[MS no. 2646251]

Ramon Pacheco Pardo, Eun A Jo, Bo-jiun Jing, and Rei Koga
Beyond Hedging? Japanese and South Korean Responses to US–China Competition

Abstract: Hedging, conceptualized as a set of improvised alignment practices, allows states to maintain maneuverability in the face of uncertainty. Using this conceptual framework, we re-examine the evolving foreign policy perceptions and strategies of Japan and South Korea in response to the growing US–China competition in the last decade. While Japan has consistently aligned with the US since 2013, when Xi Jinping took power in China, South Korea has undergone a notable shift—from hedging to balancing against China. Surprisingly, the changes in perceptions of Chinese threat can be traced to the progressive administration of President Moon Jae-in. This analysis highlights the dynamic nature of alignment strategies and their implications for regional security and the US–China rivalry.

Keywords: Japan, South Korea, hedging, balancing, US-China competition

RAMON PACHECO PARDO (corresponding author) is Professor of International Relations at King's College London, UK, and KF-VUB Korea Chair at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium. Email: <ramon.pacheco@kcl.ac.uk>. EUN A JO is David and Cindy Edelson Fellow in International Security at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA. Email: <eun.a.jo@dartmouth.edu>. BO-JIUN JING is Senior Research Fellow at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, University of Oxford, UK. Email: <bo-jiun.jing@area.ox.ac.uk>. REI KOGA is a PhD candidate in International Political Economy at King's College London, UK. Email: <rei.koga@kcl.ac.uk> .

At the 2021 East Asia Summit, US President Joe Biden said, "We envision an Indo-Pacific that is open, connected, prosperous, resilient, and secure—and we are ready to work together with each of you to achieve it" (White House 2022). Since the adoption of the Free and Open Indo-

Pacific (FOIP) strategy in 2017, the concept has become central to the US regional security framework (He and Li 2020). Notably, both the Trump 1.0 and Biden administrations have explicitly identified China as a challenge—if not a direct threat—to the region's rules-based order (White House 2017, 2). While some critics initially argued that FOIP could provoke a Cold War–style confrontation with China (Swaine 2018), the concept has since gained bipartisan support. In February 2022, the Biden administration unveiled an official document that clarified the strategy's focus, highlighting "rules-based approaches" and "like-minded" partners. Together with his Summit for Democracy, the FOIP framework has adopted a more ideological stance, foreshadowing a clash of worldviews between the US and a rising, authoritarian China.

China, in turn, has accelerated efforts to undermine the FOIP and promote its own vision of international governance, most notably through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since the BRI's inception, Chinese officials have downplayed the importance of the Indo-Pacific concept. In 2018, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi dismissed it as "sea foam in the Pacific or Indian Ocean," claiming it would "soon dissipate" (*People's Daily* 2018). However, this stance has evolved; China now characterizes the concept as a conspiracy. In response to the 2022 Indo-Pacific strategy report, a *Global Times* editorial declared, "The US strategy for a 'free and open Indo-Pacific . . . is nothing but a ridiculous Biden administration fantasy filled with deceptive actions to tie Asian countries to its anti-China agenda, stirring up regional instability" (Liu 2022). Meanwhile, China has worked to consolidate the BRI into a "global strategic plan"—a series of development and diplomatic initiatives directed by the Chinese Communist Party—that offers an alternative to the decentralized governance model championed by FOIP.

As tensions deepen, states in the region, including US treaty allies Japan and South Korea, have sought to recalibrate their positions. Their strategies for navigating the US–China competition have been broadly labeled as "hedging"—a term for when secondary states opt for strategic flexibility rather than aligning unambiguously with a great power (Goh 2005). Policymakers and pundits alike have noted the competing factors that bind Japan and South Korea to a "middle position": on the one hand, they rely critically on the US to deter aggression from active threats such as North Korea and maintain an intricate network of cooperation; on the other, both are physically near China and depend on it economically. These factors constrain Japan and South Korea from taking a clear side.

We revisit these claims through a conceptual intervention on "hedging." In this paper, we conceptualize hedging as a set of improvised alignment practices that states adopt in search of maneuverability. Practically, this means a set of ad hoc, at times contradictory, practices that allow them to avoid or minimize any potential for losses or transform them into opportunity. Crucially, whereas balancing and bandwagoning are alignment decisions designed to counteract threats—that is, well-defined risks—hedging is a foreign policy practice that is improvised to cope with uncertainty. This has implications for how to observe hedging. States are more likely to balance or bandwagon when they perceive threats, which entails clarifying their commitments; when they perceive uncertainty, they are more likely to hedge, which favors maneuverability.

Using this framework, we analyze the changes and continuities in Japanese and South Korean alignment strategies in the context of US–China competition. We show that, despite some initial differences, their perceptions have converged over time, toward the rising China as a well-defined risk. Contrary to conventional narratives, we show that Japan has perceived China as a threat since the mid-2010s and taken unambiguous measures to align with the US. In the same period, South Korean perceptions of China changed more markedly, from uncertainty to threats, which consolidated—surprisingly—under a progressive administration. As a result, South Korea has moved beyond hedging and toward balancing against China in recent years.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we provide a conceptual discussion of hedging and how to observe the strategy in practice. Second, we trace the trends in Japanese threat perceptions of China, which highlights an overall continuity, despite the "Donald Trump shock," and its consequent balancing strategy. Third, we trace the trends in South Korean perceptions, which show a more noticeable change, and the resulting shift from hedging to balancing strategies. This convergence in perceptions started during the Moon Jae-in administration and continued under the leadership of conservative Yoon Suk-yeol, who is generally credited for the realignment. We conclude by discussing some implications of the changes in Japanese and South Korean perceptions for their strategies in navigating the US–China competition.

DISTINGUISHING HEDGING FROM BALANCING AND BANDWAGONING

Hedging is typically conceptualized as a middle position between more conventional alignment strategies of balancing and bandwagoning. In this view, states adopt hedging when, for whatever reason, they cannot adopt the more straightforward alternatives and want to keep "more than one strategic option" open (Roy 2005, 306). What drives this non-decision is the political dilemma in which secondary states may find themselves, where explicit attempts to balance or bandwagon carry too great a risk of harm. In this situation, states seek to avoid alignments which would bind them to a particular foreign policy orientation.

Hedging is thus defined relatively; it is doing *less* of balancing and bandwagoning. Balancing is a survival strategy used by secondary states to counter the power of more dominant states; it is achieved either by building up military capabilities internally or by forming alliances externally (Waltz 1979). Meanwhile, bandwagoning is a survival strategy used by secondary states to acquiesce to, or even embrace, the stronger power in anticipation of future gains (Schweller 1994; Walt 1985). When states hedge, however, they pursue multiple, counteracting policies to offset risks, which manifests in attempts to balance and bandwagon at once. Hedging is thus operationalized as a mixture of these conventional alignment strategies. Kuik (2016), for instance, characterizes hedging as an alignment behavior that combines "returns-maximizing" and "risk-contingent" options within the balancing–bandwagoning spectrum. Thus it is measured as some blend of policies meant to moderate balancing or bandwagoning.

We question this understanding of hedging as a middle position or a mixed strategy and treat it as qualitatively different from either balancing or bandwagoning. For us, hedging is a set of improvised alignment practices that states adopt in search of maneuverability. Because hedging materializes in the context of uncertainty—when states cannot identify the source of the threat—it results in variegated, at times even conflicting, responses. In other words, hedging is likely to appear internally inconsistent. Absent tools to adequately appraise the future, agents improvise, based on what they believe is knowable and actionable at any given point. From this perspective, hedging is best distinguished from traditional balancing or bandwagoning strategies by examining whether states perceive threats or uncertainty, whether the end goal is control or maneuverability, and how calculatedly or improvisationally they act in a given situation (Table 1).

Table 1. *Distinguishing Hedging*

	Perception	*Objective*	*Mode of action*
Balancing or bandwagoning	Threats	Control	Calculation
Hedging	Uncertainty	Maneuverability	Improvisation

TRACING ALIGNMENT STRATEGIES

To trace Japanese and South Korean alignment strategies—and their underlying perceptions, objectives, and modes of action—we triangulate a diverse set of primary and secondary source materials. First, we consult executive speeches in international settings during our period of study, 2013–22. These are speeches delivered overseas to primarily international audiences. For Japan, we examined 86 speeches: 73 by Abe Shinzo (2013–20), six by Suga Yoshihide (2020–21), and seven by Kishida Fumio (2021–22).[1] This reflects the different lengths of their tenures as well as Abe's personal commitment to diplomacy. For South Korea, we examined 140 speeches: 30 by Park Geun-hye (2013–17) and 110 by Moon Jae-in (2017–22).[2] The difference is a by-product of multiple developments, including Park's legal troubles and eventual impeachment and Moon's own dedication to diplomacy. Reading these speeches in context allows us to trace the changes and continuities in how Japan and South Korea perceive the international environment and articulate their roles within it.

Second, given that international speeches are often more performative than tactical, we also analyze key internal documents of the governments of Japan and South Korea in the same period. These include foreign policy and defense white papers issued by the respective ministries and their attendant programmatic agendas. For Japan, we consult nine white papers from the Ministry of Defense, nine white papers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and National Security Strategies published in 2013 and 2022. For South Korea, we analyze five white papers from the Ministry of National Defense and nine from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These policy documents help shed light on Japan and South Korea's strategic objectives and the courses of action by which they intend to achieve them.

[1] See the archives of Japan's Office of the Prime Minister (https://japan.kantei.go.jp) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (https://www.mofa.go.jp).
[2] See the Presidential Archives of Korea's Ministry of the Interior and Safety (https://www.pa.go.kr).

Finally, where available, we supplement these documents with responses from the US and China. Ultimately, for alignment strategies to work as intended, their targets—the great powers—must recognize them as such. For this reason, we include any notable reactions from the US and China to provide broader contexts for interpreting Japanese and South Korean rhetoric and conduct.

JAPANESE AND SOUTH KOREAN ALIGNMENT STRATEGIES

Conventional narratives often paint Japan and South Korea as hedgers, or pursuing strategies other than balancing or bandwagoning (Jerdén and Hagström 2012; Kang 2009; Vidal and Pelegrín 2018). These narratives often begin from the premise that these two countries are treaty allies of the US and remain heavily reliant on it to counter security threats in the region, such as North Korean military buildup; yet they also admit that both face significant constraints on balancing against China, given economic dependence (Lee 2017, 31–32; Matsuda 2012, 109), regional norms (Kang 2003), and domestic politics (Kim 2016, 714–15). In these narratives, Japan and South Korea are bound to seek hedging strategies to generate ambiguity, and thus maneuverability, as US–China competition deepens.

Our findings challenge these conventional narratives in two ways. First, we echo the counter-narrative that Japan is in fact not a hedger but a balancer (Lim and Cooper 2015; Liff 2019). During our period of study, Japanese perceptions exhibited a remarkable continuity—despite the "Trump shock"—and increasingly identified China as a threat. Thus, rather than seeking maneuverability, Japan has made concerted and calculated efforts to balance against China by strengthening its own defense capabilities and bolstering the US alliance. Second, while we find that South Korea was indeed hedging, it has recently shifted toward balancing. We attribute this change to evolving perceptions of China as a threat, which began to consolidate under the Moon administration. Based on these findings, we conclude that Japan and South Korea are better characterized as balancers than hedgers today.

JAPAN: A CASE OF CONTINUITY

Japanese discourse and policy throughout 2013–2022 reflected balancing against China. In this section, we show that (1) Japan increasingly perceived threats from China as the US–China competition deepened, and that (2) this culminated in efforts to control security and economic outcomes, including in areas such as emerging technology, human rights, and global health. Overall, Japan's activism on the international stage appears calculated and coordinated.

Across administrations, Japan exhibited remarkable continuity in its perceptions of threat from China and the need to enhance the alliance with the US to balance against it. These security concerns mainly stem from China's increasingly assertive policy in the East and South China Seas (Hughes 2016; Storey 2013; Yoshimatsu 2017). The Defense White Papers of 2014–17 confirm this point; every one expressed concern regarding China's military buildup in the East and South China Seas, as the intentions behind these territorial pursuits are unclear (Ministry of Defense of Japan 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017). Moreover, Japan sought to explain to the international audience that the international maritime order was being "challenged," blaming China specifically on three occasions. In discussing Japan's security environment, Abe mentioned the East or South China Sea, or the disputed territory of the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu Islands in Chinese), in 40% of his speeches. Japan's security concerns about China were more directly expressed in bilateral settings with the US, both intergovernmental and public–private. Any explicit name-calling was often in the context of China's increasing militarization and more assertive attitude in the East and South China Seas—issues with multiple stakeholders beyond Japan.

While Abe's speeches emphasized cooperation with China on economic issues, they also signaled Japan's reluctance to bandwagon with China. In his 2017 speech at the 23rd International Conference on the Future of Asia, for example, Abe mentioned Japan's openness to cooperation with the BRI but specified four conditions: openness, transparency, economy, and financial soundness (*Nikkei Shimbun* 2019). While these conditions were expressed in terms of Japan's receptivity to the BRI, they were ultimately an excuse for its refusal to participate. Furthermore, Japan's positive portrayal of the Chinese economy was concomitant with the government's attempts to negotiate a trilateral free trade agreement between Japan, Korea, and China, as well as to advance the multilateral Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Placed in this context, Japan's cooperative language is less surprising.

Following the election of Trump, Abe's acknowledgement of competition between the US and China became more open. By 2018, Japan's Diplomatic Blue Book referred to "extremely severe conditions" in the regional order, while re-emphasizing the importance of the alliance. This was especially notable in the economic realm. Abe highlighted the importance of a rules-based international order in 62% of his speeches, presumably to counter the growing protectionist impulses in the US. Still, Abe continued to signal the strength of the US–Japan alliance even as Trump's transactionalism often put it at risk of major deterioration (Hughes 2018; Mahmood and Cheema 2018). Faced with US isolationism, combined with China's challenges to the order, Japan appeared to take on the task of upholding—and improving—the status quo on which it had come to depend. In this sense, the "Trump shock" did not immediately result in the deterioration of Sino–Japanese relations; rather, Japan took a more proactive role in advancing multilateralism.

For this reason, Abe's comments on and visions for multilateralism were often laced with security implications. A key example is the FOIP, in which Japan countered China's order-building efforts with terms such as "connectivity" and "free and open." The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is another example. In Abe's 2015 speech to the US Congress, he mentioned that TPP went beyond economic benefits and carried long-term security implications. Through the TTP, he said, "we must take the lead to build a market that is fair, dynamic, sustainable, and is also free from the arbitrary intentions of any nation." While no specific countries were mentioned, this would appear to refer to China. This kind of linkage between economic connectivity and security benefits was forged in the context of Abe's advocacy for a free and fair economic order. Abe underscored universal values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as a political foundation for rulemaking in economic cooperation. This rhetoric could be premised on his hope that TPP members with such shared values would take collective action both economically and politically and that it might evolve into political and security cooperation (Terada 2019).

Under Suga and Kishida, Japanese perceptions of Chinese threat became even more acute, as did the perception that the international environment was now interminably divisive. In fact, the 2022 Defense White Paper opened with the recognition that "the international community is currently facing its greatest trial since WWII" and pointed to intensified strategic

competition.[3] In this context, Kishida began more directly addressing China's expansionist activity in the East and South China Seas—for instance, in his speech at the G7 summit—as well as the sensitive Taiwan issue, breaking the taboo on the subject (Liff 2022). Starting in 2020, these White Papers also prioritized discussing China over North Korea, a possible sign that Japan had begun to see China as its primary threat. That same year, the Diplomatic Blue Book removed the well-used phrases pertaining to a "mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests" (MOFA 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022a). This was possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which marred China's public image, and the ensuing domestic public outcry against Xi Jinping's official visit.

The 2023 National Security Strategy is especially illuminating of Japan's growing activism and willingness to pressure China. The updated version states that "China's current external stance, military activities, and other activities have become a matter of serious concern for Japan and the international community" (Cabinet Secretariat of Japan 2022, 9). It goes on to say that Japan needs to address China's threat not only unilaterally but also in cooperation with allies and like-minded countries. This focus on multilateralism contrasts with the 2013 version, which primarily called for building up Japan's own capability to counter China (Cabinet Secretariat of Japan 2013).

Given the ingrained perceptions of Chinese threat, it is unsurprising that Japan has opted for greater internal and external balancing against China. Practically, this has involved building up and strengthening domestic capabilities by introducing security legislation and reinterpreting Japan's postwar constitution to allow the military to use force alongside other nations. The period from 2013 to 2015 was a watershed for the postwar Japanese stance on national security. In December 2013 Abe established the first-ever National Security Strategy and the National Security Council, as well as its operational body, the National Security Secretariat. This was met with criticism from China, and a Foreign Ministry spokesperson warned of a remilitarized Japan (Embassy 2015). Together with Japanese security policy, Abe was focused on mobilizing support for his economic policy, "Abenomics." This was meant to show Japan's readiness to participate in the TPP framework under the Obama administration and its integrated strategy for

[3] Japan's Defense White Papers from 2017 to 2022 do not change much in terms of their descriptions of Chinese military activities, but the way these activities are linked to changes in the global power balance is noteworthy.

domestic economic growth (Terada 2019). Until Trump withdrew from the TPP in 2017, Abe emphasized its importance to Japan's economic security.

Over time, Japan's balancing became more external in orientation. This is visible in the series of policy initiatives undertaken by the Kishida administration in 2020. First, it introduced an economic division in the National Security Secretariat against the backdrop of the US–China tech rivalry (*Nikkei Shimbun* 2020). This confirmed an expansive understanding of what constitutes national security, which had consolidated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the disruptions in the supply chain. Second, in 2022 the Kishida administration introduced the Economic Security Legislation, which facilitated cooperation with the US and like-minded countries, and joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, which the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi blamed for creating geopolitical tensions (Ng 2022). Third, the Kishida administration tried to strengthen its relationships with NATO. In April 2022, then–Foreign Minister Hayashi attended the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs for the first time (MOFA 2022b). Then in June in Madrid, Kishida attended the NATO summit—the first time a Japanese prime minister had done so. This highlighted not just maritime security in the East and South China Seas but also deepening cooperation between the Indo-Pacific Four (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) and NATO (MOFA 2022c). Finally, the Kishida administration produced three key strategic documents: the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program (*Nikkei Shimbun* 2022). They introduced a new concept of counterstrike capability, which signaled a fundamental detachment from the postwar Japanese pacifist attitude. While the documents reflected the changes in perceptions of threat under Abe, their resonance with the Japanese people was precipitated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the growing threat of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Overall, Japanese discourse and policy illustrate a strategy of balancing. From Abe's activism to his successors Suga and Kishida's continued efforts, Japan has sought various security and economic initiatives designed to counter the perceived threats of China. The consistency in their approach—deepening multilateral engagement and the alliance with the US despite the "Trump shock"—reflects Japan's intentionality and coordination. Indeed, threats pose a problem to be solved; and Japan's rhetoric and conduct during the decade in question (2013–2022) indicates an effort to strengthen its capabilities at home and bolster cooperation abroad to deter and defend against what it has identified as the source of the threat: China.

SOUTH KOREA: A CASE OF CHANGE

During 2013 to 2022, South Korean discourse and policy shifted from hedging to balancing against China. In this section, we show that (1) despite initial ambiguities, South Korea increasingly perceived threats from China, and that (2) this culminated in increasingly expansive, as well as consistent, efforts to bolster the alliance. If South Korean activism on the international stage was more improvised in the past, it appears far more concerted today.

Initially, South Korean discourse on China and the US struck a balance. Indeed, positive perceptions of China arguably peaked during the Park years, with economics as the main factor. The South Korean president discussed bilateral and multilateral economic ties with Beijing in 75% of her speeches in which China was mentioned. At a Korea–China Business Forum held only four months after her inauguration, she remarked: "There is a Chinese expression 'be friends first, do business later.' I think that this expression explains well the past and present of the relationship between Korea and China" (Park 2013). Meanwhile, on security, Park refrained from criticizing China and sought to maintain cordial relations. She visited China every year during her tenure (2013 to 2016), becoming the only South Korean president in history to do so, and she was the only leader of a major liberal democracy to attend China's 2015 parade commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War (Kim 2015). The entente Park enjoyed with Xi reflected a sense of opportunity, even as South Korean discourse on the US reflected continued faith in that alliance (Heo and Roehrig 2018; Pacheco Pardo 2023). Indeed, despite closer contact with China, the US remained by far the country the most visited by sitting South Korean presidents, with over 50 visits.[4] The positive portrayal of the alliance also continued under Park.

Yet toward the end of Park's abridged tenure the sense of opportunity in playing both sides waned as US–China competition escalated. In a speech delivered during a state visit to the US in October 2015, Park acknowledged the potential for conflict globally and in Northeast Asia: "Old conflicts and disputes are re-emerging to the extent that the term 'return of

[4] South Korea's neighbors Japan and China are second and third by a wide margin, with less than half the number of presidential visits. The information on foreign trips by Korean presidents is from the Presidential Archives of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

geopolitics' isn't unfamiliar anymore, and their scope is expanding to the maritime, space, and cyber domains." This was a time when the Obama administration was hastening the implementation of its "pivot to Asia," accelerating the shift in US military assets toward the region, speeding up TPP negotiations, and becoming more critical of China's (perceived) assertiveness (Silove 2016). It also coincided with China accelerating its artificial island building and militarization of the South China Sea, starting implementation of the BRI, and announcing its Made in China 2025 policy, an initiative to produce more core technologies domestically (Poh and Li 2017).

Still, the perception of uncertainty remains visible in the early white papers issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of National Defense (MND) of South Korea. The diplomatic white papers of 2014, 2015, and 2016 emphasized signature policies of the Park government such as the 2015 bilateral free trade agreement with China and regularized summitry, including Xi's state visit to South Korea in 2014[5] and Park's reciprocal visits to China in 2013 and 2015. Meanwhile, though the white paper referred to territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea as "factors of security instability" (MND 2014: 9), China's military buildup as a "major security threat" (17), and disputes related to the overlap between South Korea's and China's overlapping air defense identification zones (244–46), these were accompanied by counter-narratives regarding growing defense cooperation with China. The 2016 white paper was similar in its focus and frames (MND 2016).

South Korea's policy during this period was as flexible as it appeared discordant. After eight years of initial consultations and three years of negotiations, Seoul and Beijing finally signed a bilateral free trade agreement in June 2015. It became effective in December of that same year (Asia Regional Integration Center 2024). In other words, trade negotiations accelerated under Park, and an agreement was signed a little over a year after Park took office. Meanwhile, Park rejected the possibility of South Korea's joining the US-led TPP negotiations, even as she assented to its joining the RCEP discussions that launched in early 2013 (Choi 2018). In other words, Park chose the RCEP, in which China plays a significant role, over the US-led TPP, which excluded Beijing. On the other hand, Park agreed to the deployment in South Korean territory of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system

[5] At the time of writing, this remains Xi's last visit to South Korea, which further underscores that South Korea has moved from hedging to balancing in its relationship with China.

in July 2016, shortly after her final visit to China and despite warnings and criticism from Beijing (Snyder 2018).

Under Moon Jae-in, emergent perceptions of Chinese threats consolidated as tensions grew over Seoul's decision to allow the deployment of THAAD. Early in his presidency, Moon sought to diffuse tensions with a "three nos" policy, pledging that South Korea would not deploy anti-missile batteries beyond those initially planned, join any US missile defense system, or enter a trilateral alliance with the US and Japan (Pacheco Pardo 2023). Yet, over time, Moon started to signal a more negative perception of China by making references to freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, as reflected in 2021 and 2022 speeches making direct references to China. Indeed, Moon visited China in 2017 and 2019 but not afterward, even as he resumed his travel agenda after the COVID-19 pandemic, including visits to the US. Meanwhile, Xi did not visit South Korea during Moon's tenure (Pacheco Pardo 2023). This points to a deterioration in relations between Seoul and Beijing, driven by, among other factors, Moon's worsening perceptions of China compared to his predecessor.

These changes were visible in internal assessments by the South Korean government. Earlier documents mentioned China's mixed conduct and expressed uncertainty about its intentions. The 2018 defense white paper, for example, expressed caution and ambiguity regarding China's "expanding influence" (8) and "buildup of military strength" (13), while also describing defense exchanges and cooperative activities with China. But 2020's version of the same strategic document pointedly discussed Taiwan for the first time in the context of China's "military activities to expand its influence in the region" (20). And the Moon government's 2022 version detailed China's attempts "to strengthen its influence in the Taiwan Strait" (10, 17). This was the first time that South Korea explicitly referred to these matters in a defense white paper, along with the more familiar references to the East and South China Seas, the ADIZ disputes, and China's military buildup, further underscoring the Moon government's growing perceptions of Chinese threat.

Crucially, these changes in South Korean perceptions were impervious to the election of Trump. Despite Trump's skepticism of South Korea and other allies (Abrams 2019; Bolton 2020), and the recklessness of his North Korea policy (Bolton 2020; Sigal 2020), Moon continued to advocate for the alliance, underscoring its importance in 63% of all his speeches that mentioned Washington (an even higher percentage than Park). Indeed, Moon travelled to the

US eight times during his time in office, with Trump reciprocating twice. Furthermore, despite Trump's transactionalism on economic issues, as evidenced by his forced renegotiation of the KORUS free trade agreement (Woodward 2018), the trade war with China, which also implicated South Korea (Sohn 2019), and disengagement from the WTO, which rendered its dispute-settlement function void (Kerremans 2022), Moon continued to appeal to the US as a reliable and beneficial ally.

Reflecting these shifts in perception, the Moon government began taking a more openly critical stance toward China. With newly elected US President Biden, Moon issued a joint statement emphasizing "the importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" (US Government Publishing Office 2021), marking the first instance in which a joint South Korea–US statement made specific reference to China's threat to Taiwan (Song 2021). Moon also pursued a policy of closer cooperation with NATO via the Asia-Pacific Four (AP4, later rebranded the Indo-Pacific Four) in spite of Chinese objections that NATO is expanding into the Asia-Pacific region (Reuters 2023b). Thus, South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong joined a NATO foreign ministers meeting in April 2022 (NATO 2022). This was the first time AP4 foreign ministers were formally invited to join such a meeting. One month later, South Korea became the first Asian country to be a "contributing participant" of NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, an organization designed to boost cyber capabilities and information sharing. China was critical of this move as well (Campbell 2022).

Moon's move away from hedging was also visible in economic relations with China. To be sure, Moon kept South Korea in the RCEP negotiations, with the agreement being signed in November 2020 and entering into force in January 2022 (Oh 2022). Moon also launched the second phase of the free trade agreement with China in March 2021 (Asia Regional Integration Center 2024), though with limited success. Besides maintaining existing agreements, Moon made little concerted effort to court Chinese economic support, seeking instead to align more closely with the US on economic policy. Notably, he worked to join the CPTPP (Oh 2022), the successor to the US-led TPP, which his predecessor Park had hesitated to do. Though the CPTPP was no longer headed by the US, it still operated based on US standards (Hsieh 2021).

These changes in policy orientation reflected the growing understanding in South Korea that US–China tensions had become all-encompassing and transcended the traditional areas of competition (Scobell 2023). Moon saw their competition as spilling over into domains of human

security and development. In a speech at the United Nations in September 2020, for example, he warned of the geopolitical fractures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic: “The recent COVID-19 crisis threatens multilateralism, [and] the spirit of the United Nations.” This was closely linked to disputes over the origins of the health crisis in China and accusations that the Chinese government’s secrecy in its early stages was detrimental (Scobell 2023). More broadly, Moon’s presidency had coincided for the most part with Trump’s time in office, when both the US and China engaged in open diplomatic, trade, and technological confrontation. This continued under the Biden administration (Scobell 2023).

Overall, South Korean discourse and policy illustrate a strategy that is shifting away from hedging. Under Park, there were improvised efforts to maintain the alliance and court China. This culminated in a set of diverse—and even contradictory—initiatives, aimed at integrating South Korea into the China-led regional economic frameworks as well as the US-led regional security complex. Under Moon, some of this opportunism persisted earlier in his tenure, but it began to shift toward balancing as perceptions of Chinese threat consolidated. By the end of Moon’s tenure, far more consistent and coordinated efforts were being made to align South Korea with the US.

FROM PERCEPTIONS TO STRATEGIES

Since Xi Jinping became China’s president in 2013, Japan and South Korea have become increasingly aligned in their perceptions of the US and China. Both countries have consistently held positive views of their treaty ally the US, in spite of the erratic and transactional approach of the Trump administration to alliances. In contrast, Japanese and South Korean perceptions of China have deteriorated since Xi assumed power. Initially, South Korea held a more positive view of China than Japan, especially regarding security, but this changed over time. The Japanese perception of threat has deepened, while South Korea’s developed during Moon Jae-in’s final years in office, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. As tensions between Beijing and Washington have intensified, both Japan and South Korea have increasingly prioritized alignment with the US, culminating in collective and coordinated strategies to balance against a rising China.

Japan exhibited a consistent alignment strategy, with successive administrations viewing China as a primary security challenge. Even amid the uncertainty of Trump's first term, Japan remained committed to strengthening security and economic ties with the US, reinforcing the FOIP framework, and actively engaging in multilateral initiatives to counterbalance Chinese influence. Tokyo's proactive approach to economic security, defense policy, and multilateral engagement reflects a long-term strategy that extends beyond tactical adjustments.

South Korea's trajectory has been more dynamic. Initially, Seoul pursued a hedging strategy, balancing its economic dependence on China with its security alliance with the US. However, a confluence of factors—including China's economic coercion following the THAAD deployment, its increasing assertiveness in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, and its opacity during the COVID-19 pandemic—led to a gradual but decisive shift in South Korean perceptions. Under Moon's presidency, this shift translated into stronger alignment with the US on security and economic policy, paving the way for the more explicit balancing strategy pursued under the Yoon administration.

What are the broader consequences of this convergence in perceptions and strategies between Japan and South Korea? Most critically, both countries have broadened their cooperation with the US. The clearest example of this is US–Japan–Korea trilateralism, most notably symbolized by the Camp David agreement of August 2023 (White House 2023). Formal trilateral cooperation among the three countries dates back to the late 1990s and has never been fully interrupted since then (Cha 1999; Lee 2023). Yet the Camp David agreement is significant both because it followed the first-ever standalone summit between the leaders of the US, Japan, and South Korea, and because of its broad remit. Moreover, the agreement explicitly references China, which even lodged complaints against it (Reuters 2023a). Certainly, changes in leadership in both Japan and South Korea contributed to bringing the agreement to fruition, given that Kishida and Yoon have a better relationship than Abe and Moon did. However, the Camp David summit and agreement would not have been possible without South Korea's shifting perceptions of China during Moon's presidency.

In the areas of economic security, supply chain resilience, and technological competition, Japan and Korea have also joined US-led initiatives such as the Chip 4 Alliance, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the Minerals Security Partnership, and the Blue Dot Network. These initiatives are part of Washington's policy of derisking supply chains from China and cutting off

its access to the most advanced technologies (Farrell and Newman 2023; Harrell 2024). Seoul and Tokyo may not advocate isolating China—as evidenced by their participation in the RCEP—but they have aligned with Washington by joining US-led economic and technological initiatives. In doing so, they are actively contributing to efforts that limit China's ability to ascend the value-added chain, and thus engaging in a form of balancing against China.

Furthermore, both Japan and South Korea have accelerated security cooperation with the US. At the trilateral level, joint exercises and intelligence sharing have increased substantially in recent years (Mahadzir 2024). Both US allies have also expressed an interest in joining Pillar II of AUKUS, which focuses on developing new weapons systems and harnessing technologies such as artificial intelligence to maintain a military advantage over China (Jackson 2024). They also regularly participate in security trilaterals and other US-led minilateral initiatives with countries such as Australia and the Philippines (Laksmana et al. 2024). Both Japan and South Korea are also part of the NATO–AP4 framework, through which the NATO is strengthening ties with them, along with Australia and New Zealand (NATO 2024). This burgeoning security cooperation is yet another sign of their closer alignment with the US to balance against China.

Japan and South Korea's alignment with the US has not been easy. Both countries were among the key US allies that Trump openly criticized for "free-riding." They were pressured to increase their contributions to cover the costs of hosting American troops, faced new US tariffs in economic and technological domains, and had to navigate the erratic diplomatic policies pursued by the US president, particularly regarding China and North Korea (Izumikawa 2022). While Seoul and Tokyo's perceptions of Beijing began to sour during Trump's first term, his unpredictable and often antagonistic approach made it more difficult for them to align with Washington. This only changed when Biden took office. Joint statements with the US issued by Abe, Suga, and Kishida on behalf of Japan, and by Moon and Yoon on behalf of South Korea, became more comprehensive and increasingly critical of China.[6] In general, Japanese and South Korean policymakers found the Biden administration more willing to engage in dialogue, consult with them, and consider their positions when formulating US policy (Haenle 2022). This allowed the convergence of views in Japan and South Korea to translate to meaningful changes in alignment strategies.

[6] Statements available at https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101_kishida/statement for Japan and https://pa.go.kr for Korea.

While neither Japan nor South Korea advocates outright containment of China, their strategic choices reflect a more structured and deliberate response to perceived threats from Beijing. Despite Trump's reelection, the convergence of Japan and South Korea's balancing postures toward China is likely to persist, as evidenced by their continued alignment even during Trump's first term. But the efficacy of US–Japan–South Korea security cooperation will also be mediated by political will in the US to sustain and harness the partnership. What the second Trump administration pursues—and how China reacts—will thus condition how Japanese and South Korean perceptions of Chinese threat evolve going forward and what strategies they (are able to) adopt in response.

REFERENCES

Abe, Shinzo. 2014. "The 13th IISS Asian Security Summit – The Shangri-La Dialogue – Keynote Address by Prime Minister Abe." Prime Minster of Japan and His Cabinet, May 30 (https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201405/0530kichokoen.html).

———. 2015. "Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress: 'Toward an Alliance of Hope'." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 29 (https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_000241.html).

Abrams, Elliott. 2019. "Trump versus the Government: Can America Get Its Story Straight?" *Foreign Affairs* 98:1, 129–37.

Asia Regional Integration Center. 2024. "People's Republic of China-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement" (https://aric.adb.org/fta/peoples-republic-of-china-korea-free-trade-agreement).

Bolton, John. 2020. *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Cabinet Secretariat of Japan. 2013. "Kokka anzen hoshou senryaku" [National Security Strategy] (https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou.html).

———. 2022. "Kokka anzen hoshou senryaku" [National Security Strategy] (https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-j.pdf).

Campbell, Charlie. 2022. "South Korea's Intelligence Agency Has Joined NATO's Cyber Defense Unit. China Isn't Happy." *Newsweek*, May 5 (https://time.com/6173812/south-

korea-cyber-nato-china/).

Cha, Victor D. 1999. *Alignment despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*. Stanford University Press.

Choi, Youngmi. 2018. "A Middle Power's Trade Policy under U.S.-China FTA Competition: South Korea's Double Hedging FTA Diplomacy." *Contemporary Politics* 24:2, 233–49.

Ciorciari, John D. 2019. "The Variable Effectiveness of Hedging Strategies." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19:3, 523–55.

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan. 2015. "Nihon ga rekishi no kyokun o kakujitsu ni kumitoru yo unagasu Abe shusho hatsugen hodo de Chugoku gaiko-bu" [China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourages Japan to learn from historical lessons, following remarks made by Prime Minister Abe], July 1 (http://jp.china-embassy.gov.cn/jpn/lcbt/wjbfyr/202406/t20240612_11434838.htm).

Farrell, Henry, and Abraham Newman. 2023. "The New Economic Security State: How De-risking Will Remake Geopolitics." *Foreign Affairs* 102:6, 106–122.

Goh, Evelyn. 2005. *Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies*. Washington: East-West Center.

Haenle, Paul. 2022. "A Comparative Analysis of the Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy vs. the Trump Administration's." *East Asian Policy* 14:4, 56–70.

Harrell, Peter E. 2024. "How to China-Proof the Global Economy: America Needs a More Targeted Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* 103:1, 135–49.

He, Kai, and Mingjiang Li. 2020. "Understanding the Dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US-China Strategic Competition, Regional Actors, and Beyond." *International Affairs* 96:1, 1–7.

Heo, Uk, and Terence Roehrig. 2018. *The Evolution of the South Korea–United States Alliance*. Cambridge University Press.

Hsieh, Pasha L. 2021. *New Asian Regionalism in International Economic Law*. Cambridge University Press.

Hughes, Christopher W. 2016. "Japan's 'Resentful Realism' and Balancing China's Rise." *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9:2, 109–150.

———. 2018. "Japan's Security Policy in the Context of the US-Japan Alliance: The Emergence of an 'Abe Doctrine'." In James D. J. Brown and Jeff Kingston (eds.), *Japan's Foreign Relations in Asia*, 49–60. London: Routledge.

Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. 2022. “The Impact of the Donald Trump Presidency on Northeast Asia.” In Akihiro Iwashita, Yong-Chool Ha, and Edward Boyle (eds.), *Geo-politics in Northeast Asia*, 57–74. London: Routledge.

Jackson, Lewis. 2024. “South Korea Discusses Joining Part of AUKUS Pact with US, UK and Australia.” *Reuters*, May 1 (https://www.reuters.com/world/south-korea-confirms-talks-aukus-pact-with-us-uk-australia-2024-05-01/).

Jerdén, Björn, and Linus Hagström. 2012. “Rethinking Japan’s China Policy: Japan as an Accommodator in the Rise of China, 1978–2011.” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 12:2, 215–50.

Kang, David C. 2003. “Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks.” *International Security* 27:4, 57–85.

———. 2009. “Between Balancing and Bandwagoning: South Korea’s Response to China.” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 9:1, 1–28.

Kerremans, Bart. 2022. “Divergence across the Atlantic? US Skepticism Meets the EU and the WTO’s Appellate Body.” *Politics and Governance* 10:2, 208–218.

Kim, Deok-hyun. 2015. “Park’s Attendance at Chinese Military Parade Sovereign Decision.” Yonhap News Agency, August 27 (https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20150827008800315).

Kim, Min-Hyung. 2016. “South Korea’s Strategy toward a Rising China, Security Dynamics in East Asia, and International Relations Theory.” *Asian Survey* 56:4, 707–730.

Kuik, Cheng-Chwee. 2016. “How do Weaker States Hedge? Unpacking ASEAN States’ Alignment Behavior towards China.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 25:100, 500–514.

Laksmana, Evan A., Paul Fraioli, Veerle Nouwens, and James Hackett. 2024. “Scripted Order: Combined-Military Exercises in the Asia-Pacific*.”* In Evan A. Laksmana (ed.), *Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2024: Key Developments and* Trends, 14–49. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Lee, Alex Soohoon. 2023. “A Roadmap for ROK-US-Japan Trilateral Security Cooperation (TSC).” *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 32:2, 1–31.

Lee, Ji Yun. 2017. “Hedging Strategies of the Middle Powers in East Asian Security: The Cases of South Korea and Malaysia.” *East Asia* 34, 23–37.

Liff, Adam P. 2019. “Unambivalent Alignment: Japan’s China Strategy, the US Alliance, and the ‘Hedging’ Fallacy.” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19:3, 453–91.

———. 2022. “Japan, Taiwan and the ‘One China’ Framework after 50 Years.” *China Quarterly* 252, 1066–1093.

Lim, Darren J., and Zack Cooper. 2015. “Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia.” *Security Studies* 24:4, 696–727.

Liu Caiyu. 2022. “US’ New Indo-Pacific Strategy a Biden Administration Fantasy Targeting China: Experts.” *Global Times*, February 12.

Mahadzir, Dzirhan. 2024. “U.S., Japan and Korea Commit to New Multi-Domain ‘Freedom Edge’ Exercise Series.” *USNI News*, June 3 (https://news.usni.org/2024/06/03/u-s-japan-and-korea-commit-to-new-multi-domain-freedom-edge-exercise-series).

Mahmood, Nazish, and Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema. 2018. “Trump and the US Foreign Policy Crisis.” *Strategic Studies* 38:4, 1–18.

Matsuda, Yasuhiro. 2012. “Engagement and Hedging: Japan’s Strategy toward China.” *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32: 2.

Ministry of Defense of Japan. 2014. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11502835/www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/wp_2014.html).

———. 2015. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2015/pdf/).

———. 2016. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2016/pdf/).

———. 2017. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2017/pdf/).

———. 2018. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (https://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/wp2018/pdf/).

———. 2019. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (https://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/wp2019/pdf/).

———. 2020. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] (https://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/wp2020/pdf/).

———. 2021. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper] https://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/wp2021/pdf/).

———. 2022. “Bouei hakusho” [Defense White Paper]

https://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/wp2022/pdf/).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. 2014, 2015, 2016. Diplomatic White Paper.

Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Korea. 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022. Defense White Paper.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2014. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page22_001636.html).

———. 2015. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page24_000516.html).

———. 2016. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page23_001623.html).

———. 2017. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page23_002228.html).

———. 2018. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page25_001612.html).

———. 2019. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page22_003299.html).

———. 2020. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/pp/page22_1003299.html).

———. 2021. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2021/pdf/).

———. 2022a. *Gaikou Seisho* [Diplomatic Blue Book] (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2022/pdf/).

———. 2022b. “Foreign Minister Hayashi Attends the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs,” April 7 (https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/page4e_001226.html).

———. 2022c. “Outcome of Prime Minister Kishida's Attendance at the NATO Summit Meeting,” June 29 (https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/page4e_001264.html).

Moon, Jae-in. 2020. “Speech by the MIKTA Representative at the High-Level Meeting to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations.” Presidential Archives, October 14 (https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/).

NATO. 2022. “Visit to NATO by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea,”

April 8 (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_194512.htm).

———. 2024. “Relations with Partners in the Indo-Pacific Region,” October 24 (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_183254.htm).

Ng, T. 2022. “China Says Washington’s ‘Divisive’ Indo-Pacific Strategy Doomed to Fail.” *South China Morning Post,* May 23 (https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3178764/china-says-washingtons-divisive-indo-pacific-strategy-doomed).

Nikkei Shimbun. 2019. “Ittai ichiro, kyoiryoku ni yon jouken: shushou ‘zenmen sansei deha nai’” [Four conditions for BRI: PM ‘I do not fully agree’], March 25 (https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO42874300V20C19A3000000/).

———. 2020. “Kokkaanpokyoku ni ‘keizai han’ hossoku, shingata koronataioumo kyuumu” [Establishment of an Economic Division in the NSS, with COVID-19 response also a pressing issue], April 1 (https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO57510630R00C20A4PP8000/).

———. 2022. “Hangekinouryokuhoyuu wo kakugikettei bouei san bunsho, sengo anpowo tankan” [Cabinet decision on counterstrike capability: defense documents show turning point in postwar security policy], December 16 (https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUA146QM0U2A211C2000000/?msockid=216e08b47897613828241b3479ba6030).

Oh, Seok-min. 2022. “RCEP Mega Trade Pact Takes Effect for S. Korea.” Yonhap News Agency, February 1 (https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220201002200320).

Pacheco Pardo, Ramon. 2023. *South Korea’s Grand Strategy: Making Its Own Destiny*. Columbia University Press.

Park Geun-hye. 2013. “Speech at Korea-China Business Forum.” Presidential Archives, June 27 (https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/).

———. 2015. “CSIS Speech.” Presidential Archives, October 14 (https://www.pa.go.kr/research/contents/speech/).

People’s Daily. 2018. “Highlights of Foreign Minister’s Press Conference,” March 8 (http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0308/c90000-9434651.html).

Poh, Angela, and Mingjiang Li. 2017. “A China in Transition: The Rhetoric and Substance of Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping.” *Asian Security* 13:2, 84–97.

Reuters. 2023a. “China Lashes Back at NATO Criticism, Warns It Will Protect Its Rights,” July 12 (https://www.reuters.com/world/china-opposes-natos-move-into-asia-pacific-region-warns-resolute-response-2023-07-12/).

———. 2023b. “China Lodges Complaint over Criticisms of It at Camp David,” August 21 (https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-lodges-complaint-over-criticisms-it-camp-david-2023-08-21/).

Roy, Denny. 2005. “Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27:2, 305–322.

Schweller, Randall L. 1994. “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In.” *International Security* 19:1, 72–107.

Scobell, Andrew. 2023. “Parsing Post-pandemic U.S.-China Competition: Mutual (Mis)perceptions and Dueling Geostrategies.” *China Review* 23:1, 79–105.

Sigal, Leon V. 2020. “Paved with Good Intentions: Trump’s Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea.” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 3:1, 163–82.

Silove, Nina. 2016. “The Pivot before the Pivot: U.S. Strategy to Preserve the Power Balance in Asia.” *International Security* 40:4, 45–88.

Snyder, Scott A. 2018. *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers*. Columbia University Press.

Sohn, Yul. 2019. “South Korea under the United States-China Rivalry: Dynamics of the Economic-Security Nexus in Trade Policymaking.” *Pacific Review* 32:6, 1019–1040.

Song, Sang-ho. 2021. “Chinese Ambassador Calls S. Korea-U.S. Summit Statement ‘a Bit Discouraging’.” Yonhap News Agency, May 26 (https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20210526008700325).

Storey, Ian. 2013. “Japan’s Maritime Security Interests in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea Dispute.” *Political Science* 65:2, 135–56.

Swaine, Michael. 2018. “A Counterproductive Cold War with China.” *Foreign Affairs*, March 2.

Terada, Takashi. 2019. “Japan and TPP/TPP-11: Opening Black Box of Domestic Political Alignment for Proactive Economic Diplomacy in Face of ‘Trump Shock’.” *Pacific Review* 32:6, 1041–1069.

US Government Publishing Office. 2021. “Joint Statement by President Biden and President Moon Jae-in of South Korea,” May 21 (https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/DCPD-

202100429).

Vidal, López, and Àngels Pelegrín. 2018. “Hedging against China: Japanese Strategy toward a Rising Power.” *Asian Security* 14:2, 193–211.

Walt, Stephen M. 1985. “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power.” *International Security* 9:4, 3–43.

Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

White House. 2017. “National Security Strategy” (https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf).

———. 2022. “Fact Sheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States,” February 14 (https://vn.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-indo-pacific-strategy-of-the-united-states/).

———. 2023. “The Spirit of Camp David: Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States,” August 18 (https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/the-spirit-of-camp-david-joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/).

Woodward, Bob. 2018. *Fear: Trump in the White House*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Yoshimatsu, Hidetaka. 2017. “China, Japan and the South China Sea Dispute: Pursuing Strategic Goals through Economic and Institutional Means.” *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 4:3, 294–315.