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## **QI Panel: US–Japan–Philippines Summit: Strengthening Deterrence or Exacerbating Conflict?**

April 10, 2024  
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### **Jake Werner 0:38**

Welcome, everyone. Good morning. Thanks for joining us. This is a video panel discussing the upcoming US Japan Philippines Summit, which will take place tomorrow in Washington, amongst the leaders of the three countries. We're interested in digging in today on the question of where that alliances formation might be headed and where the other so called mini lateral alliances, formations that the United States has been assembling in recent years might be headed, particularly with regard to how that's going to affect regional issues and US China geopolitics. This, this webinar has been put on by the Quincy Institute. My name is Jake Warner. I'm the Acting Director of East Asia program at the Quincy Institute. And I have with me today two distinguished guests. First is Sauron shadow ray. He is the director of the Global South program at the Quincy Institute, as well as a senior non resident fellow at the Council on strategic risks and an adjunct professor at George Washington University. His research focuses on geopolitical risk grand strategy and climate security, with a special emphasis on the global south and Asia. He has published widely including a recent piece highly relevant to the discussion today and the diplomat titled China Philippines South China Sea face off requires restraints. And second, we have Mike Mochizuki. Mike is the Japan US relations chair in memory and memory of Gaston Seeger at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, and a non resident Fellow at the Quincy Institute. He co directs the memory and reconciliation in Asia Pacific project at the Senior Center. And his focus, his research focus is Japanese foreign policy, the US Japan alliance and historical memory in Asian geopolitics. He's currently working on a book that I am very excited about, called a new strategic triangle, the US Japan alliance and the rise of China. And he is also the co author along with my colleague James Park, have a Quincy report that will be coming out later this month on the US, Japan, South Korea trilateral partnership. So I'd like to kick it off. Just with a few questions I've been thinking about. This is not my area of expertise. So I'm very excited to hear from these two experts on this question. But one thing that I think has become increasingly relevant to those who are keeping close track on security developments in the Asia Pacific is the increasing the deepening the the increasing number. And the interesting ways that these are being interwoven the small, trilateral, bilateral and including quadrilateral networks alliances, that the United States has been assembling under the Biden administration. So this includes the quad, Japan, Australia, India, and the United States. The trilateral formation between Japan, South Korea, and the United States, orcas, which is Australia, the UK and United States. And we just just reported recently is that August is considering beginning to add Japan into that mix. So in some ways Japan will will start participating in office or at least there are discussions underway for it to

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do so. So there are some interesting behind the scenes dynamics here to what extent the different ostensible allies are aligned, or in the case of the quad, which includes India, India is not a treaty ally of the United States, to what extent non treaty ally is willing to go along with us agenda on these things. And of course, looming in the background is what this means for the US China relationship and for China's relationship to the region, because it's a fairly obvious open secret that all of these formations are directed at China. And one question we'll be discussing today is what exactly directed in what way is this is this hence the title of our panel today, is this strengthening deterrence or is it exacerbating conflict? So I would like to get right into the set of questions. And I will ask first one to each of the panelists. We can start with Mike, what has changed in the security posture of Japan over the last three years?

**Mike Mochizuki 5:09**

Well, first, I want to thank you, Jake and the Quincy Institute for hosting this webinar on this very important topic, I would say the major change in Japan's defense posture was the adoption of the new national security strategy in December 2022. And there were a lot of elements in this new security strategy. All but but just to highlight some of the major changes, no one, as many of you know, Prime Minister Kishida has decided to substantially increase the amount of defense spending in Japan way beyond the previous kind of ceiling of about 1% of GDP. And under the new calculation of what goes into defense spending, he hopes to raise defense spending to about 2% of GDP by 2027. The other thing is that Japan has been moving beyond its traditional strictly defensive defense posture. And there are a couple of things in this one, it has decided to begin procuring a long range strike missiles that could hit the territory of our adversaries, perhaps North Korea, and China, as the first step in this, Japan has decided to procure about 400 Tomahawk missiles, but in the works is an indigenous ballistic missile capability that could strike at the territory of adversaries. And basically, Japan wants this capability to deter by having the ability to retaliate against an attack. The third thing I want to emphasize is that a building on the 2014 reinterpretation of the Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution, and the subsequent to 2015 security legislation package, Japan has now moved quite swiftly to deepen defense cooperation are with the United States, including kind of operational planning, as well as joint exercises to deal with possible contingencies that not only relate to North Korea, but to China. And finally, I would emphasize that Japan has been continuing to relax its traditional restrictions on arms exports. And so as a result of these changes, you know, one of the things that's relevant for our discussion today is that Japan will not only be providing capacity building for the Coast Guard capabilities of Southeast Asian states, but I'd say even decided to provide naval frigates to Indonesia. So these are really see changes in Japan's defense policy.

**Jake Werner 8:37**

Thanks, Mike. And as as I think notable as those changes are the changes in the Philippines have perhaps and even sharper, so Sarang, could you could you address how the security posture of the Philippines has changed in the last few years? You're muted, or at least I can't hear you.

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**Sarang Shidore 8:59**

So can you hear me now? Yep. Great. First of all, thank you, Jake. Great to be here on the panel. With you and with Mike. Yes, there has absolutely, as you said, been a very major shift in Filipino orientation. And there is a clear moment when that happens, which is the election of the current President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr, who is elected about two years back. And initially actually the expectations were that he would be a continuity candidate. Indeed, he rang as one. He he teamed up with the daughter of the previous President Rodrigo Duterte. There was Saturday that there was still the vice president. And on his campaign trail, he didn't indicate anything that was to come later in terms of what has come about with respect to the South China Sea and China and the United States. So although Marcos started with visiting China as a as a state visit to Beijing and was received warmly there. He shifted gears soon after coming to power, responding more forcefully to what had been a series of incidents around the Philippine coast and waters that are contested with China, specifically features such as the Second Thomas Shoal, and the Scarborough Shoal. The first thing Marcos did was to up the what we can call radical transparency. So very, very, as a previous president, that data was seen as much more soft on China and critical of the United States. Marcos brought in the media and publicized incidents that were already increasing in their intensity and sharpness, before he came to power, and by doing so he sort of brought focus on on the dispute in a way that wasn't there in the previous six years of the Duterte presidency.

But then I think the more concrete things that have happened is the amount of closeness that has emerged between the Philippines and the United States in the last two years, the visits have become much more frequent interactions are very, very close. There have been a lot of rhetorical statements of partnership. And more concretely, there's been an expansion in US sites. These are military sites, not called bases. But but they were first defined under a previous president before they, there were five of those and four more have been added under Marcos. And now of course, we see joint patrols with the United States in those waters, we see also joint patrols with Australia, and the latest trilateral is a new step in the direction of consolidation of a three way Partnership, which will certainly have and has security dimensions. So we are seeing a much sharper approach to towards China, a much closer orientation towards the US and its core allies in the region. And this appears to be going forward without any serious barriers that I can see, at least in the foreseeable future.

**Jake Werner 12:29**

I think this is this is really important. Right, we're seeing, you know, the Asian security situation has been relatively stable for an extremely long time. And we're seeing changes underway, that that could alter that, that that may be moving us into a much more dangerous period for the entire region, as well as for the United States. So I want to talk about that a little bit. What are the motivations here? Mike, we'll start with you. Can you talk about what the motivations for Japan's strengthening the alliance with the United States? militarizing however you want to? However you want to characterize that? You know, there's there's one narrative that this is just

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down to threatening moves by China, this is a purely defensive reaction. So that's, I suppose one possibility. There's there's another possibility that this is due to U.S. pressure, or it's a positive inducements of some sort. And but I'm also interested in, in hearing your thoughts on what the domestic drivers might be, how is politics playing into this? What what, what sort of constituencies are there for tighter military alliances with the United States and a more anti China posture?

**Mike Mochizuki 13:40**

Okay, well, first, you know, there's no question that a great motivator is what the Japanese see as a deterioration in the regional security environment. And it has a several components, one is this general sense that the regional balance of power has shifted dramatically with the rise of China, especially the increase of Chinese military capabilities. So it's not so much that the United States is declining. But relative to China, US military capabilities are not as strong as they were at the beginning of the 21st century. And then also, the Japanese are very concerned that China is using this upgraded military capability to be much more assertive, if not coercive, and using military instruments to intimidate countries in the region of Southeast Asia and Japan, and then they also worry that China, in fact, has changed now there's a debate about this, but In talking with many Japanese in the security policy community, they stressed the fact that China is no longer following the strategy of Deng Xiaoping, and under Xi Jinping, China's becoming much more nationalistic. And the pursuit of the China dream really has hegemonic intentions. And then we shouldn't also forget the North Korea factor, North Korea has been I think the initial driver in Japan's push to expand its defense capabilities and its defense horizons. And after the failure of diplomacy during the Trump Moon period, I think the Japanese are concerned that there is nothing that will stop North Korea, off from beefing up its missile capabilities, as well as acquiring more nuclear weapons.

The other thing that's really important to know, is the importance, the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Prime Minister because she has repeated this over and over again, that what happened to Ukraine could happen or to East Asia. And I think that kind of statement has resonated with the Japanese public eye. And that has weakened a bit the pacifist sentiment in Japan. Now, in terms of the United States, there is no question that the US a security policy community, I would say, since the 1990s, I has been pushing quite hard to get Japan to be a much more active ally of the United States and to contribute militarily to regional security much more. But on top of that kind of U.S. kind of push. I think the Japanese now are also motivated by what they see as uncertainties in US domestic politics, and the implications this has for US foreign policy. So I think many Japanese are, you know, have while they would call the American abandonment syndrome. And there's a lot of discussion about the implications of the possible election of Donald Trump this year. So during this period, I think Japan wants to seize the opportunity to further tighten the US Japan alliance, so that the alliance will survive will will thrive. Even under a Trump administration. I think that's one of the big motivators for Kishida coming to Washington at this time. Now, in terms of domestic drivers, I would rather put it in terms of domestic facilitators. So the major constraint on Japanese defense policy and the US Japan alliance has been Japan's traditional pacifism. But what's happened over the last 10 to 15

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years is a substantial rightward shift in Japanese politics. And this really took place during the Abbaye government, and then the increasing anti China sentiment in Japan, that that has facilitated Japanese security policymakers to push forward this agenda. And the one of the paradoxical things is the y Prime Minister Kishida, who's had a reputation of being relatively dovish. Now why he is the person that is now accelerating this more forward leaning defense policy. And I think there are two aspects to this, you know, one Kishida is having domestic political problems. And because of that, he doesn't have the political capability to resist the more nationalist leaning members of the Liberal Democratic Party. And then, ironically, because he's has this dovish reputation. I think the Japanese people are more willing to kind of acquiesce to With this more assertive defense policy agenda that Kishida is pursuing.

**Jake Werner 20:10**

Thank you. Sarang, same question for you, what are the what are the Philippine motivations here? Thinking about China, thinking about the United States, thinking about domestic politics.

**Sarang Shidore 20:24**

Yeah, so in the case of Philippines and like Japan and say, Australia, politics, foreign policy, and politics in general is very personalized. So you one has to fall on the domestic side, one has to look at the rise of Marcos. And in terms of the way he's looking at the world and the region. But there's no question that China, the Chinese behavior has also been a factor, at least in the Philippines, it's very much perceived that way that what has happened, really the last few years, but even before that, in the last year of the Detect administration, that there has been a sort of a much more aggressive approach from China, which may have been muted in the first years of the data period, but never entirely went away. That's the general perception. And so And of course, in the case of the Philippines, and like Japan, we have seen actual features change hands. So we saw the seizure of Mischief Reef in the 90s by China, we also saw a very major incident in the Scarborough Shoal in 2012, which left a bad taste in the mouth of many Filipinos. So there's a history here of Philippines in a sense, quote, unquote, losing features or spaces that it believes that they're rightfully its own or live in and it's easy. And since the legal ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016, that is legal grounds for the Philippines, to stand on and to argue that the Chinese presence militarized or Coast Guard, presence and actions in these waters are indeed a violation of that international ruling, which most international lawyers have argued is have said, is a very sound and well constructed ruling.

On the other hand, the question still arises as to why are we in such a different place from the previous, say, you know, period. And here, you have to look at the domestic factors and the US relationship. It's not clear why Marcos has taken this on as such a big issue. So sharply different from the test a. I've been told that he was personally moved by some of the flight of some of the fishermen that that could be a reason. There's also legacy question mark was, his father was an authoritarian leader of the Philippines. And there are, there's a cloud hanging over the family, at least, as perceived by some. And he may want to leave a legacy of a leader who made a difference on a what is generally a national consensus in terms of Philippine claims and Chinese

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behavior in the region. But there's a risk to this, given that where things are going if things go wrong for the Philippines, that that could also, of course, hurt his legacy. So he's taking a bit of a risk and stepping out. And finally, the relationship between the US and the Philippines is not quite one of equals in terms of power. There's a long history there. There's obviously a strong Filipino presence in the United States. So it's entirely possible that the United States has leaned on the Philippines and at the very minimum, seen an open door or half open door and walked right through it, and built up what is generally a broader strategy of the United States in the region to bring in allies closer to create a deeper network between them, and indeed, to pull in new actors into the security architecture. So all of these, I think all of these factors have sort of weighed in one direction in the last two years and has brought us to where we are.

**Jake Werner 24:19**

Alright, let's, uh, let's think about that. The US motivations here. Before we do that, I want to remind everyone, please submit your questions under the q&a tab. And we will we will open up audience post questions at the end of our discussion. But, yeah, what is the US motivation here? What are US goals? You know, there's this old Chinese talking point that the United States is trying to create an Asian, NATO. And China takes that that will sound different to American ears, but China takes that as an obvious kind of aggressive move to sort of surround BCG China militarily, and and thinks about first thinks about the Ukraine war in similar terms that that the expansion of NATO was was the key factor in leading to Putin's aggression. So there's an implicit warning that if the United States is going to go in this direction that you could, it could lead to conflict. And it's, it's hard, I think it's hard for anyone who knows anything about geopolitics in the region to imagine an Asian NATO, but interestingly, this sort of like development of mini laterals, and trade laterals, and, and the quad, and the ways that the United States is turned in to weave them together look like, maybe it is sort of moving towards something that could be could sort of stand instead of an Asian NATO. So I want to raise that as a question is that is that kind of where we're heading? Like how, like, how do you see American goals? And what do you think the trajectory of of the US, Japan, Philippines, trilateral. And all the other many lateral alignments that the Biden administration has been constructing? Start with you, Mike.

**Mike Mochizuki 26:03**

Oh, well, that's a very important question. And, you know, first, you know, I don't think it can be denied that there are probably some, in the US security policy community would like to see some Asian version of NATO kind of a tight collective defense pack. But I think at this point in time, I think the consensus is that that's probably a bridge too far. And it's not at all clear that our Asian allies and partners would sign on to an Asian NATO. And the what distinguishes NATO, from the kind of security relationships that are developing beyond the bilaterals is article five of the North Atlantic Treaty, which basically states that an attack on one member is seen as an attack on all and it almost guarantees and automatic collective defense response. But if you look at all the different bilateral treaties between the United States and its allies, formal treaty allies in the region, they don't talk about it. The obligations and in that way, is basically, that the



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an attack on one of the countries would be seen as a dangerous development now, and the Allies would then respond according to their constitutional and legal arrangements. So the kind of the defense pact is much looser than Asian than NATO. And so, you know, I think American policymakers understand that moving towards some kind of NATO collective defense pact is unrealistic. But what clearly the United States is seeking and has been doing for quite some time is moving beyond the traditional hub and spokes, security architecture. And I think American policymakers have begun to refer to this as a lattice-like security structure. In fact, the Quincy policy report called Active Denial that I participated in actually uses this term of a lattice like a security architecture. So, what you have is a deepening of, of cooperation in terms of a military exercises, sharing of information, sharing of defense, industrial and technological capabilities. And so, you create the kind of the infrastructure for defense cooperation, if you know there is a regional contingency, but stopped short of some kind of a NATO type of hard commitment of for the use of force as part of the exercise of collective defense.

**Jake Werner 29:49**

Thanks Mike, Sarang, your thoughts on on this where the where the sort of this lattice work system of alliances and partnerships, where is it where is it heading, what is the U.S. intention?

**Sarang Shidore 30:01**

Yeah, I agree with Mike here that, I think the NATO Asia, NATO is, as any anything that we can foresee is highly unlikely. One reason is I'm not I'm not sure the United States even wants that. But But more than that the regional players, I'm not sure it would be entirely comfortable. They all have different ways of perceiving China their differences we are now in 2024, NATO was founded 75 years ago, it's celebrating its 75th anniversary today, it was a different time. The time of today is a more dynamic time when even core allies have preferences sometimes that don't align with the United States. And we'll make that clear and pursue, at least to some extent, and national interests in a way that perhaps us as a as a major Victor, in Europe, didn't have to deal with back then. So an Asia NATO seems to me, almost impossible, or certainly highly unlikely, but and the and the other factor there is also deep interdependence with China. Unlike Europe today, which had less interdependence with Russia, even before 2022, all the states, including the Philippines, and others are very much tied to what what has emerged as an Asian complex and economic complex that has been, in many ways highly successful in the last 30 or 40 years has lifted many from poverty. And that's not something states want to entirely threatened. So in Asia, NATO, very unlikely.

But this lattice network is certainly as Mike said, more than a hub and spokes arrangement. This is something in between, this is some sort of a flexible, dynamic policy type arrangement, that that creates a kind of a structure that the US being in many ways at the note of all these mini laterals, although some, a few don't have the US in them, but most of them do. And that perhaps gives the United States a kind of a flexibility, a kind of a mix and match ability to vary the temperature of response, depending on the theme or the region in question. And allows also a certain level of plausible deniability, because if you have a new NATO or something close to

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that, then that obviously looks like directly like like armed encirclement of China. Here, you have much smaller groups of states that are brought together, all of them have concerns about China, and then are brought together in ways that are that vary in intensity and response and in time, so so we have a, let's say, a clever, 21st century attempt to create some kind of a melding of states that are US allies, or are very close, like India, into an architecture and let them be no question about this. The goal here is to counter China. So although some of the claims of these middle laterals are indeed economic, climate and other claims, and I'm sure those those are certainly being addressed in these many laterals, the fundamental logic for this is about countering China.

**Jake Werner 33:18**

Great, so let's talk about let's talk about what this looks like from Beijing, and also what it looks like from other regional capitals. So how is Seoul seeing this? How is Taipei seeing this? Jakarta, Hanoi, I mean, everyone, everyone is sort of being because like, as the web of many laterals expands, it's impinging on the future of everyone in East Asia and Southeast Asia. And of course, if if China, as you say, sorry, China is the target of this, then then China has their views. What is what is the sort of regional response of those who are not part of these networks, to the expansion phase networks? I'll start with you, Mike.

**Mike Mochizuki 33:58**

Well, in terms of how China sees us, and we've already touched on this, but I think there's no question that China sees what is happening as a US led containment strategy to prevent the rise of China and undermined some of its core interests, especially about Taiwan. And the question is, then, how is China going to respond to this? I think the hope and of American policymakers and probably Japanese policymakers is by creating this lattice like structure. China will become more cautious and will be more reluctant to use direct military force to achieve its political goals, especially regarding Taiwan and and maybe a sovereignty claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. But at the same time, you know, I believe that China is not going to kind of step back or pull back our retreat and stop building up as military forces and becoming less assertive. I think this is going to lead China to kind of double down on its current pattern of behavior, which is to increase his military capabilities and increase, you know, what people have called gray zone tactics to pursue its interests. And so because of this interaction between the slightest like, network that the United States is weaving together, and the Chinese view of things and the Chinese response, the the net effect of this is that there will be increasing militarization of the disputes or in the region, it will lead to the possibility of a further geopolitical divide between the United States and Japan and some of its treaty allies. And, and China, and some of its its partners like Russia, and North Korea. And And finally, because of this, I think it raises the risk of an accidental military conflict. I don't think China wants to opt for war. But given the militarization of the environment, and all of these military drills that are now the increased in the region, or the possibility of some kind of incident, or some kind of accident, that might ignite in military conflict is quite profound. So although, you know, I certainly believed in the importance of some focus on upgrading military deterrence, my major



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criticism is that there has been such a one sided focus on military deterrence. And there's not enough of an investment in diplomacy and reassurance towards China, so that we can try to de-escalate the tensions that are increasing in the region.

**Jake Werner 37:47**

Thanks, Mike. And that helps respond to one of the questions that I think is really important to think about this came from Mesa Lau, who asked whether deterrence can actually exacerbate conflict. And I think, Mike, what you're what you're saying is that, yes, a one time to a one sided military only form of deterrence, because it's not balanced by positive inducements to bring the target along in direction that you want them to move, that that is likely to lead towards destabilizing trends that could eventually end up in complex. So thank you for that. I want I want to pose the same question to Sarang and add the second part of Mays question, whether there are any possibilities for ASEAN or for international courts to, to temper dampen or even quell some of the aggressive tendencies that are that we're seeing on all sides here?

**Sarang Shidore 38:42**

Yeah, so in the in the region of Southeast Asia, the news for the United States is not that great recently, and there was a there was a survey published just a few days back from a leading Singaporean think tank. They do this every year. This is the state of Southeast Asia survey. And the US has lost a lot of ground in key states in Southeast Asia. This is a poll of elites, but a lot of elites were interviewed, I believe, a couple, almost a couple of 1000 in total, and you can see a very sharp shift in in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia and Brunei, even in Thailand, and a couple of others. Now, obviously, the Gaza war explains some of that, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia. It's not it's the US policies that have not been received well, but broadly, the region clearly finds a lack of US policy responses or in some cases there's a lot of concern in the case of the current Philippines-China-U.S. triangular spat, ASEAN states have been very concerned that this is going in a direction that can not only lead to conflict through accident as as Mike said, but also create fractures within ASEAN, ASEAN has been a very successful grouping, it has showed a lot of wins on economics and regional integration, it doesn't typically take strong positions when it comes to hard security matters. But individually, the states of Southeast Asia have not rushed to back the Philippines in this situation, they have stayed away. And even Vietnam, which we might expect to support the Philippines in some form, because it too has a sharp maritime dispute with China has been very cautious as it should statements that are even handed broadly. Of course, we should also remember that the South China Sea disputes like the ones in the Spratlys are not just between claimant, X and China, but they are multi corner typically. So in the Spratlys, we have Vietnam as a major claimant state. And in the past, we have seen Vietnam run up against the Philippines and butted heads with the Philippines to some extent, on these features. So it's a complex situation. But broadly, I think the region is not happy, where in the direction of where things are going. And indeed Chinese behavior in the South China Sea, the nine dash line is not accepted rarely, by any of these states, the claimant states, but also others don't find it a very valid claim. And recent Chinese focus on interfering with Filipino missions to the second term has shown show as seen, or not

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seen as something that that that in may stabilize a situation. So Southeast Asia is is worried and concerned as to where this this can this can go in the future, although, as is typical in the region, states don't often explicitly message differences, they tend to do that privately, publicly, they tend to take a much more low key approach.

**Jake Werner 41:58**

Thank you. Sorry. I'd like to turn to the audience questions now. We'll start with one from from our friend and colleague, Michael Swaine. Can you both speak to what you'd like to see happen in US policies towards Japan, Philippines in the region? Both of you are talking about changes that move the region towards a more forward leaning zero sum stance towards China. Is that is that positive? What if not, what would be the alternative? Like?

**Mike Mochizuki 42:28**

Okay, well, I'll take a crack at that, you know, first of all, I am opposed to the kind of recent moves by the United States in Japan and the Philippines and Australia to begin to conduct joint drills in the South China Sea. And we've already seen the response by China, I mean, China is now engaging in military drills and in the South China Sea. And so this is, you know, part of the zero sum dynamic and the action reaction that is militarizing the South China Sea, and enhancing the danger of an accident. And so, you know, I would personally recommend exercising restraint and not doing this sort of thing. But I'm not sure that my views will be reflected in government policy, if we are going to move in this direction, I think at a minimum of what we need to do is to, you know, have a serious dialogue with the Chinese to first establish kind of workable, confidence building measures, including the prior notification of of exercises, and making sure that these exercises do not take place in places which are highly sensitive and, and, and risk, the kind of military accident that could lead to a kinetic conflict. And then, you know, I know that, you know, this is something that Michael Swaine has been pursuing for four decades is that there has to be serious discussions, not only between the United States and China, but between China, the United States and US allies and partners about effective crisis management mechanisms, and processes and understandings, because we've had 10 situations develop before and given the track record of those incidents is quite worrisome. And so we should definitely be promoting crisis management mechanisms, and then I think what's really important, and this is where I'm very critical of Japan. Now Japan is basically following the American lead on this. And although the Biden administration has taken some steps to try to kind of put a floor in the deterioration of of Sino-American relations, the Japanese have been really quite passive in all of this, and has invested very little in, in a diplomatic effort to engage China at the highest levels of the Chinese government. So this is really a shortfall in Japanese foreign policy. And I think it goes against their enlightened self interest.

**Jake Werner 45:55**

Thanks, Mike. Can I can I get Can I keep with you for a second just to address another another question along those lines, Julian Sharad asked if there's anything that Japan Japan can do to

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play a stronger role in promoting regional security by acting as an alternate power to both us and Chinese influence, either through diplomacy through greater economic influence in Southeast Asia through investment and like, what what do you think the options are for Japan that would point in a different direction than the deepening militarization we're currently on?

**Mike Mochizuki 46:27**

Well, that's a great question. And first of all, some people argue for a greater Japanese military role, all but but given the aging society, the stagnation of the Japanese economy, the huge budget deficit, the idea that Japan could develop enough military capability to be kind of a, a third player that could dramatically change the balance of power, is just nonsensical. And so the alternative approach that I think Japan can take, is to build coalitions to build networks, with other middle powers in the region, talk about a middle power network, and all of the countries on the periphery of, of China, first of all, do not want to choose between the United States and China, and do not want to have a military conflict in the region. Because much more than the United States, they are going to suffer directly if there is a military conflict between the United States and China. And and so by developing this middle power coalition, you know, spanning from Northeast Asia with South Korea, to the ASEAN states to Australia and New Zealand, and India, that could be a kind of a third force in this bilateral zero sum competition, that is escalating between the United States and China. And so it's really to have Japan show more agency in the current environment, rather than just following on the lead of the United States.

**Jake Werner 48:27**

Thanks, Mike. So going back to that, that initial question about the United States is, do you think that there are different production the United States should be taking? Or how would you counsel US policy in in regional alliances?

**Sarang Shidore 48:43**

I think the US goal of, of if the US goal is not having an Asia where China has primacy, that's reasonable. If the US goal is to return or maintain return to or maintain U.S. primacy in the region, that would be a very dangerous goal, indeed. So we have to first clarify what is the American goal in Asia broadly? And if the goal is a former, then I think as it should be, I think, then I think the United States is overstepping. If you look at the broader region, not just the Philippines, there are many examples where the US has taken on a very forward leaning posture has been front and center, whether it's joint patrols, whether it's edcast sites, these new US quote unquote, bases, I should say, quote, unquote, agreed locations, which are military sites in the Philippines, the new ones are all positioned uncomfortably closer to Taiwan. And there are strings of islands even closer to Taiwan that are being infrastructure is being built with US assistance. So things of that sort when they United States is is at the front edge of countering China in this militarized manner, raises anxieties and confirms of U.S. fears of Chinese Nationalists on the other side, which who will and are responding in kind. So, the US being so front and center at the leading edge for many of these activities, I think is unhelpful. At

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the same time, the United States should be confident of its current presence in the region. After all, if you look at the Pacific, it's still very much a US lane. There are territories and maritime zones that are completely dominated by the United States the US has Guam. The US has also concluded a pact with the with Papua New Guinea, is looking to militarize Micronesia more, these are moves that may or may not be advisable but certainly are mean that the US has a sort of a presence in the wider maritime space that China can only dream of having not to mention stalwart allies like Japan and Australia, and a much more friendly India over the last two decades. So I think there are the sharp edges of these hotspots like the Second Thomas Shoal, or the South China Sea near the Philippines, where the US can take a much more discreet role, allow regional players to define policies, assist them in strengthening their capabilities, but also lean on them to restrain some of the more adventurous moves that that are occurring in the region. So I think there is this anxiety in Washington that has gone too far. And, and of course, then the other side of the equation is, if the claims are that some of these middle mini laterals at least are primarily about public goods, let's see those public goods being delivered. Right now the QUAD hasn't delivered a whole lot has been around in its second wind. For the last eight years, we haven't seen a whole lot being delivered apart from some elements that have quasi military dimensions in them. So if the United States leads with its partners and allies in the region, and actually start solving problems in the region in a way that China cannot or in ways that complement Chinese activities in the region, I think that would be welcomed by the region, it would actually add to American influence without provoking conflict or risking a sort of Clash that can pull the US into something nobody wants. And finally, I think the US should also dial back on some of the rhetoric that we are seeing we just saw a few days back, US Ambassador to China say that Scarborough Shoal and the second tall, Thomas Shoal, are sovereign Philippine territory, which is incorrect, even by the BCA ruling of 2016. So going getting ahead of what is international law is not a wise, way forward.

**Jake Werner 53:05**

Thanks. Sorry, I want to stay with you because I think you're getting into some some territory that a couple of people had questions about. The first question comes from James Chabin is on that question with development. The, of course, advancing development is always a feature of the rhetoric around each of these agreements. But it sounds like you're skeptical, you don't see much follow through on that, that these really are motivated by security and as such development is being kind of left aside. So that question and a second question here about the quad, specifically and India's role in all this. Of course, as I mentioned, India is not us treaty ally. There are very strong differences between US and India, on Russia, for example, there has been some criticism in Congress anyway, about India's human rights record. How does how does India fit fit into all these questions? And And are we likely to see the military relationship between US and India progress at all?

**Sarang Shidore 54:09**

Right, so the first question of development, I mean, there's no question the US is still very much present in the region. It's the biggest investor, it's still a very major trading partner in the region.

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So we're not talking of a situation where the US is disappearing by any means. The problem is that all of this is historically true. So in a space where China has emerged as a very dynamic new actor just in the last 10 years with BRI, where you're seeing Japan upping its game, where you're seeing even India, increasing its presence and footprints economically, what is the United States doing? That is of a leadership level, and not a whole lot? There have been some initiatives certainly announced on climate with the Pacific Islands, Gino Raimondo was in the Philippines recently and Prime Minister billion dollars of new investment, there is, of course, a French shouldering push. That's ongoing. But broadly, the United States seems to be coming to the region, more appealing to countries that China's intentions are not good. And then waving things to them that don't seem to quite match up to what China has on the table and on offer. So the Indo Pacific economic framework is, in many ways, underwhelming. The US has walked away from the idea that trade, if properly done, can be an engine of success of prosperity and growth on both sides. IPFW does not have market access. domestic sentiment, obviously, in the US is very hostile to any such create agreements. In general, there are a couple of exceptions. But broadly, that is where the sentiment is that. So I think there has to be a conversation. And I think I want to bring this back to the US domestic scene, because I think there needs to be some leadership and US domestic politics, to start talking about these things such as trade, such as investment, where is the United States? Where can it add value? What's it good at? How can it bring partners in sometimes even bring China in into questions like climate change, and try to emerge as a problem solving leader, not just an military deterrence with one announcement after another and expect all things to fall into place? That's not going to happen?

Your second question on India's role, I think there's a long bipartisan trend on both sides in India and the US have a convergence that has that began in the late 90s, around 2000. And it's continued, irrespective of administrations and very bluntly, put the call glue that binds, that convergence is China, the rise of China creates a lot of anxiety in India, there was a war in 1962. There was a recent incident in 2020, where soldiers died, their territorial contestations along a very long border. And there is of course, a rivalry between India and China in terms of civilizational claims both see themselves as mega civilizations of Asia and the world. And there's a natural rivalry there. So the United States has seen that opening way back in the late days of the Clinton administration and seized it and built what is a much stronger partnership with India, that has taken on security dimensions. So you know, that's a trend that I think is broadly still in the works is still very much present. Structural logic drives that trend, and I don't see a very sharp pullback, from that and in the immediate future.

**Jake Werner 57:56**

Sorry. We're, we're about out of time. This has been a fascinating discussion. I want to thank both panelists for, for, for your insights, I want to close with a question that I think helps us bring this down from the level of looking at pieces on a chessboard. And, and even if we talk even when we talked about the possibility of creating the conditions that could lead to war, it still just seems kind of abstract. Like we're not, we don't really often seem to be talking about real human beings with lives when we have these discussions. This question is from Kazuki Nakazato, who

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asks about the reactions of citizens in the Japan, in Japan and the Philippines, especially those citizens who are likely to be directly affected by the militarization of the relationship. And obviously, this can be seen most clearly, in Okinawa in Japan, where US bases for the better part of a century have been consistently protested by by locals. And that has proven a headache in the alliance that the Japanese government and the US government have consistently sort of shoved aside. But But, but those dynamics are important to consider. And it helps us to see that the these sort of winds plumes have effects in real people's lives. So, Mike, could you talk just for a minute about the the possible effects around expanding militarization for people who would be directly affected in Japan? And Sarang, maybe if you could, if you have any thoughts on on what might happen, Philippines Of course, the US has a very long history of bases in the Philippines that also occasioned much local protests, and that was largely ended after the end of the Cold War, but is that in danger of coming back? Start with you, Mike.

**Mike Mochizuki 59:53**

Well, one of the one of the interesting things is that the US military has now recognized that A heavy concentration of US military bases in Okinawa makes them highly vulnerable to Chinese missile attacks during a high intensity conflict over Taiwan. And so the US Air Force is kind of responding to this change in the environment by talking about the rapid dispersal of US Air Force from Okinawa. By contrast, the US Marine Corps is now doubling down and restructuring its units so that they can actually engage Chinese forces in what they call the contested environment, which definitely means the Taiwan Strait. But also, the Japanese self defense force is now deploying missile units on the southwest island chain in Okinawa, and all of this is creating intense fears among the residents of Okinawa. One of the slogans of protesters of these recent moves is Gaza today, Okinawa tomorrow, and the Japanese government is sensitive to this. So they are developing evacuation plans if there are attacks on the southwest islands of Okinawa Prefecture. But what is misguided about this approach is that if there is a high intensity conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan, it's quite possible that China will not only go after US military bases in Okinawa, but after US military bases on the main islands of Japan, and so the entire Japanese Archipelago is likely to be involved in an escalating military conflict between the United States and China. And so the only way to kind of address this issue is not to double down on increasing militarization. But to move towards tension reductions, with kind of direct diplomacy with China, and Taiwan. And because the US and Japanese governments aren't really doing that, the governor of Okinawa, Danny Tamaki, is now engaged in his version of regional diplomacy, by reaching out to regional governments as well as civil society organizations in the region to try to de escalate tensions and to provide a stable framework for peace in the region.

**Jake Werner 1:03:11**

Thanks, Sarang, your thoughts.

**Sarang Shidore 1:03:14**



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Yeah, I think if we are talking about the Philippines specifically, there is, of course, a history in the Philippines of huge US bases during the Cold War clock in Subic Bay, and then a strong sort of a blowback, when the fall of Marcos and the other people by movement, and then the United States had to leave the Philippines, vacate those bases. And so for a long time there between 1992. And around 2014 or so the United States was not really present in a military sense in the Philippines in any significant way that has changed now with the visiting Forces Agreement signed, and then the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement added to that. And we have seen the return of U.S. footprints, military footprints that are not called bases, but they very much look like bases. And they're not supposed to be permanent bases. So you have a rotational deployment of US troops. But the idea is that US troops will always be present and many of them so they certainly looked like bases to other other players, especially China. And there hasn't been necessarily that kind of a response as we saw in the 90s. However, there is domestic dissidents, to this expanding U.S. footprint when the aircraft expansion was announced. The governor of the northern province of Cagayan expressed his opposition, his concerns very publicly, of course, as a regional governor, he did not have a foreign policy role as such, and so the president decisions are final. But there's also been dissidents from very senior senators including a The president's own sister, who has raised concerns and has asked questions about whether this can pull the Philippines into a conflict over Taiwan, for example, that really no Filipinos want that in the Philippines. There isn't this sort of any great passion for defending Taiwan as such, or defending democracy in Taiwan, the sort of rhetoric you see in Washington is in present however, there are 160,000 Filipinos working in Taiwan. And these overseas foreign workers are a concern of the citizenry and any government. So that is that element. But broadly, Filipinos are going along at the moment, the situation is such that there is a strong fervor of nationalism and skepticism of China. But in the Philippines, just looking at his politics, there are swings, and one cannot count out the United States overplayed his hand out of this thing goes out of hand broadly from from all sides, then we will see politics in the Philippines that again, once once some change to the current trajectory.

**Jake Werner 1:06:13**

Thank you. Thank you both. This has been a very rich discussion. I've learned a lot. I hope all those of you who joined us in the audience have learned a lot. I'm really struck by how significant and important the changes underway in the Asian security architecture are and also by how little they are being discussed within U.S. democracy. So I thank you both for your contributions to trying to bring these into the public realm and and I hope that we will will raise the profile of these issues and have a serious discussion in our country. Thanks, everyone, for joining us. Yes, to have a good day.