



Summary: Developments in the United States, in Japan, and in the Asia-Pacific region have combined to make this a time of transition for the U.S.-Japan alliance. To successfully navigate these challenges, Japan must not only foster a constructive relationship with the United States but also continue its efforts to strengthen and improve relationships with other U.S. allies and partners. The United States also will play an important role in helping the U.S.-Japan alliance evolve to meet the challenges it is likely to face.

The U.S.-Japan Alliance in a Time of Transition

by Sheena Chestnut Greitens and Caitlin Talmadge

Introduction

The United States and Japan are entering a period of transition in their decades-long alliance. For the alliance to endure and thrive, both parties will have to carefully navigate a range of difficult issues that lie ahead, working flexibly and in concert to ensure that these challenges serve as a basis for strengthening the two countries' partnership rather than driving them apart.

Several changes in the regional landscape have combined to make this a time of transition for the alliance. First is a shift in U.S. foreign policy: beginning in the fall of 2011, the Obama administration initiated its so-called "pivot" or rebalancing to East Asia. Many argue that the United States never left the Asia-Pacific and that the new policy is more rhetoric than reality. These observations have some merit, as the pivot seems as much about the United States' desire to end its involvement in land wars in the Middle East as about the changes occurring in Asia. And the exact contours of this policy, particularly given likely U.S. fiscal constraints, remain unclear, raising questions about the sustainability of any rebalancing. Nevertheless, the announce-

ment does signal a renewed U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military focus on the Asia-Pacific, an arena that many analysts and policymakers see as central to the United States' long-term power and prosperity.

This increased U.S. emphasis on Asia comes amidst major political changes within the region itself. China, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea all have undergone recent leadership transitions. The external implications of these internal shifts have yet to play out, but initial indicators suggest that the road ahead may not be easy. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has thus far proven as belligerent as his father, increasing the risk that the new president of South Korea, Park Geun-hye, will have to respond forcefully to increasingly dangerous threats from its neighbor. China under Xi Jinping appears committed to continuing its path of military modernization, as well as to an increasingly assertive stance in regional territorial disputes, especially with Japan.

Japan's own position in the region is undergoing change as well. The Abe administration and Japan's Liberal Democratic Party, which returned to

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power in December 2012, have begun to push for Japan to develop more robust self-defense capabilities. Their initiatives include increasing Japan's defense budget (which is comparatively low by global standards), rethinking Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (to be reissued later in 2013), and revising the limits on activities by Japan's Self-Defense Forces to allow for the evacuation of Japanese nationals from overseas crises and possibly participation in "collective self-defense."¹ Japan has also pursued a series of efforts with other Asian countries to promote regional security: developing a more robust security partnership with Australia, launching a strategic dialogue and joint maritime exercises with India, signing a fishing agreement with Taiwan, using its overseas development assistance program to sell patrol boats to the Philippines, and initiating discussions on maritime security cooperation with Vietnam.²

At the same time, the historical legacy of Japanese military power in the region remains highly sensitive. In recent months, a series of gaffes by right-wing Japanese politicians have sparked protests in several Asian countries. Opposition to Japan's efforts heightens regional tensions and places domestic limits on other countries' ability to cooperate with Japan, even in areas of common interest.

The United States should welcome Japan's efforts, especially at a time when fiscal constraints and public war weariness are placing limits on what the United States can do for its allies. Security and continued economic prosperity for all countries in Asia, however, requires smooth political relations among U.S. allies. In this context, the challenge for Japan is clear. Tokyo has to find ways to contribute to mutual security while avoiding needless provocation of nationalist sentiments among its neighbors. Although likely

1 Ian Easton and Randall Schriver, *Assessing Japan's National Defense: Toward a New Security Paradigm in the Asia-Pacific* (Washington: Project 2049 Institute, June 3, 2013); Kirk Spitzer, "Japan Looks to Protect its Own Overseas," *Time*, February 18, 2013, <http://nation.time.com/2013/02/18/japan-looks-to-protect-its-own-overseas/>; "Tensions Bolster Tokyo Military Bid," *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323361804578389372219613626.html>; "Abe Restarts Discussions on Collective Self-Defense Right," *The Asahi Shimbun*, February 9, 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201302090077.

2 "Japan, Vietnam To Hold Security Talks in May," *Kyodo*, April 15, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/15/national/japan-vietnam-to-hold-maritime-security-talks-in-may/>; "With Eye on China, Japan to Provide Patrol Boats to Philippines," *The Asahi Shimbun*, May 23, 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201305230042; "Japan-Taiwan Fishing Pact Takes Effect, But Rough Waters Lie Ahead," *The Asahi Shimbun*, May 11, 2013, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201305110065>; Center for a New American Security, *The Emerging Asia Power Web: The Rise of Bilateral Intra-Asian Security Ties* (Washington: CNAS, June 2013).

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to be difficult, managing such tensions will be central to ensuring future peace and stability in the region.

Below, we review Japan's relationships with three of its neighbors and identify potential challenges for the alliance. We then propose three areas in which the United States can play a constructive role in meeting these challenges: reassuring allies and partners to alleviate regional security dilemmas, balancing that reassurance with incentives for allied restraint and sound crisis management, and supporting allies' efforts to cooperate with one another, both bilaterally and through regional institutions.

Challenges Facing Japan and the Alliance

Three relationships are likely to be particularly challenging for the U.S.-Japan alliance in the near to medium term: Japan and South Korea, Japan and China, and Japan and Taiwan.

Japan and South Korea

Despite significant convergence between the two countries' security and economic interests, relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have been strained by a territorial dispute and historical issues related to Japanese colonial expansion in Asia during the first half of the 20th century. Mitigating these tensions and finding a way to prevent them from impeding economic and security cooperation should be a key priority.

On the territorial front, Seoul and Tokyo dispute who has sovereignty over a set of islands called Dokdo in Korean and Takeshima in Japanese. Ownership of Takeshima is generally not a nationalist cause in Tokyo, but Dokdo is in Seoul. Koreans see the islands as symbolic of Korea's exploitation and abuse at the hands of Japan in the early 20th

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century, and Japan's refusal to cede the islands represents the country's failure to come to terms with its tarnished history.³ Distrust has been strengthened by a series of recent missteps by Japanese politicians: inaccurate comments about women coerced into prostitution by the Japanese Imperial army; visits to the Yasukuni shrine that commemorates Japan's war dead; and military photo-ops that have brought back painful memories of World War II.⁴

As a result, South Korean presidents are under domestic pressure to stand up to Japan, and seemingly historical debates have concrete consequences for security and economic cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo.⁵ In the summer of 2012, for example, public outcry led to the cancellation of a valuable General Security of Military Information Agreement that would have facilitated intelligence cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo on the subject of North Korea, and the shelving of plans to pursue a similarly useful Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement.⁶ In April 2013, deputy prime minister Taro Aso's visit with other Japanese politicians to Yasukuni resulted in the cancellation of a visit by ROK Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se.

These tensions pose a major challenge for U.S. efforts in Asia. Korean distrust of potential Japanese militarism constrains Japan from developing its capabilities and considering alternative strategies against North Korea. Thus far, for example, Japan's deterrence of North Korea has been limited to "deterrence by denial" and reliance on missile defense, because the capabilities required for a "deterrence by punishment" strategy could be used for other ends and therefore raise far more concern among Japan's neighbors.

3 Japan has made some attempts at privately funded compensation and apology, but the Koreans have rejected these efforts as inadequate and insincere. Takashi Yokota, "Why Japan and South Korea Are Feuding Over a Cluster of Rocks," *Newsweek*, September 3, 2012, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2012/09/02/why-japan-and-south-korea-are-feuding-over-a-cluster-of-rocks.html>

4 Alastair Gale, "South Korean Media Blast Abe's Numerical Provocations," *Wall Street Journal: Korea Real Time*, May 15, 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2013/05/15/south-korean-media-blast-abes-numerical-provocations/>; "Japan and Its Neighbors: For Whom the Bell Tolls," *The Economist*, April 27, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21576724-visit-controversial-yasukuni-shrine-upsets-neighbours-whom-bell-tolls>

5 This may be especially true for former President Lee Myung-bak, who was born in Osaka, and current President Park Geun-hye, whose father served in the Japanese Imperial Army before becoming president and who normalized relations with Japan over popular protest in 1965.

6 Ralph A. Cossa, "Japan-South Korea Relations: Time To Open Both Eyes," Council on Foreign Relations, July 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/south-korea/japan-south-korea-relations-time-open-both-eyes/p28736>

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Feuding between two countries in alliance with the United States also weakens extended deterrence in Seoul and Tokyo by creating uncertainty about the extent to which each would provide support in a crisis that involved the other.

Japan and China

As with Japan-ROK ties, Japan's relationship with China is complicated by both territorial conflict and larger historical animosities. Much of the recent conflict between Japan and China has centered on the territorial dispute over the island chain called the Senkakus in Japanese and the Diaoyu islands in Chinese. Each side justifies its claim by appealing to different sets of historical evidence about discovery and ownership, as well as different data about the geographic placement of the islands.⁷ The islands were administered as part of Okinawa from 1945 onward, but in the late 1960s, discovery of possible hydrocarbon deposits in the area led to re-energized claims to sovereignty by both Taipei and Beijing.⁸ When the United States transferred control over Okinawa prefecture to Japan in 1972, it transferred administrative control of the islands as well, though at the time, Washington explicitly delinked administrative control from recognition of the title to sovereignty. Tensions over the islands have been high since 2010, when a Chinese fishing boat rammed Japanese Coast Guard vessels and its captain was detained by Japan. Frictions intensified in 2012-2013

7 Japan's claims to the islands hinge on its "discovery" of them in the late 19th century, when the Japanese empire gained control of Taiwan, and on their geographic proximity to Japan. Taiwan and China, on the other hand, view Japan's claims as the illegitimate result of imperial expansion (including its takeover of Taiwan in 1895), and base their historical claims on evidence dating back to at least the 1700s. They also point to the islands' placement on the Chinese continental shelf. See Joyman Lee, "Senkaku/Diaoyu: Islands of Conflict," *History Today*, Vol. 61, No. 5 (2011), <http://www.historytoday.com/joyman-lee/senkakudiaoyu-islands-conflict>; "The Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands: Narrative of an Empty Space," *The Economist*, December 22, 2012, online at <http://www.economist.com/news/christmas/21568696-behind-row-over-bunch-pacific-rocks-lies-sad-magical-history-okinawa-narrative>

8 Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, "The U.S. Role in the Sino-Japanese Dispute over the Diaoyu [Senkaku] Islands, 1945-1971," *China Quarterly*, No.161 (2000): pp. 102-115; Alan D. Romberg, "American Interests in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Issue, Policy Considerations," unpublished paper, April 11, 2013.

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with the Japanese government's purchase of three of the islands from a private owner, a move that led to increased Chinese patrols and serious military tensions in the area.⁹

Although the United States does not side with Japan's claim on sovereignty, it is committed by treaty to defending Japanese administrative control. Article V of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty states, "Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety" and would, in the event of an armed attack on those areas, "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes."¹⁰ This commitment — explicitly confirmed by the Obama administration — is one reason why Beijing holds the United States responsible for Japanese behavior with respect to the islands. Chinese scholars and officials spoke, for example, of the Japanese government's purchase of the islands in September 2012 as a U.S.-China issue, despite the fact that the United States had explicitly discouraged the purchase.¹¹

As in Korea, the territorial dispute tends to activate deep anti-Japanese feelings in China, grounded in the historical experience of resistance against Imperial Japan's invasion and occupation of the Chinese seaboard in the 1930s and 1940s. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) achieved its initial legitimacy largely on the claim that it had unified and strengthened China after this period of weakness and foreign domination, and nationalism, fostered by the post-1989 Patriotic Education Campaign, remains a major component of CCP legitimacy today.¹² Recent survey data have shown that the intensity and negativity of Chinese citizens' feelings toward Japan far exceed their attitudes toward any other country.¹³ In the aftermath of the Japanese government's purchase of the islands — viewed in China as

9 Sheila A. Smith, "A Sino-Japanese Clash in the East China Sea," Council on Foreign Relations Contingency Planning Memorandum, No. 18 (Washington: CFR, April 2013).

10 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States of America and Japan, January 19, 1960, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/japan/mutual_cooperation_treaty.pdf

11 "U.S. Warned Government Against Buying Senkaku Islands: Campbell," *Kyodo/Japan Times*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/10/national/u-s-warned-government-against-buying-senkaku-islands-campbell/#.UXmMc8o7ZVJ>

12 Suisheng Zhao, "A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (1998), pp. 287-302.

13 Peter Gries, "Disillusionment and Dismay: How Chinese Netizens Feel About the Twin Cities," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 12 (2012), pp. 31-56.

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"nationalization," and taking place shortly before the anniversary of Japan's invasion of Manchuria — protests erupted in over 80 cities in China, many of them violent.¹⁴

It is unclear whether the Chinese government still views anti-Japanese sentiment as something to be fostered to bolster its own internal legitimacy and increase its external bargaining power, or whether these sentiments genuinely constrain it from cooperation and push it toward confrontation. Either way, Beijing appeared to have decided that the purchase of the islands was a provocation requiring punishment, or at least "reactive assertiveness."¹⁵ In early 2013, Chinese officials spoke of a "new status quo" in the area that involved co-administration, and Chinese patrols have continued despite statements from the United States and Japan that opposed the use of coercive measures to change the status quo administrative practice.¹⁶ The lack of a code of conduct in disputed waters, coupled with the increased law enforcement and military presence and the absence of serious crisis control and communication measures, raises the risk that accidents, miscalculations, or deliberate actions could escalate to military conflict.

14 China watchers debate whether public hostility toward Japan is manufactured or inflamed by the government in order to bolster legitimacy and improve bargaining power, or whether it is a genuine expression of public opinion and a constraint on Chinese government efforts at cooperation. Our point is that regardless of the preferences of the Chinese government, once public opinion is inflamed, the domestic constraint it creates is real. See Ian Johnson and Thom Shanker, "Beijing Mixes Messages over Japan Protests," *New York Times*, September 16, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/world/asia/anti-japanese-protests-over-disputed-islands-continue-in-china.html>; Jessica Chen Weiss, "Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Popular Protest in China," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (2013), pp. 1-35; Peter Hayes Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

15 International Crisis Group, *Dangerous Waters: China-Japan Relations on the Rocks*, East Asia Report 245, (April 2013), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/north-east-asia/china/245-dangerous-waters-china-japan-relations-on-the-rocks.aspx>; Yaping Wang, "The Flawed Logic Behind Beijing's Senkaku/Diaoyu Policy," *The Diplomat*, May 16, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/china-power/the-flawed-logic-behind-beijings-senkakudiaoyu-policy/>

16 Koji Sonoda and Takashi Oshima, "U.S. Warns Against 'Coercive Action' Over Senkaku Issue," *The Asahi Shimbun*, April 30, 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201304300129

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Japan and Taiwan

Japan's relations with Taiwan are, at present, relatively smooth. The current lack of tension, however, is the result of careful diplomacy and should not be taken for granted. Taipei also claims sovereignty for the Republic of China over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands, and in early 2013, it was behavior from Taiwan that many U.S. officials were concerned about — namely, the risk that fishermen setting off for Diaoyu would trigger an incident and push the three capitals toward more hardline positions. Tokyo and Taipei's signing of a fishing agreement in April 2013, reportedly over Beijing's objections, was therefore received with relief.¹⁷ The deal postponed disagreements over sovereignty, but allowed Taiwan fishermen within the 12-mile limit. It thus removed the most likely source of direct conflict between Taiwan and Japan, while benefitting the Taiwan economy and decreasing the likelihood that Taipei would side with Beijing against a U.S. ally, Japan. In combination with Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou's East China Sea Peace Initiative,¹⁸ which calls for the temporary shelving of sovereignty disputes to focus on developing a code of conduct in disputed areas, Taiwan-Japan relations are currently among the least fractious of Northeast Asia's bilateral relations.

Nevertheless, concerns remain. President Ma is under domestic pressure; poor economic performance and low approval ratings create incentives for him to adopt more hardline nationalist stances on sovereignty.¹⁹ (His doctoral work in law at Harvard, which focused on sovereignty in the East China Sea, also likely convinced him of the validity of these claims.²⁰) The recent Taiwan-Philippines conflict over the Philippine Coast Guard's shooting of a Taiwan fisherman, in which early sympathies for Taiwan decreased with the Ma government's refusal to accept Philippine

apologies,²¹ suggests that pressure for Ma to stand up has been temporarily muted, not permanently removed.

The Role of the United States

Although complete resolution is unrealistic in the short term, the United States can still play a positive role in helping to manage the contentious issues facing its East Asian allies and partners. Below, we identify three areas in which U.S. policymakers can act constructively to promote peace and stability in East Asia during this time of transition.

Alleviate Regional Security Dilemmas by Reassuring Allies

First, U.S. presence in the region can continue to play a vital role in alleviating security tensions. Regional discord is real, but conflict among China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Koreas likely would be far more intense in the absence of long-standing U.S. security guarantees.

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By backstopping Japan's, South Korea's, and Taiwan's defenses, the United States lessens the need for these states to build up their militaries in ways that might seem threatening to neighbors. It also reduces incentives for them to go to war pre-emptively: no state wants to absorb the first blow in a conflict, but those with a U.S. security guarantee can feel more confident in their ability to deter aggression, or to survive and respond in the event that such an

17 David Cohen, "Japan and Taiwan's Senkakus Play," *The Diplomat*, April 13, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/china-power/japan-and-taiwans-senkakus-play/>; James R. Holmes, "Three Reasons to Applaud Taiwan-Japan Fishing Accord," *The Diplomat*, April 15, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/the-naval-diplomat/2013/04/15/3-reasons-to-applaud-taiwan-japan-fishing-accord/>

18 "East China Sea Initiative," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/EnOfficial/Topics/TopicsIndex/?opno=cc7f748f-f55f-4eeb-91b4-cf4a28bbb86f>

19 Daniel Ten Kate and Yu-Huay Sun, "Taiwan Directs Anger at Philippines as Ma Frustration Simmers," *Bloomberg*, May 17, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-05-17/taiwan-directs-anger-at-philippines-as-ma-frustration-simmers.html>

20 For Ma's statement on the islands, see "President Ma Visits Pengjia Islet," Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), September 7, 2012, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=28074&rmid=2355&ed=2012/09/05&ed=2012/09/07>

21 J. Michael Cole, "How Taiwan Bungled the Philippine Crisis," *The Diplomat*, May 21, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2013/05/21/how-taiwan-bungled-the-philippine-crisis/>

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attack happens. By creating these incentives for restraint, the United States reduces the likelihood that tensions will escalate into wars.²²

This is not a new role for the United States, in Asia or elsewhere. A similar logic governed U.S. alliances in Cold War Europe: U.S. policy was not simply about countering the Soviets but also about creating safe conditions for cooperation among NATO members. U.S. security guarantees were vital to finally stamping out the Franco-German rivalry that had resulted in three devastating wars during the period 1870-1945. Admittedly, true reconciliation and integration require motivated allies and even then can take decades. The European experience also suggests, however, that an umbrella of protection from an outside actor makes these efforts far more likely to succeed.

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In the current East Asian context, there is more to making allies feel secure than U.S. forward military presence, though that is important. Joint military exercises, both bilateral (between the United States and an ally) and multilateral (involving the United States and multiple allies), are an important means of demonstrating U.S. capabilities and resolve to act in the region — both to U.S. allies and to other observers. The June 2012 U.S.-Japan-ROK naval drills exemplify this approach in action.²³

Such efforts generate opportunities for training allied militaries, sharing skills, and improving interoperability, which often depends as much on coordinating tactics and harmonizing communication as on acquiring common hardware. These activities have the added benefit of encouraging U.S. allies to do more to provide for their own security, while enabling the United States to shape the development of such capabilities so that they do not needlessly threaten neighbors. Balancing these dueling imperatives points directly

²² Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009-10), pp. 158-196.

²³ Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia* (Washington: CSIS, August 2012), p. 8.

to a second area in which the United States can play a constructive role in the region: fostering the right kinds of restraint.

Encourage Restraint during Crises and Avoid Emboldening Allies

Reassurance, while important, does not mean writing blank checks. Although the United States should seek to make its friends feel more secure, it should also guard against providing over-broad guarantees that embolden allies to behave provocatively with the expectation that the United States will defend them even when core U.S. interests are not at stake.

U.S. media reports commonly refer to the territories disputed by U.S. allies in Asia as "a bunch of abandoned rocks." This characterization is flippant, but it rings true for most Americans, who perceive no core interests at stake in these disagreements. The United States' fundamental interest is the maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region; at a basic level, it makes no difference to the United States whether Japan or South Korea have sovereignty over the Dokdo/Takeshima islands, or whether Japan, Taiwan, or China have sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu/Diaoyutai islands. What matters is that the sovereignty claims be resolved peacefully, in ways that do not undermine broader regional stability and political relationships.

As Alan Romberg has noted, U.S. policy needs to emphasize that the United States is neutral on questions of sovereignty but not neutral on the use of force.²⁴ In other words, the United States cares much more about the process than the substance of any resolution of these issues. U.S. diplomats should continue to emphasize these realities, and U.S. security assistance and guarantees should be contingent upon allied recognition of them.

The U.S. stance on Taiwan exemplifies how this approach could work in practice. The United States has made clear that it will defend Taiwan in the event that it is attacked by China but that Taiwan can expect no help in the event that it declares independence or takes other provocative actions that invite conflict with the mainland. U.S. policy thus backstops Taiwan's security and deters China from aggression but also creates strong incentives for Taiwan to refrain

²⁴ Romberg, "American Interests," p. 8.

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from challenging the status quo in ways that might lead to conflict. The last ten years have seen increasing marginalization of pro-independence parties in Taiwan's domestic politics, as well as growing economic and cultural integration with mainland China, suggesting that Taiwan's voters see the benefits of the status quo. Cross-strait relations are not "resolved," but they are stable and peaceful.

The United States should employ a similar approach in its position on Japan's territorial disputes: the United States will guarantee fundamental Japanese security, but will not support aggressive or offensive assertions of Japanese sovereignty. This was more or less the message behind Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's warning that the United States would oppose "any unilateral actions that would seek to undermine Japanese administration" of the Senkakus.²⁵

Tellingly, this statement satisfied neither China nor Japan. Chinese viewed it as evidence that the United States was "taking sides," while Japanese made the opposite complaint: that the United States has not done enough to support Japanese sovereignty claims.²⁶ This is exactly as it should be. Washington should want Beijing to worry that forceful attempts to end Japanese administration of the islands may engage U.S. treaty obligations to defend Japan. Washington also should want Tokyo to worry that if it moves aggressively to do more than administer the islands, it may find itself alone and without U.S. backing in an escalating crisis with a powerful neighbor. Where both parties perceive more to lose than gain from the use of force, peace and stability are likely to prevail.

Foster Opportunities for Improved Relations among Allies

Lastly, the United States has a role to play in fostering opportunities for its allies to improve their relationships with one another. Most of this will depend on U.S. allies' own choices, and the United States' ability to nudge them in a cooperative direction will be limited. For example, U.S. diplomats can emphasize to Japanese counterparts behind closed doors that inflammatory statements and actions invoking the legacy of Imperial Japan are unhelpful to the

25 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "Remarks With Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After Their Meeting," January 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2013/01/203050.htm>

26 Brad Glosserman and David Santoro, "Toward the Next "Strengthening" Agenda: the U.S.-Japan Alliance in Search of a Vision," *Issues & Insights*, Vol. 13, No. 5 (CSIS Pacific Forum, February 2013).

The United States has a role to play in fostering opportunities for its allies to improve their relationships with one another.

alliance and counterproductive for Japan's security. The roots of such behavior and reactions to it, however, lie in the domestic politics of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China, which the United States is not in a position to influence.

What the United States can do is foster opportunities for its allies to discuss these issues candidly. The Cold War experience in Europe suggests that external security guarantees in the face of a mutual and highly threatening adversary can go a long way toward reconciling former combatants. Similarly, when changes in Asia's Cold War security environment demanded closer cooperation, U.S. policymakers were able to advocate more effectively for the normalization of ROK-Japan relations in the mid-1960s, a step that had economic and security advantages for both sides.²⁷ Today, when domestic politics push Asian allies to focus on their differences, U.S. diplomacy can draw their attention to areas of common challenge and mutual benefit.

These measures could take a number of forms. Arranging for dialogue among its partners on issues such as economic policy, climate change, or nuclear safety could provide important openings to lessen tension, build transparency, and increase confidence. The United States also might consider hosting security-focused meetings centered on the common threat of North Korea, which Japanese defense officials describe as "a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan" and one of the principal factors contributing to the recent deterioration of Japan's security environment. The June 2013 trilateral security statement issued by the defense ministers of the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan — reportedly at the instigation of the United States — is a positive step in the effort to focus on common contemporary interests and a potential model moving forward.²⁸ U.S. lead-

27 Victor D. Cha, "Bridging the Gap: the Strategic Context of the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization Treaty," *Korean Studies*, Vol. 20 (1996), pp. 123-160.

28 "Joint Statement of the Japan, Republic of Korea, United States Defense Ministerial Talks," June 1, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=16054>

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ership on discussion of common dangers may lead Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, among others, to look beyond past differences and emphasize areas of future cooperation.

Conclusions and Implications

Developments in the United States, in Japan, and in the Asia-Pacific region have combined to make this a time of transition for the U.S.-Japan alliance. To successfully navigate these challenges, Japan must not only foster a constructive relationship with the United States but also continue its efforts to strengthen and improve relationships with other U.S. allies and partners. The United States also will play an important role in helping the U.S.-Japan alliance evolve to meet the challenges it is likely to face. In particular, U.S. policymakers can reassure allies and partners, alleviate regional security dilemmas, balance reassurance with restraint and sound crisis management, and support its friends' efforts to cooperate with one another, both bilaterally and through regional institutions. Doing so will help ensure the continued health of the U.S.-Japan alliance as it enters its seventh decade.

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The Young Strategists Forum aims to develop a new generation of strategic thinkers in the United States, Europe, and Asia through a combination of seminars, simulations, and study tours. The project is led by transatlantic fellow Daniel M. Kliman with non-resident senior fellow Aaron Friedberg serving as faculty. The first Young Strategists Forum was convened in Japan with the support of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. This initiative is part of GMF's Asia Program, which addresses the implications of Asia's rise for the West through a combination of convening, writing, strategic grants, study tours, fellowships, and partnerships with other institutions.

About GMF

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) strengthens transatlantic cooperation on regional, national, and global challenges and opportunities in the spirit of the Marshall Plan. GMF does this by supporting individuals and institutions working in the transatlantic sphere, by convening leaders and members of the policy and business communities, by contributing research and analysis on transatlantic topics, and by providing exchange opportunities to foster renewed commitment to the transatlantic relationship. In addition, GMF supports a number of initiatives to strengthen democracies. Founded in 1972 as a non-partisan, non-profit organization through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has offices in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, Bucharest, Warsaw, and Tunis. GMF also has smaller representations in Bratislava, Turin, and Stockholm.

About The Sasakawa Peace Foundation

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) is a private non-profit organization established in September 1986. It seeks to contribute to the welfare of humanity and the sound development of international community, and thus to world peace, through activities that foster international interaction and cooperation.