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American Foreign Policy Options
in East Asia after the Cold War

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American Foreign Policy Options in East Asia after the Cold War¹

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With the end of the Cold War, the institutions of international security in Europe and the grand strategies of its principal states have undergone fundamental changes. Comparable changes have yet to reach Asia. While NATO is either evolving into a collective security organization, or moving the East-West divide eastward by some 500 miles, the centerpiece of international security in East Asia, the US-Japan alliance, has not been similarly transformed. To the contrary, Japanese and American alliance managers have reaffirmed it in its present form. For the past fifty years, the United States sought to prevent the spread of communism in Asia (often at great cost), and in particular it sought to stem the influence of the Soviet Union. With the disintegration of communism as an ideology and of the Soviet Union as a state, this purpose can no longer motivate American policy in the region. And yet, despite the withering away of its primary mission, the US strategy and the concomitant architecture it erected to implement that strategy is unchanged.

It is now time to step back and assess anew reasons for US strategic engagement in the region. With its primary adversary vanquished and with the nations of the region enriched and mostly democratic, the United States must reconsider its interests and the full range of policies it might pursue to secure them. In the final analysis, retention of the current alliance structure, albeit with some adjustment, may be well advised. But this

¹Forthcoming in Patrick Cronin and Michael Green, eds., The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future, (1998).

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conclusion is not preordained by the legacy of the Cold War. It should be arrived at through a thorough “bottom-up” assessment of regional dynamics and US interests.

Beginning from First Principles: Identifying US Interests

Aside from the fact that the United States trades more with East Asia than with Europe (or indeed any other region of the world), there are a number of other specific security interests at stake in the region. Foremost among these are the following, in rough hierarchical order:³

1. **Preserving stability among the great powers.** This is justified on simple security grounds: The last time there was a great power war in Asia, the United States was drawn in. The last two times there was a great power war in Europe, the United States was drawn in. All three were costly, and American policy should be aimed at preventing such conflicts in the future.
2. **Preserving of the safety of the sea lanes of communication throughout East Asia.** Preservation of the security of these sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) is vital if the United States is to participate in the prosperity of the world’s fastest growing region. It also ensures that US ships have the right of free passage to other areas of vital national interest, such as the Middle East.
3. **Maintaining an American leadership role in regional and global international institutions.** The US’s ability to project power to a region that welcomes it is connected directly to regime formation: A legitimate and welcomed US constabulary role also ensures that the United States retains a place at the table (likely the head)

³Our list of interests summarizes most of what the United States says it wants to do: See the “Nye report” a.k.a., Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, “United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region,” Washington, DC, February 1995.. It is also consistent with those interests put forth in Mike Mochizuki, “American Economic and Security Interests in Japan,” A working paper for the second meeting of the study group on “American Interests in Asia: Economic and Security Priorities,” sponsored by the Economic Strategy Institute, Washington, DC, November 14, 1996.

where the rules of commerce are determined and the coordination of foreign policies occurs.⁴

4. **Peaceful resolution of the division of the Korean Peninsula, ideally on Seoul's terms.** The security of our South Korean ally is important because: a) it enhances US credibility as a reliable ally; b) the freedom and security of other democracies enhances that of our own; c) a second Korean war would likely involve the use of weapons of mass destruction; and finally, d) the regime in the North has proven one of the most reckless in the region, and were it to control the entire peninsula (unlikely to be sure, but possible), the Northeast Asian balance would shift in dangerous ways.
5. **Peaceful resolution of the Chinese-Taiwanese conflict.** As in the case of American interests in Korea, Taiwan has implications for both credibility and the democratic peace. Taiwanese democracy is also the only Chinese democracy in the world, an example that helps refute culture-based arguments from China in opposition to democratization. Finally, Taiwan has strategic significance, as it sits astride important Asian Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs).
6. **Avoiding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.** Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the wrong hands threaten the ability of the United States to undertake unilateral action, e.g. a) to provide aid to a friendly state such as Israel; b) to provide military support to an ally such as Korea; and c) to secure natural resources. WMD proliferation also raises the cost of any conflict and is one of the few possible direct threats to the continental United States.

⁴ On the utility of military power in securing economic concessions, even from allies, see Robert Gilpin, "The Politics of Transnational Economic Relations," in Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Jr., eds., Transnational Relations and World Politics, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1971), pp. 48-69. On the differential impacts of international economic regimes that parallel power distributions, see Stephen D. Krasner, Structural Conflict: The Third World against Global Liberalism, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (1985). Also this point is supported in the context of American post-Cold War foreign policy by Samuel Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993), pp. 82-3.

7. **Ensuring the independence of Indochina and Southeast Asia.** This is important for preventing hegemonism in Asia. Additionally, these states sit astride some of the most traveled, and congested, SLOCs in the world. We have gone to war over this region twice before in this century.

Identifying these interests is only a first step. The United States might pursue a variety of strategies to achieve its goals. Choosing among strategies requires several steps: first, identifying them; second, determining if they do indeed protect American interests; and third, assessing their costs.

STRATEGIES TO BE AVOIDED

The alternatives of Isolationism and Multilateralism—supported by many in the public debate today—will not achieve the American goals laid out above.

Isolationism

Isolationism (sometimes referred to as “restraint”) is enjoying a resurgence among academics, policy analysts, and some politicians.⁵ Proponents of this strategy argue that in the post-Cold War world, the United States is already very secure, and could be more prosperous at no real security cost if it spent less on defense. Forward deployment in Asia is expensive and exposes US troops to the risk of being caught in an Asian cross-fire. Scholars supporting restraint posit two core US interests: security and prosperity. The core of their argument is the expectation that the Asian balance of power will smoothly obtain. However, this strategy construes US security too narrowly,

⁵This is developed in: E. Gholz, D. Press, and H. Sapolsky, “Come Home America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation,” *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 4 (forthcoming, Spring 1997). For an off-shore balancing variant, see Christopher Layne, “The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise,” *International Security*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993): pp. 45-51.

underestimates the full costs of prosperity, and overstates the ease with which stable balances of power can be achieved. Due to these shortcomings, a strategy of isolation or “restraint” would not effectively defend the interests outlined above.

Even evaluated on its own terms, this strategy is flawed. Isolationist proponents agree that if US security is to be attained, aggressors must be deterred. But they suggest that such balancing will occur smoothly, e.g. that China will adjust to a Japanese defense buildup at low or zero cost to the United States, or that a unified Korea will not threaten Japan (or vice versa). This seems untenable in the face of historical evidence that balancing often is accompanied by substantial conflict and violence.⁶ Indeed when one of the great powers stays out of such balancing activity—their prescription for the United States—the level of violence may rise even higher.⁷ Kenneth Waltz argues that the process of balancing can be quite dangerous: he warns that multipolar systems are more conflict prone than bipolar ones because in the former, nations have incentives to free-ride in alliances, thus avoiding their role in balancing.⁸ It is true that the balance of power must eventually prevail, as it is that wars eventually end. Both these truisms overlook the more pressing questions of “how long until then?” and “at what cost?”

A US withdrawal to continental North America would jeopardize several of the interests listed above. It both risks sparking great power conflict and may accelerate the rise of a new hegemon. The most likely conflict is that between China and Japan (two of the richest nations in the world), although Korean-Chinese and Korean-Japanese tensions

⁶ “Throughout its history of more than four hundred years the policy of the balance of power succeeded in preventing any one state from gaining universal domination... Yet universal domination by any one state was prevented only at the price of warfare, which from 1648 to 1815 was virtually continuous and in the twentieth century has twice engulfed practically the whole world.” Hans Morganthau and William Thompson, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Sixth Edition, New York, NY: McGraw Hill, Inc. (1985): p. 222. Also see Paul Schroeder, “Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory, *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): pp. 108-48.

⁷ Here the example of pre-WWI Britain is apposite. Had Britain been less equivocal in the July Crisis, it is possible that Germany would have been less reckless.

⁸ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Publishing (1979).

are also likely to be stimulated. The expectation that the United States would stand aside in any such future conflict is implausible.

If, in the absence of an alliance with the US, Japan chose to aggressively balance against China, the region will face a dangerously destabilizing arms race. Korea and much of Southeast Asia may well be forced to take sides. For Japan to truly compete in such a race, it would have to acquire nuclear weapons, a dangerous and destabilizing step that, in Harrison's words "would only provoke a more belligerent posture on the part of both China and Russia."⁹ Moreover, while bilateral relations in which both sides possess secure second strikes are considered rather stable, that would certainly not be the situation as Japan announces its development and possession of nuclear weapons. The same forces that lead China and Japan into an adversarial relationship in the first place may well push them to the brink of war, and this would be disastrous from a US perspective for several reasons:

- A war between two of America's largest trading partners would be devastating to the US economy.
- A war between a former ally and a former enemy would be hard for the United States to avoid getting involved in.
- A war between a nuclear power and a threshold nuclear power would push the nuclear envelope in new and disconcerting ways.
- A war between the two would be a(nother) humanitarian disaster.
- Any nuclearization in Japan would press both Koreas to do the same, and perhaps pressure other Asian nations to follow suit.

⁹ Selig Harrison, Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1996), p. 26.

Even if China and Japan do not go to war, a Cold War between the two great powers could impose high costs on the region, and indeed the globe, if the last simmering conflict between two giants on the world scene has any lessons. At a minimum, the remarkable (and hard-earned) domestic political stability in Japan would further unravel, creating even greater uncertainties for its foreign policy and its evolving role as provider of global public goods. These are all negative outcomes for the United States. By maintaining a close alliance with Japan—providing nuclear guarantees and serving as a more neutral guarantor of the stability in the region—the United States can prevent this outcome.

On the other hand, if Japan bandwagons in the face of Chinese economic growth and military expansion, the United States will face a number of unpalatable risks:

- A non-status quo China could hunger for additional appeasement, à la Munich.
- China would gain dramatically from a closer relationship with Japan. This would provide it with substantial additional economic power as well as political-military power, certainly threatening Taiwan, probably Southeast Asia (e.g., the Spratlys), and possibly Indochina.
- Korea, reunified or not, would be squeezed between two giants. If the United States is there, then we would be surrounded. If we is not, then Korea would be.
- Aggression would have paid.

Clearly, these are all negative outcomes from the US perspective. By demonstrating to China that the regional status quo can be positive sum, and by providing Japan with the wherewithal to resist Chinese demands—either through a strong alliance with the United States—this possible future can be avoided.

Of course, it is indeed possible that China and Japan would adjust comfortably to sharing influence in the region, resolving their disputes peacefully, and avoiding tension.

Sadly, history does not suggest this to be very likely. Levels of mistrust (both popular and elite) between Japan and China have not receded.¹⁰ Moreover, even with the US “cork” in the Japanese military bottle, Japanese and Chinese military budgets are expanding to record levels. Finally, even if we recognize this outcome as a possibility, it is only one of many contingencies for which the United States must be prepared.

If the United States is not engaged actively in the region, then a number of other interests will also go undefended (aside from the issue of great power conflict). It is far less likely for Japan to stand between China and Taiwan than for the United States to do so. Similarly, while Japan has a profound interest in peaceful commerce in the South China Sea, it may choose not to defend these in such a way as to provide the public good of safe commerce for the other states in the region. Japanese debates over the wisdom of confronting Sadaam Hussein in the Gulf War suggest that Japan may instead choose to pay a premium to reroute its commerce, if such an option were available. Moreover, since a unified Korea is as likely to be concerned about its security vis-à-vis Japan as vis-à-vis China, neither regional great power may strongly encourage that process to move forward.

Achieving *these* goals requires, first and foremost, a US military presence in the region. This conclusion is not based on paternalistic reasoning: It is not that we can secure these interests better than can Asian countries. It is simply that Asian countries will not necessarily find it in their interests to defend them. Japan may prefer a divided Korea, China may risk some violence in absorbing Taiwan, the independence of Indochina is a mixed blessing for both China and Japan, etc. In these cases, US interests are not shared universally; it would therefore help considerably if the United States could continue to pursue them from within the region. The remaining strategies considered below allow for this through a variety of mechanisms.

¹⁰Poll results in both countries bear this out. See Benjamin Kang Lim, *Reuters Newswire*, February 15, 1997.

Multilateralism

Multilateralism comprises two possible strategies: a formal alliance structure and a collective security arrangement. Neither will provide adequately for American interests.

The first strategy looks to the example of NATO and suggests that American interests in East Asia can best be pursued through a tight, formal, militarized alliance aimed against the threatening power or powers. This alliance might be referred to as the Pacific Treaty Organization (PTO). This form of multilateralism, rooted firmly in the traditions of realpolitik, would rely primarily on the threat or use of military power. To the extent it mirrors NATO, a PTO would require creation of a multinational military force. Military alliances require specified enemies. In practice, the power that such an alliance would be aimed against would likely be China.

This strategy has several shortcomings. First, it is not yet clear that China is a threat that needs to be contained. Chinese domestic politics and its economic transformation are both extremely fluid. It is not in US interests to contribute to Chinese fears of encirclement, a strategy that certainly will worsen the prospects for peace.

Second, even if we judged China to be a threat, creating this type of alliance will be difficult. We would need to assume a Japanese, Korean, and/or ASEAN willingness to participate in a containment policy. Each is an extremely unlikely partner. In post-World War II Europe, the threat posed by the Soviet Union was relatively clear-cut, making countervailing alliances (NATO) easier to arrange. Today in Asia, the threat posed by China is both uncertain and varies across nations. Securing a broad agreement on the parameters for a PTO would be a daunting task.

Third, incorporating the most avid potential partner, Taiwan, would be particularly galling to China. It would also destroy anything that remains of value in the American policy of constructive ambiguity on the Chinese reunification issue.

A fourth problem with this strategy is that it might discourage the independence of mid-sized states. States not in the PTO would feel a need to choose sides in the conflict, and some might opt for China. While it is difficult to foresee such a move by Australia or New Zealand, states on the Korean Peninsula, or in Indochina might choose differently. Such a polarization is not in American interests.

Finally, the United States alone has sufficient capability to oppose China, if that is necessary. It need not inflame Chinese nationalist passions vis-à-vis its neighbors and thereby ensure political and military instability in the region.

The second variant of a possible multilateral US strategy in Asia would look more like the European example of the Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe (CSCE). A CSCA might build upon the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or other nascent institutional fora. It would aim to create an inclusive security community with primary emphasis on established traditions in international law. The threat of force would remain the ultimate arbiter of disputes, but the CSCA would sanction violence based on transgression of predetermined legal norms that would apply to all members, in contrast to the PTO's reliance on *ad hoc* power based calculations.

There are a number of problems with this strategy as well. First, it is difficult to imagine this working effectively, especially in the short run. No historian of the Cold War in Europe gives the CSCE credit for keeping the peace there. After all, the CSCE co-existed with NATO, it did not substitute for a military alliance. History offers an earlier lesson as well. The League of Nations, another example of a collective security organization, proved impotent at the first instance of great power aggression. There is no reason to think that the CSCA would be any more successful at resolving potential conflicts of interest among the great powers.

Second, like the League of Nations, the CSCE was built upon several key points of consensus. For example, members agreed to shelve territorial disputes and no state questioned the right of others to be present at the table. Such agreement is hard to

imagine in the contemporary Asian context, for territorial disputes between Japan and China (Senkakus/Diaoyutai), between Japan and Korea (Tokdo/Takeshima), and between China and ASEAN states (Spratlys) are the nub of extant regional security concerns. This concern also applies to the sovereignty of key players such as the DPRK and Taiwan. If consensus could be achieved on some of these issues, then US interests would be well served indeed. However, proposing a collective security arrangement that presupposes the resolution of such issues is not a strategy for getting the region to that point.

Finally, it is pertinent to any thoughtful evaluation of US options that international institutions are likely to strengthen over time, as norms for cooperation evolve and transform the behavior of member states.¹¹ Whatever we might think of the long term possibilities for such a collective security strategy, however, in the *short term* it is an unlikely vehicle for achieving US interests.

VIABLE STRATEGIES EXIST

If neither isolationism nor these two forms of multilateralism seem likely to serve American interests, there are a number of others that will. We see four possibilities: a) maintenance of the status quo, b) creation of a standoff military option, c) shift to alternate allies, and d) a more 'balanced' alliance.

¹¹See Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York, NY: Basic Books (1984); Also Robert O. Keohane notes that the initial creation of an institution is difficult relative to its perpetuation in *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Economy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (1984). Finally Stephen Krasner provides note the self-reinforcing positive feedback characteristic of institutions in "Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1 (April 1988): pp. 80-6.

Maintain the Status Quo

The status quo—built upon the US-Japan alliance as the central axis—is an inexpensive and effective way to achieve US security objectives. It requires that no new forces be deployed and that no new bases be built. Certainly, a status quo of this sort is less threatening to other regional powers than sudden change. Each of the states in the region has expressed comfort with the US presence—the Japanese because it protects them from North Korea and/or China and China because it contains Japan. The current alliance allows the United States to remain in the thick of (and to affect) great power relations in the Northwest Pacific.

However, there are substantial problems in the alliance, dating from the 1970's. Throughout much of the Cold War, the United States provided regional public goods in the form of a stable political and military environment, open markets, and access to the world's most abundant technology base. Japan grew richer relative to the United States, becoming the second largest economy in the world and America's most formidable economic competitor. Japanese producers enjoyed the advantage of competing head to head with US firms in the United States and third markets, while being effectively protected in a sanctuary market at home. Shifts in Japan's relative economic and technological strength, combined with its "cheap ride" on US security guarantees had a corrosive effect on the overall relationship. Japan's reluctance to assume a greater share of the responsibility for creating collective goods in science, technology, and security combined with its staggering global and bilateral trade surpluses to make the alliance seem unfair to many Americans.¹²

Meanwhile, the threat of monolithic communism, like the USSR itself, disappeared. With nothing left to stand *against*, it became unclear what the alliance stood

¹² See the National Research Council, ed. Maximizing U.S. Interests in Science and Technology Relations with Japan, Report of the Defense Task Force, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1995.

for. In April 1996, alliance managers hoped to stimulate the Japanese public to pay greater public attention to security issues and to ensure a forward base for US troops after the reunification of Korea. But promises of an expanded Japanese security role which would be more reciprocal and balanced, while enhancing mutual trust, remain unfulfilled as yet.

In a strictly military sense, fairness has limited relevance to the ability of this strategy to achieve American interests at a relatively low direct cost. However, the political costs of this strategy may be higher. Should it come to conflict, Americans will wonder why their rich ally cannot assist the US military more, and Japanese will question why they are being asked to play a role in a conflict that appears more important to Washington than Tokyo. Both are good questions. Unless the elites in both capitals find answers to these concerns, the alliance will remain fragile.

In short, while the alliance provides the United States with a (subsidized) foot in the regional door, it is not without its own political, economic, and technological costs. The US-Japan alliance is essentially unchanged from that of fifteen years ago, and neither the Japanese nor the American public has focused publicly on the need for a new alliance architecture. Thus, while the status quo may serve to provide the United States the wherewithal to defend its regional interests, there are reasons to question whether it can survive a serious test.

The “Ally Free” Option: Construct a Stand-off Force

This strategy would take advantage of America’s substantial technological prowess in general as well as some particular military developments. The United States could sever its Asian alliances and abandon its bases abroad. It could develop a long range military force that would frequently deploy to the region from the continental United States, Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, and Diego Garcia. It would make clear its

interests and its intent to defend its interests in the region, and it would develop the military force to make this intent credible. Retaining such a long range power projection capability will be expensive, but it is possible.

This strategy would require a substantial change in the composition of American military forces. In particular, increased use of pre-positioning forces afloat would provide for the ability to rapidly insert ground forces.¹³ Strategic air forces and carrier based air forces would have to substitute for shorter range, ground based tactical aircraft. Ground based tactical air power can deliver ordinance less expensively at a given level of accuracy than can strategic or carrier air power. Also, the number of carrier battle groups that we maintain would have to be increased. The Pentagon estimates that it takes five carriers in the inventory to keep one on station in the Mediterranean Sea. In contrast, it only takes 1.7 to keep one on station in the Western Pacific.¹⁴ Having a home port in Yokosuka, Japan saves substantial amounts of transit time making trips for maintenance, shore leave, resupply, etc. all much quicker. A stand-off force strategy would sacrifice such savings.

It would also require the expensive development of new weaponry. Long range strike aircraft, more capable carrier based aircraft, arsenal ships (a recent proposal by the US Navy to have large ships that serve as missile launchers and have minimal crew requirements), more varied types of long range cruise missiles, and “smarter” ordinance would all have to be developed. None will be cheap.

Pursuing such a strategy would also likely raise the human cost to the United States in the event of hostilities. Credibility comes at a price. One way of paying that price is to station ‘trip wire’ forces in the line of possible conflict as the United States did

¹³Currently we maintain enough prepositioned equipment afloat to equip one marine division and an heavy army brigade. Additionally, we have enough Amphibious Assault Ships to deploy approximately another one and a half marine divisions. See Secretary of Defense William Perry, Annual Report to the President and Congress, Washington, DC: GPO (March 1996), pp. 162, 193-97.

¹⁴ Figures from Navy presentation at “General James H. Doolittle Workshop: The Future of Naval Aviation,” Security Studies at MIT, April 24, 1996.

in Europe and Korea during the Cold War. Absent that, credibility must be earned. Establishing a reputation for defending one's interests may require several demonstrations of will, something that will be extremely difficult to sell to the American public.

Cost concerns and public acceptance aside, this strategy seems well placed with regard to American interests. Most of the conflicts that the United States hopes to deter would be fought at sea. Due to the high vulnerability of very expensive naval assets to well targeted munitions, the United States can easily play a role here. It was much easier for the Seventh Fleet to step between China and Taiwan in 1996 than it would have been for the United States to stop the border conflict between China and Vietnam eighteen years before.

With regard for possible ground conflicts that run counter to US interests—most likely a Korean war and a Chinese expansion into Indochina—the United States will have to rely primarily on air power. In the Korean scenario, this will likely be more than enough. For Indochina, air power will be useful, but perhaps not as dominant (i.e., the Chinese would have more margin for losses against the Vietnamese than do the North Koreans against the ROK).

Since this strategy commits the United States to no entangling alliances, America need not worry about damaging the cohesion of any alliance through actions taken or left undone. Nonetheless, as long as the interests identified above accurately reflect the calculations of US strategists, US intervention—even “selective engagement”¹⁵—seems as likely as ever. The advantage of this “Ally-free” option over the status quo is thus fairly marginal in this regard.

A final disadvantage to consider is the potential effect on the size of the Japanese military. To the extent that Japan currently depends on the United States to provide for

¹⁵For a good definition of this term see, Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/97): pp. 5-53.

its security, removing the “cork” in the Japanese bottle will allow Tokyo to take matters into its own hands. It will have to increase military spending substantially, setting into motion spirals of arms races and security dilemmas, which may work against American interests.

Find A New Friend

In order to avoid the high costs of the stand-off strategy and in order to ameliorate the potential political problems with the status quo, the United States might choose to find another ally willing to provide substantial basing structure. This will allow it to retain a presence directly in the region, enhancing its credibility as a ‘player’ in East Asian security affairs. It will also make better use of the military assets it currently possesses.

Through the judicious selection of this ally, Washington may be able to achieve some of its goals quite directly (i.e., those pertaining to independence of Southeast Asia and Indochina and those to the peaceful settlements of the two divided nations in the region: Korea and China). Although the United States has been forced to leave both Vietnam and the Philippines over the last 25 years, it is conceivable that those countries might invite the United States back. Taiwan would certainly welcome a closer military relationship with Washington. Australia has enough territory for substantial bases, although it sits only at the periphery of the East Asian region itself.

Depending on the precise location of Washington’s new security partner, both costs and benefits are likely to accrue. A shift southward for the Seventh Fleet would assist in the maintenance of free SLOCs and the insurance of an independent Indochina and Southeast Asia. But it would also take US forces away from the likely hub of great power conflict in the Northwestern Pacific. This strategy, like the stand-off one, will pull the cork out of the Japanese bottle.

Finally, there is the simple effect that such a major change in deployment will have on the countries in the region. The status quo is familiar to all. Governments throughout the region's capitals have considered the American relationship with Japan and have *all* found it to be constructive.¹⁶ Unanimous support for such a contentious issue as the deployment of force abroad in the anarchic world of international security is rare. It seems unlikely that any other possible basing location could secure such sweeping support.

Reconfigure the Alliance

Sometimes referred to as the "Overt Linkage" option, this approach accepts that the US-Japan alliance is the most effective mechanism for realizing US interests (including regional stability) in Asia.¹⁷ But, it is based upon the view that the United States needs (and deserves) a better (more symmetrical) deal. The primary American interest, the avoidance of great power conflict or hegemony should be Japan's primary interest as well. Even if US costs are less than they might otherwise be, it is inappropriate (and politically unsustainable) for the United States to bear the bulk of the burden to achieve this.¹⁸

With the end of the Cold War, it is no longer necessary or desirable for the United States to trade-off its political/military and techno-economic interests. Instead of offering Japan security guarantees *and* (effectively) unlimited access both to advanced technology and its domestic market, the United States ought to offer security guarantees, technology, and market access in the context of reciprocal access to Japanese technology and the Japanese market. In short, in this view military, economic, and technological security

¹⁶ This is the position taken privately at least by even North Korean and Chinese senior officials.

¹⁷ For a similar argument, see Committee on Japan Defense Task Force, ed., "Maximizing U.S. Interests in Science and Technology Relations with Japan," Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1995.

¹⁸ Annual SOFA contributions of \$5 billion do little to defray the costs of maintaining the military force structure necessary for the United States to project power into the region. A small American carrier battle group can cost upwards of \$20 billion to procure. Any conflict in the Pacific would require a half dozen or so such groups.

ought to be linked overtly, correcting Japan's "cheap ride" on US security guarantees. The ability of Japan to exploit the security relationship for relative economic and technological gains should be reduced.

Perhaps more importantly, Japan should be expected to pay the full costs (and assume fuller risks) necessary to preserve regional peace and security—including well defined (and publicly supported) roles and missions in the event of a regional military crisis. The Japanese government has not committed publicly to applying the alliance to the Asia-Pacific region. Nor has it put into law regulations that would expedite the provisions of supplies and rear area support—something Japan has already done for the United States in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Finally, as a component of a post-Cold War strategy that must be more sea- and air-based than heretofore, it would seem prudent to withdraw the U.S. Marines from Okinawa. Although nominally comprising a division, the current deployment includes only a regiment of troops (approximately 1/3 of a division). It is unlikely that such a small group of ground forces would have a material effect on the outcome of any conflict on the Asian land mass. Such a step has three collateral benefits: 1) reassuring the Chinese that the United States does not intend to become involved in another land war in Asia, 2) demonstrating to the Japanese that the United States is confident that Japan can defend itself, and 3) eliminating the long festering irritant that disposed Japanese public opinion strongly against the American military. The role of the Okinawa-based US Marines today is primarily to enhance the credibility of the alliance. Taking the steps we have enunciated above—in particular those aimed at 'selling' the alliance to the Japanese people—will do more in that regard than will this small deployment of American forces.

The key advantage of this strategy over the status quo is that it explicitly addresses the issue of public support in both countries, thus strengthening the relationship for the long term. Americans will not resent the relative economic losses in our relationship with Japan, and Japanese will recognize through the behavior and public

statements of their government the nature and scope of their commitments to the alliance, as well as the true costs of national security.

CHOOSING AN AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Each of these latter three options, plus the status quo, has attractions and difficulties. Washington cannot pick and choose among them by itself. It must consult with the regional powers to secure their support. If Japan is not willing to move towards a “Reconfigured Alliance,” then the United States should consult with other regional players to more fully consider the “Find another Friend” strategy. Once that is done, choosing between that strategy and the status quo can be more objectively considered. If both these seem unpalatable, the United States retains the expensive Stand Off force option. In the interim, we will be very fortunate indeed if the US-Japan alliance is not tested.