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**43**

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**HOW NATIONALISM HELPS INTERNAL BALANCING BUT HURTS EXTERNAL  
BALANCING: THE CASE OF EAST ASIA**

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**How Nationalism Helps Internal Balancing but Hurts External Balancing: the  
Case of East Asia**

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## **Abstract**

Does nationalism help or harm the ability of states to balance against hegemonic threats? Scholars have studied both nationalism and balancing separately in great detail, but the causal nexus between the two has received less attention. Studies that touch upon this issue find that nationalism helps internal balancing. This conventional wisdom is not so much wrong as it is incomplete. It focuses on the impact of nationalism on states' mobilization of domestic material capabilities (internal balancing) but has not paid sufficient attention to the influence of nationalism on states' alliance choices (external balancing). I contend that while nationalism helps internal balancing, it also hurts external balancing. Nationalism deployed at home can alienate potential allies abroad by increasing their threat perception and engendering distrust toward the nationalist state. The argument is particularly powerful when what I call offensive nationalism is dominant or when offensive and defensive nationalisms are indistinguishable. The case of Japanese nationalism, which helps internal balancing against China but undermines external balancing with South Korea, illustrates the explanatory potential of the argument. The argument has broad policy and normative implications for East Asian international politics.

## **How Nationalism Helps Internal Balancing But Hurts External Balancing: The Case of East Asia<sup>1</sup>**

What is the effect of nationalism on balancing? Does nationalism help or harm the ability of states to balance against hegemonic threats? In addition to their historical importance, these questions are particularly timely. If we are to better explain the international politics of East Asia, where nationalism is prevalent and many expect balancing to become prominent, we need to grapple with these questions.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars have studied both nationalism and balancing separately in great detail, but the causal nexus between the two has received less attention.<sup>3</sup> Studies that touch upon this issue find that nationalism helps internal balancing. They show that elites can successfully appeal to public nationalist sentiments to recruit mass armies, extract resources, and mobilize individuals' spirit of self-sacrifice. This conventional wisdom is not so much wrong as it is incomplete. It focuses on the impact of nationalism on states' mobilization of domestic material capabilities (internal balancing) but has not paid sufficient attention to the influence of nationalism on states' alliance choices (external balancing).

I contend that while nationalism helps internal balancing, it also hurts external balancing. Nationalism deployed at home can alienate potential allies abroad by increasing their threat perception and engendering distrust toward the nationalist state. This constrains the alliance options of the nationalist state against hegemonic threats. The argument is particularly powerful when what I call offensive nationalism is dominant or when offensive and defensive nationalisms are indistinguishable. The case of Japanese nationalism, which helps internal balancing against China but undermines external balancing with South Korea, illustrates the explanatory potential of the argument.

The paper proceeds as follows. It starts with a brief review of the relevant literature and argues that it offers a truncated view of nationalism's impact on balancing. Then, I articulate the argument that nationalism helps internal balancing but hurts external balancing. The third part provides a plausibility probe to illustrate the empirical promise of the argument. The last part considers potential objections and highlights the contributions of the paper.

### **The Literature**

Given nationalism's profound impact on modern international politics, it is not surprising that it has received sustained scholarly attention. Although a wide variety of theoretical approaches to nationalism exist,<sup>4</sup> most of these subscribe to a broad definition, according to which nationalism is a political ideology that aims to obtain and maintain a sovereign state for the nation.<sup>5</sup> Nationalism divides humanity into unique nations and claims self-determination for them. Nations should have their own sovereign states, where the rulers and the ruled share the same national identity, and the state pursues the national interest. Just as nations need the state to thrive, individuals need the national community to flourish. It is only when immersed in the national community that individual members

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<sup>1</sup> For support and helpful comments I am grateful to T.V. Paul, CIPSS, and the participants of the CIPSS Speaker Series at McGill University.

<sup>2</sup> For a nuanced analysis of balancing and bandwagoning in East Asia see Ross 2006. For a critical view on balancing expectations in the region see Kang 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Levy 2002; Smith 2010.

<sup>4</sup> For a good compilation see Hutchinson and Smith 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Gellner 1983, 1; Van Evera 1994, 6; Hobsbawm 1990, 9.

reach fulfillment.<sup>6</sup> Nationalism posits that the individual's loyalty to the nation takes precedence over alternative groups, and establishes a strong connection between individual interest and national interest. Of course, there is variation in the extent to which different types of nationalisms exhibit these attributes, but most nationalisms share them.

There is a rich literature on the causes and effects of nationalism. Some insightful studies inquire into the nature, origins, and global spread of nationalism.<sup>7</sup> Others examine how nationalism facilitated the transition from an international system comprised of territorial-sovereign states and legitimated by dynastic principles to an international system based on national-sovereign states and legitimated by nationalist principles.<sup>8</sup> Again others analyze the wide range of effects of this nationalist macro-level change on international politics. We know that nationalism increases the costs of foreign occupation<sup>9</sup> and amplifies the intensity of wars.<sup>10</sup> In addition, under particular conditions nationalism engenders secessionist, irredentist, imperialist, and interventionist wars.<sup>11</sup>

Despite this rich literature, we know less about the effect of nationalism on balancing.<sup>12</sup> Balancing is conventionally defined as "the creation or aggregation of military power through internal mobilization or the forging of alliances to prevent or deter the territorial occupation or the political and military domination of the state by a foreign power or coalition."<sup>13</sup> Although arguments about nationalism and balancing are not always explicit, we can discern relevant discussions in three different strands of the literature. They all suggest that nationalism helps states' mobilization of internal capabilities or internal balancing.

First, studies on nationalism and war suggest that nationalism helps internal balancing. Cederman and his colleagues demonstrate that nationalism increases war size measured in terms of battle deaths.<sup>14</sup> Their explanation for this phenomenon, drawing on Clausewitz, is that nationalism increases the capacity of states to wage war. The territorial-sovereign state located sovereignty in the ruler, relied on coercion to extract resources, and employed professional armies to fight wars. The national-sovereign state located sovereignty in the nation, relied on individuals' loyalty to the nation to extract resources, and employed mass armies to wage wars. Nationalism allowed the nation-state to extract resources more efficiently and field a stronger army than the territorial-sovereign state, allowing it to fight more destructive wars. From this, we can infer that nationalism helps internal balancing because it allows the state to mobilize its internal resources more efficiently.

Second, explanations of the diffusion of nationalism are also underpinned by the argument that nationalism boosts states' domestic military potential. The logic of the argument is essentially the same as above: because nationalism commands the primary loyalty of individuals and encourages their self-sacrifice for the nation, it facilitates states' ability to extract resources and recruit committed mass armies. Once Napoleonic France demonstrated the potential of nationalism to mobilize states' domestic military capabilities, other European states quickly adopted nationalism in an effort to uphold their sovereignty in the face of external threats.<sup>15</sup> Although nationalism may have initially

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<sup>6</sup> Kedourie 1994, 49; Breuilly 1994, 111.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson 1993 [1983]; Gellner 1983; Smith 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Hall 1999; Bukovansky 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Edelstein 2004; Pape 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Wimmer 2013, ch. 4; Cederman, Warren, and Sornette 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Van Evera 1994; for nationalism and war see also Hall and Malešević 2013.

<sup>12</sup> For a useful overview of balancing see Levy 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Schweller 2004, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Cederman, Warren, and Sornette 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Posen 1993; Mearsheimer, May 5, 2011, 23.

supported Napoleon's hegemonic project, its spread allowed others to balance effectively against the threat of French hegemony.

Third, there is a long tradition of realist theorizing that recognizes nationalism as a source of nation-state power. One group of scholars focuses on national cohesion as a source of power.<sup>16</sup> Insofar as nationalism strengthens internal cohesion, it enhances internal balancing. Conversely, the lack of national cohesion inhibits internal balancing and is an important cause of underbalancing.<sup>17</sup> Others employ nationalism to help explain variation in the specific practices states select to internally external threats.<sup>18</sup> Going beyond nationalism and balancing, Randall Schweller argues that fascism facilitated the mobilization of internal resources and resulted in expansionist grand strategies.<sup>19</sup>

These three categories of studies make a convincing case that nationalism helps internal balancing. However, this conventional wisdom is incomplete in that it says little about the impact of nationalism on external balancing or states' ability to form alliances. This is an important omission because, with the risk of stating a truism, international and domestic politics are closely connected.<sup>20</sup> Without considering how nationalism-induced internal and external balancing affect each other, we will have a truncated perspective on the impact of nationalism on balancing.

In the next section I contend that nationalism has a contradictory impact on balancing: while it helps internal balancing, it also hurts external balancing. This argument fits with the literature that reveals the contradictory effect of nationalism on a host of issues. Hegemonic nationalism can stimulate imperialism by encouraging wars of imperialism, whereas stateless nationalism can undermine imperialism by stimulating wars of national liberation.<sup>21</sup> Others show that nationalism does not necessarily hurt but can also help free trade.<sup>22</sup> A recent study argues that nationalism does not always undermine foreign occupation, but sometimes facilitates it.<sup>23</sup> These arguments highlight that different kinds of nationalisms have different, and sometimes even contradictory, effects. Instead, my point is that the same nationalism can have contradictory effects in the domestic and international realms.

## **The Argument**

This section explains how, under certain conditions, nationalism facilitates internal balancing but inhibits external balancing. Nationalist appeals deployed at home aid the mobilization of internal material capabilities against hegemonic threats, but they also alienate some potential allies, constraining the nationalist state's ability to form alliances. I start with a brief discussion of balancing against hegemonic threats, and then I articulate the impact of nationalism on internal and external balancing.

### *Balancing Against Hegemonic Threats*

The argument proceeds from the usual premise that international politics takes place in an anarchic environment. Although state deaths are rare and anarchy does not necessarily imply a competitive logic, in the current international system prudent decision makers still need to worry

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<sup>16</sup> Morgenthau 1962.

<sup>17</sup> On underbalancing see Schweller 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Taliaferro 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Schweller 2009.

<sup>20</sup> For a classic study see Putnam 1988.

<sup>21</sup> Van Evera 1994; Lawrence 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Shulman 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Kocher, Lawrence, and Monteiro 2013.



about the sovereignty of their states.<sup>24</sup> The case of Russia's infringement of Ukrainian sovereignty in 2014 is illustrative. A potential cause of concern for decision makers is the threat to state sovereignty posed by the hegemon, defined as the strongest state in a region (regional hegemon) or in the world (global hegemon). While hegemons can be providers of public good and do not necessarily endanger others' sovereignty, their strength puts them in a favorable position to do so.

States can respond in a number of ways to hegemonic threats, but perhaps the two most prominent behaviors are bandwagoning and balancing.<sup>25</sup> Here I focus on balancing, as defined conventionally above. I focus narrowly on the mobilization of military capabilities to protect state sovereignty, favoring hard over soft balancing.<sup>26</sup> Yet one should keep in mind that hard balancing is not necessarily assertive balancing. Military capabilities can be employed assertively or in a circumscribed manner in balancing efforts.<sup>27</sup> It is also important to distinguish balancing as a policy from the balance of power, which is an outcome characterized by a relatively equal distribution of capabilities among states.<sup>28</sup> Balances of power can occur without coordinated balancing among states, and balancing policies do not necessarily result in balances of power. Yet even studies skeptical that balances of power occur with any regularity find evidence of balancing efforts, however ineffective.<sup>29</sup>

Stephen Walt's "balance of threat" theory makes a cogent case that balancing does not occur simply in response to power. Drawing on empirical evidence of Middle Eastern diplomacy between 1955 and 1979, he found that states ally not against the strongest, but the most threatening unit.<sup>30</sup> When hegemons are not the most threatening units, states will not balance against them. In cases where there is a regional hegemon and a different global hegemon, states will balance against the more threatening of the two.

Many scholars expect great powers to do most of the balancing. Weaker states might balance but, depending on the context, they might also engage in alternative responses to hegemonic threats. Ross argues that the behavior of secondary states depends on the distribution of military power in their immediate neighborhood. Where the distribution of power favors the regional hegemon, weaker states will bandwagon with it, but elsewhere they will balance against it.<sup>31</sup> Finally, while scholars vigorously debate various aspects of balancing, they agree that states can balance internally by mobilizing their domestic military capabilities or externally by forming alliances.<sup>32</sup> Typically one needs some combination of the two to respond effectively to hegemonic threats. The next sections analyze the impact of nationalism on internal and external balancing.

### *How Nationalism Helps Internal Balancing*

The mechanism underlying the conventional wisdom that nationalism helps internal balancing is the nationalist card. Nationalist appeals, understood broadly to comprise nationalist rhetoric and rituals, mobilize public nationalist sentiment in support of state policies. The insight that elites play the nationalist card is not new, but it is typically seen as a response to domestic competition.<sup>33</sup> Yet

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<sup>24</sup> Fazal 2004.

<sup>25</sup> For various responses to US hegemony see Walt 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Paul 2005; Pape 2005; for a critique see Brooks and Wohlforth 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Twomey 2000, 171.

<sup>28</sup> For a good study of both see Paul, Wirtz, and Fortmann 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Wohlforth et al. 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Walt 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Ross 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Waltz 1979, 118.

<sup>33</sup> Lawrence 2013; Gagnon 1994/1995; Snyder and Ballentine 1996.

elites deploy nationalist appeals not only to counter domestic threats to their power, but also to meet external security threats.

Nationalist appeals can be particularly useful for mobilizing internal resources against hegemonic threats. They make the nation salient to individuals appealing to individuals' emotional attachment to the nation and its homeland, motivation to help their country, and linking their personal identity and self-esteem to the fate of the nation.<sup>34</sup> In this way, nationalist appeals help overcome at least three obstacles to domestic mobilization.<sup>35</sup>

One obstacle is that the general public is not always concerned about hegemonic threats. While logical arguments may help persuade the public to that such threats are serious, claims that resonate with the public's deeply ingrained values, beliefs, fears, and identities tend to be more effective.<sup>36</sup> Nationalist appeals fall in this latter category. By linking individual identities to that of the nation and the state it inhabits, these appeals lend the nation a quasi-sacred character. When nationalist appeals depict the hegemonic threat as endangering the nation, the public is more likely to take the threat seriously.

A second obstacle is the collective action problem. National security is a collective good, and individuals have incentives to free ride rather than contribute their share to providing this good. Particularly if policies deemed necessary to meet the hegemonic challenge are costly, this obstacle can be considerable. Playing the nationalist card can help overcome the collective action problem. Nationalism underlines the strong connection between the individual and the nation and between individual and national interest. Policies deemed necessary to respond to hegemonic threats may be costly, but they serve vital national and individual interests. Nationalist appeals also tend to emphasize the importance of individual sacrifice for the nation, further lowering the attractiveness of free riding.

Third, the public may hold values and norms that clash with the new security policy promoted by elites. Whether these are libertarian values of a minimalist state, anti-tax ideas, or pacifist norms, they can impede the mobilization of internal resources against hegemonic threats. Nationalism mitigates this obstacle to mobilization by emphasizing that the individual's primary loyalty lies with the national community. Values and norms that clash with nationalism must be subordinated to the interests of the nation, as constructed by the nationalist rhetoric.

The media often serves as a "conveyor belt" that transmits nationalist appeals to the public. This can be the case not only in autocracies, where the media is more tightly controlled by the political elite, but also in democratizing states and mature democracies. In democratizing states nationalist appeals manipulate the public by exploiting partial monopolies of supply, segmented demand, and weak regulatory institutions.<sup>37</sup> In mature democracies the marketplace of ideas may select out the most extreme nationalist appeals, but is not immune to nationalism. Elites can exploit the nationalism of democratic publics to delegitimize dissent as unpatriotic.<sup>38</sup>

One important scope condition for nationalism to help internal balancing is that it must unify rather than divide the domestic population. If elites deploy ethnic nationalist appeals in a state with substantial ethnic minorities, nationalism can divide the population and undermine internal balancing.

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<sup>34</sup> Terhune 1964; Druckman 1994, 44.

<sup>35</sup> For obstacles in the way of public mobilization see Christensen 1996.

<sup>36</sup> Thrall 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Snyder and Ballentine 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Cramer 2007.

Clever elites deploy more exclusive ethnic nationalist appeals for internal mobilization in less ethnically diverse states, and they use more inclusive civic nationalist appeals in more ethnically diverse states. A second scope condition is that there is considerable overlap between the nationalist ideology of the masses and of elites. When popular and state-sponsored nationalisms widely diverge, state elites will find it harder to use nationalism for balancing.

The logic of nationalist appeals shows an affinity with strategic communication in IR. It is strategic like persuasion and framing, but it does not necessarily aim at changing agents' utility functions.<sup>39</sup> Following Checkel's distinction between argumentative and manipulative persuasion, nationalist rhetoric resembles the latter because its purpose is "to mobilize rather than convert".<sup>40</sup> It is also similar to rhetorical action and rhetorical coercion, which use norm-based arguments strategically to mobilize public support and deploy it against political opponents.<sup>41</sup> But while much of this literature focuses on benign audience predispositions, the nationalist card corroborates the ethnic conflict literature that elites might also mobilize public support by appealing to malign audience predispositions, including nationalism.<sup>42</sup>

In sum, by playing the nationalist card, elites can mobilize the public against the hegemonic threat. The argument does not imply that elites have perfect control over nationalism, only that their ability to manipulate it is considerable. Nationalism helps maximize what Christensen calls national political power, defined as "the ability of state leaders to mobilize their nation's human and material resources behind security policy initiatives."<sup>43</sup> However, the domestic audience is not the only one that pays attention to nationalist appeals. Nationalist appeals deployed at home also reach foreign audiences abroad. Some of these will react adversely to these appeals, constraining the nationalist state's alliance options.

### *How Nationalism Hurts External Balancing*

Nationalist appeals hurt external balancing by engendering fears of nationalist wars and stimulating contentious memory politics between the nationalist state and potential allies. Either of these can undermine the external balancing efforts of the nationalist state, but they exert the strongest effect together. This section discusses these two pathways through which nationalist appeals at home alienate potential allies abroad.

According to the cognitive pathway, nationalism reduces the nationalist state's alliance options by tilting the balance of threat against it. At least some of the potential allies will perceive the nationalist state as more threatening than the hegemon, decreasing the likelihood of an anti-hegemonic alliance with the nationalist state. Walt's balance of threat is a function of four factors: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.<sup>44</sup> Walt's innovative theoretical move was to recognize that "Perceptions of intent are likely to play an especially crucial role in alliance choices."<sup>45</sup> The more threatening the perceived intentions of a state, the more likely it is that others will balance against it rather than with it.

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<sup>39</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 914-15.

<sup>40</sup> Checkel 2001, 56.

<sup>41</sup> Schimmelfennig 2001; Krebs and Jackson 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 916.

<sup>43</sup> Christensen 1996, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Walt 1985; Walt 1987, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Walt 1987, 25.

There is considerable evidence that ideologies shape perceptions of intent and alliance choices. Ideological similarity can lead to perceptions of benign intent, which facilitates alliance formation. Conversely, ideological difference can lead to perceptions of malign intent, which hinders alliance formation. Social identity theory provides the micro-foundations for this in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.<sup>46</sup> Universal cognitive limitations of self-esteem give rise to categorization and the association of positive features with ideological in-groups and negative ones with ideological out-groups. For example, liberal democracies tend to perceive the intentions of other liberal democracies as defensive, while they perceive the intentions of states with different regime types as offensive.<sup>47</sup> Mark Haas finds that independent of the specific content of the ideology, the more different two states' political ideologies are, the more threatening they perceive each other's intentions.<sup>48</sup> John Owen uncovers that as early as in sixteenth century Holy Roman Empire ideology shaped perceived threats and alliance choices.<sup>49</sup> Shared ideology played a role, albeit moderate, in the League of Three Emperors, the Holy Alliance, the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

If ideologies generally shape alliance formation, we have good reasons to think that nationalism does too. States with similar nationalist ideologies should perceive each other's intentions as more benign, aiding alliance formation, while states with different nationalist ideologies should perceive each other's intentions as more malign, hindering alliance formation. There is some evidence, for instance, that nationalism constrained Napoleon III's ability to find allies against Prussia, because it alienated France from other European courts.<sup>50</sup> Because nationalism appears to be more divisive than most transnational ideologies, it is particularly likely to hinder alliance formation. As opposed to transnational ideologies, nationalism is national by definition. All else equal, the in-group entailed by nationalism is narrower than that entailed by transnational ideologies like liberalism. It is more difficult for any two states to share the same or similar nationalist ideology than to share the same or similar liberal ideology. Insofar as very few states are inhabited by the same nation, it is more likely that the ideological distance between the nationalisms of any two states will be larger than the ideological distance between their liberalisms.

Even when the same or very similar national groups inhabit states, their nationalist ideologies rarely translate into alliances. Although under some conditions pan-nationalist ideologies, such as Pan-Slavism facilitated alliances, they often do more to hinder alliances. For instance, pan-Arab nationalism may explain the absence of Arab states with Israel, but it does not translate into an alliance among Arab states. In fact, Arab nationalism sometimes undermines an Arab alliance by engendering discord among Arab states over what constitutes appropriate behavior for members of the in-group.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, because nationalism helps legitimate the state and the power of state elites, they have incentives to amplify the difference between their nationalism and that of other states inhabited by similar national groups. Thus, even among such similar nations we are likely to find ideological differences that can hinder alliance formation. The larger the ideological distance between the nationalist states and a potential ally, the more nationalism deployed in the former would undermine a balancing alliance with the latter.

An emotional pathway parallels the cognitive one to undermine external balancing. Nationalist appeals not only increase threat perceptions of potential allies, but also intensify negative

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<sup>46</sup> Mercer 1995; Brown 2000.

<sup>47</sup> Risse-Kappen 1995; Owen 1994, 95-96.

<sup>48</sup> Haas 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Owen 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Hall 1999, 181, 207.

<sup>51</sup> Barnett 1996, 409.

emotions toward the nationalist state. These negative emotions are similar to those highlighted by the ethnic conflict literature: resentment, distrust, and hate.<sup>52</sup> Potential allies are most likely to have a negative emotional response to nationalist appeals when there is a past of crimes that the nationalist state committed against them. The result is often contentious memory politics between the nationalist state and the potential ally. When the legitimacy of elites in the potential ally is low, they may find it in their interest to dwell on the nationalist appeals of the nationalist state and even engage in their own nationalist rhetoric. This further decreases the chances of an alliance with the nationalist state. While cognition and emotion may shape alliance choices separately, they often do so jointly. They tend to be inextricably intertwined as emotion helps select and process evidence.<sup>53</sup>

Nationalism is most likely to hurt external balancing when offensive nationalism is dominant in the nationalist state or when offensive and defensive nationalism are indistinguishable.<sup>54</sup> What I label offensive nationalism has low respect for minority rights and encourages aggressive foreign policy toward others. It narrates a version of the past that downplays the nationalist state's past atrocities and shows insufficient atonement for these. Thus offensive nationalism is offensive both in the sense that it is aggressive and in the sense that it offends other nations. Offensive nationalism can be distinguished from defensive nationalism, which prescribes defensive policies toward others, acknowledges past atrocities, and shows sufficient atonement for these. Offensive nationalism is similar to "hypernationalism," which implies hate of other nations, while defensive nationalism is more similar to patriotism, which emphasizes love of one's own nation.<sup>55</sup> Offensive nationalism ranks high on Van Evera's "danger scale," while defensive nationalism ranks low.<sup>56</sup> While defensive nationalism tends to be status quo, offensive nationalism tends to be revisionist.

Given the anarchic nature of international politics, unless offensive and defensive nationalisms are clearly distinguishable, the potential ally has strong incentives to interpret nationalist appeals as evidence of threatening intentions. The potential ally will also be emotionally alienated by offensive or ambiguous nationalist appeals. Since alliances are risky in that one might be abandoned or entrapped in an undesired conflict by one's ally,<sup>57</sup> increased threat perceptions and negative emotions such as distrust can considerably hinder alliance formation by decreasing states' willingness to take the risk.

This argument, of course, does not imply that alliance patterns are determined by ideology generally and nationalism specifically. Henry Kissinger was correct that if this was the case, "Hitler and Stalin would never have joined hands any more than Richelieu and the Sultan of Turkey would have three centuries earlier."<sup>58</sup> States sometimes do ally with ideological adversaries to restrain them or to counter more immediate threats from third parties.<sup>59</sup> Communist ideology contributed to the Sino-Soviet split.<sup>60</sup> However, just because ideology does not *determine* alliance formation, it does not mean that it is irrelevant. Even a skeptic like Walt acknowledged that when threats are moderate or there is uncertainty about intentions, ideology may influence alliance choices by shaping perceived intentions.<sup>61</sup> Neither does the argument imply that alliance formation across nationalist differences is

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<sup>52</sup> Kaufman 2001.

<sup>53</sup> Mercer 2010.

<sup>54</sup> This argument is inspired by the offense-defense literature Glaser and Kaufmann 1998.

<sup>55</sup> On hypernationalism see Mearsheimer 1990, 21; for a discussion of nationalism and patriotism, see Druckman 1994.

<sup>56</sup> Van Evera 1994, 15.

<sup>57</sup> Snyder 1997.

<sup>58</sup> Kissinger 1994, 332.

<sup>59</sup> Resnick 2010/2011; Schroeder 1975.

<sup>60</sup> Lüthi 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Walt 1994, 38; Haas 2005, 29.

impossible. However, such differences make the formation and maintenance of alliances more difficult.

### **A Plausibility Probe of the Argument: The Absence of Japanese-South Korean Balancing Alliance against China**

This section provides a plausibility probe for the argument articulated above that while nationalist appeals at home help internal balancing, they also hurt external balancing by alienating potential allies abroad. More specifically, the section shows that nationalism is an important impediment for a Japanese-South Korean balancing coalition against China that alternative arguments based on US presence or Asian cultural uniqueness do not capture.<sup>62</sup> The rest of the section illustrates the explanatory power of nationalism for balancing patterns. It starts with a brief discussion of China's regional hegemony. Then, it shows that nationalist appeals help Japan's internal balancing but undermine the possibility of Japan's external balancing by forming an alliance with South Korea.

#### *The Regional Hegemonic Threat of China*

Following the end of the Cold War, China's fast economic growth and military modernization propelled it into a dominant position among East Asian states. Although the US remains the global hegemon, China is the regional hegemon. Its GDP in current US dollars was \$356 billion in 1990 compared to Japan's \$3 trillion. By 2010 China's \$5.9 trillion economy exceeded Japan's by \$500 billion. In 2013, China's economy was valued at over \$9 trillion, far ahead of Japan's \$4.9 trillion.<sup>63</sup> The US has a comfortable lead with \$16.8 trillion, but current estimates suggest that by 2021 China would pass the US to become the world's largest economy.<sup>64</sup>

This impressive economic growth allowed Chinese decision makers to increase military spending. Although there is disagreement about the exact amount of China's defense budget, it is clearly the largest in East Asia. According to the estimates of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China's defense spending in 1990 was \$19 billion in 2011 US dollars, while Japan's was \$47 billion. In 2004, China's \$63 billion budget passed Japan's \$61 billion to become the largest in the region. In 2013, Chinese military expenditure amounted to \$171 billion, almost three times Japan's \$59 billion, but also far behind of the United States' \$618 billion.<sup>65</sup> More conservative estimates, such as that of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), put Chinese defense spending at \$112.2 billion in 2013, compared to Japan's \$51 billion.<sup>66</sup> Projections estimate that China will overtake the US in terms of military expenditure by 2035.<sup>67</sup>

Much of this increased military spending targeted the modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Chinese armed forces increasingly rely on satellites, reconnaissance drones, thousands of surface-to-surface and anti-ship missiles, stealthy conventional and nuclear submarines, space and cyber-warfare capabilities, and even an aircraft carrier. China has made significant progress regarding command, control, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR)

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<sup>62</sup> Kang 2003; Cha 1999.

<sup>63</sup> World Bank Data,

[http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?page=4&order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2009%20wbapi\\_data\\_value%20wbapi\\_data\\_value-first&sort=desc](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?page=4&order=wbapi_data_value_2009%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-first&sort=desc)

<sup>64</sup> The Economist, "Catching the Eagle: Chinese and American GDP forecasts," August 22, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> SIPRI Milex Data, 1988-2013, [http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex\\_database](http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database)

<sup>66</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, <https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military-s-balance>

<sup>67</sup> The Economist, "China's military rise: The dragon's new teeth," April 7, 2012.

capabilities. It also has a cutting-edge ballistic missile development program, ground-launched land-attack cruise missiles, and about 500 fourth-generation aircraft.<sup>68</sup>

To reassure others, Chinese leaders emphasize their country's "peaceful rise." Analysts have also persuasively argued that neither China's capabilities nor its assertiveness should be exaggerated.<sup>69</sup> China's slowing economic growth, internal problems, modest per capita GDP, relatively peaceful regional track record, economic interdependence, and its increasing integration into the liberal system also mitigate any potential "China threat".<sup>70</sup>

However, even those who think that East Asia might be "set for stability"<sup>71</sup> rather than "ripe for rivalry,"<sup>72</sup> acknowledge that there are reasons for concern. Some observers infer aggressive intentions from China's communist regime type, virulent nationalism, cyberattacks, the unilateral imposition of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea, and revisionist claims in the South China Sea.<sup>73</sup> Although prudent decision makers should avoid making China a threat by treating it as one, they also need to be prepared in case China's regional hegemony threatens their sovereignty.

Perhaps Japan has the most reasons to worry about China's rise. Early post-Cold War studies predicted that China's regional hegemony would destabilize the region generally and Sino-Japanese relations especially.<sup>74</sup> Although bilateral economic relations between China and Japan are good, political and military relations are problematic. Frictions arising from historical and territorial disputes result in a "simmering rivalry".<sup>75</sup> While scholars worry more about the negative implications of China's rise for the US, "Chinese analysts view Japan with much less trust and, in many cases, with a loathing rarely found in their attitudes about the United States."<sup>76</sup> A Cabinet Office poll in October 2005 found that close to three-quarters of Japanese thought that Sino-Japanese relations were not good; in 2006 about 70 percent in both Japan and China viewed the other state unfavorably.<sup>77</sup> Recent Pew Research polls indicate that in 2013 only 5% of Japanese saw China favorably, while 74% of Japanese considered Chinese power a major threat to Japan.<sup>78</sup>

Scholars disagree over Japan's response to the rise of China. Lind makes the case that Japan is passing the buck to the US.<sup>79</sup> Kang suggests that Japan is more likely to bandwagon with China.<sup>80</sup> Current empirical trends seem increasingly at odds with the arguments of Lind and Kang. Ross argues that where the distribution of power favors China, East Asian states accommodate China, but where the US maintains its dominance, they balance against China. Because the US maintains a dominant position in Japan's neighborhood, Japan is balancing China.<sup>81</sup> Twomey takes a middle ground between Ross and Kang to propose that Japan is neither balancing assertively nor bandwagoning, but it is engaged in "circumscribed balancing." Circumscribed balancing involves a loose alliance with

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<sup>68</sup> Montgomery 2014, 131-34.

<sup>69</sup> Beckley 2011-2012; Goldstein 1997; Johnston 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Ross 2005; Goldstein 1997; Shambaugh 2004-2005; Ikenberry 2008; Johnston 2003.

<sup>71</sup> Berger 2000.

<sup>72</sup> Friedberg 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Bernstein and Munro, 1997; Roy 1994; Friedberg 2012; Goldstein and Murray 2004.

<sup>74</sup> Roy 1994.

<sup>75</sup> Calder 2006.

<sup>76</sup> Christensen 1999, 52.

<sup>77</sup> Lampton 2008, 196.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce Stokes, "Asia's view of China—mostly wary, but Japan most of all," August 5, 2013, Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/>

<sup>79</sup> Lind 2004.

<sup>80</sup> Kang 2003.

<sup>81</sup> Ross 2006.

the US, reliance on defensive strategies, and a narrow focus on Sino-Japanese bilateral military balance, ignoring the rise of China in peripheral issue and geographic areas.<sup>82</sup> My argument corroborates those of Ross and Twomey. In the next two sections I argue that Japanese elites deploy nationalist appeals in an attempt to balance against China. Although this helps internal balancing, it also hinders external balancing.

### *Japanese Nationalism Helps Internal Balancing*

In its modern form, Japanese nationalism can be traced back to the Meiji period (1868-1912).<sup>83</sup> Japan's defeat in the "war without mercy"<sup>84</sup> discredited nationalism, which was blamed for taking Japan into a disastrous war that ended with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During the first part of the Cold War nationalism was relegated to the margins of society, but the Japanese economy's meteoric rise during the 1970s and 1980s allowed the return of a new Japanese nationalism. This new nationalism is more defensive and less offensive, but elements of the latter still linger, making offensive and defensive nationalism in Japan indistinguishable. Post-WWII generations are less averse to Japanese nationalism. They have no direct memories of the war, and during their formative years have experienced pride in Japan's economic prowess. When the 1994 electoral reforms elevated the importance of national (security) issues, charismatic party leaders had strong incentives to deploy nationalism to increase Japan's military capability.<sup>85</sup> Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) was the first to come to power after the electoral reforms were fully implemented. Nationalism was central to his "security policy activism,"<sup>86</sup> which was continued by his successors, especially Shinzo Abe.

Although the rise of China provides incentives for Japanese balancing, there are a number of impediments that elites must overcome. First, Japanese society internalized an anti-militarist culture.<sup>87</sup> This translates into public opposition to increasing the military capabilities and broadening the role of Japan's military (the Self-Defense Forces). Second, anti-militarism is enshrined in several formal and informal institutions. Perhaps most importantly, Article 9 of the 1946 Constitution renounces Japan's right to maintain "war potential" and to wage war. The informal ceiling of 1% of GDP for military spending reinforces this limitation. These cultural and institutional factors serve as the main pillars of Japan's post-WWII Yoshida doctrine, which channels nationalism into economic endeavors, is diplomatically unambitious, and embraces military dependence on the US.<sup>88</sup>

Nationalism has been a useful resource for weakening the powerful impediments to internal balancing. There are a number of specific nationalist appeals that Japanese elites rely on regularly. They engage in symbolic rituals such as visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, to honor Japan's 2.5 million war dead. Because 14 of these are class-A war criminals condemned by the 1948 Tokyo war tribunal, visits to Yasukuni contain both offensive and defensive nationalist elements and are controversial. The shrine's Yūshūkan museum depicts Japanese colonizers as liberators and casts doubts on the legitimacy of the Tokyo war tribunal that found a number of Japanese guilty of war crimes.<sup>89</sup> Despite the controversial nature of these visits, Japanese leaders insist on them, although they try to minimize the costs by emphasizing that they visit in private capacity. Sometimes they also avoid visiting on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of Japan's WWII defeat. Koizumi visited this symbol of Japan's

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<sup>82</sup> Twomey 2000.

<sup>83</sup> Matthews 2003, 7; Nish 2000.

<sup>84</sup> Dower 1986.

<sup>85</sup> Estevez-Abe 2014, 170.

<sup>86</sup> Izumikawa 2010, 150.

<sup>87</sup> Berger 1993.

<sup>88</sup> Chai 1997; Arase 2007, 574.

<sup>89</sup> The Economist, "The ambiguity of Yasukuni," October 6, 2005.



nationalist past six times while in office. Abe did not visit during his first tenure as prime minister in 2006-2007 (he later said he regrets this), but went to the shrine recently on December 26, 2013. In April 2013, 168 lawmakers paid their respect at the shrine, the largest visit in recent memory. Abe sent a message to those honored, which “sacrificed their souls to become the foundation of the fatherland.”<sup>90</sup>

Textbooks contain another prominent category of nationalist appeals. Because the Ministry of Education needs to approve textbooks, the political leadership has significant influence over what Japanese students learn. As Abe put it, “It’s natural that the textbooks follow the government line”.<sup>91</sup> Textbook revisions tend to shift the emphasis from Japan’s past atrocities and the pacifism of the Constitution to Japanese patriotism and the constitutionality of the Self-Defense Forces.<sup>92</sup> Yet another set of appeals whitewashes the fact that during WWII Japan coerced women from Korea and elsewhere to work in the military’s brothels.<sup>93</sup> The euphemism “comfort women” is used to suggest that these women were prostitutes rather than sex slaves. Although in the 1993 Kono Statement Japan apologized for this practice, subsequently Japanese elites have undermined this apology.

A last category of nationalist appeals has to do with contested territories. Nationalist appeals depict the national territory as indivisible, and quickly raise nationalist sentiment. This increases the likelihood that the public would be more supportive of internal balancing efforts. References to what Japan calls the Senkakus and China calls Diaoyu islands, or to what Japan calls Takeshima and South Korea calls Dokdo are the most prominent examples.

What these different nationalist appeals share is a revisionist view of Japan’s history and even territory. They downplay the negative aspects of Japan’s past and emphasize the positive ones. They aim to boost patriotic pride. Their implicit message is that Japan is no worse than other countries; therefore this ‘normal’ Japan should have a normal military force to protect itself. Abe’s 2006 bestseller, *Towards a Beautiful Country*, epitomizes the nature of these nationalist appeals. Nationalist appeals also emphasize the strong connection between the nation and the individual, and praise the sacrifice of the latter in the service of the former.<sup>94</sup> Valorizing the sacrifice of the individual for the nation, most evident at the Yūshūkan museum, aims to persuade Japanese to pay the costs for protecting Japan.

The media plays an important role in disseminating nationalist appeals. In a recent move to reshuffle the leadership of the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (Nippon Hoso Kyokai or NHK), the Abe administration backed the appointments of Katsuto Momii as director and that of Naoki Hyakuta as member of the NHK governing board. Both have strong nationalist views. Hyakuta denied the Nanjing massacres, while Momii downplayed the use of sex slaves by the Japanese Army during WWII. Suggesting strong government influence over the NHK, Momii said: “We cannot turn left when the government says right.”<sup>95</sup> Of course, not all Japanese media is nationalist, and some are critical of nationalist appeals. But the political elite still exerts considerable control to use some of it as a conveyor belt to the public.

Nationalist appeals help erode the institutional-legal and cultural-normative impediments to internal balancing. The Cabinet Legislation Bureau, which is in charge of interpreting the

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<sup>90</sup> Martin Fackler, “Japan’s Premier Supported Ceremony for War Criminals,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2014.

<sup>91</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, “In Japan’s New Texts, Lessons in Rising Nationalism,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Burk 2007; Ienaga 1993.

<sup>93</sup> Yoshiaki 2002.

<sup>94</sup> Nelson 2003, 454.

<sup>95</sup> BBC, “Is Japan’s public broadcaster under threat?” 19 March 2014 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26403639>

Constitution, construes “war potential” in Article 9 on a sliding scale.<sup>96</sup> In the most recent move, a government advisory panel recommended loosening constitutional limits on Japan’s armed forces to allow “collective self-defense” or protecting allies under attack. Abe also passed laws to strengthen state secrets, create a National Security Council, and lift Japan’s self-imposed ban on weapon exports. These measures continue earlier legal-institutional reforms. For instance, between 1991 and 2003 fifteen laws were passed and a host of new security institutions established to increase the role of the armed forces. As Samuels put it, “The pacifist loaf that had been so carefully prepared by Yoshida and his successors in the conservative mainstream would now be sliced nearly beyond recognition by revisionists in the anti-mainstream once they consolidated power.”<sup>97</sup>

The public’s opposition to constitutional change is still considerable, but is declining. Whereas in 2006 67% of the Japanese opposed constitutional amendment, in 2013 56% do.<sup>98</sup> This is why the government prefers to reinterpret rather than change the Constitution. Although public opinion can constrain nationalist elites,<sup>99</sup> Abe’s popularity, like that of Koizumi’s, allows him to relax this constraint. At the same time, he also reassures the public. He argues that his changes are part of a doctrine of “proactive pacifism” that will not embroil Japan into conflict but are necessary to deter threats like China and North Korea.<sup>100</sup> While the Japanese public is still averse to offensive military operations, it is increasingly supportive of the self-defense role of the Japanese armed forces, a self-defense that is interpreted increasingly broadly.<sup>101</sup> Nationalism helps Japan’s elites to produce fast and substantial change in Japanese security policy.<sup>102</sup>

“Japan is experiencing a security renaissance,” said Andrew L. Oros, director of international studies at Washington College.<sup>103</sup> Japan started to broaden the role of the military in 1992, when the Diet passed the International Peace Cooperation Law, which allowed Japanese forces to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions overseas under restrictive conditions. Partly in response to the threat of North Korea, in 1997 Japan signed the revised Guidelines for Defense Cooperation with the US, which clarified Japan’s mission in a potential Korean war and allowed its participation in non-combat roles in “areas surrounding Japan”. After 9/11, Japan changed its domestic legislation to allow the overseas deployment of its armed forces to support US operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Insofar as these measures were not directly aimed at China and involved non-combat missions, they can be seen as pre-balancing efforts that prepared the way for, but did not qualify as, balancing.

Increasing concerns about China pushed Japan toward balancing. In 2003 Japan decided to acquire a ballistic missile system. It procured interoperable and defensive power-projection capabilities, including an Aegis sea-mobile missile-defense system, amphibious ships, and long-range aircraft refueling. The military underwent reforms to better integrate the different components of the armed services.<sup>104</sup> In 2007 the Japan Defense Agency was upgraded to a Defense Ministry. In 2010, Japan announced its decision to increase its already outstanding submarine fleet from 16 to 22 boats.

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<sup>96</sup> Samuels 2007-08, 86.

<sup>97</sup> Samuels 2007-08, 89.

<sup>98</sup> Pew Research Center, “Japanese Public’s Mood Rebounding, Abe Highly Popular; China and South Korea Very Negative Toward Japan,” July 11, 2013, p. 4, <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2013/07/Pew-Research-Center-Global-Attitudes-Project-Japan-Report-FINAL-July-11-2013.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> Midford 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Martin Fackler, “Japan Moves to Scale Back Postwar Restrictions on the Use of Military Power,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Midford 2011, 171.

<sup>102</sup> For this argument applied to Koizumi see Arase 2007, 571-72.

<sup>103</sup> Martin Fackler and David E Sanger, “Japan Announces a Military Shift to Thwart China,” *New York Times*, July 1, 2014.

<sup>104</sup> Hughes and Krauss 2007, 162, 65.

What is remarkable is that the number of boats did not change since 1976. In 2013, Japan launched an Izumo-class helicopter carrier. The Air Self-Defense Forces now have not only a total of over 350 fourth- and third-generation fighters (F-15s, F-2s, and F-4s), but also fifth-generation F-35 ones.<sup>105</sup>

Much of this increase in Japan's power projection capabilities and the expansion of the military's role occurred without exceeding the 1 percent of GDP military expenditure cap. Strengthening the economy would be the best way to increase Japan's military without exceeding this limit, which is partly why nationalists like Abe focus on the economy. Given the ailing economy, Japan's defense budget slowly declined during much of the last decade. Decision makers tried to allocate the available money more effectively rather than increase military spending. In addition, they found ingenious ways to circumvent this 1 percent limit, such as upgrading the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) and essentially turning it into the fourth branch of the military.<sup>106</sup> This move bolstered Japan's power projection capability, but because the JCG is not formally part of the armed forces, spending on it does not formally count as military spending.

In December 2013 the Abe cabinet finally approved a new national security strategy and increased military expenditure, citing concerns about China's growing defense spending and assertiveness.<sup>107</sup> Part of the \$232 billion increase over five years will be spent on new military hardware, such as surveillance drones, stealth aircraft and amphibious vehicles. In August 2014 the Ministry of Defense asked for a record \$53 billion budget for next year.<sup>108</sup> Although Japan has not acquired nuclear weapons and it remains averse to offensive military capabilities, there has been an undeniable shift toward increased internal balancing. Nationalism has played an important role in weakening the cultural and institutional constraints on internal balancing.

### *Japanese Nationalism Hurts External Balancing with South Korea*

This section demonstrates that the same nationalist appeals that help Japanese internal balancing, also hurt external balancing. This helps explain the puzzling absence of a Japanese-South Korean balancing alliance against China. Scholars have long noted that in many respects the two countries should be natural allies. After all, they are both US allies, are threatened by China and North Korea, are economically interdependent, and are democracies.<sup>109</sup> Despite the normalization of Japanese-South Korean relations in 1965, their relationship remains fraught with tension. Japanese nationalist appeals regularly cause outrage in South Korea, damaging bilateral relations. Already in 1969 Japan recognized in the Korea Clause of the Nixon-Sato communiqué that the security of South Korea is essential to its security. Nonetheless, bilateral military-political relations remain underdeveloped.

There is no shortage of potential explanations for the absence of a Japanese-South Korean alliance. One argument is that their separate bilateral alliance with the US provides all the external balancing they need, and allows them to avoid an alliance with each other. If the US gradually disengaged from Asia, however, they would be forced to overcome their disagreements and form an alliance.<sup>110</sup> There is no doubt that US presence shapes alliance patterns in the region. However, this explanation is incomplete in at least two respects. While American presence may explain why Japan

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<sup>105</sup> Toshi Yoshihara, "Japanese hard power: Rising to the challenge," American Enterprise Institute, Aug 25, 2014, <http://www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/defense/japanese-hard-power-rising-to-the-challenge/>

<sup>106</sup> Samuels 2007-08, 85.

<sup>107</sup> BBC, "Japan boosts military forces to counter China," December 17, 2013. See also Japan's Medium Term Defense Program (FY 2014-FY2018), [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/Defense\\_Program.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/Defense_Program.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> The Economist, "Japan's military spending: Tooling Up," September 1, 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Berger 2012, 191-92, Cha 1999, 1-2.

<sup>110</sup> Cha 1999.

and South Korea afford not to ally with each other, it says little about why they are averse to such an alliance in the first place. In addition, the Japanese and South Korean bilateral alliances with the US do not necessarily point away from a Japanese-South Korean alliance. An equally plausible argument could be made that Japan's and South Korea's separate alliances with the US provides them with strong incentives to ally with each other. The US is an advocate of closer political and military cooperation between the two countries to enhance the effectiveness of a balancing coalition against China. Yet US exhortation could not so far overcome the antagonism between Japan and South Korea.

Another explanation is that, unlike the European state system, the East Asian one had historically been hierarchical. The states of the region are comfortable with Chinese hegemony, which is a stabilizing and peaceful factor. Kang argues that rather than balance against China, states in the region, including Japan and South Korea, might bandwagon with it.<sup>111</sup> This argument is right to emphasize that balancing is not necessarily a cross-culturally valid law of nature and it may not occur in Asia.<sup>112</sup> Yet it conflates two distinct goals states may have: peace and autonomy. Balancing often occurs not in an effort to keep the peace but to secure states' sovereignty. Even if Chinese hegemony keeps the peace of the region, but encroaches on others' sovereignty it is likely to trigger balancing. Given China's recent frictions with its neighbors, many states have reasons to believe that Chinese hegemony is a threat to their sovereignty. Current empirical trends also sit uncomfortably with Kang's argument. Japan exhibits anti-Chinese balancing behavior, even if for a number of reasons it remains a "circumscribed balancer."<sup>113</sup>

To complement these explanations, I propose that nationalism plays an important role in alienating South Korea from Japan. As one scholar put it, "nationalism trumped geostrategic and material interests as, time and again, negotiations between the two countries collapsed over differences in how the two sides viewed history."<sup>114</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Japanese-South Korean relations were reasonably good. The two governments engaged in bilateral cooperation, including defense. Cooperative efforts included high-profile visits and regularized bilateral committees such as the Trade and Technology Cooperation Meeting, the Assistant foreign ministerial meeting (included the US), the Fishery working-level committee, the Korea-Japan Forum, the Air defense working-level committee, and the Sakhalin Island Committee.<sup>115</sup> Both countries seemed politically committed to improving bilateral relations.

This initial progress was set back after 2001, when the Koizumi administration started deploying Japanese nationalism for internal balancing. As a former Japanese colony between 1910 and 1945, South Korea is understandably very sensitive to Japanese nationalist appeals. Such appeals activate already negative cognitive and emotional associations with Japan.<sup>116</sup> The more Japanese elites deploy nationalist appeals at home and the more South Korean elites and the media draw attention to these appeals, the more threat perceptions and distrust toward Japan hinders bilateral cooperation. This is particularly true regarding visits to the Yasukuni shrine, revisionist Japanese textbooks, Japanese references to "comfort women," and nationalist appeals that call for Japan's control over disputed territories.

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<sup>111</sup> Kang 2003.

<sup>112</sup> Katzenstein and Okawara 2001-2002, 156.

<sup>113</sup> Twomey 2000.

<sup>114</sup> Berger 2012, 160.

<sup>115</sup> Cha 1999, 86.

<sup>116</sup> Cho and Park 2011, 267.

It is well known that Japanese visits to the Yasukuni shrine damage relations with South Korea. Abe's recent visit in December 2013 caused outrage in South Korea. Koizumi's six visits epitomize the problem. The South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued an official statement of regret in response to Koizumi's first visit on August 13, 2001. South Korean mass media criticized Japan harshly, and South Koreans staged anti-Japanese mass protests.<sup>117</sup> Like other victims of Japanese aggression, South Koreans interpret visits to Yasukuni as the glorification of Japan's militarist past.<sup>118</sup> Koizumi, as other Japanese leaders, reject this militarist interpretation: "No matter if I will come under criticism from other nations, I must pay my respects to those who were forced to go to war for their families and for the country" . . . and make it clear that [Japan] will never again wage war."<sup>119</sup> Yet the credibility of such reassurance is limited by the fact that Yasukuni hosts war criminals too, rendering Japanese offensive and defensive nationalism indistinguishable.

Another set of irritating revisionist appeals relate to what Japan calls "comfort women". Although in the 1993 Kono Statement Japan apologized for coercing women (many of whom were Korean) into Japanese military brothels, Japanese leaders regularly justify this practice or question the historical evidence for it. Most recently, in June 2014 a government-appointed working group emphasized the secret nature of the negotiations that produced the Kono Statement, implicitly questioning the evidence on which it is based. South Korea saw this as proof that Japanese apologies were insincere.<sup>120</sup> This issue creates distrust toward Japan. President Park Geun-hye told US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in October 2013 that "I know Japan is an important country to cooperate with for peace and stability in Northeast Asia...but trust has not been established...With lack of trust in Japan as well as its denial for the inhumane treatment of women during World War II, the whole Korean citizenry is very upset".<sup>121</sup>

Nationalist appeals to reclaim the Dokdo/Takeshima islands, which are under South Korean administration, also inhibit the possibility of an alliance. In 2005 the prefectural assembly of Shimane in Japan declared February 22, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's conquest of the islets as Takeshima Day. South Korea reacted furiously. "When Japan claims Dokdo as its own territory, we Koreans feel as outraged as if someone pointed at our wife and claimed that she is his own," said Cho Whan-bok of Northeast Asian History Foundation, a government-affiliated South Korean think tank. "If the Japanese try to take this island from us, we will fight to the end. If we run out of firepower, we will ram our ship against the intruders! Our national pride is at stake," added Kwak Young-hwan, a South Korean Coast Guard captain.<sup>122</sup> On March 1 President Roh asked Japan to apologize and offer compensations for past atrocities, and on March 23 he stated: "Now, the South Korean government has no choice but to sternly deal with Japan's attempt to justify its history of aggression and colonialism and revive regional hegemony."<sup>123</sup>

Frictions over the islets re-emerged in 2008, when a new manual approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education instructed teachers and textbook publishers to teach Japanese students that the islets belong to Japan. South Korea recalled its ambassador from Tokyo, while South Korean citizens engaged in anti-Japanese protests. South Korean politicians occasionally also find it useful to engage in nationalist appeals to boost their approval ratings and distract the public's attention from other problems. In August 2012 President Lee Myung-bak visited Dokdo/Takeshima, further contributing

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<sup>117</sup> Shibuichi 2005, 211.

<sup>118</sup> Nelson 2003, 454.

<sup>119</sup> Nelson 2003, 458.

<sup>120</sup> New York Times Editorial Board, "Japan's Historical Blinders," *New York Times*, June 22, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> Ankit Panda, "Park Geun-hye, Japan Summit 'Pointless' without Apology," *The Diplomat*, November 5, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Choe Sang-Hun, "Desolate Dots in the Sea Stir Deep Emotions as South Korea Resists a Japanese Claim," *New York Times*, August 30, 2008.

<sup>123</sup> Rozman and Lee 2006, 779.

to the cooling of relations with Japan. Nationalism infuses contested territories with a symbolic significance that makes them part of an indivisible national territory.<sup>124</sup> This makes it hard to solve territorial disputes through peaceful compromise and increases chances of tensions and even conflict.

South Korean perceptions of Japan remain negative, despite good economic relations and cooperation in other issue areas. The dislike of Japan broadly correlates with the rise and fall of nationalism-induced tensions. While in 1990 66% of South Koreans said they dislike the Japanese, following intergovernmental cooperation efforts the proportion declined to 42.2% by 2000, and then climbed back to 63% by 2005 due to Koizumi-era frictions.<sup>125</sup> A joint Japanese-Korean survey in May 2005, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalization of bilateral relations, found that the percentage of South Koreans who distrust Japan increased from 75% in 2002 to over 90% in 2005.<sup>126</sup> Poll numbers for the 2002-2012 period show that a majority of South Koreans perceive Japan unfavorably. Favorable perceptions briefly peaked in 2008 to reach 49.7%, and have been declining ever since to reach a nadir of 22% in 2014 under Abe.<sup>127</sup> In South Korea Abe is perceived much less favorably than Vladimir Putin and even slightly behind Kim Jong-Un.<sup>128</sup> Poll numbers are sensitive to question wording, public opinion can be fickle, and it does not determine alliance choices. Nonetheless, these numbers give us a sense of the antipathy a potential Japanese-South Korean alliance would need to overcome.

Japanese nationalist appeals inhibit the possibility of a balancing alliance with South Korea against China. These nationalist appeals sometimes make Japan appear more threatening to South Koreans than even China, prodding them to balance not with Japan but against it. In 2005, following frictions over Dokdo/Takeshima, President Roh talked about South Korea's balancing role in the region, which many interpreted as being aimed at Japan's increase in military capabilities and nationalism.<sup>129</sup>

In other cases nationalism inhibits the deepening of bilateral military cooperation. In the summer of 2012, Japan and South Korea planned to sign an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). These would have allowed the reciprocal provisions during overseas peacekeeping operation and the sharing of classified military information, essential to respond effectively to threats from China or North Korea. Yet the backlash from the general public and the opposition forced the South Korean Ministry of Defense to sideline the agreement.<sup>130</sup> Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, commander of the US Pacific Command, lamented that Japan and South Korea cannot communicate with each other due to political restrictions on information sharing, and "This degrades their ability to defend their own airspace, their own nations." He added: "we keep articulating to the people of Japan and South Korea that from a military perspective we understand the serious political issues and social issues that have to be overcome. But...they are an impediment to your security."<sup>131</sup> Current efforts try to circumvent public

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<sup>124</sup> Goddard 2006; Toft 2005.

<sup>125</sup> Berger 2012, 200.

<sup>126</sup> Rozman and Lee 2006, 781.

<sup>127</sup> Kevin Stahler, "Mutual Distrust: Japanese Views on South Korea," Peterson Institute for International Economics, <http://blogs.piie.com/nk/?p=12439>; Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/pg-2014-07-14-balance-of-power-4-01/>

<sup>128</sup> Alastair Gale, "In Seoul, Kim Jong Un Preferred to Shinzo Abe," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 2014, <http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2014/03/04/in-seoul-kim-jong-un-preferred-to-shinzo-abe/?mod=WSJBlog>

<sup>129</sup> Rozman and Lee 2006, 779.

<sup>130</sup> Moon Young Jun, "History Intrudes on Korea-Japan Security Cooperation," *Stimson*, July 13, 2012, <http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/history-intrudes-on-korea-japan-security-cooperation/>.

<sup>131</sup> Cheryl Pellerin, "Locklear Briefs on Asia-Pacific, Partners, Security," Jul 30, 2014, [http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=82494](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=82494)

hostility to Japanese-South Korean information-sharing agreements by sharing information indirectly through the US.<sup>132</sup>

Japanese policymakers are not entirely insensitive to the negative impact of their nationalist appeals on their neighbors generally and South Korea specifically. As one Japanese politician, Ichiro Ozawa, put it, “The bitterness of both North and South Korea over Japan’s past colonial domination is still strong, and it continues to prevent the development of normal relations between Japan and the two Koreas.”<sup>133</sup> This awareness sometimes leads to a certain degree of self-restraint and even apologies. The 1993 Kono Statement and the 1995 Murayama Statement expressed regret for past Japanese atrocities. Koizumi generally avoided visiting Yasukuni on August 15. Abe refrained to visit altogether during his first tenure as prime minister to avoid offending China and South Korea and visited these countries to improve diplomatic relations. Two months after his 2001 visit to Yasukuni, Koizumi visited South Korea and apologized for the suffering caused by Japanese colonialism. On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII, on August 15, 2005 Koizumi apologized to China and South Korea for Japan’s wrongdoings.<sup>134</sup> Japan’s defense minister, Itsunori Onodera criticized Toru Hashimoto, the mayor of Osaka, for justifying the use of “comfort women”. In Singapore at the Shangri-La Dialogue, he condemned Hashimoto for “causing misunderstanding and mistrust to Japan’s neighboring countries” with “inappropriate remarks about the history of Japan.”<sup>135</sup>

But these cases of self-restraint and apology remain limited. As one scholar writes, “Whenever a Japanese prime minister sought to adopt a more penitent stance on history, prominent members of the government gave voice to a solidly impenitent view of history, undermining and diluting the impact of the prime minister’s statements.”<sup>136</sup> They fall short of satisfying South Koreans, 98% of whom consider Japan’s apologies insufficient.<sup>137</sup>

More generally, nationalist appeals undercut Japan’s ability to reassure its neighbors, many of which harbor deep suspicions against Japan.<sup>138</sup> In Berger’s words, “The need to reassure Japan’s neighbors thus clashed with the need to mobilize domestic support for the military—a tension that Japanese policy makers would find particularly difficult to negotiate.”<sup>139</sup> Nationalism amplifies this difficulty.

One may wonder whether nationalism could open up new alliance options even as it closes down others. While Imperial Japan’s ultra-nationalism alienated it from the US, perhaps it also brought it closer to Nazi Germany and ultimately facilitated their alliance. If this argument holds, nationalist appeals would not necessarily hurt external balancing. Although it is conceivable in theory that nationalist states would band together, it is still likely that nationalism would close down more alliance choices than it would open. Furthermore, as discussed above, nationalism is a divisive ideology that does more to hinder than to help alliance formation. Nationalist states often have revisionist claims against each other, hindering their cooperation. Currently India seems to be the best candidate for a balancing alliance against China. Although Abe and Modi are both nationalists, that

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<sup>132</sup> Song Sang-ho, “Korea, US, Japan Sign Military Info-sharing Deal,” *The Korea Herald*, December 26, 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Ozawa 1994, 103.

<sup>134</sup> Rozman and Lee 2006, 780.

<sup>135</sup> Jennifer Lind, “The Limits of Nationalism in Japan,” *New York Times*, July 23, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> Berger 2012, 183.

<sup>137</sup> “Japanese Public’s Mood Rebounding, Abe Highly Popular; China and South Korea Very Negative Toward Japan,” July 11, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2013/07/Pew-Research-Center-Global-Attitudes-Project-Japan-Report-FINAL-July-11-2013.pdf>

<sup>138</sup> Midford 2002.

<sup>139</sup> Berger 2012, 179.

is unlikely to be enough to persuade India to leave behind its fondness for partnerships and enter a formal alliance with Japan. India's relationship with China is also too important to allow such an alliance.

In sum, I argued that while nationalism helps internal balancing, it can also hurt external balancing. Nationalist appeals at home alienate potential allies abroad, particularly when offensive nationalism is dominant or when offensive and defensive nationalism are indistinguishable. While this impediment to alliance formation is not impossible to overcome, it represents a serious obstacle that increases the costs of forming and maintaining alliances.

## Contributions

I conclude with highlighting three contributions of the paper. A first theoretical contribution is to show that nationalism not only helps internal balancing, as the conventional wisdom holds, but also hurts external balancing. Nationalist appeals at home can increase the threat perceptions and distrust of potential allies abroad, constraining the nationalist state's alliance choices. Thus, the paper offers a more comprehensive picture of nationalism's impact on balancing.

Second, the argument has important policy contributions. When internal and external balancing are both needed to meet the hegemonic threat, decision makers may face what can be called the nationalist balancing dilemma: how to deploy nationalism to balance at home without alienating potential allies abroad? Policy makers can solve the dilemma by relying on defensive nationalist appeals that are distinguishable from offensive ones. When offensive and defensive nationalism are indistinguishable, and there are no good alternatives to nationalism for internal balancing, the dilemma is more difficult to solve. In these situations, decision makers need to employ a case-by-case calculation of costs and benefits to decide whether nationalism would do more to help or hurt their overall balancing efforts. While internal balancing improves security reliably but slowly, external balancing does so less reliably but fast. Much of the literature suggests that domestic political calculations determine the combination of arms and allies decision makers choose.<sup>140</sup> This paper brings in external costs to help identify the optimal mix of internal and external balancing one needs to meet hegemonic threats.

Third, the paper offers normative contributions as well. One such contribution is that anti-militarist norms can be undermined by nationalist appeals. If powerful normative prohibitions conflict with strong nationalist values and beliefs, they may lose some of their prohibitive force. This corroborates other studies that find that when taboos and strong values clash, normative prohibitions are substantially weakened.<sup>141</sup> Another normative contribution pertains to the potentially destabilizing influence of nationalism in Asia.<sup>142</sup> If nationalism is able to keep Japan and South Korea apart, countries that have numerous reasons to ally, it is even more likely to cause tensions between other states. What is particularly problematic is the ethnic or racial strands of nationalism that are common in the region.<sup>143</sup> At least in this respect, East Asia resembles pre-WWI Europe. Deracializing Asian nationalism would decrease its offensive nature and consequently its ability to facilitate discord and hinder cooperation.

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<sup>140</sup> Morrow 1993.

<sup>141</sup> Dolan 2013.

<sup>142</sup> Cho and Park 2011, 290.

<sup>143</sup> Dikötter 1997; Shin 2006.



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