970, p. 30.
- ⁴⁴ “Speech by Premier Chou En-lai at the Banquet,” *Peking Review*, 10 April 1970, p. 13.
- ⁴⁵ “US-Japanese Reactionaries’ Criminal Designs,” November 29, 1970; *Peking Review*, 5 December 1969, p. 14.
- ⁴⁶ “Joint Statement of China Council for Promotion of International Trade and Japanese Association for Promotion of International Trade and Six Other Japanese Organizations for Friendly Trade,” *Peking Review*, 24 April 1970, p. 29.
- ⁴⁷ “Speech by Premier Chou En-lai at the Banquet,” *Peking Review*, 10 April 1970, p. 13.
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