THE ROLE OF THE US’ QUASI-ALLIANCES IN ASIA: SHADOW PUPPETRY OR HARD ALLIANCES?

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ABSTRACT

States accumulate power and engage in balances of power in order to minimize the effects of anarchy and ensure their security. One way to do this is by forming alliances based on states’ threat perceptions. However, once states determine whom to ally with, they face problems of defection in the form of either abandonment or entrapment. The issue becomes that of alliance management. How do states calculate the risks of abandonment and entrapment? How are hard alliances maintained?

In order to address these questions, I turn to the use of language as an analytical method. Linguistic tools like representational force recognize the power differentials of states and can therefore trace how weaker members end up acquiescing with the demands of the stronger powers. This shadow puppetry notwithstanding, the logic of representational force allows weaker powers to do the same and make stronger states comply with their representations. This framework can be applied to the United States’ alliances in East and Southeast Asia. I argue that in the face of crises, alliances deploy representational force in order to stabilize their relationship. In the short term, this takes precedence over addressing the actual threat. The US-Japan alliance faced a crisis during the War on Terror, while the US-Philippine alliance currently faces a crisis in the South China Sea. In both these cases, representational force was used, first and foremost, to stabilize the alliance. Doing so was necessary for both sides to attain convergence and address the crisis at large.

INTRODUCTION

The United States’ alliances with Japan and the Philippines are a core feature of the Asian security architecture. Both arrangements were reached in the early stages of the Cold War and persist to this day. The current strategic environment of the US-Japan alliance involves North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile development programs, as well as China’s military build-up. In response to these, the alliance now covers a range of areas for security and defense cooperation, including surveillance and reconnaissance, ballistic missile defense, extended deterrence, space, cyberspace, trilateral and multilateral cooperation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, information security, and cooperation in equipment and technology. Meanwhile, the US-Philippine alliance operates in an environment where China’s assertive moves inevitably result in the insecurity of its neighbors. In this regard, the Philippines welcomes the US rebalancing strategy, as well as the recently concluded Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). In these alliances, the strategic environment colors threat perceptions and the mode of strategic convergence, which complicate and test the bounds of their partnerships. Interestingly, these arrangements endure despite the odds. Endurance, however, needs to be understood as the result of effective alliance management. How this is achieved is the purview of this paper.

States accumulate power and engage in balances of power in order to minimize the effects of anarchy and ensure their security. One way to do this is by forming alliances. However, once states determine whom to ally with, they face problems of defection in the form
of either abandonment or entrapment. This is the scope of alliance management. How do states calculate the risks of abandonment and entrapment? How are hard alliances maintained?

In addressing these questions, I turn to the use of language as an analytical method. Linguistic tools like representational force can capture the fluidity of power politics in alliance relationships. As a communicative strategy, representational force is deployed to stabilize the collective identity of a relationship that is facing an external crisis. Moreover, representational force recognizes the power differentials of states and can therefore trace how weaker members end up acquiescing with the demands of the stronger powers. This shadow puppetry notwithstanding, the logic of representational force allows weaker powers to do the same and make stronger states comply with their representations. In short, using language as a method of analysis permits a reexamination of alliance management.

This framework can be applied to the US’ alliances in East and Southeast Asia. I argue that in the face of crises, alliances deploy representational force in order to stabilize their relationship. In the short term, this takes precedence over addressing the actual threat. The US-Japan alliance faced a crisis during the War on Terror. Given Japan’s constitutional restrictions at the time, how did the US convince or persuade its ally to join the campaign? Moreover, what factors determined the modality of Japan’s role in the US-led campaign? The US-Philippine alliance likewise faces a crisis in the South China Sea. What role does the US rebalance play in this environment? With the Philippines’ military limitations, what strategies are employed to guarantee the continued presence of the US in regional security? In both cases, representational force was used, first and foremost, to stabilize the alliance. Doing so was necessary for both sides to attain convergence and address the crisis at large.

The paper proceeds in three main parts. The first section makes reference to alliances in extant literature and offers how representational force can complement our understandings of the management and preservation of this security cooperation mechanism. The last two sections consider each of the alliances in turn. The US-Japan alliance is set against the backdrop of the War on Terror, while the US-Philippine arrangement is analyzed with China as a variable. In both cases, the argument is that representational force is necessary to maintain the cohesion of the alliance. In this sense therefore, the use of representational force is a management strategy. The paper closes by considering the unique circumstances where alliance management succeeds, and by extension, where it fails.

ALLIANCES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Current understandings of the origins and nature of alliances owe much to the works of Glenn H. Snyder and Stephen M. Walt.1 Both premise their analyses on the existence of anarchy, which breeds insecurity among states. In order to minimize the effects of the international system, states accumulate power and engage in balances of power. Bandwagoning is one way to do this. This occurs among weaker states who form alignments with the source of the threat. In other words, alignments are formed with the stronger side in order to appease the source of danger (a defensive position) or “to share the spoils of victory” during wartime (an offensive position).2 The reasoning behind this move is that weak states are more vulnerable to pressure. Also, they do not have sufficient resources to offer more powerful states. Although bandwagoning does occur, Walt claims that balancing via alliances is more common. This is because bandwagoning’s presupposition is that aggression is

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rewarded precisely because security is so scarce. For this reason, states prefer forming alliances over joining the bandwagon.

Another way in which states minimize the effects of anarchy is to balance by way of alliances. In contrast to bandwagoning, alliances are characterized by alignments with the weaker side. These are arrangements among weaker powers against, instead of with, a prevailing threat. The main motivation of balancing is to prevent stronger entities from dominating others. In deciding whom to ally with, states consider several factors. The level of threat is measured by a state’s aggregate power, its geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions. States must likewise consider aligning with or against the power that has the greatest capabilities. In the same manner, alliance formation involves states’ calculations of the payoffs and trade-offs. Doing so entails the identification of shared interests and ideologies, internal political configurations, and bargaining as the basis of estimates of benefits, costs, and risks. Added to these are determinants of choice, which include levels of dependence, the strategic interests of the parties, the degree of the explicitness of the alliance agreement, whether the parties’ interests are in alignment (or not) with the adversary, and their behavioral record.

States engage in balancing and therefore form alliances primarily to ensure their survival. This has proven to be one of the most effective ways of mitigating the effects of anarchy. Another reason, however, as to why states are adamant about entering into agreements with others is that this move can likely increase their influence within the alliance. Walt put this more succinctly: “…joining the weaker side increases the new member’s influence within the alliance, because the weaker side has greater need for assistance. Allying with the stronger side, by contrast, gives the new member little influence (because it adds relatively less to the coalition) and leaves it vulnerable to the whims of its partners. Joining the weaker side should be the preferred choice.”

Assuming that alliance formation is accomplished, this mode of security cooperation begs the question of how to manage and sustain the relationship. Alliances are at risk of defection in the form of abandonment or entrapment. Abandonment spells realignment, de-alignment, repealing the alliance contract, or failing to deliver on explicit commitments or to render support where it is expected. Entrapment means being forced to join an ally’s war efforts for the sake of preserving the alliance. In multipolar systems, the risks of abandonment are higher. Meanwhile, risks of entrapment are rife in bipolar structures.

Allies promote strategic convergence in order to narrow the differences in their objectives, priorities, and means. Nevertheless, it is taken for granted how strategic convergence is achieved. Alliances assume that power dynamics are directed outward, that is, toward an external threat. It is nonetheless as important to examine how the same struggle for power operates within alliances. After all, if power politics is pervasive in international relations, then why should states that are parties to alliances be any less immune to it? The fact that the risks of abandonment and entrapment are acknowledged implies the operation of power politics within alliances, albeit the non-physical expressions thereof. This can be best captured

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7 Ibid.
8 Walt (1987).
9 Ibid., 18-19.
through a specific kind of power called representational force. This concept can complement our understandings of alliance management.

Representational force is a communicative strategy that can be launched during times of crisis in order to, first and foremost, stabilize the alliance. This ensures that the members are on board – and indeed, are on the same page – in terms of the threat in their midst. In this sense, the deployment of representational force is a prerequisite to alliances’ response to crises. Most importantly, it depicts power struggles and demonstrates the ability of one actor to influence or persuade another. Its unique quality, however, is that it does not resort to physical force. Instead, representational force is “wielded through language [and] enables a perpetrator to bluntly, self-interestedly and nonnegotiable compel his victim to abide by his version of some contested story. It accomplishes this by brandishing a threat, which traps the victim with no real option but to comply.”

A story or one version of a truth acquires representational force when an agent structures a narrative in a way that threatens the audience’s ontological security. It carries within it a threat that capitalizes on the delicate strands – even the vulnerabilities – of the sociolinguistic realities that make up the target audience’s identity. It likewise carries within it an element of a non-choice between submitting to the agent’s viewpoint and undermining the audience’s own subjectivity. The choice is indeed no choice at all, and this is precisely what makes representational force an effective tool for agents to ensure that their narrative representation of reality becomes the truth.

In the crafting of an interpretation, an agent forms words and sentences into a narrative, the structure of which can take various genres, such as an argument, a negotiation, a metaphor, or a direct challenge. Furthermore, in conveying an interpretation to an audience, an agent must take note of his chosen genre, and then deploy this via different communicative strategies, such as persuasion, framing, bargaining, manipulation, and so on. These methods, however, are risky because the audience has room to refuse since the threat of or the use of force is absent. This is unlike the use of verbal fighting (genre) via the deployment of representational force (strategy), where the audience is left with no room to maneuver and no chance to refuse. It works like a trap and is in many ways similar to coercion: there is an appearance of a choice, but it is in fact a non-choice because the audience’s options are either to cooperate with the agent or risk physical harm. What makes representational force different, however, is that the threats to the audience are aimed at their “subjectivity rather than physicality” and this is conveyed not in explicit or direct reference to material factors, but in the way the agent structures his narrative. This suggests that the agent’s narrative involves a reconfiguration of the realities that constitute the very identity of the audience. The audience’s ontological security, after all, rests on a certain configuration of different realities. For an agent to change that configuration – either by exploiting the contradictions and inconsistencies in which the audience’s subjectivity depends – therefore equates to the destabilization of what constitutes as reality for the audience. Indeed, it may even mean the reconfiguration of the audience’s notion of itself.

The value of using representational force in analyses about alliance management is it demonstrates how the risks of abandonment and entrapment are calculated. Furthermore, it shows how strategic convergence is achieved. In this regard, the use of representational force questions the automaticity of strategic convergence between and among allies. I now turn to

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14 Ibid., 602. Emphasis in the original.
two cases where representational force was used in the face of crises. The first revolves around
the US-Japan alliance during the War on Terror, and the second is centered on the US-
Philippine alliance with the rise of China as a backdrop.

THE US-JAPAN ALLIANCE AND THE WAR ON TERROR

The alliance logic of abandonment and entrapment entangled both Japan and the US to
respond towards each other in the way that they did. Japan’s offer and provision of help to its
ally via non-combat missions was a function of its efforts at “normalization,” which in itself is
a hedging strategy to minimize the risks borne of the alliance. At the same time, this is a
manifestation of how the US sold the idea of the War on Terror to its ally. By deploying the
communicative strategy of representational force, the US backed Japan in a corner thereby
leaving it with no choice but to join the Afghan and Iraqi campaigns. While Japan indeed
bought into the idea of the War on Terror as a response to the September 11 attacks, its response
was carefully crafted to meet certain Constitutional constraints. In short, the crux was how
Japan managed to align its international and domestic commitments to engage – and yet still
be able to disengage – from the War on Terror. These moves are Japan’s version of
representational force.

America’s rhetoric after the September 11 attacks was to convince, persuade, even bully
an audience (the international community writ large) into agreement about the correctness and
validity of its interpretation, i.e., that terrorists were out to wreak havoc on the free world unless
they were stopped. In framing the response to the September 11 attacks, a set of narratives
converging on what we now know as 9/11 was constructed, which then became the basis for
the crafting of the War on Terror as a foreign policy. The moves that the US made on this
account were not simply knee-jerk reactions to a clear and present danger. For instance, in
calling the campaign a war presupposes the US as the defender of the world and that it is a
strong, responsible leader. Furthermore, a line was drawn, albeit arbitrarily, in the US’ very
binary “Either you are with us or with the terrorists” pronouncements. Upstanding members
of the international community would negate what makes them “good” if they took the “wrong”
side in the US’ ultimatum. They would, in effect, be destroying the “very ‘realities’ that author
them into existence in the first place.”

The presentation of the options of being with the US

or with the terrorists is the prime example of the deployment of representational force. The US
was offering a representation of reality that warranted a military campaign in defense of the
international community, and that punishment, both in the physical and subjective form, would
be meted out should its partners and allies disagree or veer away from this interpretation. The
choice, therefore, is actually a non-choice.

This notwithstanding, Japan cleverly found room to maneuver in terms of the modality
of its response. It was already a given that as a “good” member of the international community
and as an ally of the US, Japan would indeed join the campaign against terrorism. Two things
are worth keeping in mind at this point. First, Japan’s Constitution constrained it from
mobilizing a military response in the War on Terror. Second and despite legal limitations,
Japan was gearing towards “normalization” to minimize the risks of abandonment and
entrapment. “Normalization” is also a result of Japan’s growing self-confidence and a
realization that its dependence on the US increases its vulnerabilities.

Japan’s immediate responses to the September 11 attacks can be plotted along three
axes. First, Japan offered rhetorical support to the US. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro
Koizumi said the day after the attacks that his government would “spare no effort in providing

15 Ibid., 600.

16 Nick Bisley, “Security the ‘Anchor of Regional Stability’? The Transformation of the US-Japan Alliance and
the necessary assistance and cooperation.”\textsuperscript{17} Later on, he issued a 7-point measure and said that “Japan [would] take its own initiative towards the eradication of terrorism, in cooperation with the United States and other countries concerned.”\textsuperscript{18} Here, Koizumi committed the deployment of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to lend support in the form of medical services, transportation and supply, and information gathering.

Second, Japan gave economic support. This included US$10 million directly to the victims’ families, US$10 million for rescue and cleanup operations in the US, and emergency economic aid to India and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{19} From early to mid-October 2001, Japan also provided refugee assistance by giving tents and blankets to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Likewise, it funneled US$120 million to international organizations. Third, Japan emphasized the value of multilateral engagements by meeting with China, South Korea, and APEC countries. It also co-chaired the Senior Officials Meeting on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo in January 2002 where it pledged US$4.5 billion to the new Afghan government.\textsuperscript{20}

Japan’s motivations for joining the War on Terror were that it shared with the US an abhorrence and condemnation of terrorism. More than that, however, was its inclination to avoid a repeat of the humiliation and exclusion it experienced in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War. Also, Japan realized that a late reaction at best and inaction at worst would risk US abandonment. At the same time, however, Japan had doubts about the utility of military power as the principal instrument for defeating terrorism, which was why it wanted its role to revolve around the use of economic power, post-conflict reconstruction, and state-building practices.\textsuperscript{21} It managed to do this by creating a set of institutionalized responses.

Japan’s institutionalized responses took the form of two new legislations, both of which were crafted specifically for mobilizing non-combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML) was enacted in October 2001 and was designed to allow the SDF to provide logistical support for the intervention in Afghanistan. The ATSML further tasked the SDF to conduct surveillance and intelligence operations outside of Japan, as long as the SDF was not part of a military force used by any country. Finally, the ATSML’s mandate allowed the SDF to use weapons but only for self-defense purposes and for defending people under their protection.\textsuperscript{22} Apart from Ground SDF, the ATSML’s mission included Maritime SDF flotillas and Air SDF transport aircraft to provide refueling and logistical transport and medical and maintenance support to US and other forces in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

The ATSML set a precedent in that it extended the definition of permissible non-combat operations for the SDF. At the same time, however, it set caps on the range of Japan’s support. In particular, it limited support to non-combat areas only. Also, it limited the supply and transport of weapons and ammunition on foreign territory in much the same way that fueling or performing maintenance on aircraft preparing for combat missions was not permissible. One


\textsuperscript{21} Christopher Hughes, “Japan’s Re-emergence as a ‘Normal’ Military Power,” Adelphi Papers 368 (December 2004a).

\textsuperscript{22} Peter J. Katzenstein, “Same War-Different Views: Germany, Japan, and Counterterrorism,” International Organization 57 (Fall 2003): 731-760.
loophole, however, was that such activities were otherwise allowed on the high seas and in international air space.\textsuperscript{23}

The other legislation that Japan came up with in regard to the War on Terror was the Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance (LCSMHRA), which was enacted in July 2003 and designed specifically for Japan’s contribution to the Iraqi campaign. It was contentious because it was the first time that the SDF was to be sent to a conflict zone, and without a UN mandate at that.\textsuperscript{24} It was eventually passed in the Japanese Diet but only until after the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling all members to assist in Iraqi reconstruction. The LCSMHRA’s mandate was the dispatch of Ground SDF and Air SDF units to Iraq for one year from December 2003. This mandate was extended until mid-2006. The Ground SDF conducted reconstruction activities in Samawah in the southwest of Basra, while the Air SDF flew supplies from Kuwait to the Ground SDF and likewise transported US troops from Kuwait to Iraq.\textsuperscript{25}

The domestic dynamics in designing both legislations hinged on Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. This is the heart of Japan’s pacifist stance as it renounces war and the use of force in dealing with international disputes. In the intra-governmental discussions regarding the parameters of the ATSML and the LCSMHRA, the Ministry of Defense and the Liberal Democratic Party wanted to use the Revised US-Japan Defense Guidelines and the definition of the areas surrounding Japan as the framework for providing support to the US. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, meanwhile, wanted a new legislation because the Defense Guidelines were both and at the same time overly and under restrictive. They were overly restrictive in the sense that the Indian Ocean was out of their scope, and that they limit SDF support to sea and air efforts, thereby ruling out the option of sending ground forces, which was MOFA’s primary recommendation. The Defense Guidelines were also under restrictive because they could likely set a precedent that would undermine Japan’s previous attempts to minimize the geographical and functional scope of the SDF. The inability to do this would mean an increase in the risks of entrapment.

Hence, there was an observable desire to avoid any breach of constitutional prohibition on the exercise of collective self-defense. Japan could have easily invoked the need for individual self-defense due to the deaths of Japanese citizens in the September 11 attacks, but this would entail a combat role for the SDF. Matters were further complicated in the run up to the Iraq intervention because it was without the backing of the UN. Japan insisted on a non-combat role based on UN resolutions. A way out of this dilemma was achieved by linking the issue to the Constitution’s Preamble instead of Article 9, i.e., that Japan should work with international society for the preservation of peace. The implication of this move was that Japanese support was not just on behalf of the US, but also for the rest of the international community’s fight against terrorism. In short, circumventing constitutional prohibitions required a focus on reconstruction efforts by citing the Preamble instead of Article 9.

The idea behind the War on Terror and what such a campaign entailed in terms of support from the US’ partners and allies around the world was sold through a communicative strategy called representational force. The US, as the author of the campaign, created a response to the September 11 attacks, framed it as the narrative we know as 9/11, and launched it as the War on Terror. The success of this policy was contingent upon the support and cooperation of the “good” members of the international community. The strength of the strategy of representational force is such that the choice of being “with the US” or “with the terrorists” is in actuality a non-choice. To side with the terrorists not just means expecting the

\textsuperscript{23} Midford (2003).
\textsuperscript{24} Bisley (2008).
\textsuperscript{25} Christopher Hughes, “Japan’s Security Policy, the US-Japan Alliance, and the ‘War on Terror’: Incrementalism Confirmed or Radical Leap?” \textit{Australian Journal of International Affairs} 58, 4 (December 2004b): 427-445.
full force of the US’ military, but also that a state that makes such a choice would negate its own identity about what it means to be a worthy member of international society. In short, the choice has been made for the US’ partners and allies: the choice is to support the War on Terror and to do otherwise is the unthinkable.

Such was the case with Japan. Given the origins of its pacifist stance, its experiences during the 1991 Gulf War, and most importantly, its alliance with the US, the choice was not so much if it would join the War on Terror, but how. Its Constitutional constraints and intra-governmental debates played into the crafting of two new legislations that spelled out Japan’s engagement and disengagement in the US-led War on Terror. It can be argued that the idea of launching the War on Terror was indeed sold to Japan, but this was done on Japan’s terms. Similarly it can be argued that the ATSML and the LCSMHRA are a testament to Japan’s hedging attempts to minimize alliance-related risks.

**The US-Philippine Alliance and the Rise of China**

The relationship of the US and the Philippines likewise demonstrates alliance dynamics and the value of representational force in stabilizing the partnership vis-à-vis China’s rise. The US launched its rebalancing strategy in the context of China’s assertive moves in the South China Sea. The strategy was persuasive to America’s Asian allies primarily because it was cloaked in representational force. For the Philippines, in particular, the lack of regional support and a modern military made it all the more welcoming to the US’ strategy. In the same way, its move to seek arbitration is an effort to use representational force: in trying to internationalize the issue, it is at the same time articulating its desire for a rules-based regional security architecture. Not supporting the Philippines’ cause therefore is tantamount to not desiring a peaceful region. In this sense, the respective moves of the US and the Philippines can be seen as a way to ensure the stability of the alliance in the face of a rising China.

In 2010, the Obama administration announced that the US was shifting its attention away from Iraq and Afghanistan and towards Asia. This rebalancing, it has been argued, was “a natural trend” of turning toward and focusing on the up and coming, dynamic region of the world.\(^\text{26}\) At the same time, the policy was seen as a counter-narrative to American decline, as well as a way to balance the rapid growth, strength, and influence of China in the region.\(^\text{27}\) While the strategy has various aspects, tensions in the South China Sea overshadowed its diplomatic and economic rationales and made it “a decidedly military effort…”\(^\text{28}\) The strategic moves that were the hallmarks of the rebalancing strategy included the deployment of 2,500 US Marines for training purposes in Australia, the stationing of four new littoral combat ships at the Changi Naval Base, plans for a temporary basing access in the Philippines, and increasing the percentage of ships in the Pacific Fleet to 60 percent. Of late, crises in the Middle East involving Iraq/Syria, Gaza, and Ukraine required substantial American resources. Nevertheless, the Obama administration underscored the updated emphases of the rebalance: Southeast Asia’s centrality and ASEAN’s key role, as well as the building of maritime defense capacities of the US’ allies and partners.\(^\text{29}\)


The US’ justification for the rebalancing strategy was framed against the logic of needing to move alongside dynamic Asia, which could only be achieved through a continued and deepened engagement with the region. The main references for the rebalancing were former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s November 2011 article in *Foreign Policy*, and US President Barack Obama’s speech to the Australian Parliament, also in November 2011.\(^{30}\)

In both, the message was clear: America was reprioritizing towards the Asian region. The main objectives were to sustain the US’ leadership, to secure its interests, and to advance its values. The instruments required to achieve these objectives were strengthening bilateral security alliances, deepening working relationships with emerging partners, engaging with multilateral institutions, expanding trade and investment, forging broad-based military presence, and advancing democracy and human rights. Crucial in the narrative of the rebalancing strategy was the demonstrated fact that the groundwork had already been laid; efforts and initiatives have already been taken towards closer ties between the US and Asia.

One cannot ignore the role of China herein. Considering China’s rise, US strategy is, of course, about China, but to single it out as the sole driving force of American decisions in the region is, at best, inaccurate. Still, China enriches the narrative of the US-Philippine alliance, given its assertions in the South China Sea that have, of late, turned more vigorous and involved naval confrontations.\(^{31}\) China claims historical precedence over these areas, while others, including the Philippines, rely on definitions laid down by UNCLOS on territorial waters and exclusive economic zones.

Traditionally, the US has been seen as beefing up or reviving its relations with the Philippines every time a crisis occurred.\(^{32}\) In the mid-1990s, the Mischief Reef incident helped revive US-Philippine military ties. In 1995, the US Navy Seals held a combined exercise with Filipino counterparts, with a larger military joint combined exercise with air, land, and naval operations the following year. Also in 1996, the negotiations on the Status of Forces Agreement began, which led to the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement in 1999. Moreover, the US dispersed military stations in the littorals of southern Mindanao and developed Cooperative Security Locations in the Philippines.\(^{33}\)

However, the 2011 stand-off between the Philippines and China over the Scarborough Shoal demonstrated a more measured American response. The US is not a claimant in the South China Sea, and hence it is understandable that it does not and cannot support one claim against another. By implication, explicit support for the Philippines cannot possibly be forthcoming. In March 2011, two Chinese patrol boats were said to have harassed a Philippine survey ship while the latter was conducting oil explorations in the Reed Bank. The Philippines immediately filed a protest with the Chinese embassy in Manila. However, the embassy responded by insisting that China has sovereignty over the Nansha (Spratly) Islands and adjacent territories.\(^{34}\) By June, China disclosed plans to construct an oil rig within the

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\(^{33}\) CSLs are heavy infrastructure bases that can accommodate larger forces and can be outfitted with supplies and equipment. See De Castro (2009).

Philippines’ exclusive economic zone, and that any oil exploration activities required Chinese permission, even if said explorations were well within the Philippine EEZ. China’s argument was based on a map it presented to the UN that showed its “9-dash line,” which in essence, allows it to claim sovereignty over most of the South China Sea. At this point, the Philippines launched all possible diplomatic means to address the issue, including lodging legal arbitration with the UN in January 2013. This is one way for the Philippines to internationalize the issue, given that coopting ASEAN proved limited. In 2011, the Philippines proposed the creation of a Zone of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation, which garnered lukewarm reactions. Similarly, ASEAN issued no statement of support in the wake of the 2012 standoff in Scarborough. These therefore bolstered the Philippines’ decision to refer the dispute to UNCLOS arbitration, albeit this move is more symbolic than substantive.

Progress in the US-Philippine alliance includes the EDCA, which features the development of a minimum credible defense posture and aims to boost the partners’ individual and collective defense capabilities. This also complements the Mutual Defense Treaty and the Visiting Forces Agreement. The EDCA allows the US military access to some facilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for security cooperation exercises, as well as training activities for the promotion of interoperability and capacity building. Undergirding the EDCA is the acknowledgement that the Philippines badly needs to modernize its military in order to develop a minimum credible defense. This is also a function of the shift of the country’s strategic culture from internal security to territorial defense. The overarching goals of the drive to modernizing the Philippine military are to equip the AFP with capabilities to protect the country’s territorial integrity, to offset the evolving foreign defense challenges, and to ensure the attainment of strategic maritime interests in the South China Sea. Furthermore, the innovations over the short- and medium-terms are the establishment of “appropriate strategic response forces” in the three branches of the AFP to undertake integrated defense missions, the enhancement of the command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) system to support joint strategic defense operations, and the development of a modern satellite communications network to work alongside improved C4ISR platforms.

Hence, in the wake of events and circumstances surrounding the South China Sea issue, the US rebalancing strategy becomes very attractive and persuasive from the point of view of the Philippines. Under the umbrella of the rebalancing strategy, the Philippines can work on a constructive relationship with China and at the same time, be guaranteed of US presence and engagement in the region. Also, the US’ rebalancing strategy in Asia permits the Philippines

36 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
to align its own program of territorial defense with America’s agenda in the region.\textsuperscript{41} This can likewise be interpreted as burden sharing within the aegis of the Mutual Defense Treaty.\textsuperscript{42}

**CONCLUSION**

Alliances are indeed one way of guaranteeing security in an anarchic environment. Despite this, they are not without risks. Abandonment and entrapment calculations are common in alliances. Balancing these is the key to effective alliance management. In this regard, using the communicative strategy called representational force is helpful in identifying and tracing how states manage the risks of being in alliance relationships. The cases of the US-Japan and US-Philippine alliances demonstrate that when faced with an external crisis, members of the alliance made certain moves by using representational force with the goal of stabilizing the relationship before the actual threat could be addressed.

The utility of alliances rests on members’ ability to ensure that they are on the same page before a threat can be addressed. This is feasible if the external threat is unprecedented, such as in the War on Terror and in China’s rise. However, certain conditions may lead this strategy to flounder. The current overtures of the US to form a coalition against the Islamic State are an example, where persuasion is difficult and convergence is less than optimal. In order to avoid strategic divergence, states in alliance relationships need to raise the ante on representational force. Clearly, the fact that there is divergence in allies’ policies towards a common threat is an indication that the communicative strategy is launched prematurely or incompletely. In this instance, it is neither impractical nor infeasible for quasi-allies to step out of the shadow puppetry and form hard alliances themselves.

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