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Greater Security Cooperation: US Allies in Europe and East Asia

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ABSTRACT: Growing Sino-Russian coordination necessitates greater security cooperation between US Allies in Europe and East Asia. US Allies in both regions face remarkably similar threats requiring similar operational concepts, capabilities, and technologies. Further, these Allies must hedge against the specter of US abandonment. An exploration of the links between the two geographically distant US Alliance networks illustrates the Allies' perspectives on US extended deterrence and highlights opportunities to devise better policies for cooperation.

Over the last decade, strategic links between East Asia and Europe have grown rapidly. Consequently, the analysis and management of US Alliances require an interregional perspective that explicitly assesses the connections between the security and geopolitical dynamics in both regions. As they have in the past, US Alliances must play a central role in today's era of renewed great-power competition.¹ After all, one of the advantages the United States enjoys vis-à-vis either China or Russia is its possession of a strongly institutionalized alliance system. If the United States and its Allies remain complacent, however, China and Russia could coordinate to divide US attention and resources and drive wedges within and between existing US Alliances.

Leveraging synergies between US Alliances in both regions would benefit the United States in the context of its competition with Russia and China. But this is not a debate confined to Washington. America's European and East Asian Allies must proactively engage in interregional dialogues to remain cohesive in the face of greater Sino-Russian coordination and to counter skepticism in the United States about the value of Alliances.

The Stage

On July 23, 2019, Russia and China jointly flew warplanes near island clusters called Dokdo in South Korea and Takeshima in Japan respectively, driving a wedge between two US Allies that dispute the

1. Elbridge A. Colby and A. Wess Mitchell, "The Age of Great-Power Competition: How the Trump Administration Refashioned American Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 1 (January/February 2020): 118–30.

sovereignty over these islands.² And security coordination between Moscow and Beijing is not limited to East Asia: in July 2017, China's People's Liberation Army Navy and the Russian Navy participated in a joint exercise in the Baltic Sea.³ According to a Chinese military expert, China and Russia "need to lean on each other for support to deal with hostilities from different fronts."⁴ In January 2019, then US Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats told Congress, "China and Russia are more aligned than at any point since the mid-1950s, and the relationship is likely to strengthen in the coming year as some of their interests and threat perceptions converge."⁵

Moreover, the Biden-Harris administration's references to a global struggle between democracy and authoritarianism implicitly assume an alignment between Russia and China and thus lower expectations Washington will try to create fissures between the two nations.⁶ Indeed, the Biden White House's *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* alludes to the fact that Russia and China represent a threat to US Allies and interests in the critical regions of Europe and the Indo-Pacific.⁷ The prospect of deeper security coordination between those two powers in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and elsewhere threatens to complicate America's global strategic picture.

In contrast, US Allies in Europe and Asia continue to display rather tenuous security ties, despite repeated promises of further cooperation. For decades, these distant groupings of US Allies have enjoyed a quasi-alliance with each other, a term used by some scholars to designate the relationship between those states who share alliance ties with a common third party but not with each other.⁸ Despite such long-standing quasi-alliance ties, US Allies in Europe and East Asia have had a limited security interaction with each other due to resource scarcity, geographical distance, and the need to prioritize threats in their respective regions.⁹ Yet US European and East Asian Allies now

2. Brad Lendon, "Why Russia and China Are Wading into a Centuries' Old Dispute over a Tiny Island Cluster," CNN, updated July 27, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/26/asia/south-korea-russia-japan-china-warplanes-analysis-intl-hnk/index.html>.

3. Richard Weitz, "Assessing the Sino-Russian Baltic Sea Drill," *China Brief* 17, no. 12, Jamestown Foundation, September 20, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/assessing-the-sino-russian-baltic-sea-drill/>.

4. Ni Lexiong quoted in Tommy Yang, "Strategy Behind China Joining Russia 'on NATO Doorsteps' in Baltic Sea," Sputnik News, July 21, 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/politics/201707211055763714-china-drills-russia-baltic-sea/>.

5. Daniel R. Coats, *Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community* (Washington, DC: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2019), 4, <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf>.

6. Joseph R. Biden Jr., "America's Place in the World" (remarks, US Department of State Headquarters, Washington, DC, February 4, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>.

7. Joseph R. Biden Jr., *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: White House, March 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

8. Victor D. Cha, *Alignment despite Antagonism: The US-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

9. Stephan Frühling, "'Key to the Defense of the Free World': The Past, Present and Future Relevance of NATO for US Allies in the Asia-Pacific," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 2019): 238–54.

have good reasons to develop more robust security relationships with each other. At least three sets of interrelated developments underscore this point.

The first development, already mentioned, relates to improving security cooperation between China and Russia.¹⁰ Greater coordination in security policies can allow these two powers to maintain a cohesive front, outflank the United States, and undermine the security of America's European and East Asian Allies. Notably, through arms transfers and greater military coordination, Russia and China have strengthened each other's capabilities, while mutually learning from best technological and operational practices.

Moreover, Russia and China appear to be engaging in coordinated probing in Europe and East Asia, executing incremental, self-restrained actions designed to test the reactions of the United States and its Allies and better gauge the boundaries of their freedom of action while staying below the threshold of traditional military activity.¹¹ Coordinated Sino-Russian actions against US interests and Allies in Europe and East Asia could force Washington into a long and resource-draining two-flank competition and compel it to make difficult choices. Such coordinated activities could lead to tensions between the United States and its Allies regarding which threats to prioritize, but could also lead to tensions between US Allies in the two regions as they compete for US resources and attention.

The second development pertains to the similarity of the regional threats US Allies in Europe and East Asia face. Through their advances in precision strike and missile modernization programs, Russia and China seek to undermine the local military balance in northeastern Europe and in the Western Pacific. Relatedly, as they strengthen their local military positions relative to that of the United States and foster the perception they may enjoy local military superiority in certain parts of Europe or the Western Pacific, Moscow and Beijing can more confidently engage in nontraditional forms of probing. Conceptually, US Allies in Europe and East Asia face a similar problem, namely, how to counter the threat posed by Russian and Chinese military modernization and hybrid or gray-zone activities. To address such similar threats, US Allies must draw on similar operational concepts, capabilities, and technologies, which will reveal opportunities for collaboration.

The third development concerns persistent uncertainty about US security commitments to either region. This problem became particularly pressing in the face of US President Donald Trump's "America First" vision and mixed signals about the value of Alliances.¹² Even under the Biden-Harris administration, recovering the damaged trust in

10. Alexander Korolev, "How Closely Aligned Are China and Russia? Measuring Strategic Cooperation in IR," *International Politics* 57 (2020): 760–89.

11. Jakub J. Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

12. Mira Rapp Hooper, "Saving America's Alliances: The United States Still Needs the System That Put It on Top," *Foreign Affairs* 99, no. 2 (March/April 2020).

US Alliances will require the efforts of all parties to those Alliances. Although the Biden-Harris administration has put Alliances at the center of its foreign policy, US Allies cannot rule out the possibility of a less Alliance-friendly president in the future.

Concerns about US security commitments also include questions about how the United States will prioritize between Europe and East Asia at a time when America faces two great-power challengers simultaneously, and when the power gap it enjoyed during the so-called unipolar era appears to be diminishing.¹³ The specter of US retrenchment from their regions incentivizes Allies to hedge, either by investing in strengthening their own autonomy or diversifying their portfolio of security partnerships.¹⁴ Greater ties with each other can be part of that package. To be sure, such ties cannot be seen as an adequate alternative to their existing Alliances with the United States, because no group of countries can match US power-projection capabilities. Rather, these ties can strengthen the bargaining position of Allies in both regions vis-à-vis the United States and can hedge against uncertainty surrounding the future of US foreign policy.

Similarities

US Allies in Europe and East Asia are part of an extended deterrence success story. Although adversaries have conducted large-scale military attacks against countries with close security ties to the United States—South Korea in 1950, Taiwan in 1954, and Pakistan in the Indo-Pakistani Wars—there appears to be no such attack against a US Ally protected by an *applicable* defense obligation of the United States.¹⁵

The two regions also present important similarities in terms of their threat environments. One common feature relates to the threat posed by theater-range missiles and the proliferation of anti-access/area-denial capabilities. This concern becomes particularly pressing following the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: progress in fielding theater-range missiles and anti-access/area-denial capabilities is enabling Russia and China to behave more aggressively. In this context, US Allies in Europe and East Asia face a similar conceptual problem—how to counter an impending missile challenge through enhanced missile defense capabilities, which includes

13. Linde Desmaele and Luis Simón, “East Asia First, Europe Second: Picking Regions in US Grand Strategy,” *War on the Rocks*, August 7, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/08/east-asia-first-europe-second-picking-regions-in-u-s-grand-strategy/>.

14. Sven Biscop, “Letting Europe Go Its Own Way: The Case for Strategic Autonomy,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 6, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-07-06/letting-europe-go-its-own-way>; and Yogesh Joshi, *India-Japan-Australia Minilateral: The Promise and Perils of Balancing Locally*, Observer Research Foundation (ORF) Occasional Paper 114 (New Delhi, India: ORF, May 2017), 1–22.

15. Tongfi Kim, “U.S. Trans-Pacific and Trans-Atlantic Alliances: A Comparison,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, January 6, 2019, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2019/01/06/trans-pacific-and-trans-atlantic-alliances>.

weighing the pros and cons of deploying theater-range missiles to deter Russian and Chinese aggression.¹⁶

And even if they may not go so far as launching a direct attack on US Allies, Russia's or China's missile and military buildup could give them the confidence to engage more aggressively in hybrid or gray-zone forms of warfare.¹⁷ Precisely because US extended deterrence has been so successful in preventing armed conflicts, China and Russia now engage in hybrid or gray-zone tactics, which are aggressive but aimed to avoid triggering military retaliation. Russia's "Little Green Men" have infiltrated Ukraine since 2014, while China's "Little Blue Men" have advanced Chinese interests in the South and East China Seas.¹⁸ As US Alliances were originally designed with large-scale armed aggression in mind, such hybrid or gray-zone tactics leave uncertainty about how these Alliances can cope with them.¹⁹ The link between traditional military threats and nontraditional ones is therefore concerning for US Allies in both regions.

The challenges China and Russia pose to US Allies in East Asia and Europe is further compounded by growing Sino-Russian cooperation. Such cooperation has grown steadily in the post-Cold War era, and the two former adversaries now appear to be aligned strategically.²⁰ In particular, periodic joint exercises, staff exchanges, and arms sales point to an increasingly institutionalized military cooperation. Russian arms sales and technology have played an important part in the development of Chinese anti-access/area-denial capabilities. More broadly, Russia and China appear to be learning from each other's best practices in hybrid forms of warfare.²¹

As a function of this strategic military cooperation, simultaneous probing by China and Russia of US Allies and interests in East Asia and Europe could help disperse US resources and thus maximize the chances of success for Beijing and Moscow. More broadly, Sino-Russian diplomatic and economic cooperation may also create an effective wedge against US Alliances. By working together, China and Russia could reduce the negative repercussions of their actions in the East and South China Seas or Ukraine, respectively, and also sabotage western efforts outside East Asia and Europe, as the situation in Syria shows. To

16. See Jacob Cohn et al., *Leveling the Playing Field: Reintroducing US Theater-Range Missiles in a Post-INF World* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), <https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/leveling-the-playing-field-reintroducing-us-theater-range-missiles-in-a-post-inf-world/publication/1>; and Luis Simón and Alexander Lanoszka, "The Post-INF European Missile Balance: Thinking about NATO's Deterrence Strategy," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 12–30.

17. Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January 2016): 175–95.

18. Christopher P. Cavalas, "China's 'Little Blue Men' Take Navy's Place in Disputes," *Defense News*, November 2, 2015, <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2015/11/03/chinas-little-blue-men-take-navys-place-in-disputes/>.

19. Michael M. Bosack, "Ameliorating the Alliance Dilemma in an Age of Gray-Zone Conflict: Lessons Learned from the US-Japan Alliance," *Naval War College Review* 73, no. 4 (2020): 45–66, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8145&context=nwc-review>.

20. Korolev, "Closely Aligned."

21. Grygiel and Mitchell, *Unquiet Frontier*.

the extent the credibility of US military protection is interconnected in different parts of the world, China and Russia could also work together to erode Allies' confidence in US extended deterrence.

Finally, a worsening regional threat environment brings back fears of abandonment among US Allies in both Europe and East Asia.²² Such fears are perhaps further compounded both by the aforementioned America First doctrine and by the fact that the need to deal with great-power challengers on multiple fronts may force the United States to prioritize the other region. Indeed, Trump openly questioned the value of US Alliances and demanded all Allies increase their financial payments to the United States.²³ In the late 2019 negotiations with South Korea on defense cost-sharing, for example, the United States reportedly demanded a fivefold increase, although this demand was subsequently dropped.²⁴

Trump also questioned the US commitment to NATO's collective defense and demanded NATO Allies increase defense spending.²⁵ US pressure on its Allies for economic concessions or increased defense spending was by no means a new phenomenon, but these recent demands were more serious because they were combined with a contempt for the value of US Alliances. Even as the Biden-Harris administration seeks to rebuild failing Alliances, Allies can no longer take such commitments for granted.

Differences

Beyond the well-known distinction between the multilateral NATO and bilateral Alliances in East Asia, there are important differences in how US Allies relate to regional threats. First, US European Allies are relatively economically self-reliant. Even though there is some degree of dependence on Russia, such dependence is confined to the hydrocarbon sector, which appears to be decreasing and is mutual—Russia is badly in need of European markets, investments, and technology.²⁶ Thus the degree of economic interaction and interdependence European Allies have with the United States far outweighs their dealings with Russia. In contrast, the economies of America's East Asian Allies are deeply intertwined with China, which has become the economic center of

22. Victor D. Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 2000): 261–91.

23. Zack Beauchamp, "How Trump Is Killing America's Alliances," Vox, June 12, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/6/12/17448866/trump-south-korea-alliance-trudeau-g7>.

24. Bloomberg, "US Drops Demand for Fivefold Hike in South Korea Troop-Funding Bill, Report Says," *Japan Times*, December 26, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/12/26/asia-pacific/us-drops-south-korea-fivefold-demand/#.XhG61FVKiUk>.

25. Jeremy Shapiro, "Trump's Meaningless NATO Spending Debate," *Order from Chaos* (blog), Brookings Institution, July 9, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/09/trumps-meaningless-nato-spending-debate/>.

26. European Commission, "Russia," European Commission, last updated May 20, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/russia/>.

gravity in the region.²⁷ The interests of the East Asian Allies to preserve good economic relations with China may at times undermine the cohesion of America's Alliances in East Asia.

Another interregional difference lies in the geographic characteristics of the two theaters. Whereas US Allies in East Asia face China's military challenges at sea over maritime territorial disputes, European Allies confront primarily land-based military threats from Russia.²⁸ In the military component of its rebalance to Asia, therefore, the Obama administration emphasized increased investment in the Navy.²⁹

Aside from different military requirements, the geographical differences are likely to produce different political challenges for the Alliances. Because maritime borders and territories tend to be far from metropolitan areas and have few residents, disputants may have a more difficult time justifying military conflict for their claims or, alternatively, believe escalation is easier to control than it is on land. For the United States, for example, it may seem absurd to fight a war against China over uninhabited islands, even though the US government has repeatedly confirmed the US-Japan security treaty applies to the Senkaku Islands.³⁰ For China, in turn, occupying the Senkaku Islands probably appears to be less provocative and dangerous than invading densely populated Taiwan.

Finally, unlike NATO's relatively clear-cut competitive relations with Russia, some US Alliances in East Asia are ostensibly targeted against North Korea, which is dangerous and nuclear armed but not nearly as powerful as China. In fact, the United States and its regional Allies have seen China as a potential partner to help address the challenge posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons development. If North Korea ceases to present a significant threat to Japan and to South Korea, US Alliances with these two countries will require significant political adjustments. Meanwhile, NATO is expected to play an important role in counterterrorism and geopolitics in the Middle East and North Africa. Although these new missions increase the importance of NATO, especially to the United States, they can also create friction among Allies, as was seen at the time of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

Perceived Links

Connections between US Alliances in Europe and East Asia may not be apparent at first glance, but they do exist and can have a

27. Evan A. Feigenbaum and Robert A. Manning, "A Tale of Two Asias: In the Battle for Asia's Soul, Which Side Will Win—Security or Economics?," *Foreign Policy*, October 31, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/10/31/a-tale-of-two-asias/>.

28. Mira Rapp Hooper, "Uncharted Waters: Extended Deterrence and Maritime Disputes," *Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 127–46.

29. Robert G. Sutter et al., *Balancing Acts: The US Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability*, Elliott School of International Affairs and Sigur Center for Asian Studies (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 2013).

30. Tongfi Kim, *US Alliance Obligations in the Disputes in the East and South China Seas: Issues of Applicability and Interpretations*, PRIF Report, no. 141 (Frankfurt, Germany: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2016): 1–34.

meaningful impact on the strategic calculations of US Allies in each region—and even on the United States itself. When new developments create uncertainty about US policy, with potential implications for the United States’ reputation as an Ally or the allocation of US military resources, the Allies pay close attention to situations in distant regions.

Moreover, as the United States prepares for global competition with China, Washington has been paving the road for interregional cooperation between US Allies. For example, a recent expert group report to the NATO secretary general argues China is “best understood as a full-spectrum systemic rival, rather than a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor,” and asserts “NATO must devote much more time, political resources and action to the security challenges posed by China.”³¹

Two somewhat contradictory interregional connections are particularly important for US Alliances. First, US Allies in both regions are affected by the reputation of the United States as a military protector.³² Insofar as reputation is a global commodity, all US Allies have reasons to support the reputation of the United States—the credibility of US extended deterrence helps guarantee their own security. Yet US military resources, including policymakers’ attention, are limited, resulting in an inevitable trade-off between what the United States can commit to in East Asia and in Europe.

Thus, just as the Obama administration’s rebalance to Asia or the Trump administration’s emphasis on competition with China provoked uneasiness among European Allies about the sustainability of Washington’s commitment to Europe, America’s reengagement with Europe after Russia’s annexation of Crimea led to questions in Asia about the future of the alleged rebalance. In this regard, the complementary and competitive relations between the two regions are an important background to any interregional collaboration among the Allies.

Beyond these important but abstract connections, what can the United States and its Allies gain from greater interregional cooperation? Arguably the most important contributions America’s European and East Asian Allies can provide to each other’s security are indirect. In a context defined by resource scarcity and a worsening threat environment in Europe and East Asia, the United States would prefer its Allies concentrate their defense resources and efforts in their respective regions. In this vein, US experts and policymakers often argue the most efficient way to use the resources and capabilities of America’s European Allies is to deter Russia and provide security in their own continent—and

31. NATO Reflection Group, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era* (Brussels: NATO, November 25, 2020), 27–28, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf.

32. Hal Brands, Eric S. Edelman, and Thomas G. Mahnken, *Credibility Matters: Strengthening American Deterrence in an Age of Geopolitical Turmoil* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2018), <https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/credibility-matters-strengthening-american-deterrence-in-an-age-of-geopolit/publication/1>.

its immediate neighborhood—thus relieving Washington of its burden there as it prioritizes Asia and the Indo-Pacific region.³³ The same logic applies in relation to America's East Asian Allies, whom the United States would rather have focus on deterring China in the Western Pacific.³⁴

America's European Allies would also derive important indirect benefits if East Asian Allies were to step up their defense and security efforts, and vice versa. From a European perspective, perhaps the most useful contribution East Asian Allies can make is to increase their own military capabilities while also reducing tensions with China. Likewise, East Asian Allies would very much appreciate a greater European defense effort, which could free up US resources badly needed in East Asia.³⁵ East Asian Allies would also welcome a de-escalation between the West and Russia—perceived to be a relevant stakeholder in Asian security.³⁶ From their viewpoint, the more conflictual the relationship between the United States and Russia is, the more of a spoiler attitude Moscow may adopt in East Asia, for example, by closing ranks with China on North Korea and other issues.

Even though America's European and East Asian Allies focus their efforts on their respective regions, the fact they face similar military-strategic problems offers opportunities for a structured security dialogue. Missile defense is one such area. Both sets of allies face the problem of proliferation of theater-range missiles and the challenges of addressing this threat through a combination of US support, the development of indigenous missile defense capabilities, and the development and deployment of theater-range missiles.³⁷ Another opportunity relates to countering hybrid warfare and related problems such as cybersecurity or disinformation.³⁸

Through a more structured dialogue, America's European and East Asian Allies could learn best practices from each other in missile defense or hybrid threat countermeasures—including questions relating to divisions of labor with the United States—and even cooperate in research and technology. In this vein, the *NATO 2030: United for a New Era* report argues the Alliance should “deepen cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners, including by strengthening information-sharing and creating regularised dialogues on technological cooperation and pooling of R&D in select fields.”³⁹

To be sure, America's European and East Asian Allies can *directly* contribute to each other's security in a number of ways. Through the

33. Interviews with multiple US defense officials in Washington, DC, and Brussels, Belgium, September 2018–April 2019; and Barry Pavel and Jeffrey Lightfoot, “The Transatlantic Bargain after ‘the Pivot,’” Issue Brief, Atlantic Council, March 22, 2012, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/the-transatlantic-bargain-after-the-pivot/>.

34. Interview with US defense official, February 23, 2018.

35. Interviews with multiple Japanese and Australian officials, November 2019–March 2020.

36. Interview with Japanese defense official in Tokyo, January 15, 2020.

37. Jacob Cohn et al., *Leveling the Playing Field*.

38. Interviews with multiple Japanese, Australian, South Korean, and NATO officials, September 2018–March 2020.

39. *NATO 2030*, 15.

European Union's arms embargo against China, the steady flow of high-quality European weapons systems to East Asia, and engagement in defense cooperation with key US Allies and partners in the region such as Japan, Australia, and Vietnam, European Allies are contributing to the security of East Asian Allies, and the advancement of US strategic objectives in that region.⁴⁰

Another important direct contribution to security relates to diplomatic support in the face of political disputes. Having support from Allies beyond the scope of any given region adds legitimacy to US foreign policy, reinforcing its aspiration to frame the US position as grounded in global rules and norms. In this regard, the support from Japan and other East Asian Allies in denouncing Russia's annexation of Crimea or that of European Allies in denouncing Chinese actions in the South China Sea represents an important legitimacy boost.⁴¹ Arguably, the most practical assistance East Asian Allies can expect from European Allies is diplomatic and political support. For instance, European diplomatic support is important for Japan on issues such as North Korea's nuclear weapons development and territorial disputes with China.⁴² Diplomatic and political support from European Allies makes it easier for East Asian Allies to frame certain problems (for example, territorial disputes with China or North Korea's nuclear program) as threats to the rules-based international order, rather than merely a by-product of power politics.

Last but not least, since China is expanding its influence, mostly through geo-economic tools and the creation of an economic hierarchy in Asia, it is also important for East Asian Allies to receive European assistance in countering China's economic influence attempts. Until recently, China's power-projection capabilities were limited, and Beijing's leverage over other states derived mostly from its economic clout rather than its ability to either threaten or protect other states. As the debate over membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank or the debate over Huawei's role in 5G networks illustrates, China can resort to divide-and-rule tactics vis-à-vis US Allies in both regions.

Conclusion

America's European and East Asian Allies are far away from each other, but their links with the United States generate important geopolitical crossovers between regions. These nexuses become increasingly apparent as the threat by Russia and China to US regional Allies intensifies simultaneously. Against that backdrop, a number of relevant questions emerge. How can European and East Asian Allies strengthen deterrence in their respective regions? And what can they learn from each other's experiences in that regard? What are the

40. Luis Simón, "Europe, the Rise of Asia and the Future of the Transatlantic Relationship," *International Affairs* 91, no. 5 (September 2015): 969–89.

41. Interviews with multiple Japanese, Australian, South Korean, EU, and NATO officials, September 2018–March 2020.

42. Interviews with multiple Japanese officials, September 2018–March 2020.

similarities, differences, and possible connections between US Alliances in Europe and East Asia? What are the perceptions of credibility of US extended deterrence that abound in Europe and northeast Asia?

This article has addressed these questions by identifying some of the similarities, differences, and possible synergies between US Alliances in Europe and East Asia. While interregional dialogues thus far have focused on transnational challenges, a focus on deterrence against great-power challengers is warranted. Certainly as their respective regional security environments worsen, European and East Asian Allies are becoming increasingly focused on their immediate vicinities. This perspective limits the scope for direct engagement beyond each country's region. Yet all countries face similar challenges, ranging from missile proliferation and hybrid forms of warfare from Russia, China, or (to a lesser extent) North Korea to mounting concerns about America's commitment to their security.

Greater coordination can help US Allies learn from each other's experiences and best practices in dealing with regional challengers and better managing their relations with the United States, particularly in the face of increasing strategic coordination between China and Russia. Additionally, diplomatic support and greater economic engagement can be mutually beneficial in terms of strengthening resilience against regional challengers, mitigating excessive dependence on the United States, and hedging against the possibility of US retrenchment in the future. In particular, since China's geo-economic challenge is global in scope US Allies worldwide can benefit from supporting each other against Chinese predatory behavior. Thus, security dialogues between European and East Asian Allies should involve top leaders who can link the global, interregional, economic, and security aspects of cooperation.

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