

# The Security Dilemma in U.S.-Taiwan Informal Alliance Politics\*

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*This article has two main goals, one is to explore whether the improvement in cross-Strait relations has increased both the risk of entrapment for Washington and the fear of abandonment for Taipei since 2008, and the other is to examine why the United States provides Taiwan with strategic reassurance. The two main international relations (IR) theories applied in this article are Charles Lipson's theory of informal alliance and Glenn H. Snyder's theory of security dilemma in alliance politics. Taipei may be hoping that when cross-Strait negotiations move from economic and cultural issues to politically sensitive ones, Washington will play the role of guarantor or supervisor. However, the United States may believe that playing such a role would increase its risk of entrapment. On the other hand, fear of abandonment for Taiwan is more likely to arise when the cross-Strait relationship further deepens and expands. While most observers believe that Taiwan's fear of abandonment is greater than Washington's risk of entrapment, some are of the opinion that the rise of China will*

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*eventually allow Beijing to intimidate Taipei, leading to Taipei's submission, if cross-Strait relations get out of control. Fortunately, bearing China's expansionist behavior in 2010 in mind, the United States is taking steps to focus its attention on Asia once again, and also emphasizing that Taiwan is an important security and economic partner, thereby easing Taipei's fear of abandonment. Thus, the main conclusion of this article is that while a relatively swift improvement in cross-Strait relations may increase the risk of entrapment for Washington and the fear of abandonment for Taipei, it seems that both the United States and Taiwan have reached a consensus that their current informal alliance should be nurtured by means of strategic reassurance, given China's potentially expansionist behavior.*

**KEYWORDS:** abandonment; entrapment; informal alliance; security dilemma; strategic reassurance.

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At a time when China's cooperation was essential in the U.S.-led global war on terror, China's rising global status and Taipei's provocative policies toward Beijing led the George W. Bush administration to tilt in favor of China at the expense of Taiwan. It was not until Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) was elected president of the Republic of China (ROC) on March 22, 2008, that cross-Strait relations began to improve significantly. This article has two main goals, one is to explore whether the improvement in cross-Strait relations has increased both the risk of entrapment for Washington and the fear of abandonment for Taipei since 2008, and the other is to examine why the United States provides Taiwan with strategic reassurance.

Two international relations (IR) theories are applied in this article. The first is Charles Lipson's theory of informal alliance, and the second is Glenn H. Snyder's theory of security dilemma in alliance politics.<sup>1</sup> When

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<sup>1</sup>See Charles Lipson, "Why Are Some International Agreements Informal?" *International Organizations* 45, no. 4 (Autumn, 1991): 495-538; and Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461-95. In 1997, Snyder published a book about the formation and management of alliances, Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997). In *Alliance Politics*, Snyder drew from the following works: Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987); Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder,

referring to a formal ally or informal partner, it is necessary to cite Lipson as he is one of the pioneer scholars of formal treaties and informal agreements in alliance politics.<sup>2</sup> There are two types of alliance, formal or informal, and both carry the risk of entrapment or abandonment. Informal alliances are ones that are formed without the signing of a treaty. The degree of formality of an alliance can be adjusted to accommodate states' interests and enable them to maneuver in a changed international environment. States form alliances as a way of promising each other to act in a specific way in specified future contingencies; yet, either type of alliance carries the risk of a security dilemma. Examples of informal alliances include the loose anti-Soviet alliance formed by the United States, Europe, Japan, and China during the period 1979-91, and the alliance that has existed between the United States and Taiwan since 1979.<sup>3</sup>

According to Lipson, informal agreements offer states at least five advantages.<sup>4</sup> First, they are more flexible than treaties. They can be adapted to meet certain conditions and unpredictable contingencies. Second, treaties often contain clauses permitting renegotiation, but the process of renegotiation is slow and cumbersome and is always impractical.

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"Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 137-68; Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 72-107; James Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 38, no. 2 (June 1994): 270-97. For comments and critique on Snyder's book, see Randall L. Schweller, "Alliance Politics by Glenn H. Snyder," review of *Alliance Politics*, by Glenn H. Snyder, *Political Science Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 513-14; James R. Sofka, "Entangling Alliance," review of *Alliance Politics*, by Glenn H. Snyder, *Review of Politics* 60, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 823-26; Patricia A. Weitsman, "The Dynamics of Alliance Formation and Management," *Mershon International Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (November 1998): 366-68; and John Conybeare, "Alliance Politics by Glenn H. Snyder," review of *Alliance Politics*, by Glenn H. Snyder, *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (September 2000): 775.

<sup>2</sup>Lipson, "Why Are Some International Agreements Informal?" 501-38.

<sup>3</sup>Gary G. Sick, executive director of the Gulf/2000 Project, Columbia University, and a former National Security Council adviser on Iran, gave another example when he pointed out in early 2007 that an "emerging strategy" is developing that brings the United States, Israel, and Sunni Arab states together in an informal alliance against Iran. See Interview with Bernard Gwertzman, Consulting Editor, "Sick: Alliance against Iran," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 23, 2007, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/12477/sick.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Lipson, "Why Are Some International Agreements Informal?" 501-11.

However, informal agreements make fewer informational demands on the concerned parties. Negotiators need not try to predict all future contingencies and comprehensively contract for them. Third, because informal agreements do not require elaborate ratification, they can be concluded and implemented quickly if need be. In complex and rapidly changing environments, speed is a particular advantage. Fourth, informal agreements are generally less public and prominent, even when they are negotiated openly. Their low profile allows them to escape or avoid democratic oversight, ratification debate, bureaucratic control, and diplomatic intervention. Finally, informal agreements avoid formal and public pledges.

The advantages of some states having informal agreements in an alliance may be the disadvantages of some other states in the same alliance.<sup>5</sup> The inherent problem with informal agreements is that they make states more likely to abandon each other and fail to honor their obligations due to the agreement's informality and flexibility. States form informal alliances according to their strategic interests and their need to adapt to the changed international environment.

Glenn H. Snyder, as a neorealist scholar, argues that a state expects to be supported by its allies, with whom it shares interests, and to be opposed by its opponents whom it confronts. A security dilemma consists of the risk of "entrapment" and "abandonment."<sup>6</sup> In a multipolar system, alliances are seldom firm regardless of their formality. Entrapment involves a state being dragged into a conflict over interests that it does not share with its ally, or shares only partially. When the interests of allies are not identical, entrapment is more likely to occur. A state will become intransigent in disputes with an adversary if it is confident of the support of its ally. The degree of entrapment varies according to the strategy of a state's formal ally or informal partner.

According to Snyder, alliances, even formal alliances in which the text of the written agreement is clear and explicit, are seldom firm, and

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 501-11, 514-38.

<sup>6</sup>Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 467-70.

alliances in which the text is ambiguous and the meaning implicit are even less so. Therefore, a state's fear of abandonment by its ally is ever present in a multipolar system. In the case of a formal or an informal alliance system, abandonment or defection may occur in the following ways.<sup>7</sup> A state may realign with its former adversary; it may merely de-align with its formal ally or informal partner, terminating the security pact; it may fail to fulfill its explicit security commitment; or it may fail to provide assistance in contingencies where support is highly expected. In the latter two variants, the formal or informal alliance may remain intact, but the expectations of support underlying it will be substantially weakened. On the other hand, suspicion of an ally's realignment may lead to a preemptive realignment or a prompt resolve.

In alliance politics, a strong commitment often reduces a state's bargaining leverage over its formal ally or informal partner. If the ally can count on being supported, it is less vulnerable. In contrast, bargaining power is enhanced when a state threatens its formal ally or informal partner with possible nonassistance,<sup>8</sup> while a state's strong commitment to defend its own interests tends to strengthen its bargaining power vis-à-vis its adversary. A state usually keeps its commitments tentative or vague for as long as possible because in that way it can either preserve opportunities for realignment or maximize bargaining leverage over its present formal ally or informal partner.

A state not only has to deal with its adversary but also to deal with its allies and/or partners.<sup>9</sup> The security dilemma arises from the state's uncertainty whether its adversary is a security seeker or an expansionist. Firm policies toward allies or partners can deliver credible deterrence against an aggressive opponent, thereby enhancing a state's reputation for resolve. However, if the opponent is only a security seeker bent on maintaining the status quo, a firm stance may be provocative, increase tension, and induce

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 467-68.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 468-70.

unnecessary power competition, as the adversary will interpret the firmness and toughness of the alliance as hostile behavior. A conciliatory policy may resolve conflict and reduce tension if the adversary is a security seeker. If the adversary is an expansionist, however, a conciliatory policy may be perceived as appeasement and encourage aggression.

During the presidential election campaign of 2007-2008, Ma Ying-jeou, the Kuomintang (國民黨, KMT) candidate, proposed a "modus vivendi" approach (活絡模式) to relations between Taiwan and China. This involved "mutual non-denial" (互不否認) and the "three-no's" (三不) policy, namely, "no unification (不統), no independence (不獨), and no use of force (不武)." According to Ma, the modus vivendi he was seeking was a peaceful solution to the nearly six-decade-long dispute between the two sides. This would involve setting aside the dispute over sovereignty for the time being, which would allow a consensus to be reached.<sup>10</sup> Ma saw "mutual non-denial" as a necessary basis for future cross-Straits negotiations on Taiwan's international space, meaning that there could be benign interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait only if they agreed not to deny each other's right to exist, even though it would be impossible for Taipei and Beijing to recognize each other at the current stage. The "three-no's" policy was proposed as a foundation for future negotiations on a cross-Straits peace agreement.<sup>11</sup> Unification is not acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the Taiwan people, whereas independence would be disastrous for both sides. So long as Taiwan does not declare itself independent, any use of force by China against Taiwan is unnecessary. Therefore, the only way Ma could put the Chinese leaders at ease was to go back to the normal track of cross-Straits relations under the consensus of "one China with respective interpretations (一中各表)," or what Dr. Chi Su (蘇起) called the "1992 Consensus."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Dimitri Bruyas, "Ma Repeats 'Mutual Non-Denial' Policy," *China Post*, March 24, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/presidential%20election/2008/03/24/148519/Ma-seeks.htm>.

<sup>11</sup>"Ma's 'Three-Noes' Policy Viable," *China Post*, April 3, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/editorial/taiwan%20issues/2008/04/03/150090/Ma%27s-%273-noes.htm>.

<sup>12</sup>Due to the previous Democratic Progressive Party (民進黨, DPP) administration's strong

The United States, as an informal ally of Taiwan, was actively engaged in cross-Straits affairs in the period March 22-May 20, 2008, immediately after Ma's victory in the presidential election. For example, Douglas Spelman, a Department of State coordination chief in charge of Taiwan affairs, said on March 25 that the United States had "five expectations" with regard to cross-Straits relations. These were (1) that relations should return to the normal track, (2) that Taiwan should strengthen its military defense capabilities, (3) that China should reduce its military coercion of Taiwan, (4) that China should respect Taiwan's international space, and (5) that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should resume substantial dialogue.<sup>13</sup>

Although it was reluctant to play the role of mediator in cross-Straits relations, Washington anxiously expressed its concern over cross-Straits negotiations just one week after Ma's victory. Raymond Burghardt, chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), said on March 28, 2008, that he advised President-elect Ma to divide cross-Straits dialogue into three stages.<sup>14</sup> In the first stage, Taiwan and China could tackle the issue of cross-Straits charter flights and direct flights. Then, in the second stage, Taipei could enter into negotiations with Beijing on cross-Straits economic, trade, and investment issues. It would not be until the third stage that the two parties could start negotiations on such politically sensitive issues as a peace accord, confidence-building measures (CBMs), and Taiwan's parti-

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opposition to the concept of "one China" in its relations with the mainland, Dr. Chi Su (蘇起), former chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) under President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), proposed the "1992 consensus" in lieu of "one China with respective interpretations" during an academic conference at Tamkang University, Taiwan, in April 2000, believing an ambiguous term might be more acceptable to the proindependence DPP government. Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) not only refused to accept the "1992 consensus," but also labeled it the "surrender consensus," saying that there was no mention of it in official documents on cross-Straits relations and claiming that China had never publically recognized or accepted its existence.

<sup>13</sup>Liu Ping, "Ma shengxuan, Mei guowuyuan ti 'wuxiang qidai', yali zhuanxiang Beijing" (Five expectations from U.S. Department of State after Ma's victory, pressure turns to Beijing), *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) (Taipei), March 26, 2008, <http://news.chinatimes.com/2007Cti/2007Cti-Focus/2007Cti-Focus-Content/0,4518,9703260331+0+0+225606+0,00.html>.

<sup>14</sup>Dimitri Bruyas, "U.S. Won't Play Mediator in Cross-Straits Issue: AIT Head," *China Post*, March 29, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign%20affairs/2008/03/29/149336/U.S.-won%27t.htm>.

**Table 1**  
**The Complete Security Dilemma in a Multipolar System**

Strategies	Possible Consequences	
	Alliance game	Adversary game
<b>I</b> Alliance C Support, strengthen commitment  Adversary D Stand firm	"goods" 1. Reassure ally, reduce risk of abandonment 2. Enhance reputation for loyalty "bads" 1. Increase risk of entrapment 2. Reduce bargaining power over ally 3. Foreclose realignment option 4. Solidify adversary's alliance	"goods" 1. Deter, or prevail over, adversary 2. Enhance reputation for resolve "bads" 1. Provoke adversary; increase tensions; induce insecurity spiral
	"goods" 1. Restrain ally, reduce risk of entrapment 2. Increase bargaining power over ally 3. Preserve realignment option 4. Divide adversary's alliance "bads" 1. Increase risk of abandonment 2. Reduce reputation of loyalty	"goods" 1. Resolve conflict; reduce tensions    "bads" 1. Encourage adversary to stand firmer 2. Reduce reputation for resolve

**Source:** Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 469; Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 194.

cipation in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs).

Despite this advice, many suspect that the role of the United States in cross-Straits affairs has become less important since President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) put forward his six proposals for promoting the peaceful development of the cross-Straits relationship.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Hu Jintao, "Six Proposals Offered for Cross-Straits Relations," speech at a ceremony com-



In his 1997 book entitled *Alliance Politics*, Snyder describes how, in a multipolar alliance system, states tend to identify each other as friends or enemies and what the consequences are of this.<sup>16</sup> He synthesizes structural realism, coalition formation, and bandwagoning with his historical knowledge of alignments before World War I, and borrows ideas from scholars such as Stephen Walt, Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, Randall Schweller, and James Morrow.<sup>17</sup>

Most international relations theorists, such as Schweller, James R. Sofka, and Patricia A. Weitsman, agree that Snyder provides a timely and necessary theoretical analysis of the formation and management of alliances. Schweller believes that Snyder's book has set a new standard by which future alliance studies will be judged. In part two of *Alliance Politics*, Snyder shows how a number of factors affect alliance politics and how diplomatic tactics and decision makers' motives interact with each other in a multipolar system.<sup>18</sup> According to Sofka, Snyder explores the conditions conducive to the formation of alliances in a multipolar international system, and then goes on to scrutinize how alliance partners seek to avoid "entrapment" or "abandonment." In Sofka's opinion, Snyder's book is most valuable in the way that it synthesizes historical cases and

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memorating the 30th anniversary of the mainland's "Message to Compatriots in Taiwan," *Xinhua*, December 31, 2008, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/31/content\\_7357490.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/31/content_7357490.htm). The six proposals (胡六點) are: (1) political mutual trust across the Taiwan Strait to be established through cross-Strait consultations under the one China principle; (2) Beijing to sign a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Taipei and seek ways to link cross-Strait common development with Asia-Pacific economic integration; (3) the two sides of the Strait to work together to promote their common cultural heritage, stressing that Taiwan sentiment is not equal to Taiwan independence sentiment; (4) Beijing to respond positively to the DPP if it stops its secessionist activities; (5) Beijing to consult with Taipei on arrangements for Taiwan's participation in international organizations as long as this does not create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan"; and (6) Beijing to step up cross-Strait military contacts and exchanges and to negotiate with Taiwan on security mechanisms for building mutual trust, ending cross-Strait hostility, and concluding a peace agreement under the one China principle.

<sup>16</sup>Snyder, *Alliance Politics*.

<sup>17</sup>See Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*; Christensen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks," 137-68; Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit," 72-107; and Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs," 270-97.

<sup>18</sup>Schweller, "Alliance Politics by Glenn H. Snyder," 513-14.

the author's knowledge of alliances to shows how allies calculate rational costs and benefits. Sofka also appreciates the way that Snyder generates a number of hypotheses and puts them to the test.<sup>19</sup> Weitsman points out that Snyder's book offers a long-overdue examination of the formation and management of alliances. The book starts with the establishment of the principal costs and benefits of alliance politics by observing how systemic forces affect these calculations and by generating a "composite security dilemma that combines alliance and adversary" dynamics.<sup>20</sup> Snyder's only detractor is John Conybeare, who is of the opinion that the book is not entirely new and that some parts of it repeat Snyder's earlier work. Conybeare even criticizes some of Snyder's hypotheses, saying that they are not particularly impressive or remarkable.<sup>21</sup>

Despite Conybeare's misgivings, I believe that some of Snyder's hypotheses are worthy of testing on the case of U.S.-China-Taiwan relations. The following hypotheses are extracted from the theoretical discussion above:<sup>22</sup>

- H1: The less dependent an ally is on the alliance, the more influence it will enjoy in alliance politics.
- H2: The more interests there are at stake, the more influence a state or an ally will have in alliance politics.
- H3: The more firmly a state is committed to defending its ally, the more likely it is to be entrapped.
- H4: The more it suspects that an ally is seeking realignment, the more likely it is that a state will reach a preemptive realignment or a prompt resolve with its adversary.
- H5: The more a state looks as if it is seeking realignment, the more

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<sup>19</sup>Sofka, "Entangling Alliance," 823-26.

<sup>20</sup>Weitsman, "The Dynamics of Alliance Formation and Management," 366-68.

<sup>21</sup>Conybeare, "Alliance Politics by Glenn H. Snyder," 775.

<sup>22</sup>Lipson, "Why Are Some International Agreements Informal?" 501-11, 514-38; Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 467-70; and Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 199-200.

likely its ally is to provide costly signals in order to enhance credibility between them.

- H6: The more conciliatory a state is toward a security-seeking adversary, the more likely it is to resolve conflict and reduce tension.
- H7: The more conciliatory a state is toward an expansionist adversary, the more likely it is to encourage aggression.
- H8: The firmer a state's policy is toward a security-seeking adversary, the more it will provoke the adversary.
- H9: The firmer a state's policy is toward an expansionist adversary, the more likely it is to deter the adversary.
- H10: The stronger the strategic interests involved, the more likely a state is to adjust its position toward its allies and partners.

Since the improvement in China-Taiwan relations that occurred in May 2008, the two sides have established an unwritten consensus on a "diplomatic truce" as a symbol of peaceful development across the Strait. This improvement in cross-Strait relations has imposed a restraint on the U.S.-Taiwan informal alliance, that since the two sides broke off diplomatic relations in December 1978 has been governed by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The restraint affects three aspects of the alliance, namely, diplomacy, economics, and security.

### **Impact on the Diplomatic Aspect of the U.S.-Taiwan Informal Alliance**

The ROC on Taiwan has been isolated in the international community since it was expelled from the United Nations in 1971. During the period 1979-2008, Washington, Tokyo, Canberra, and Seoul all played an important role in Taiwan's efforts to expand its international space.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup>For example, the United States helped Taiwan to maintain its diplomatic relations in the Caribbean, Central America, South America, and elsewhere. Moreover, the Reagan administration invited Taiwan to stay in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1986 (although

**Table 2**  
**The Security Dilemma in U.S.- Taiwan Informal Alliance Politics**

Strategies	Possible Consequences	
	Alliance game	Adversary game
<b>I</b> Alliance C: Support, strengthen commitment  Adversary D: Stand firm	<p>"goods"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reassure Taiwan by stressing the TRA as a "central document" to reduce fear of abandonment</li> <li>2. Reduce risk of abandonment by providing Taiwan with a strategic reassurance, including UNFCCC, TIFA, TPP, and arms sales</li> <li>3. Enhance reputation for loyalty by rejecting China's "core interests" or the "fourth communique"</li> </ol> <p>"bads"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase risk of entrapment by providing Taiwan with assistance in crisis where support is counted on</li> <li>2. Reduce bargaining power over Taiwan by demonstrating firmness toward China</li> <li>3. Foreclose realignment option by demonstrating a tough stance toward China</li> <li>4. Solidify China's alliance by increasing the degree of threat or demonstrating toughness toward it</li> </ol>	<p>"goods"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deter, or prevail over, China if it is aggressive in nature</li> <li>2. Enhance reputation for resolve by helping create a peaceful environment for cross-Strait negotiations if China has expansionist goals</li> </ol> <p>"bads"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provoke China by providing Taiwan with strategic reassurance and offensive weapons systems; increase tension by dispatching two battle groups to waters near Taiwan Strait; induce "insecurity spiral" by encouraging power competition if China is basically oriented toward status quo</li> </ol>
	<p>"goods"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restrain Taiwan to reduce risk of entrapment</li> <li>2. Increase bargaining power over Taiwan by means of a subtle threat</li> <li>3. Preserve realignment option by accommodating China to reduce the risk of being entrapped by Taiwan</li> <li>4. Divide or weaken China's alliance by conciliating Beijing</li> </ol> <p>"bads"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase risk of abandonment by accommodating or conciliating China</li> <li>2. Reduce reputation for loyalty by respecting China's "core interests" in the future U.S.-China joint statement or the "fourth communique"</li> </ol>	<p>"goods"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Resolve conflict by conciliating China;</li> <li>2. Reduce tension by not supporting Taiwan independence if China is expansionist in nature</li> </ol> <p>"bads"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage China to stand firmer if China is basically oriented toward status quo</li> <li>2. Reduce reputation for resolve by urging Taiwan to negotiate with China on politically sensitive issues without insisting on creating a non-coercive environment</li> </ol>

**Source:** Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 469; Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 194.

swift improvement in cross-Straits relations and the unwritten consensus that the two sides should observe a "diplomatic truce" have brought about a change in the U.S.-Taiwan informal alliance in the area of diplomacy. It has been said that Beijing has transformed its mind-set from one of "crisis management" during the period March 2000-May 2008 to one of "opportunity management" starting in May 2008.<sup>24</sup>

The United States used to be Taiwan's most substantial "ally" in its efforts to stabilize its diplomatic ties with countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and elsewhere. But now China has become the single most significant factor determining the number of Taiwan's diplomatic allies. Four or five of Taiwan's allies have attempted to leave the Taipei-led diplomatic alliance system in the abovementioned regions since May 2008, and it was China that dissuaded them from seeking diplomatic ties with Beijing. In return, Taiwan turned down a request to reestablish formal relations with at least one of China's diplomatic allies in Africa.

Thanks to China's acquiescence in Ma's diplomatic truce, Taiwan has managed to retain its twenty-three diplomatic allies since May 2008. China has even shown its goodwill by postponing negotiations with some who were attempting to establish formal ties with Beijing. As the then secretary general of the KMT, Wu Den-yih (吳敦義), indicated, not seeking to win over each other's diplomatic allies is an important dimension of the diplomatic truce.<sup>25</sup>

In the same way, during the period 1979-2008, it was the United States, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and the member states of the European Union (EU) who were most influential in Taiwan's attempts to participate in inter-

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China insisted on a change of name) without much loss in terms of privileges and rights. Furthermore, the George Bush administration helped Taiwan to apply for membership of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1990. The United States, together with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, also helped Taiwan to join the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 1992.

<sup>24</sup>Yu Xintian (俞新天), director of the Institute of Taiwan Studies in Shanghai, made this remark during a conference on cross-Straits relations on October 31, 2008.

<sup>25</sup>Central News Agency, "Wu Dunyi: Beijing tongyi waijiao xiubing, quantui Taiwan bang-jiaoguo" (Wu Den-yih: Beijing supports diplomatic truce by dissuading Taiwan's diplomatic ally," *Lianhebao* (United Daily) (Taipei), October 14, 2008, <http://udn.com/NEWS/NATIONAL/NAT1/4558062.shtml>.

governmental organizations (IGOs), and now this role has been taken over by China. Few IGOs that require their members to be sovereign states are available to Taiwan. Nonetheless, Taiwan is only likely to get its voice heard in IGOs if China gives a nod of acquiescence. For example, Zhou Wenzhong (周文重), China's ambassador to the United States, said during a press conference in November 2008 that China and Taiwan should initiate negotiation on Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) as early as possible on the basis of the "1992 consensus."<sup>26</sup> After a series of cross-Straits negotiations, Taiwan was invited to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an observer under the title "Chinese Taipei (中華台北)" in May 2009. In addition, Taiwan gained accession to the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) and the International Health Regulations (IHR) later that year.<sup>27</sup> In the past, former government leaders from Taiwan, including a former vice president and president, had been denied permission to attend the economic leaders' summit of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, but now, the former vice president, Lien Chan (連戰), has attended the summit four years running as President Ma's special envoy. This is a sign of significant progress considering that another former vice president, Li Yuan-cu (李元簇), was denied access to the summit as President Chen Shui-bian's envoy.<sup>28</sup>

China's attitude has also turned out to be the crucial factor in Taiwan's participation in East Asian economic integration. Since the signing of the cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) on June 29, 2010, Taiwan has shown a strong interest in negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) or similar pacts with other states in the region. But the signing of FTAs between Taiwan and China's diplomatic allies is still po-

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<sup>26</sup>Chen Lo-wei and Liu Ping, "Ma: zhengqu dalu shanyi, canyu shiwei dahui" (Ma: win China's good will to join the WHA), *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) (Taipei), November 8, 2008, <http://news.chinatimes.com/2007Cti/2007Cti-News/2007Cti-News-Content/0,4521,110501+112008110800085,00.html>.

<sup>27</sup>Central News Agency, "Foreign Minister Touts Flexible Diplomacy Success," *China Post*, March 2, 2010, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2010/03/02/246463/Foreign-minister.htm>.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

litically sensitive for the Chinese, who see FTAs as agreements between sovereign states. In addition, China is worried that once Taiwan diversifies its substantive economic relations through the signing of FTAs with China's diplomatic allies, Taipei may become less dependent on the Chinese market and may pull out of the cross-Straits economic cooperation system. Beijing is also concerned that the DPP could come to power again in Taiwan and inherit the KMT's diplomatic achievements. However, it is expected that, as long as Taiwan refrains from using politically sensitive titles to conclude FTAs with other states, China will not stand in its way, particularly when Taipei is targeting smaller countries.

Observing the change of climate in cross-Straits relations, some Asia-Pacific countries have been encouraged to improve their relations with Taiwan. For example, Japan has started to develop substantive ties with Taipei, including the establishment of a Taipei Cultural Center in Tokyo and an Institute of Japan Studies in Taipei. Japanese officials also asked in March 2010 whether Taipei was interested in negotiating an FTA with Tokyo.<sup>29</sup> In September 2011, Japan signed an investment guarantee agreement with Taiwan.<sup>30</sup> Tokyo has even dispatched serving military officers and retired generals and admirals to Taipei to discuss bilateral military cooperation. Singapore declined to open FTA negotiations with Taiwan during the Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) administration because Taipei demanded that any such agreement should be concluded in the name of the Republic of China. Once Taiwan and China had inked the ECFA, however, Singapore changed its mind,<sup>31</sup> Now the two sides are in the process of negotiating

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<sup>29</sup>Li Zhi-de, "Tai-Ri qianshu FTA, Zhao Jianmin daihui zhengmian xiaoxi" (Positive message from Chao Chien-Min: the signing of Taiwan-Japan FTA), *Lianhebao* (United Daily) (Taipei), March 16, 2010, <http://udn.com/NEWS/NATIONAL/BREAKINGNEWS1/5478910.shtml>.

<sup>30</sup>Taiwan-Japan Bilateral Investment Arrangement (BIA). For official documentation, see Arrangement Between the Association of East Asian Relations and the Interchange Association for the Mutual Cooperation on the Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment (亞東關係協會與財團法人交流協會有關投資自由化、促進及保護合作協議), signed in Taipei on September 26, 2011, [http://www.moea.gov.tw/TJI/main/content/ContentLink.aspx?menu\\_id=3613](http://www.moea.gov.tw/TJI/main/content/ContentLink.aspx?menu_id=3613).

<sup>31</sup>In an interview with Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew (李光耀) of Singapore, President Chen said that Singapore would only be able to sign an FTA with Taiwan if Taiwan im-

an FTA or a similar agreement. It is expected that other states around the world will make similar positive moves.

Nevertheless, Beijing's good will is not without limits, and its willingness to accommodate Taipei is selective. First, although President Ma's diplomatic truce has won some positive responses from Beijing, it is clear that the truce also has benefits for China. Before May 2008, China launched wave after wave of diplomatic offensives against Taiwan, and both sides suffered a lot from this highly expensive diplomatic warfare. Now they can use their resources elsewhere. But the problem for Taiwan is whether the diplomatic truce will last. Second, although Lien Chan was invited to dine with President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) of China during each of the last four APEC economic leaders' summits, this was more a matter of symbol than substance. Third, although Taiwan has attended the WHA as an observer under the title "Chinese Taipei" since May 2009, it can only attend by invitation, and it still does not have membership of the World Health Organization (WHO). In a proposal put forward by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in September 2008, Taipei claimed that it was entitled to be an observer in a range of UN specialized agencies, covering economic affairs, culture, education, health, transportation, finance, telecommunication, the environment, human rights, narcotics, and anti-terrorism.<sup>32</sup> Taiwan's efforts to gain meaningful participation in UN-affiliated specialized agencies are targeted primarily at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other agencies also on its wish list.

In September 2009, Taipei changed its policy, and it is now only attempting to gain observer status in the ICAO and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) under the title

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proved its relations with China. Central News Agency, "Taiwan-Singapore FTA Hinges on Cross-Strait Ties," *China Post*, May 9, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/%20business/2008/05/09/155579/Taiwan-Singapore-FTA.htm>.

<sup>32</sup>In September 2008, through its diplomatic allies, the ROC demanded that the UN secretary general arrange a review of its fundamental right to participate in UN specialized agencies in a meaningful way. For documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), see <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/lp.asp?ctNode=1435&CtUnit=373&BaseSD=7&mp=1>.



"Chinese Taipei."<sup>33</sup> Although the European Parliament strongly supports Taiwan's efforts to join these two bodies, China has yet to give its approval.<sup>34</sup> China is particularly reluctant to acquiesce where IGOs like the ICAO or international regimes like the UNFCCC are concerned because Taiwan's participation would involve the controversial issue of sovereignty. Also, China doubts whether Taiwan will remain satisfied with observers status, and fears it may seek full membership in the future. Finally, China's misgivings stem from fear that the proindependence DPP will return to power and benefit from the KMT government's diplomatic achievements.

In short, Taipei's approach of finding a *modus vivendi* with Beijing and establishing a diplomatic truce across the Strait has so far proved to be at least partially successful, as tensions have eased and Taiwan has been allowed to expand its international space. The new flexible and pragmatic foreign policy, which differs entirely from the aggressive approach of the Chen Shui-bian administration, has allowed President Ma to rebuild mutual trust between Taiwan and other countries such as the United States, the EU, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, and India.

What was most damaging for the ROC's national interests was the way in which the U.S.-China Joint Statement of November 17, 2009, mentioned Taiwan in relation to the United States respecting China's "core interests."<sup>35</sup> Although U.S. officials and think tank scholars have contended that Taiwan is not part of China's integrated sovereignty and territories or one of China's "core interests," Washington's policy of conciliating Beijing was viewed by Taipei as heightening the risk of abandonment. Why did the United States do this? Washington had urged Taipei to adopt a "pro-U.S. strategy" and a surprise-free approach, and not to cross the "red lines"

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<sup>33</sup>Ko Shu-ling, "Ma Lauds Efforts at UN Participation," *Taipei Times*, November 25, 2009, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2009/11/25/2003459353>.

<sup>34</sup>Central News Agency, "Europe Supports Taiwan's Role in ICAO, UNFCCC," *China Post*, March 13, 2010, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2010/03/13/248064/Europe-supports.htm>.

<sup>35</sup>"U.S.-China Joint Statement," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, November 17, 2009 (hereinafter U.S.-China Joint Statement by President Obama and President Hu of China on November 17, 2009), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>.

drawn by Washington since 2008,<sup>36</sup> and Taipei had complied. Some observers suspect that Washington was disappointed that Taiwan had failed to keep the United States informed about some cross-Straits issues, in particular the ECFA. Despite Taipei's efforts to accommodate Washington, the Americans were still prepared to hurt Taipei's feelings by showing respect for China's "core interests." In order to soothe Taiwan, the AIT chairman, Raymond Burghardt, came to Taipei on November 25, 2009, and stressed that "the Taiwan Relations Act is a 'central document' governing relations between Taipei and Washington," thus helping to reduce Taiwan's fear of abandonment.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the United States reassured Taiwan by demonstrating its firm support for Taiwan's participation in IGOs and international regimes. In a speech on December 7, 2010, Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg pointed out that "the United States has discussed with China some of the particular institutions and organizations like UNFCCC where Taiwan could play a constructive role"<sup>38</sup> (see table 2).

Things became clearer in 2011 as the United States expressed its determination to shift its strategic focus to Asia through substantial diplomatic moves. A more friendly U.S. stance was felt strongly in Taiwan. After China had demonstrated its expansionism by extending the concept of its "core interests" to the South China Sea and elsewhere in 2010, the United States decided to enhance its reputation for loyalty by rejecting China's proposal that the phrase "core interests" should be mentioned in the

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<sup>36</sup>Interview with U.S. think tank scholars in 2008. The U.S.-set red lines include the five no's (no independence, no two Chinas, no one China one Taiwan, no introduction of two-states theory into the ROC constitution, and no problems such as the abolition of the National Unification Council and the Guidelines for National Unification) for the DPP, and four no's (no economic alliance with China targeting the U.S., no illegal dispatch of U.S.-made weapons systems to China, no joint military exercises with China, no military alliance with China targeting the United States) for the KMT.

<sup>37</sup>Ko Shu-ling, "US Policy on Taiwan Unchanged: AIT," *China Post*, November 25, 2009, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2009/11/25/2003459370>.

<sup>38</sup>Central News Agency, "US Diplomat Burghardt Recognizes Taiwan's Democratic Achievements," *China Post*, December 2, 2010, <http://chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2010/12/02/282151/US-diplomat.htm>; and Ko Shu-ling, "Burghardt Praises 'Political Maturity' of Both Parties," *Taipei Times*, December 2, 2010, <http://taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2010/12/02/2003489937>.

U.S.-China Joint Statement of January 19, 2011.<sup>39</sup> According to Raymond Burghardt, Washington made it clear that "we prefer to have no joint statement rather than a statement which used the phrase 'core interests'," believing that the phrase could cause certain difficulties, misunderstandings, and troubles for the Asian region.<sup>40</sup> China even attempted to break new ground as it initially wanted the joint statement to be called a communiqué, but the United States refused.<sup>41</sup> This move by the United States could be seen as an effort to significantly reduce Taiwan's fear of abandonment. However, another statement by Burghardt to the media in Taiwan simply increased Taipei's feelings of uncertainty. Referring to Washington's rejection of the proposal for a fourth communiqué, he said that "the time has not arrived for Washington and Beijing to negotiate the document."<sup>42</sup> This was equivalent to a subtle threat of abandonment for Taiwan (see table 2).

Fortunately for Taiwan, in the new climate of Washington's "back-to-Asia" policy, the Americans view solid reassurance for Taiwan as necessary, as it perceives that China has expansionist goals. Praising the progress made in cross-Straits relations during the previous three years and looking forward to continued improvement, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton pointed out in a speech at the East-West Center, Hawaii,

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<sup>39</sup>For the text of the Joint Statement, see "U.S. - China Joint Statement," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, January 19, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/19/us-china-joint-statement>. See also "Press Conference with President Obama and President Hu of the People's Republic of China," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, January 19, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/19/press-conference-president-obama-and-president-hu-peoples-republic-china> (accessed January 20, 2011).

<sup>40</sup>"President Ma Meets American Institute in Taiwan Chairman Raymond Burghardt," Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), News Release, January 25, 2011, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=23355&mmd=2355>.

<sup>41</sup>Shih Hsiu-chuan, "US Kept Taiwan in Mind During Hu Trip: Burghardt," *Taipei Times*, January 26, 2011, <http://taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2011/01/26/2003494438>; and Joseph Yeh, "Taiwan's Interests Not Violated by Hu's Visit," *China Post*, January 26, 2011, <http://chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2011/01/26/289114/Taiwans-interests.htm>.

<sup>42</sup>Shih, "US Kept Taiwan in Mind During Hu Trip"; Yeh, "Taiwan's Interests Not Violated by Hu's Visit."

on November 10, 2011: "We have a strong relationship with Taiwan, an important security and economic partner."<sup>43</sup> This was the first example of U.S. "strategic reassurance" for Taiwan since the severing of diplomatic ties in 1979 (see table 2).

Both H1 (The less dependent an ally is on the alliance, the more influence it will enjoy in alliance politics) and H2 (The more interests there are at stake, the more influence a state or an ally will have in alliance politics) are tested here, and they do seem to accord, by and large though with some adjustments, with the U.S.-Taiwan informal diplomatic alliance. For example, although Taiwan does not intend to defect from its informal diplomatic alliance with the United States, the less dependent it is on the alliance, the more leverage it will enjoy in intra-alliance bargaining. However, as U.S. diplomatic interests in the Asia-Pacific region increase, not only will the United States have the largest say in intra-alliance bargaining, but its allies and partners, including Taiwan, will become more influential in alliance politics. H3 (The more firmly a state is committed to defending its ally, the more likely it is to be entrapped) is tested here, and it does seem that the United States feared entrapment when the DPP was in power in Taiwan. This fear of entrapment has been significantly reduced since Ma Ying-jeou came to power because there is no likelihood that Taiwan will declare itself independent and there is an ongoing process of peaceful development involving the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. H4 (The more it suspects that an ally is seeking realignment, the more likely it is that a state will reach a preemptive realignment or a prompt resolve with its adversary) is tested here, but the result seems confusing. The subtle threat of abandonment in Burghardt's remark that "the time has not arrived for Washington and Beijing to negotiate [a fourth communique]" was probably intended to bring Taiwan back into line, and to persuade it to brief Washington in advance on important cross-Strait issues. H6 (The more conciliatory a state is toward a security-seeking adversary, the more likely it is to resolve con-

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<sup>43</sup>Hillary Rodham Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," a speech at East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, November 10, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/11/176999.htm> (accessed November 12, 2011).

flict and reduce tension) is tested here, and once again the result seems unclear. There may be reasons to believe that the United States was unhappy with Taiwan's failure to keep it completely in the picture regarding ECFA negotiations, but whether Washington intended to improve its relations with Beijing at the expense of Taipei was not clear at that time. H7 (The more conciliatory a state is toward an expansionist adversary, the more likely it is to encourage aggression) is tested here, and we can see that Washington is no longer operating a conciliatory policy toward Beijing; instead, it tends to see China as being potentially expansionist, judging from Beijing's behavior in 2010. H10 (The stronger the strategic interests involved, the more likely a state is to adjust its position toward its allies and partners) is tested here, and the result suggests that now the United States is determined to come "back to Asia," its stronger strategic needs in the region will require it to move from a pro-China stance to a balanced policy toward the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

### **The Impact on Economic Aspects of the U.S.-Taiwan Informal Alliance**

The swift improvement in cross-Strait economic relations has had an impact on economic aspects of the informal U.S.-Taiwan alliance. Cross-Strait economic relations have by and large developed on the basis of "economy first, politics later" and "easy first, hard later" since May 2008. Taiwan's exports to China have increased significantly year on year since 2000, with the exception of 2009. The hiccup that occurred in 2009 was probably on account of the uncertain future of the ECFA, as exports began to increase steadily again once the ECFA was signed in late June 2009 (see table 3 and figure 1). We can therefore be reasonably confident that cross-Strait economic ties will prosper for some years to come.

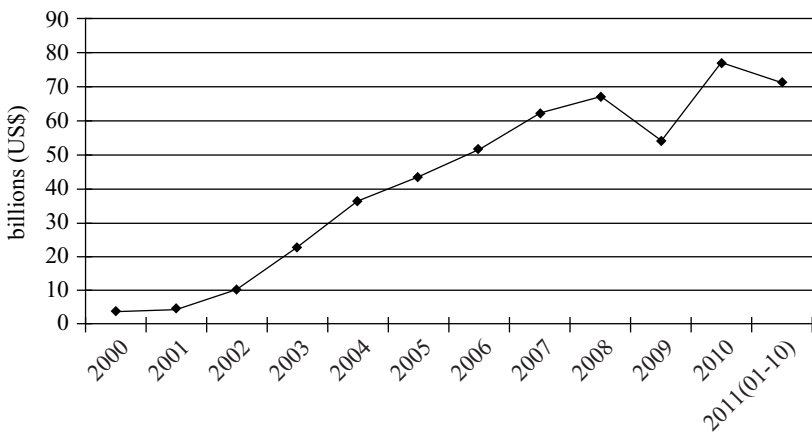
In contrast to its trade with China, Taiwan's exports to the United States have by and large decreased since 2000 (see table 4 and figure 2). Indeed, the value of exports to China in 2010 and 2011(01-10) was more than double that of exports to the United States in the same period (see

**Table 3**  
**Volume of Taiwan's Exports to China (2000-2011)**

Year	Trade Volume	
	Amount (US\$)	+ or - (%)
2000	4,217,429,107	66.25
2001	4,895,292,484	16.073
2002	10,526,738,214	115.038
2003	22,890,302,915	117.449
2004	36,349,024,608	58.797
2005	43,643,322,853	20.067
2006	51,808,178,766	18.708
2007	62,416,411,093	20.476
2008	66,883,031,816	7.156
2009	54,248,101,236	-18.891
2010	76,934,575,511	41.82
2011(01-10)	71,204,646,698	11.795

**Source:** Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA, ROC.

**Figure 1**  
**Volume of Taiwan's Exports to China (2000-2011)**



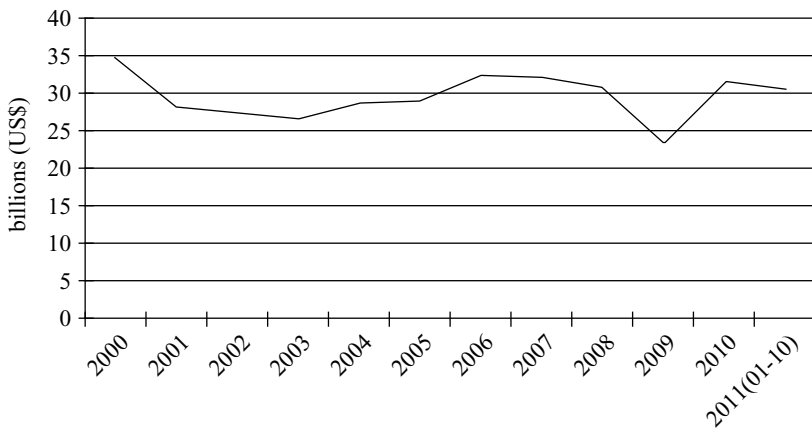
**Source:** Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA, ROC.

**Table 4**  
**Volume of Taiwan's Exports to the United States (2000-2011)**

Year	Trade Volume	
	Amount (US\$)	+ or -
2000	34,814,299,053	12.663
2001	28,135,945,492	-19.183
2002	27,364,876,167	-2.741
2003	26,553,388,056	-2.965
2004	28,750,631,862	8.275
2005	29,113,593,431	1.262
2006	32,360,389,828	11.152
2007	32,076,803,666	-0.876
2008	30,790,660,048	-4.01
2009	23,552,548,066	-23.507
2010	31,465,691,049	33.598
2011(01-10)	30,763,211,906	19.244

**Source:** Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA, ROC.

**Figure 2**  
**Volume of Taiwan's Exports to the United States (2000-2011)**



**Source:** Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA, ROC.

tables 3 and 4). It is thus reasonable to expect that the U.S.-Taiwan economic relationship will become less close in the future.

Obviously, if the current trend of cross-Straits economic cooperation continues without U.S. interference in the future, Taiwan's economic affinity with the United States will soon lag far behind its affinity with China. Moreover, if Beijing is generous enough to allow Taiwan to conclude FTAs or similar pacts with its neighbors, Taipei may become even more dependent on Beijing.<sup>44</sup> As long as China plays a more important role than the United States in keeping the Taiwan economy flourishing and in aiding Taiwan's participation in the process of East Asian economic integration, Washington may have reason to fear Taipei's defection from their informal economic alliance. This fear of abandonment may lead to a preemptive U.S. realignment with China or a prompt "solution" of the Taiwan problem by Washington and Beijing. The problem for Taiwan is that realignment may be the last resort largely because its price is unaffordable. Nevertheless, given the fact that China's huge market is acting as a magnet for Taiwan's economic resources, Washington may have to take one countermeasure or another.

Worried about Taipei's possible defection from their informal economic alliance, the United States has expressed concern over Taiwan's embrace of the China market. For instance, when asked about President Ma's eagerness to sign an ECFA with Beijing, Susan Shirk, who served as a deputy assistant secretary of state in the Clinton administration, said that although increasing trade across the Taiwan Strait could greatly benefit Taiwan, Taiwan should never underestimate the risk involved, and she urged the Taiwanese to take a closer look at Beijing's motives for offering an ECFA. She added that Taiwan had an "efficient government" with regular, democratic elections; therefore, if the public was worried that China might

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<sup>44</sup>Hu Jintao's second proposal reads as follows: Beijing is willing to sign the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Taipei and seek ways to link cross-Straits common development with Asia-Pacific economic integration. Xinhua News Agency, "Six Proposals Offered for Cross-Straits Relations," *China Daily*, December 31, 2008, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/31/content\\_7357490.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/31/content_7357490.htm).



eventually absorb Taiwan's economy, they should express their concern through the ballot box.<sup>45</sup>

In the U.S.-Taiwan informal economic alliance, Washington may have to reassure Taipei by employing a cooperative and positive economic strategy toward Taiwan. Raymond Burghardt said on November 30, 2010, that the United States was ready to reinvigorate the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) talks,<sup>46</sup> but U.S. readiness for this kind of move is by no means unconditional. Taiwan began testing U.S. beef for the feed additive ractopamine in January 2011, prolonging the suspension of TIFA talks that had been in place since 2007, when Taiwan banned U.S. beef imports over concerns about mad cow disease. The United States called off the resumption of TIFA talks, scheduled for January 2011, in response to the testing for the chemical.

In 2011 it became increasingly obvious that the United States was determined to shift its economic focus back to Asia, as it began adopting positive policies toward its allies and partners in the region. President Barack Obama announced at the APEC Summit during his trip to Asia, indicating that the United States will play a leading role in promoting the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>47</sup> His call for the establishment of the TPP, was echoed by Japan (with reservations), Canada, and Mexico.<sup>48</sup> Recognizing the signal from Washington, President

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<sup>45</sup>Fang Cheng-hsiang and Rich Chang, "Former US Official Wams about ECFA with Beijing," *Taipei Times*, June 21, 2009, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2009/06/21/2003446724>.

<sup>46</sup>Joseph Yeh, "Taiwan's Curbs on US Beef Could Complicate Trade: AIT," *China Post*, December 1, 2010, <http://chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2010/12/01/281997/Taiwans-curbs.htm>; Crystal Hsu, "US Aims to Deepen Its Trade Ties with Taiwan: AIT Head," *Taipei Times*, December 1, 2010, <http://taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/12/01/2003489847>.

<sup>47</sup>"Remarks by the President in the Meeting with Trans-Pacific Partnership," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, Hale Koa Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii, November 12, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/12/remarks-president-meeting-trans-pacific-partnership> (accessed November 14, 2011).

<sup>48</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Deepening U.S. Ties to Asia-Pacific Region Not at China's Expense," *IIP Digital*, November 23, 2011, <http://translations.state.gov/st/english/article/2011/11/20111122175855nehpets0.5838892.html> (accessed November 25, 2011); "Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Jay Carney and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic

Ma responded by saying that Taiwan would join the U.S.-led Asian economic bloc sometime within the next ten years as it needed time to complete preparations by adjusting its domestic economic, financial, and trade structure.<sup>49</sup> The TPP has been a significant issue for Taiwan since late 2010. The partnership was initiated by Singapore, Chile, Brunei, and New Zealand (the so-called P4) in 2006. They were later joined by the United States, Australia, Peru, Malaysia, and Vietnam (becoming the P9). Obviously, the TPP is one of Washington's countermeasures designed to balance the rising power of China<sup>50</sup> (see table 2). On the other hand, as mentioned above, Secretary of State Clinton was offering strategic reassurance to Taiwan.<sup>51</sup>

When Burghardt visited Taipei on January 31, 2012, he linked the bilateral trade dispute to Taiwan's overall trade liberalization and its engagement with regional trade partners. He pointed out that "there is no way to talk about beef without putting it in that context." He added that:

"Taiwan needs to have better relations with the Asia-Pacific region, beyond China. Taiwan has said it has interests in joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 10 years. Why wait 10 years? Why not make it sooner? But there are a lot of things Taiwan would have to do with its agriculture policy, its policy in the pharmaceutical and financial sectors. All of these things have to be liberalized."<sup>52</sup>

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Communications Ben Rhodes," Office of the Press Secretary, White House Washington, D.C., November 15, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/15/press-gaggle-press-secretary-jay-carney-and-deputy-national-security-adv> (accessed November 17, 2011); and U.S. Department of State, "White House Briefing on President Obama's Trip to Asia Pacific," *IIP Digital*, November 23, 2011, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/11/20111123120030su0.9150769.html> (accessed November 25, 2011).

<sup>49</sup>"President Ma Meets ROC Delegation Returning from 2011 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting," Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), News Release, November 17, 2011, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=25921&rmid=2355&word1=TPP&sd=2011/11/01&ed=2012/02/09>.

<sup>50</sup>"Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Kan of Japan in Statements to the Press in Yokohama, Japan," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, November 13, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/13/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-kan-japan-statements-press-yo> (accessed November 15, 2010).

<sup>51</sup>Clinton, "America's Pacific Century."

<sup>52</sup>Shih Hsiu-chuan, "AIT Chairman Links Beef to Trade Talks and TPP Accession," *Taipei Times*, February 1, 2012, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/02/01/>

Indeed, his remarks that "Taiwan needs to have better relations with the Asia-Pacific region, beyond China" do suggest that Washington has a strategic/economic blueprint in mind.

In theory, all the members of APEC are welcome to join the TPP which is seen as an important step toward a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP).<sup>53</sup> However, Washington seems to have used the TPP as a diplomatic and economic tool in its economic competition with China. In order to ensure that it can join the TPP, resume TIFA negotiations, and at the same time send signals to Washington showing its gratitude for U.S. strategic reassurance, Taipei may have to accommodate the United States on the issues of beef and ractopamine.<sup>54</sup>

International relations are simply a matter of quid pro quo, and Washington and Taipei's security and economic partnership is no exception. The United States has offered the Republic of China strategic reassurance of a kind that has not been seen since 1979, but this reassurance must be more than empty rhetoric. It must be transformed into practical policies. And more importantly, strategic reassurance is not a one-way commitment.

In the case of the U.S.-Taiwan informal economic alliance, abandonment or defection may occur in two ways. For instance, the United States may realign with China or merely de-align with Taiwan by abrogating their bilateral economic agreements. Likewise, in theory at least, Taiwan may realign with China as their economic cooperation deepens and expands, or it may merely de-align with the United States by abrogating their bilateral economic agreements. The more dependent Taiwan is on China, the more it will fear abandonment by the United States. Therefore, while the first

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2003524404; "MOEA Trying to Resolve US Beef Row," *China Post*, February 1, 2012, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/foreign-affairs/2012/02/01/330283/MOEA-trying.htm>.

<sup>53</sup>"Remarks by the President to CEO Business Summit in Yokohama, Japan," Office of the Press Secretary, White House, November 12, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/12/remarks-president-ceo-business-summit-yokohama-japan> (accessed November 14, 2010).

<sup>54</sup>"President Ma Meets American Institute in Taiwan Chairman Raymond Burghardt," Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), News Release, February 1, 2012, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=26433&rmid=2355>.

two forms of abandonment or defection seem unlikely because the United States would like to incorporate Taiwan into its economic sphere through TIFA and the TPP, the last two forms also do not seem possible as Taiwan will continue to pursue a strategy of "peaceful to China, friendly to Japan, and close to the United States" (和中、友日、親美) (see table 2).

Both H1 (The less dependent an ally is on the alliance, the more influence it will enjoy in alliance politics) and H2 (The more interests there are at stake, the more influence a state or an ally will have in alliance politics) are tested here, and they seem largely to accord with the U.S.-Taiwan informal economic alliance with some adjustments. For instance, although Taipei does not intend to defect from the alliance, the less dependent it is on it, the more leverage it will enjoy in intra-alliance bargaining. However, as the United States has more and more economic interests at stake in the Asia-Pacific region, Washington will not only have the largest say in alliance politics, but its allies and partners, including Taiwan, will become more influential in intra-alliance bargaining. H3 (The more firmly a state is committed to defending its ally, the more likely it is to be entrapped) is tested here, and we find that the United States was fearful of entrapment when the DPP was in power in Taiwan, but this fear has dissipated since Ma Ying-jeou came to power, as there is no likelihood of him declaring independence. H10 (The stronger the strategic interests involved, the more likely a state is to adjust its position toward its allies and partners) is tested here, and we can see that having decided to shift its focus toward Asia, the United States is more likely to be willing to adjust its economic stance in the changed international economic environment from a pro-China policy to a policy that balances the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

### **Impact on the Security Aspects of the U.S.-Taiwan Informal Alliance**

Knowing that the United States has been under financial pressure from Beijing, Taipei has found it increasingly difficult to determine Wash-

ington's intentions from its words and actions.<sup>55</sup> The alignment or realignment among states as a result of conflicts and affinities may be decided on grounds of security interests.<sup>56</sup> In September 2009, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said that Washington hoped that China and Taiwan would discuss the establishment of confidence-building mechanisms (CBMs) that would further stabilize cross-Straits relations.<sup>57</sup> Even in a climate of improving relations, CBMs are still needed to reduce the risk of accidental conflict, to establish patterns of cooperation, and to lay the groundwork for building greater trust. Half a year on from that, Premier Wu Den-yih of the ROC set two preconditions for talks with China on military CBMs.<sup>58</sup> First, he said, Taiwan must maintain a streamlined yet strong military that is capable of defending Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu, and second, the talks must be conducted step by step. Wu also said that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should show mutual respect and self-restraint and achieve an equal footing before they can further discuss issues regarding military CBMs. For example, he said, in the event of a military plane from either side crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait, the two sides should remain calm and avoid immediate war.

When the ROC's deputy defense minister, Andrew Yang (楊念祖), visited Washington in early October 2010, he pointed out that the security threat to Taiwan was increasing all the time, adding, "Beijing is sweetening the carrots and hardening the sticks."<sup>59</sup> Yang said that "China has attempted to instigate differences between the Taiwanese people and the government

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<sup>55</sup>Yeh, "Taiwan's Curbs on US Beef"; and Hsu, "US Aims to Deepen Its Trade Ties with Taiwan."

<sup>56</sup>Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 462-66.

<sup>57</sup>James B. Steinberg, "Administration's Vision of the U.S.-China Relationship," Deputy Secretary of State, Keynote Address at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), Washington, D.C., September 24, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/2009/129686.htm> (accessed September 30, 2009).

<sup>58</sup>Vicky Hsu and Y. F. Low, "Premier Sets Preconditions for Cross-Straits Talks on Military CBMs," *China Post*, March 16, 2010, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2010/03/16/248575/Premier-sets.htm>.

<sup>59</sup>William Lowther, "China Threat 'Has Never Diminished'," *Taipei Times*, October 6, 2010, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2010/10/06/2003484659>.

and even tried to dominate Taiwan's public opinion and manipulate it in cross-Strait relations." These remarks indicate that deep differences had started to emerge between the two sides just as Beijing was proposing political and military dialogue with Taipei.

One of these differences between the two sides stems from Beijing's longstanding opposition to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg and Jeffrey Bader, senior director of the U.S. National Security Council, flew to Beijing in March 2010 to repair U.S.—China relations. China made good use of this opportunity to bargain for a termination of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, a goal Beijing has aimed at for decades and now feels bold enough to move toward.<sup>60</sup> China has expressed its strong opposition to Taiwan independence since the KMT returned to power in May 2008, indicating that it has something else in mind—that is, reunification. It goes without saying that Beijing's first step toward reunification would be to disarm Taiwan. Obviously, what China wants most is to stop U.S. arms sales and undermine Washington's security commitment to Taiwan.

Taiwan's policy of ensuring Washington's security commitment and the procurement of U.S. weapons systems is, from a realist or neorealist perspective, an example of "self-help" behavior. In order to survive in the international community, Taiwan has tried every possible means to protect its national interests and guarantee its national security. In the language of Premier Wu Den-yih, "We cannot rely solely on the good will of the other side, for good will may not last forever. . . . We need to purchase necessary arms and equipment to safeguard the security and sovereignty of the Republic of China."<sup>61</sup> Taiwan cannot give up its security in exchange for a peace accord with China. In a speech on October 10, 2009, President Ma pointed out that although cross-Strait ties had improved dramatically since

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<sup>60</sup>Josh Rogin, "What U.S. Officials Heard in Beijing," *Foreign Policy*, March 9, 2010, [http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/03/09/what\\_us\\_officials\\_heard\\_in\\_beijing](http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/03/09/what_us_officials_heard_in_beijing).

<sup>61</sup>"China Should Accept Status Quo Across Taiwan Strait," *China Post*, October 2, 2009, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/china-taiwan-relations/2009/10/02/226980/China-should.htm>.

he took office, he had not ignored China's military threat and would not seek peace at the expense of national security.<sup>62</sup> During Ma's stopovers in the United States, the Obama administration accorded him better treatment than his predecessor had received. In response to President Ma's defense needs, President Obama agreed to sell Taiwan weapons packages worth US\$6.4 billion in January 2010 and another package worth US\$5.8 billion in September 2011.<sup>63</sup>

Washington has been reluctant to admit in public that it has played a significant role in cross-Straits relations over the past six decades, but in reality, the United States has played multiple roles in the relationship since 1949. When it dispatched two aircraft carrier battle groups to waters near the Taiwan Strait during the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, it was playing the role of an arbitrator. When it promoted the resumption of cross-Straits dialogue, it was playing the role of a mediator. When it advocated a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue, it was making sure that neither side used force to resolve their dispute. When it provides Taiwan with sophisticated weapons systems and a security commitment, it is playing the role of a guarantor<sup>64</sup> (see table 2).

Indeed, a strategy of vague commitment has the desirable effect of avoiding unnecessary entrapment. The more dependent a state is on the alliance, the higher its risk of entrapment. Likewise, the stronger a state's commitment to its ally, the more likely it is to be entrapped. That is why, in the U.S.-Taiwan informal alliance, Washington always keeps its commitments tentative or as vague as it possibly can. The motivation behind that

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<sup>62</sup>Ko Shu-ling, "Ma Vows to Maintain National Security," *Taipei Times*, October 11, 2009, 1, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2009/10/11/2003455699>.

<sup>63</sup>U.S. Department of State, "Background Briefing on Asian Security," senior officials via teleconference, Washington, D.C., January 29, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/01/136286.htm> (accessed January 31, 2010); Andrew Jacobs, "Arms Sale Draws Angry, but Familiar, Reaction," *New York Times*, September 22, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/world/asia/china-expresses-anger-over-latest-us-arms-sales-to-taiwan.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=US%20arms%20sales%20to%20Taiwan%20in%20September%202011&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/world/asia/china-expresses-anger-over-latest-us-arms-sales-to-taiwan.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=US%20arms%20sales%20to%20Taiwan%20in%20September%202011&st=cse).

<sup>64</sup>Edward I-hsin Chen, "U.S. Role in Future Taipei-Beijing Relations," in *Political and Economic Security in Asia-Pacific*, ed. King-yuh Chang (Taipei: Foundation on International & Cross-Straits Studies, 2004), 82-95.

is either to preserve opportunities for shifting to another ally in case Taiwan turns out to be a defector, or to maximize its bargaining power over Taiwan by showing that it has options. For example, the George W. Bush administration was reluctant to allow itself to be entrapped in the cross-Strait conflict over the issue of Taiwan's independence when the DPP was in power in Taiwan. As a result, it reached an anti-independence consensus with China. There is no question of independence under the leadership of Ma Ying-jeou. When Taiwan starts negotiations on politically sensitive issues, however, what Taipei needs is for Washington to play the role of guarantor or supervisor. The security dilemma in the U.S.-Taiwan informal alliance is that Washington may think that playing this role is a kind of entrapment. In the absence of U.S. endorsement, Taiwan may be reluctant to enter into negotiations with China on such issues as a peace agreement, CBMs, and the political status of the two sides of the Strait (see table 2).

The U.S.-Taiwan alliance was by no means always firm in the days of the U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty when its terms were explicit, let alone now that its terms are only implicit. In theory, both sides should have been equally fearful of abandonment since 2008. In the U.S.-Taiwan informal alliance, however, Taiwan's fear of abandonment has been much greater. Abandonment or defection may occur in the following ways. For instance, the United States may realign with China; it may merely de-align with Taiwan, abrogating the TRA; it may fail to fulfill its explicit security commitment; or it may fail to provide support in contingencies where support is expected. As of today, the first two variants are only hypothetical. In the event of the latter two variants, the informal U.S.-Taiwan alliance might remain intact, but the expectations of support which underlie would be weakened. Suspicion that Taiwan is considering realignment may lead to either a preemptive U.S. realignment with China or a prompt U.S.-China solution of the Taiwan problem (see table 2).

The United States and Taiwan have had an informal security arrangement since 1979. The two countries are tied together into an informal alliance based on the TRA—a piece of domestic legislation approved by the U.S. Congress, not an agreement between two countries. The TRA does not provide a serious U.S. security commitment to Taiwan for various



reasons stemming from the security dilemma described by Snyder. States usually want to keep their commitments tentative or vague for as long as possible, both to preserve opportunities for shifting partners in case the status quo turns out to be unsatisfactory and to maximize bargaining power over their current partner by showing that they have options. For some months before Washington and Beijing signed the U.S.-China Joint communique on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan on August 17, 1982, Taiwan feared that the United States would betray the TRA. This fear was not dissipated until President Ronald Reagan provided Taiwan with his "six assurances" on July 14, a matter of weeks before the signing of the communique. This example clearly illustrates the vulnerability of parties to something as flexible and ambiguous as an informal alliance (see table 2).

Although the original intention behind the TRA was to ensure lasting peace between Taiwan and China, it does not contain any clear stipulation that the United States should send troops to waters near the Taiwan Strait to prevent a military conflict. In other words, the TRA laid the foundation for the long-standing ambiguity in U.S. policy on Taiwan in that its conditions are subject to change in accordance with U.S. national interests in the region. This ambiguity gives the United States restraining power over Taiwan's cross-Strait policies and prevents Taiwan from carrying out any provocative acts. Moreover, while Taipei fears abandonment, Washington feared entrapment through its security arrangement with Taipei during the Chen administration (see table 2).

When the national interests of allies are not identical or when they know that larger benefits may be reaped elsewhere, abandonment is more likely to occur. In the politics of the U.S.-Taiwan informal alliance, a U.S. strategy of strong commitment to Taiwan can significantly reduce Taiwan's risk of abandonment. The fear of abandonment is reduced as Taiwan is discouraged from defecting by its confidence in Washington's strong support. However, this support may encourage Taiwan to take a strong stance in quarrels over disputed waters or military crises with China, thus exposing the United States to the risk of a conflict it would rather avoid. Conversely, Washington's strategy of giving only weak or vague commitments to Taiwan in disputes or crises with China tends to restrain Taipei and reduce the

United States' risk of entrapment, but it also tends to reduce the credibility of the security alliance (see table 2).

While most observers believe that Taiwan has more reason to fear abandonment, some others think that if cross-Strait relations get out of control, the United States should be able to detect defection early enough to respond by seeking a prompt solution to the Taiwan problem. For example, Professor Robert Sutter of the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, suggests that the United States should adjust its policy toward the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.<sup>65</sup> This adjustment should include a review of U.S. policy options that would take account of the full implications of China's markedly increased influence over Taiwan along with the benefits of reassuring Beijing in the interests of cross-Strait stability. Sutter believes that such a review of U.S.-Taiwan relations would lead to the modification of Washington's long-standing emphasis on sustaining a balance of power and influence in the Taiwan area favorable to and heavily influenced by the United States. Some specific questions that Sutter suggests should be considered in the review are: (1) whether U.S. efforts to shore up support for Taiwan militarily, diplomatically, and economically will prompt Beijing to ease its pressure on Taiwan; (2) whether modification of Washington's emphasis on balance in the Taiwan Strait and recognition of China's growing influence on Taiwan will have an impact on the broader U.S. strategy to hedge against the possibility of Chinese expansionism, thereby disrupting the regional order; and (3) whether the United States should act as a mediator between Taiwan and China in the future. Sutter's concerns are worthy of our attention. The problem with his arguments is that they are based upon an assumption that the United States would not take a firm stance on any use of force by China against Taiwan. This assumption in turn leads to a suspicion that the rise of China will eventually lead either to Beijing's coercion or Taipei's surrender.

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<sup>65</sup>Robert Sutter, "Cross-Strait Moderation and the United States—Policy Adjustments Needed," Pacific Forum CSIS, Honolulu, Hawaii, *PacNet*, Number 17, March 5, 2009, <http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-17-march-5-2009-cross-strait-moderation-and-united-states-policy-adjustments-need>. For PDF file, see <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/pac0917.pdf>.

In response to Sutter's policy recommendations, Richard C. Bush, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and director of its Center for Northeast Asian Policy, and Alan Romberg, a distinguished fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Center, pointed out that the situation across the Taiwan Strait is not that gloomy and that the United States can do a lot of things to prevent the worst scenario from occurring.<sup>66</sup> First, the goal of the United States since the mid-1950s has been the maintenance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, including through the peaceful resolution of issues between the two sides, instead of what Sutter terms "maintaining a balance of power and influence in the Taiwan area favorable to Taiwan and U.S. interests." Second, Sutter's call for a policy review is based on the assumption that the United States would not be willing to take an effective stand against China's coercion or worse against Taiwan. China is rising, they say, but that does not necessarily mean that its power is unchecked. Third, although Sutter fears that the rise of China will eventually lead to China's dominance and Taiwan's submission, Taiwan possesses many resources that enable it to resist China's coercion or threats, including a viable democratic system, an internationally competitive economy, strong multinational corporations, a modest military deterrent, and a strong relationship with the United States. In the opinion of Bush and Romberg, Washington has not only strongly endorsed the improvements in cross-Strait relations, but has also enhanced its own relations with Taiwan, including those in the security realm.

Given the fact that Beijing seems to be taking a bigger role than Washington in helping Taipei to maintain its diplomatic ties and expand its international space, the United States may have reasons to fear Taiwan's defection from their informal security alliance. Such a fear of abandonment may lead to a preemptive U.S. realignment with China or a prompt U.S.-China solution of the Taiwan problem. Although realignment may be a last resort, it is a price that Taiwan could not afford. In fact, Taiwan has

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<sup>66</sup>Richard Bush and Alan Romberg, "Cross-Strait Moderation and the United States—A Response to Robert Sutter," *PacNet*, no. 17A, March 12, 2009, <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/pac0917a.pdf>.

been more fearful of abandonment since it became an informal ally of the United States in 1979. In the U.S.-Taiwan informal security alliance, if China is a security seeker which is interested in maintaining the status quo, then a policy of toughness may provoke China, increase tension, and induce an "insecurity spiral" or unnecessary power competition because China will interpret U.S. firmness as aggression. A U.S. strategy of conciliation toward China may have the desirable effect of resolving conflict and reducing tension with a rising but nonaggressive China. Nonetheless, if China has expansionist goals, a conciliatory policy on the part of the United States may only encourage it to make further demands in the belief that Washington lacks resolve (see table 2).

Fortunately, the United States has adopted a dual strategy toward China, instead of a conciliatory policy. Since 2009, the Obama administration has been both positive and firm in its policy toward China. Regarding the latter, Secretary of State Clinton declared in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2009 that "the United States is back [in Asia]."<sup>67</sup> But it was not until the sinking of the South Korean naval vessel, the *Cheonan*, ostensibly by the North Koreans, in 2010 that Washington had a legitimate pretext to return to Asia. The *Cheonan* incident, together with a series of North Korean bombardments of islands off South Korea, provided the excuse for a series of joint U.S. exercises with South Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. In a speech on October 28, 2010, Mrs Clinton pointed out that the United States was determined to engage in the Asia-Pacific region, and to press ahead with its "forward-deployed" diplomacy.<sup>68</sup> Taiwan could make good use of a U.S. back-to-Asia strategy and a U.S.-led political, economic, and military system in the Asia-Pacific region (see table 2).

Things became increasingly clear in 2011 as the United States showed its determination to pursue a back-to-Asia strategy. In response to a negative

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<sup>67</sup>Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks with Thai Deputy Prime Minister Korbhak Sabhavasut," remarks by Secretary of State, Bangkok, July 21, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/july/126271.htm> (accessed July 21, 2009).

<sup>68</sup>Hillary Rodham Clinton, "America's Engagement in the Asia-Pacific," remarks by Secretary of State, Kahala Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii, October 28, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/10/150141.htm> (accessed October 14, 2010).

message from AIT chairman Raymond Burghardt, President Ma issued some costly signals to the United States in an effort to restore mutual trust. In a speech during a video conference with the Washington-based think tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Ma laid down three defensive lines. He promised to institutionalize cross-Straits relations and develop an international cooperative mechanism, while strengthening relations with the United States and Japan by establishing a national security network to integrate defensive force and diplomacy. He also said Taiwan would adhere to the principle of the three-no's (no unification, no independence, and no use of force) in promoting relations with China, and called for the United States to help maintain Taiwan's ability to defend itself according to the TRA<sup>69</sup> (see table 2).

In the face of objections from China, top U.S. and Japanese defense and foreign affairs officials reaffirmed the U.S.-Japan alliance and called for peace through dialogue in the Taiwan Strait in their joint statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee on June 21, 2011, entitled "Toward a Deeper and Broader U.S.-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership."<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Japan has played an even more important role by establishing a military presence in the South China Sea with solid endorsement from the United States. Based on their security alliance, Washington and Tokyo have worked together to further advance their military cooperation with countries that share their values in such settings as the bilateral U.S.-Japan and U.S.-South Korea security alliances, the

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<sup>69</sup>Ma Ying-jeou, "Building National Security for the Republic of China," remarks of President Ma at the videoconference with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), News Release, May 12, 2011, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=24284&rmid=2355>. See also Mo Yan-chih, "Ma Renews Calls for Acquisition of F-16C/D Aircraft," *Taipei Times*, May 12, 2011, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2011/05/13/2003503109>.

<sup>70</sup>Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Japanese Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto, and Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa after Their Meeting," remarks by secretary of state at Dean Acheson Auditorium, Washington, D.C., June 21, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/06/166644.htm> (accessed June 23, 2011); and J. Michael Cole, "US, Japan Call for Strong Asia-Pacific Defense," *Taipei Times*, June 23, 2011, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2011/06/23/2003506460>.

U.S.-Japan-Australia trilateral cooperation, and the U.S.-Japan-India security dialogue. Washington has also enhanced its alliance with Manila and its security partnerships with Hanoi and Jakarta, among others. The U.S. navy has conducted military exercises with its counterparts in Vietnam and the Philippines, and in early July 2011, the United States held joint maneuvers with Japan and Australia in waters near Brunei. Furthermore, both India and the United Kingdom signed military agreements with Vietnam in November 2011, demonstrating that India intends to shift its focus eastward.

Given the fact that Japan is moving southward and Australia northward, the United States has two solid allies as its two arms, together with other reliable allies such as South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore on the one hand, and new partners such as India and Vietnam on the other. This will allow the United States to press ahead with a hedging strategy against the rise of China, using an anti-access strategy (反介入戰略) in the region if necessary. Referring to disputes over the South China Sea during his trip to Asia, Tom Donilon, the U.S. national security adviser, pointed out:

The U.S. position here is a principled position. The United States is a Pacific power; it's a trading power; it's a maritime power. The United States has an interest in the freedom of navigation, the free flow of commerce, the peaceful resolution of disputes. We don't have a claim. We don't take sides in the claims. But we do, as a global maritime power, have an interest in seeing these principles applied broadly. But the conversation today, to be just totally straight with you, was a short conversation, principally focused again on economics.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, the United States has broken the fences between the first and second chains of islands with the introduction of the U.S.-led Air-Sea

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<sup>71</sup>"Pressing Briefing by Press Secretary Jay Carney, National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes," Press Filing Center, W Hotel Seminyak, Bali, Indonesia November 19, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/19/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-national-security-advisor-tom-> (accessed November 21, 2011).

Concept/Plan (海空一體戰). Under this plan, all the waters and sea lanes in the North Pacific, the Eastern Sea, the Western Pacific, the Taiwan Strait, the South East Sea, the Straits of Malacca, and the Indian Ocean would be integrated into one battleground<sup>72</sup> (see table 2).

It is in the context of the new climate and security environment that Hillary Clinton declared during her November 2011 speech at the East-West Center in Hawaii, that "the 21st century will be America's Pacific century." She went on to say that "the United States is proud of our long history as a Pacific nation and a resident diplomatic, military, and economic power. And we are here to stay." She pointed out that the United States "has a strong relationship with Taiwan, an important security and economic partner." Moreover, she applauded the progress that had been achieved in cross-Strait relations over the previous three years, looking forward to continuing improvement so there can be a peaceful resolution of the differences between the two sides<sup>73</sup> (see table 2).

Both H1 (The less dependent an ally is on the alliance, the more influence it will enjoy in alliance politics) and H2 (The more interests there are at stake, the more influence a state or an ally will have in alliance politics) are tested here. The results of the tests are slightly different. H1 does not seem to fit the facts as well as H2. Although Taiwan is heavily dependent on the informal U.S.-Taiwan security alliance in terms of U.S. arms sales and military cooperation programs, it seems to be enjoying more influence in alliance politics than ever before. However, at a time when Washington's strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region are increasing, not only does Washington have the largest say in alliance politics, but its allies and partners, including Taiwan, are becoming more influential in intra-alliance bargaining on security issues. H3 (The more firmly a state is committed to defending its ally, the more likely it is to be entrapped) is tested here, and we can see that the United States did fear entrapment when the DPP was in power in Taiwan. Despite the U.S. offer of strategic re-

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<sup>72</sup>"White House Briefing on President Obama's Trip to Asia-Pacific."

<sup>73</sup>Clinton, "America's Pacific Century."

assurance to Taiwan, Washington's fear of entrapment has significantly decreased, not only because there is no chance of a declaration of independence under the leadership of President Ma but also because peaceful development between Taiwan and China is still an ongoing process. H4 (The more it suspects that an ally is seeking realignment, the more likely it is that a state will reach a preemptive realignment or a prompt resolve with its adversary) is tested here. This does not seem to accord with the facts in this case. With a few exceptions, most U.S. think tank scholars do not believe that Taiwan is seeking realignment. Therefore, there is no need for Washington to carry out a preemptive realignment or come to a prompt resolve with Beijing. H5 (The more a state looks as if it is seeking realignment, the more likely its ally is to provide costly signals in order to enhance credibility between them) is also tested here. We can see that in response to U.S. dissatisfaction at Taiwan's failure to keep Washington informed about its plans to sign the ECFA, President Ma decided to provide costly signals in order to enhance credibility between Taipei and Washington, highlighting the importance of U.S. diplomatic and military assistance to Taiwan. H9 (The firmer a state's policy toward an expansionist adversary, the more likely it is to deter the adversary) is tested here. It may be that having identified China as expansionist, the United States is determined to take a firmer stance toward Beijing after the adoption of its back-to-Asia policy. H10 (The stronger the strategic interests involved, the more likely a state is to adjust to the changed international environment) is tested here. Our study suggests that having decided to come "back to Asia," the United States will have stronger strategic interests there, thereby causing it to adjust its stance toward its allies and partners, and swap a pro-China policy for one that is balanced between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait on security issues.

## Conclusion

A new and dramatically changing era has begun with the intensification of competition between the United States and China and a high degree



of suspicion in the Asia-Pacific region. Most countries in the region are feeling uncomfortable for a variety of reasons, ranging from the renminbi exchange rate and trade conflicts which could lead to protectionism, subtle competition between the China-led ASEAN and the U.S.-led TPP, and disputes over sovereignty in the South China Sea, to possible confrontation as a result of Washington strengthening its cooperation with its allies and partners in the region.

Although China's role may now be more important to Taiwan than that of the United States, Taipei has no intention of defecting from its informal diplomatic alliance with Washington. However, at a time when the United States has more and more diplomatic interests at stake in the Asia-Pacific region, not only does Washington have the largest say in intra-alliance bargaining, but its allies and partners, including Taiwan, are also becoming more influential in alliance politics. It is still unclear whether Raymond Burghardt was issuing a subtle threat of abandonment when he said that "the time has not arrived for Washington and Beijing to negotiate [a fourth communique]," and it is suspected that the United States was unhappy about Taipei's failure to give it advance warning of the ECFA with Beijing. In other words, whether Washington was intending to improve its relations with Beijing at the expense of Taipei was not clear at that time. Because of China's expansionist behavior in 2010 and its excessive claims concerning its "core interests," Washington is no longer taking a conciliatory stance toward Beijing. Indeed, now that the United States has decided to come "back to Asia," it has stronger strategic interests there. As a result, Washington is more prepared to adapt itself to the changed international diplomatic environment by shifting from a pro-China stance to one that is balanced between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Taipei certainly does not intend to defect from U.S.-Taiwan informal economic alliance. However, the less its economy depends on this alliance, the more influence Taiwan will enjoy in alliance politics. And the more U.S. economic interests there are at stake in Asia, the more influence both the United States and its allies and partners, Taiwan included, will have in intra-alliance bargaining. Now that the United States has demonstrated its determination to return to Asia through economic initiatives

like the TPP, it has stronger economic interests in the region. As a result, in line with the international economic environment, the United States has changed its pro-China policy for one that is balanced between China and Taiwan.

In the U.S.-Taiwan informal security alliance, although Taipei is heavily dependent on Washington in terms of U.S. arms sales and military cooperation programs, it enjoys more leverage in alliance politics than ever before. And with the United States having more security interests at stake in the Asia-Pacific region, Washington has the largest say in intra-alliance bargaining and Taiwan and its other allies and partners have become more influential in alliance politics. Washington's fear of entrapment has decreased since Ma Ying-jeou came to power in Taiwan, despite the United States' offer of strategic reassurance to Taiwan. Few observers believe that Taiwan is seeking realignment, so there is no need for Washington to carry out its own preemptive realignment or to seek a prompt resolution of the Taiwan issue with Beijing. U.S. dissatisfaction at Taiwan's failure to give advance warning of the ECFA meant that Ma had to provide costly signals in order to enhance credibility between Taipei and Washington. The United States may have identified China as being potentially expansionist, and that may be why it has decided to take a firmer stance toward China as it shifts its strategic focus back to Asia. This shift of focus means that Washington will have stronger interests in the region and will therefore adopt a balanced policy toward Taiwan and China instead of a pro-China stance on security issues.

China has demonstrated its willingness to accommodate Taiwan's requests on the issue of international space and a diplomatic truce since May 2008, not because it likes the ruling KMT but because it does not want to see the return to power of the proindependence DPP. But Beijing's good will is not without its limits, and its accommodation appears to be selective. If Taiwan's *modus vivendi* foreign policy is to achieve more breakthroughs in the future, other countries will have to offer their accommodation and support.

Taiwan must adopt a "smart" foreign policy in order to survive in the international community. Taking sides with the United States and other

countries without looking for economic cooperation with China will cause Taiwan's economy to shrink. Taking sides with China without securing a security commitment and international support from the United States would be an act of political suicide. Therefore, Taiwan is more than willing to maintain a balanced policy between China and other countries.

Indeed, as the risk of abandonment decreases, the danger of entrapment grows, and vice versa. In the negotiation of politically sensitive issues between Taiwan and China, what Taipei needs is for Washington to play the role of guarantor or supervisor. The United States may believe that in doing this it will increase its risk of entrapment, but Taiwan may not have sufficient confidence to enter into serious negotiations with China without U.S. supervision. Taipei needs a peaceful and noncoercive environment in which to negotiate, and this requires continuing U.S. arms sales and a lasting U.S. security commitment—something China has sought to sabotage ever since cross-Strait relations began to improve.

The rise of China has increased the risk of abandonment for Taiwan, particularly at a time when the United States is under financial pressure from China. Taipei is increasingly unable to read Washington's intentions from its words about security commitment or its actions. It is expected that the rise of China will eventually lead to Beijing coercing Taipei into submission. The risk of abandonment may increase when the United States takes the possibility of realignment into consideration. Nonetheless, such a consideration is unnecessary. Taiwan has a host of resources that can help it resist coercion or intimidation by China, including a viable democratic system, an internationally competitive economy, strong multinational corporations, a modest military deterrent, and a solid relationship with the United States, not to mention the U.S. back-to-Asia strategy and new U.S.-led Asia-Pacific political and economic system. While a relatively rapid improvement in cross-Strait relations will increase the risk of entrapment for Washington and the fear of abandonment for Taipei, it seems both the United States and Taiwan have reached a consensus that their current informal alliance needs to be cherished by means of strategic reassurance at a time when they believe China to be potentially expansionist.

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