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Degree Program in INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Course of ASIAN STUDIES

Between Hedging and Wedging-- The  
Reputational Logic of America's Asia-Pacific  
Alliances and Great Power Dynamics

Prof.Silvia Menegazzi

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SUPERVISOR

Prof.Gregory Alegi

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CO-SUPERVISOR

Yao Du  
ID646472

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CANDIDATE

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## Summary

With the intensification of Sino-US competition in the past decade and the change of regional balance of power, the Asia-Pacific allies of the United States generally tend to "hedge" rather than purely "check and balance" and "bandwagoning", but these countries are different in the direction and intensity of hedging. This paper will explain this phenomenon from the perspective of allies' reputation perception, and argue that the perception of America's resolve reputation and China's reputation for threat affects allies' alliance strength and willingness to balance, and then leads to the difference of their "hedging" behavior in the trend of "balancing and bandwagoning". The thesis is divided into four parts. The first chapter expounds the concept of reputation and the application of reputation in deterrence and alliance theory, and evaluates reputation skepticism. The second chapter is the research design and hypothesis, in which "resolve reputation attribution" and "reputation for threat level" are used as independent variables, and the conditions affecting the two independent variables are elaborated, and the "hedging" form of allies is used as dependent variable, and the "hedging" form is divided into four different types. The third chapter is a case study, which selects Japan and South Korea as examples to sort out the history and causal analysis of the reputation logic of the "hedging" behavior of the allies, and takes the Diaoyu Island incident and the "THAAD into South Korea" incident as specific cases to study the reputation interaction. The conclusion part emphasizes again that the difference of reputation perception between Japan and South Korea leads to the strategy of "tending to balance" and "forced hedging", and points out that the difference of "sensitivity" and "vulnerability" of reputation between China and the United States at this stage has an impact on the alliance strategy of the United States and the strategy of China's rise.

**Key words: reputation; Hedging; Reputation attribution; Ally perception**

## **Abstract**

Having witnessed a crescendo of Sino-US competition and a change of regional balance-of-power, US allies in the Asia-Pacific region opt for “hedging” as a viable alternative to pure balancing or bandwagoning, yet the directions and paces of their “hedging” moves are strikingly different. This dissertation purports to clarify this phenomenon by treating “allies’ perception of reputation” as an explanatory variable, saying that the cohesiveness of alliance is shaped by an ally’s perception of America’s “reputation for resolve” while an ally’s balancing intention is affected by its calculation of China’s “reputation for threat”. And diverse combinations of reputational perceptions put these allies in distinct positions along the “balancing-bandwagoning” spectrum. The dissertation consists of four chapters and is organized as follows: Chapter I includes a definition of “reputation”, the application of this concept in deterrence and alliance theory, and an appraisal of the argument which believes “reputation doesn’t matter”; Chapter II comprises hypotheses and a research design, in which there are two independent variables, namely “the attribution of reputation for resolve” and “the extent of reputation for threat”, six specific factors affecting these two variables are also embedded in the design. Besides, allies’ “hedging” patterns function as dependent variables, which could be categorized into four sets; Chapter III focuses on case study. Approaches of historical review and causal mechanism analysis are embodied in an attempt to find the “reputational logic” behind Japan and South Korea’s “hedging” behavior, and by probing into two cases—“Diaoyu Islands Disputes” and “THAAD Issue”, reputational interactions among different actors are manifested; the conclusion in Chapter IV reiterates perceptual divergences behind the aforementioned two allies’ different “hedging” patterns, and regarding current Sino-US interactions, a reputational difference in “sensitivity” and “vulnerability” might bear on the two countries’ future strategic choices.

**Key Words: reputation, hedging, reputational attribution, allies' perceptions**

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1、 The purpose and significance of the selected topic

The alliance behavior between countries has long been an important research topic in the discipline of international relations. Alliance research not only involves the formation, maintenance, transformation, weakening and disintegration of alliances, but also includes the theoretical viewpoints of different schools such as realism, liberalism and constructivism. As an important means for a country to achieve external checks and balances, alliances have the characteristics of strength aggregation, military orientation, third-party pertinence and relative stability, so the shaping of alliances not only reflects the direction of national foreign policy, but also shows the competition and cooperation situation among countries, and the related research also has the characteristics of system and unit level.

In recent years, with the continuous enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, the strategic competition between China and the United States has become increasingly significant, and the Asia-Pacific region has become the focus of the game between the two sides. In the face of China's rising momentum, the United States regards the Asia-Pacific alliance as a preferred option for offshore checks and balances, and tries to play the supporting role of regional allies (Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand) in order to contain the rising powers by using asymmetric power advantages and the principle of "responsibility sharing". The "Asia-Pacific rebalancing strategy" of the Obama administration, the "Indo-Pacific strategy" of the Trump administration, and the reshaping of alliances by the Biden administration all reflect this philosophy. It can be said that the alliance form and policy choices of allies in the Asia-Pacific region are not only influenced by the structural competition between China and the United States, but also shape the development direction of Sino-US relations in turn.

Because the behavior of the Asia-Pacific alliance is based on the structural framework of Sino-US relations, with the intensification of Sino-US competition, the goals of the main allies and those of the middle powers and small allies begin to diverge, which is mainly reflected in the degree of checks and balances on the rising countries, and the choice of small and medium-sized allies is not a simple dichotomy between "balancing threats" and "bandwagoning threats". Academic circles generally call the third choice of countries in the competition zone of big powers as "hedging strategy", that is, small countries use policy combinations or vague zones to maximize their gains while avoiding external threats, so as to avoid the situation of forced selection of sides in the confrontation between two or more big powers. The implementation of this strategy by the Asia-Pacific allies of the United States is popularly interpreted as the so-called "economic dependence on China and security dependence on the United States".

However, the general concept of "hedging" can not summarize all the behavioral characteristics of US allies in the Asia-Pacific region. The allies not only have obvious differences in their attitudes towards China, but also are difficult to keep pace with each other in their alliance actions. For example, compared with the tough attitude of Japan and Australia towards China, the policies of South Korea and the Philippines towards China are more moderate, and as far as the relationship with the allies is concerned, the latter two have more frictions with the United States in action coordination (such as the exchange of intelligence between the United States, Japan and South Korea in recent years and the agreement between the United States and the Philippines on visiting forces). In addition, it is difficult to explain this difference simply by security and economic interests. In the hierarchy of national interests, security interests are at the highest level, and their core includes sovereignty and territorial interests, which is the sharpness of Sino-Japanese contradictions and Sino-Indian contradictions. According to this logic, the countries that have territorial disputes with China among the Asia-Pacific allies of the United States should have stronger relations with the United States, that is, the US-Philippine alliance should be



more stable than the US-Australian alliance. However, in recent years, the US-Philippine alliance has experienced twists and turns, and the US-Australian relationship has become increasingly strengthened. There is no territorial dispute between Australia and China, and the two sides have close economic and trade relations, but Australia's resolve and action to balance China is still very significant. Therefore, the dual dependence model of "economy-security" can neither explain the behavioral motivation of Asia-Pacific allies nor accurately define the different types of "hedging" strategies.

In view of the current research on the concept of "hedging" is relatively simple, and the discussion on the differences of "hedging" behavior among countries is relatively vague, this paper will introduce "reputation" and "reputation attribution" variables to construct an analysis model based on the background of structural competition between China and the United States, and then put forward assumptions and conduct case studies. Finally, it tries to provide an explanation for the differences and motivations of the "hedging" behavior of the US Asia-Pacific allies. On the one hand, the discussion of this issue is helpful to predict the future alliance and diplomatic behavior of the US allies in the Asia-Pacific region, on the other hand, it can also provide possible policy ideas for China to achieve peaceful rise under the condition of regional checks and balances.

## **Section 1. Literature Review**

As an economic concept, "hedging" refers to an investment that is used to reduce the risk of another investment. Applied to international relations, "hedging strategy" refers to "the behavior of a country to adopt a variety of opposite behavior choices to offset risks in the case of strong uncertainty and high risk".<sup>①</sup>; Lim and Zack Cooper argue that "hedging can be defined as an alliance option – that is, avoiding a close alliance with a single power, while releasing some ambiguity about common security

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① John D Ciorciari & Jürgen Haacke, "Hedging in international relations: an introduction," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol.19, No.3 (September 2019), pp.367-374.

interests, thereby ensuring flexibility and low risk to change in the future".<sup>①</sup>; Evelyn Goh argues that hedging is "a policy equilibrium in which secondary countries can reap the benefits of economic relations without sacrificing fundamental security interests".<sup>②</sup>; The broader definition of "hedging" regards it as "a series of contradictory or offsetting actions taken in order to strive for national interests".<sup>③</sup>。 In summary, hedging can be understood as a policy trade-off for countries facing strategic problems.

Because the research object of this paper is the hedging behavior of the US Asia-Pacific allies in the context of Sino-US game, the existing research on "hedging" behavior will be classified in combination with alliance theory. It mainly includes the following five categories: the threat orientation theory at the system level (balance-bandwagoning theory), the interest orientation theory at the system level (dual dependence), the threat perception theory of allies, the influence of alliance structure on "hedging" behavior (the difference between hub and spoke structure and multilateral structure), and the influence of domestic politics on "hedging" behavior (system type, interest group, leader's personality, etc.).

### 1.1.1 Hedging theory at the system level

The system-level reasons for the "hedging" behavior of allies mainly include threat-oriented and interest-oriented. According to Kenneth Waltz's neorealist theory, the system structure includes three levels: the principle of order, functional differences and the distribution of power. Because of the anarchic nature of the principle of order and the uneven distribution of national power, small countries often need to ensure their own security through external checks and balances (such as alliances).<sup>④</sup>But alliances and other instruments contain uncertainty about commitments, and countries

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① Darren J. Lim & Zack Cooper, "Reassessing hedging: The logic of alignment in East Asia," *Security Studies*, Vol.24, No.4 (November 2015), pp.696-727.

② Evelyn Goh, "Southeast Asian perspectives on the China challenge," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.30, No.4-5 (July 2007), pp.809-832.

③ Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, Vol.30, No.2 (August 2008), pp.159-185.

④ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2010), pp.121.

concerned about the risk of "abandonment" need to use a combination of policies to alleviate their concerns. As Stephen Walt has said, small countries often choose to bandwagoning threat countries when they lack the ability to check and balance threats.<sup>①</sup> Victor Cha argues that countries may hedge against the prospect of abandonment by combining "adhesion strategies" for allies with appeasement strategies for adversaries.<sup>②</sup> By studying Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, Wu Cuiling found that after the Cold War, these countries did not adopt a pure strategy of checks and balances or bandwagoning-up, but sought a "comprehensive trap" and a "complex balance of influence" between the two powers.<sup>③</sup> For Alexander Korolev, hedging boils down to countries using a combination of engagement and containment policies to keep themselves equidistant from other powers. Therefore, in the uncertain situation of strong external threats and insufficient checks and balances, small countries often adopt hedging as an alternative option.<sup>④</sup>

With regard to the theory of interest orientation at the system level, Denny Roy believes that the interpretation of "bandwagoning" strategy separated from security considerations is equivalent to defining bandwagoning as economic cooperation.<sup>⑤</sup> Lim and Cooper believe that with the injection of American military and security guarantees into East Asia, countries in the region have more opportunities to hedge their security relations and economic interests based on the concept of balance of power.<sup>⑥</sup> Ikenberry (G. John Ikenberry) believes that China's rise has changed the regional pattern, making small countries in East Asia rely on the United States for security and China for economy.<sup>⑦</sup> But Amitav Acharya argues that economic cooperation or diplomatic engagement with China does not mean that East Asian

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① Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp.24.

② Victor D. Cha, "Complex Patchworks: US Alliances as Part of Asia's Regional Architecture," *Asia Policy*, No.11 (January 2011), pp.27-50.

③ Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies," *International Security*, Vol.32, No.3 (Winter 2007), pp.113-157.

④ Alexander Korolev, "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relations," *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol.9, No.4 (Winter 2016), pp.375-397.

⑤ Denny Roy, "Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, Vol.27, No.2 (August 2005), pp.305-322.

⑥ Darren J. Lim & Zack Cooper, "Reassessing hedging: The logic of alignment in East Asia," *Security Studies*, Vol.24, No.4 (November 2015), pp.696-727.

⑦ G. John Ikenberry, "Between the Eagle and the Dragon: America, China, and Middle State Strategies in East Asia," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.131, No.1 (Spring 2016), pp.9-43.

countries sacrifice security and sovereignty interests for economic relations with China.<sup>①</sup>

The theory of "hedging" at the system level mainly explains the third choice of allies driven by threats, checks and balances and interests. The Theory of "threat orientation" and the theory of "interest orientation" respectively continue Walter's logic of threat bandwagoning (bandwagoning for fear) and Randall Schweller's logic of interest bandwagoning (bandwagoning for profit). It also explains the background factors of "hedging" behavior to some extent. However, it is difficult to distinguish the "hedging" behavior of different allies simply from the level of system checks and balances or bandwagoning. In the same situation of territorial disputes, Japan chooses to close its alliance with the United States while the Philippines chooses to alienate. Secondly, it is difficult to reflect the initiative of medium-sized and small countries in the power transfer of big powers simply by discussing the system reasons. For example, David Kang believes that South Korea's assessment of its goals and intentions towards China is the main factor determining its adoption of a non-balancing and non-bandwagoning strategy.<sup>②</sup>

### **1.1.2 Hedging "Threat Perception Theory", "Alliance Structure Theory" and "Domestic Politics Theory"**

Allies' threat perception theory emphasizes the level of threat perception at the unit level. Patricia Weitsman argues that a country will gradually shift from a "hedging" strategy to a binding and balancing strategy as the perceived threat level increases from low to high.<sup>③</sup> Kuik Cheng-Chwee believes that a country's choice of direct or indirect checks and balances is the result of the interaction of threat level and credible support. When a country's threat perception level and support level increase

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<sup>①</sup> Amitav Acharya, "Will Asia's Past Be Its Future?," *International Security*, Vol.28, No.3 (Winter 2003/2004), pp.149-164.

<sup>②</sup> David C. Kang, "Between Balancing and Bandwagoning: South Korea's Response to China," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol.9, No.1 (January-April 2009), pp.1-28.

<sup>③</sup> Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.166.

at the same time, its policy may shift from indirect checks and balances to direct checks and balances.<sup>①</sup>Chen Zongyan also believes that in the context of positive expectations, if a rising country is regarded as a high threat, a small country will adopt a strategy of checks and balances, otherwise it will be a hedging strategy.<sup>②</sup>Wu Cuiling believes that Thailand's low threat perception of China is the key to its "hedging" strategy.

The advantage of threat perception theory is that it can exert direct influence on policy intervention, while the disadvantage is that it is difficult to measure. As a unit-level variable, the threat perception factor is more indicative of a threatened country's subjective reception of negative signals from the rising country, and the privacy of such signals is difficult to form common knowledge, which is not conducive to grasping the impact of threats on the alliance as a whole.

In addition, from the perspective of alliance structure, James Morrow believes that alliances between countries with unequal strength are easier to form and maintain, and that big and small countries can trade safely and autonomously.<sup>③</sup>Victor Cha put forward the theory of "Powerplay", which holds that the Asia-Pacific region does not apply to multilateral alliances in Western Europe, and that the United States can control the actions of its allies in the Asia-Pacific region by shaping bilateral alliances.<sup>④</sup>Zhou Jianren believes that whether the alliance structure is bilateral or multilateral directly affects the degree of security dependence of the allies on the leader of the alliance, among which the allies in the bilateral alliance are less likely to weaken the alliance because of their strong dependence and weak counter-ability.<sup>⑤</sup>

The theory of alliance structure reveals the particularity of the hub-and-spoke model of the U.S. Asia-Pacific alliance, and in this alliance system composed of several independent bilateral treaties, any two spoke countries will not seek to

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① Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "How Do Weaker States Hedge? Unpacking ASEAN states' alignment behavior towards China," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.25, No.100 (2016), pp.500-514.

② Ian Tsung-Yen Chen & Alan Hao Yang, "A harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory typologies of ASEAN countries strategies to the rise of China," *The Pacific Review*, Vol.26, No.3 (2013), pp.265-288.

③ James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.35, No.4 (November 1991), pp.904-933.

④ Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol.34, No.3 (Winter 2009/2010), pp.158-196.

⑤ Zhou Jianren, Strategic Credibility, Alliance Structure and Alliance Weakening, 5 *International Political Science*, 24 (2020).

establish a new alliance with each other under the condition that the alliance leader guarantees to be credible, and the differences in the support of the alliance leader to different allies will also lead to individual differences in the perception of alliance reliability. In general, structural theory can be used as a basis for explaining the differences in the "hedging" behavior of different allies, but other variables are still lacking.

In terms of domestic political theory, Guo Qingshui believes that the behavior choices of small countries are largely influenced by the legitimacy of domestic regimes, so consolidating the legitimacy of the ruling regime is the main concern of elites in formulating foreign policies.<sup>①</sup>Min-hyung Kim believes that South Korea's tendency to pander to adversaries (North Korea) and potential threats (China) in its "hedging" behavior is influenced by the progressive ideology of medium-sized countries under the Moon Jae-in government.<sup>②</sup>From the perspective of neoclassical realism, Randall Schweller believes that the state's response to systemic threats is influenced by factors such as domestic elite consensus, regime vulnerability and elite cohesion.<sup>③</sup>Bennett and Capone explored the relationship between democratic institutions and coalition behavior, and argued that coalitions formed by democratic countries are more likely to last.<sup>④</sup>Erik Gartzke, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Atsushi Tago found that the information cost of participation in policymaking, The distributive incentives of regular government rotation and the advantages of established interest groups can increase the uncertainty of democratic commitment.<sup>⑤</sup>

To some extent, the explanation of domestic factors supplements the elements neglected at the system level, but the overemphasis on political institutions, interest

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① Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, Vol.30, No.2 (August 2008), pp.159-185.

② Min-hyung Kim, "Hedging between the United States and China? South Korea's ideology-driven behavior and its implications for national security," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol.00, No.0 (August 2021), pp.1-30.

③ Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security*, Vol.29, No.2 (Fall 2004), pp.159-201.

④ D. Scott Bennett, "Testing Alternative Models of Alliance Duration, 1816-1984," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.41, No.3 (July 1997), pp.846-878.

⑤ Erik Gartzke & Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Why Democracies May Actually Be Less Reliable Allies," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.48, No.4 (October 2004), pp.775-795; Atsushi Tago, "When Are Democratic Friends Unreliable? The Unilateral Withdrawal of Troops from the 'Coalition of the Willing'," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.46, No.2 (2009), pp.219-234.

groups and leaders' personality will increase the ambiguity of the study. In addition, domestic explanations of foreign policy behavior tend to underestimate the unity of foreign interests and the ability of leaders to manage decentralized power. Especially for the "strong government", its advantages in information guidance, resource coordination and agenda setting are enough to divide interest groups.<sup>①</sup> Therefore, the domestic political decision-making process is not the focus of the study of "hedging" behavior.

Based on the above theories of alliance and hedging, we can see that it is difficult to fully explain the motivation differences of alliance and hedging behavior of US Asia-Pacific allies only by considering the factors at the system or unit level. Although the neo-classical realism theory can achieve the connection between the two by setting the system and unit factors as independent variables and intervention variables, it also has defects. Although neoclassical realism aims to bridge the gap between the international and domestic levels, it ignores the elements of interaction between States – especially the interaction of allies and adversaries. Indeed, a country's foreign policy choices are not only the result of international institutions and domestic variables, but are also influenced by interactions with other countries. This paper argues that "reputation" is an important interactive variable at the level of communication system and unit, and can be used as an independent variable to explain the difference of "hedging" behavior.

## **Section 2. Research Methods**

This paper mainly adopts text analysis method and case study method.

Among them, text analysis mainly involves government-related documents (such as FRUS documents, treaty statements, joint declarations, etc.), leaders'talks, scholars' comments and news reports, which can reflect the expression and feedback of prestige in the process of national interaction, as well as the impact of key events on national alliances and hedging policies.

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<sup>①</sup> Paul K. MacDonald & Joseph M. Parent, *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp.19.

The case study focuses on the comparison of "hedging" behavior between Japan and South Korea. The purpose of the case study is to clarify the context of the event and to test the hypothesis and theoretical utility of the article. The country cases selected in this paper can reflect the differences of "hedging" behavior among countries, and to some extent confirm the role of reputation model in shaping the behavior of US Asia-Pacific allies.

### **Section 3 Innovations and shortcomings**

This paper introduces the reputation factor into the study of allies' hedging behavior, and from the perspective of allies' reputation perception, we can understand the impact of the leader's and challenger's reputation signals on allies' policy choices. There are two functions. First, the interactive factor of reputation combines the system background of allies' decision-making with the unit calculation, and indirectly communicates the system and unit levels. Thus, it is helpful to understand the influence of the interaction among the leader, the challenger and the allies more comprehensively. Secondly, because reputation signals have the characteristics of openness and intersubjectivity, by studying the different attributions of American allies (such as Japan and South Korea) to the same reputation signal of the leader of the alliance, we can find that different allies have different degrees of concern about "being abandoned" and "being implicated". To some extent, this difference also leads to the differences within the alliance and the differences in the "hedging" nature of the allies.

However, this paper still has the bandwagoning shortcomings and research difficulties:

First, the lack of quantitative research. This paper mainly distinguishes reputation perception in a qualitative way, and only uses three degree words of positive (+), negative (-) and neutral (N) to deal with the role of reputation conditions. It does not turn these conditions into operational indicators or overall weighted



measurement, nor does it numerically compare the reputation perception levels of different allies in the same period or different historical periods of the same ally. Therefore, the subjectivity of the research is inevitably increased. In the improvement of future research, reputation performance can be assigned through event impact or discourse analysis, for example, in discourse analysis, treaty text, leader statement, general official speech, scholar analysis and media comments can be assigned from high to low. However, due to the subjectivity of reputation factors, it is still difficult to define a unified measurement standard.

Secondly, the object of reputation research is ambiguous. The object of this study is the reputation interaction between countries, but the release of a country's reputation signal may be mixed with the reputation of leaders, regimes, interest groups, national reputation and other forms. For example, Danielle Lupton emphasized the importance of shifting the focus of resolve reputation research from the state to the individual, arguing that "if reputation is bound to the leader rather than the state, the coming to power of a new leader can change the observer's perception of reputation", and that "the leader's construction of reputation is based on its position in international politics." Therefore, this path "has a greater analytical effect". This analysis complements existing studies of national reputation, and experience has shown that the personalities of different leaders do indeed lead to differentiated policy preferences (e.g., Lee Myung-bak and Moon Jae-in). But there are problems with this view. Take Trump as an example, it is questionable whether his personal performance and words have weakened the reputation of the United States to protect its allies. Trump's "withdrawal" behavior and pressure on allies to "share" can only be attributed to personal characteristics or other aspects of the lack of reputation (such as honesty).<sup>①</sup>Its attitude on key issues (such as the Indo-Pacific strategy) still reflects the continuity of American foreign policy and the constraints of the decision-making system on its leaders. After Biden came to power, the United States' "rectification" of alliance maintenance and the restoration of alliance relations also verified the overall stability of the country's reputation. In future research, the importance leaders attach

① Samuel Seitz & Caitlin Talmadge, "The Predictable Hazards of Unpredictability: Why Madman Behavior Doesn't Work," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.43, No.3 (Fall 2020), pp.31-46.

to national reputation and the impact of this "importance" or "contempt" on reputation perception (the difference between wartime and peacetime, the difference between domestic and international audiences) can be included in the study of national reputation.

Thirdly, the description of the selected cases is still not comprehensive and objective enough. Because the accumulation of reputation is long-term and relatively stable, it is crucial to examine and sort out the history as a whole. This paper sorts out the basic context and key nodes related to the reputation perception of allies from the beginning of the establishment of the alliance to the present, and describes the logic of development as objectively as possible, but at the same time, this paper also intentionally omits some events. For example, this paper does not record the impact of US-Japan trade frictions when examining Japan's perception of the reputation of the United States in the middle of the alliance, and whether the economic threat posed by the "Plaza Accord" spills over to the strength of the alliance needs further investigation. From the "Toshiba incident" in the latter part of the United States' slight punishment of Japan and Japan's cooperation in export control, it can be seen that the United States and Japan have reached a certain tacit understanding in the interaction of alliance security and reputation, and the impact of trade background seems not significant, but it still needs further rigorous testing.

## Chapter 2 The Concept of Reputation in International

### Relations and Its Connotation

#### Section 1 Definition of reputation

##### 2.1.1 Economic Definition of Reputation

Reputation is a widely used concept in social sciences, which covers sociology, anthropology, economics and other disciplines, and the definition of reputation is also different. Among the various disciplines, the discussion of reputation in economics is the most in-depth.<sup>①</sup>From the perspective of disciplinary analogy and reference, it is not uncommon to apply the concepts in economics to international relations. The system-unit theory of structural realism and the oligarchic market theory of great power competition all draw lessons from the concepts of market and actor in economics.<sup>②</sup>Although there are many differences between state and enterprise, international system and market in terms of hierarchy principle, interaction mode and continuity, these analogies can still bring enlightening thinking for research, so the application of reputation concept in economics is discussed first.

In economics, research on business and markets has shown that a firm's historical reputation in the marketplace is an important predictor of its future economic performance. As the main body of market activities, enterprises try to make themselves credible reputation, because reputation is "the long-term and consistent evaluation of a certain attribute of an enterprise".<sup>③</sup>。 Attributes can include aspects such as price, quality, and marketing capability, and this assessment explores the

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① Carl Shapiro, "Premiums for High Quality as Returns to Reputations," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.98, No.4 (November 1983), pp.659-680.

② Yang yuan, The Main Mechanism of Power Competition between Hegemonic Countries and Rising Countries in the Era of Great Powers Without War, 6 *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, 22 (2011).

③ Paul Herbig & John Milewicz, "The Relationship of Reputation and Credibility to Brand Success," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol.10, No.3 (1993), pp.18-24.

willingness and ability of an enterprise to repeat an action in a similar context. An enterprise can only establish a certain reputation after many transactions with other parties, so reputation reflects the total result of historical transactions made by the enterprise in its life cycle, which requires the enterprise's behavior to maintain long-term consistency.

The necessity of reputation indicators stems from the uncertainty of the choice and motivation among market participants. If the actors have conducted many transactions in the relevant context and can see the transaction records of the other party, they tend to use the existing information to fill in the missing information and further infer the future behavior of the other party. Enterprises can use reputation to predict the future behavior of competitors, and consumers can also use reputation to judge the quality of enterprises' products. To achieve this goal, enterprises must release effective "market signals", which reflect the intention, commitment or motivation of enterprises, and their effectiveness is based on the cost of releasing signals and the punishment of false signals. Releasing credible market signals can help enterprises establish their reputation and gain brand advantages, while enterprises that fail to release credible signals will lose their reputation and gradually decline.

To sum up, reputation contains the bandwagoning characteristics: first, the formation of reputation can not be separated from the interaction process of actors, and a single actor can not create reputation; Secondly, reputation is not the product of a single interaction, but the result of repeated games and interactions in similar situations. Thirdly, reputation is essentially others' evaluation of themselves, which involves more than two subjects. Because this is a two-way or even multi-directional interaction process, reputation signals are largely influenced by active receivers.

### **2.1.2 International Relations Applications of Reputation**

#### **Reputation and deterrence theory**

The concept of reputation has been discussed for a long time in the field of

international relations, which can be traced back to ancient Greece. Thucydides' masterpiece *History of the Peloponnesian War* describes how much importance Pericles attached to the reputation of Athens. In his speech to the fallen soldiers, Pericles pointed out that "only Athens was proved to be greater than its reputation when it met the test".<sup>①</sup>Our spirit of adventure fills every sea and every land; Everywhere we show kindness to our friends and strike back at our enemies as memorials to future generations.<sup>②</sup>The "reputation of Athens" mentioned here is a demonstration of Athenian war resolve and strength, as well as a powerful signal to allies and enemies, which can be regarded as the embryonic form of "reputation of resolve".

Machiavelli, in *On Livy*, spoke of the possible consequences of the presence or absence of a determined reputation. "If you give in to threats in order to avoid war, the more you do so, the less you can avoid war," he said.<sup>③</sup>"In addition, you will find that your supporters will treat you more coldly because they think you are weak and timid."<sup>④</sup>A similar statement is also reflected in *The Prince*, where Machiavelli believes that a monarch will be respected only when he is a true friend or enemy of a person, that is, when he unreservedly supports one side and opposes the other. It can be seen that from the perspective of war and alliance, reputation plays a major role in demonstrating resolve and reliability.

Post-1960s deterrence theory further emphasizes the role of reputation. In Thomas Schelling's view, resolve and reputation are "the few things worth fighting for".<sup>⑤</sup>He argued that the United States lost 30,000 lives in the Korean War not to save South Korea, but to save the face of the United States and the United Nations.<sup>⑥</sup>When Herman Kahn studied the nuclear deterrence of great powers, he found that once the Soviet Union gained the reputation of "abandoning cities to achieve its goals", other countries could only choose to negotiate and compromise in advance.<sup>⑦</sup>According to

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① Martin Hammond & P. J. Rhodes, eds., *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2009), pp.93.

② *Ibid.*, p.95.

③ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (London: Penguin, 1998), pp.313.

④ *Ibid.*

⑤ Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp.124.

⑥ Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp.125.

⑦ Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publisher, 2007), pp.528.

the logic of deterrence theory, external performance is the basis for other countries to judge the attributes of a country. If a country is disloyal to its allies, it will bear the reputation of disloyalty, which will arouse the allies' doubts about the reliability of the alliance. By the same token, if a country backs down from its adversaries, it will gain a reputation for timidity, thereby undermining the credibility of its threats. According to Anne Sartori and Alexandra Guisinger, leaders and envoys shape certain types of reputations in order to overcome the uncertainties inherent in crisis diplomacy, and Sartori emphasizes the importance of an "honest" reputation for deterrence.<sup>①</sup> Van Jackson sums up the overall logic of reputation as "the temporary interdependence of 'events' such as threats, signals, and actions in a crisis," and this information affects the credibility of how adversaries interpret future threats.<sup>②</sup> This logic has profoundly affected the decision-making characteristics of US leaders, and concerns about America's reputation have also been reflected in Lyndon Johnson's attitude toward the Vietnam War, Bill Clinton's intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and George W. Bush's attitude toward the Iraq War. In essence, deterrence theory treats reputation as a manipulable asset that States can store and use to their advantage in future games.

## **Reputation and alliances**

The role of reputation in shaping and maintaining alliances is also one of the focuses of current international relations research. As an advanced form of inter-state security cooperation, the existence of alliances sends two clear signals, one is the signal of mutual assistance among allies in times of crisis, and the other is the signal of deterrence to challengers. But the effectiveness of the signal needs to be based on the observance of the covenant, and an unreliable ally not only does not increase the security margin, but also weakens the credibility of the alliance's deterrence.<sup>③</sup> Just as

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① Alexandra Guisinger & Alastair Smith, "Honest threats: The interaction of reputation and political institutions in international crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.46, No.2 (April 2002), pp.175-200; Anne Sartori, *Deterrence by Diplomacy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp.111.

② Van Jackson, *Rival Reputations: Coercion and Credibility in US-North Korea Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.17.

③ Neil Narang & Brad L. LeVeck, "International reputation and alliance portfolios: How unreliability affects the structure and composition of alliance treaties," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.56, No.3 (February 2019), pp.379-394.

enterprises are uncertain, in anarchy, the privacy of national intentions and commitments increases the uncertainty of allies and the difficulty of choosing, and countries with a tendency to betray will disguise their true intentions to seek alliances, so countries need to determine the credibility of alliance commitments by observing the historical performance records of other countries.<sup>①</sup> Miller's research found that Britain used reputation as an important factor in choosing allies in the early 20th century, and he believed that the more reliable a country was, the more autonomy it could gain in choosing alliances.<sup>②</sup>

Different from deterrence theory, which regards reputation as a controllable asset, the reputation of alliance theory emphasizes the interactive characteristics similar to economic reputation, including signaling and perception, and highlights the role of perception objects. Jonathan Mercer argues that since reputation is "other people's perception of their own characteristics and abilities", the manipulation of reputation in deterrence theory means the manipulation of audiences.<sup>③</sup> This can be achieved for domestic audiences, but it is very difficult to influence foreign audiences. Accordingly, he believes that "the credibility of threats or promises depends entirely on the perception of others".<sup>④</sup>

Similar to Meurser's view, Jonathan Renshon believes that actors cannot simply "own" reputation, which is perceptual and sometimes involves "second-order beliefs".<sup>⑤</sup> Mark Crescenzi and Jacob Kathman argue that a state's past performance record is perceived differently by different actors. Therefore, a country's reputation model contains two important components: one is the country's information on alliance reliability, and the other is the importance of this information to potential third-party (proxy) allies.<sup>⑥</sup> Clearly, the argument is that reputation is highly influenced by context, perception, and bias. Wang Xuedong also discussed the social

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① For related research, see Brett Ashley Leeds, "Alliance reliability in times of war: Explaining state decisions to violate treaties." *International Organization*, Vol.57, No.4 (Fall 2003), pp.801-827; Brad L. LeVeck & Neil Narang, "How International Reputation Matters: Revisiting Alliance Violations in Context," Vol.43, No.5 (2017), pp.797-821.

② Gregory D. Miller, "Hypotheses on reputation: alliance choices and the shadow of the past," *Security studies*, Vol.12, No.3 (Spring 2003), pp.40-78.

③ Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp.25.

④ *Ibid.*, p.27

⑤ Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp.39.

⑥ Mark J.C. Crescenzi, *Of Friends and Foes: Reputation and Learning in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.40.

construction of reputation, emphasizing that the reputation of a country is not equal to its own essential characteristics.<sup>①</sup>

To sum up, from the perspective of alliance, the perception of reputation is of great significance for understanding the change of political behavior. The reason why scholars of deterrence theory only focus on the release of reputation signals is that they believe that the military strength and resolve behind such signals will not be misunderstood by their opponents. However, this idea ignores the "filtering" effect of the receiver of the signal, and simply tough behavior may be interpreted by others as reckless or belligerent. That is why Lebeau (Richard Ned Lebow), in his study of the causes of the Cuban missile crisis, argues that deterrence "has multiple and contradictory consequences for the behavior of the superpower."<sup>②</sup>。 The United States and the Soviet Union tried to force the other side to make concessions by means of troop concentration and threat of war, but the failure of these attempts aggravated the seriousness of the crisis. Because Soviet leaders never doubted American resolve, the urgency of deterrence translated into threat perception on the Soviet side, leading to a spiral of provocative behavior. The final resolution of the crisis is not the compulsory result of reputation signals, but more benefits from the restraint of the Soviet side and the fear of the consequences of nuclear war on both sides.<sup>③</sup>Therefore, judging whether reputation signals can influence the behavior choices of other countries must be based on the specific perception and actual situation of other countries.

## **Section 2 Distinction between reputation, credibility and reliability**

Reputation, credibility and reliability are three similar concepts in international

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<sup>①</sup> Wang Xuedong, *The Role of National Reputation in the Rise of Great Powers*, 1 *International Political Science*, 117 (2005).

<sup>②</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Avoiding War, Making Peace* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp.137.

<sup>③</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.343.



relations, and the mixture of them is common, so it is necessary to make a further distinction. In this regard, Zhou Jianren believes that reliability and reputation are aimed at the past behavior of actors, while reputation is aimed at their future behavior, and the scope of reputation is greater than reliability.<sup>①</sup> Qi Haixia believes that reputation is often measured by specific behavior, while reliability and reputation are the judgment of other countries on a country, and the measurement standard is the subjective evaluation of other countries, and the judgment perspective of reliability focuses on cooperation, while reputation is used to evaluate potential opponents.<sup>②</sup>

This paper holds that reliability is a factual description of reputation and the results caused by reputation, so the focus of distinction is on the latter two. Economics holds that the difference between reputation and credibility lies in timeliness, in which reputation has the characteristics of long-term and continuous, while credibility refers to the credibility of an actor at a specific time. Repeated positive trading signals can lead to positive reputation and higher credibility, while repeated negative signals can lead to negative reputation and higher credibility, and only mixed signals can reduce the level of credibility. It can be seen that the consistency of reputation will affect the judgment of reputation. Zhou Jianren summed up the national strategic credibility as consistency in words and deeds. The former refers to the logical self-consistency of information, which is similar to the concept of reputation. The latter refers to the fulfillment of commitments, that is, the degree of practice of commitments, which involves other material factors besides reputation, such as national strength. Price (Daryl Press) believes that credibility is the result of the balance of power and national interests, and judging whether the threat credibility of the enemy is credible or not should be based on the strength level and cost-benefit calculation of the other side.<sup>③</sup>

Mercer's definition of credibility is more comprehensive. He believes that

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① Zhou Jianren, *Strategic Credibility, Alliance Structure and Alliance Weakening*, 2 *International Political Science*, 12 (2020).

② Qi Haixia, *Rising Signals, Strategic Credibility and Containment of War*, 4 *International Political Science*, 9 (2020).

③ Daryl Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp.22.

credibility includes resolve, ability and interests.<sup>①</sup>Tang Shiping believes that reputation, like reputation, is a relational concept, while resolve belongs to private information that is difficult for others to infer, so he replaces "resolve" in the definition with "resolve reputation", and reputation becomes "a combination of perception of ability, perception of interests and resolve reputation".<sup>②</sup>。 In addition, Tang Shiping pointed out that the effect of reputation is not a simple addition of three variables, but a multiplication, that is, reputation = ability \* benefit \* resolve reputation, which means that a very low value of any one of them will lead to the overall level of reputation can not be raised, and simply enhancing the other two can not make up for the defects. This "cask theory" definition is more in line with the practice of international relations. Facts have proved that the lack of national capacity (Britain's contraction strategy after the 1870s), the decline of common interests (the deterioration of Soviet-Egyptian relations in the 1970s) and the lack of resolve and reputation (the appeasement policy of Britain and France towards Germany before World War II) will lead to the decline of strategic credibility.

Adopting Tang Shiping's view on the relationship between reputation and reputation, this paper holds that reputation is only one of the important components of reputation, and the information indicated by a country's dishonesty in a single game or fulfillment of a promise is not necessarily the reduction of a country's reputation. In his study of the alliance's credibility, James Morrow noted that the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975 did not affect the confidence of Western European countries in the security commitment of the United States, because the United States had different interests in Vietnam and Western Europe.<sup>③</sup>Although the defeat of the Vietnam War reduced the strategic credibility of the United States to a certain extent, in the view of Western Europe, the reason for the reduction was the reduction of interests involved, and the Western European countries, which were located in the core area of anti-Soviet Union, did not doubt the fundamental security

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① Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp.15.

② Shiping Tang, "Reputation, Cult of Reputation, and International Conflict," *Security Studies*, Vol.14, No.1 (January-March 2005), pp.34-62.

③ James D. Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.38, No.2 (June 1994), pp.270-297.

interests of the United States, so the credibility and reputation of the United States would not be affected.

Therefore, both reputation and reputation are influenced by the audience's subjective perception, but the influencing factors of reputation are more complex. Since the research object of this paper is the behavioral logic of the US Asia-Pacific allies, reputation rather than reputation is chosen as the starting point of the study for the bandwagoning reasons: First, reputation is a comprehensive concept, which includes both short-term objective parts (capabilities and interests) and long-term subjective parts (reputation perception), which means that reputation indicators are more difficult to measure and distinguish. In the same situation of low reputation of the alliance leader, low reputation caused by low ability or low reputation will lead to different behavior choices of allies (low ability may lead to changes in the internal structure of the current alliance, while low reputation may not), so it is difficult to reflect the development and changes of the alliance simply by discussing the level of reputation. Secondly, among the elements of reputation, only reputation is long-term rather than instantaneous, so starting from reputation is conducive to judging the long-term characteristics of the alliance and simplifying the research variables. Thirdly, as far as the specific research object is concerned, this paper focuses on the behavior of the Asia-Pacific allies of the United States, and there is a huge gap between the economic and military strength of each ally and that of China and the United States. At this time, it is meaningless to examine the credibility index of "alliance leader capability", because all allies in the region have only one security guarantor, the United States.<sup>①</sup>In this case of "no alternative" asymmetric dependence, a slight change in the total or projected power of the United States will not have an impact on credibility, which weakens the practical significance of credibility. Finally, from the perspective of development history, in some periods, the power status of the United States has not changed fundamentally, and its common security interests with its allies have not weakened, but the reliability of the alliance has been questioned, which has led to the fluctuation of the alliance (such as the US-South Korea relationship in the

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<sup>①</sup> Yuxing Huang, "An Interdependence Theory of Wedge Strategies," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol.13, No.2 (Summer 2020), pp.253-286.

Park Chung-hee period), which is closely related to reputation perception. To sum up, it is more pertinent to use reputation rather than reputation as an indicator to study the Asia-Pacific alliance of the United States.

## **Section 3 Reputation Skepticism and Evaluation**

### **2.3.1 Mercer's Reputation Attribution and Reputation Utility**

At present, there are still differences on the actual role of the concept of reputation in the field of international relations, and some scholars have questioned the importance of reputation, among which Mercer's view is the representative.

Mercer's main views on reputation can be summarized in two points: First, reputation belongs to the concept of dispositional attribution rather than situational attribution. Because situational factors (abilities, interests) will change with the change of events, and reputation is stable, changeable situational factors can not shape reputation.<sup>①</sup>Secondly, the actor has "out-group bias". When the out-group members choose the desirable behavior in the actor's view, the actor usually uses situational attribution to explain it perfunctorily. When an out-group member makes an undesirable choice, the behavior will blame him with personality attribution.<sup>②</sup>For example, in a social experiment to test the return of money found, observers would think that the person who voluntarily handed in the money was under moral pressure because he saw the camera, while the person who embezzled the money was morally corrupt.

Based on this view, Meurser divides the behavior of allies and adversaries. For a country facing an external threat, the firm support of its allies is a desirable behavior, whereas the withdrawal of responsibility is an undesirable behavior. According to Mercer's theory, the firm performance of allies will be interpreted by the situation and thus fail to produce reputation, while the withdrawal of allies will lead to the reputation of "lack of resolve" under the influence of personality attribution. In the

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<sup>①</sup> Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp.16.

<sup>②</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45-46.

same way, if the country regards the opponent's retreat as desirable and his resolve as undesirable, the opponent will always gain a reputation for toughness. Accordingly, Meurser believes that the obsession with reputation is a "myth", because your allies will always think that you are not firm enough, and your enemies will not doubt your resolve, so both the signal of assurance and deterrence are useless.<sup>①</sup>

However, this reputation skepticism has the bandwagoning shortcomings. First, contextual factors should not be excluded from the process of reputation formation. Mercer believes that because situational attribution does not have "cross-situational validity", it can not be used to predict the behavior patterns of actors in different situations, which actually reduces the information sources of reputation. As mentioned above, the formation of reputation can not be separated from the long-term interaction of actors, so the frequency of interaction will affect the attribution of reputation to a certain extent. Compared with the interaction between enterprises and consumers in the market, the frequency of interaction between countries in the international system is lower, so even if the historical behavior with low similarity contains more predictive value for each other.<sup>②</sup> Because they can reflect the interest path of actors.<sup>③</sup> In addition, the reason why observers tend to ignore the situational constraints of signal formation (for example, when leaders deter each other, they tend to ignore the domestic audience costs, economic conditions and regime stability) and attribute signals to personality is that the signals transmitted by the state are more complex and vague. Countries can modify their perceptions of reputation by adding interactions to supplement contextual factors.

Second, allies do not necessarily "always think you are weak" and opponents do not necessarily "always think you are tough".<sup>④</sup> Reputation is essentially a subjective perception held by others, so different actors have different criteria for

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① *Ibid.*, p.53-65.

② Gregory Miller, *The Shadow of the Past: Reputation and Military Alliances before the First World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp.37.

③ James E. Alt, Randall L. Calvert & Brian D. Humes, "Reputation and Hegemonic Stability: A Game-Theoretic Analysis," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.82, No.2 (June 1988), pp.445-466.

④ For example, before the Korean War, the United States used the situational factor of "interest relevance" to compare the importance of Korea and Taiwan to China, thus underestimating the possibility of China sending troops to Korea, which is a situational attribution of the undesirable behavior of the enemy. See Anne E. Sartori, *The Might of the Pen: A Reputational Theory of Communication in International Disputes*, "International Organization", Vol.56, No.1 (Winter 2002), pp.121-149.

judging reputation. In addition, social psychology holds that "reputation is a part of the social environment", which means that reputation is generated in a certain context, even if the reputation signal has a clear releaser and receiver, this signal not only affects the two actors, but also affects the perception of the third or more actors, reputation has interdependence and multiple intersubjectivity. Mercer's description of the reputation of allies is based on the premise that "other allies will form the same view as me", requiring the members of the alliance system to have a certain homogeneity. In fact, the current alliance systems led by the United States are different from each other, and the differences between the "multilateral" structure of the NATO alliance and the "hub-and-spoke" structure of the Asia-Pacific alliance lead to the differences in the sub-system factors within the alliance, which involve geopolitical environmental constraints, national characteristics, threat perception and so on. Comparatively speaking, the multilateral nature of the NATO alliance makes the coordination ability of its members stronger and the cognition relatively consistent (although the current mini-lateral characteristics within NATO make it show the tendency of threat perception differentiation), while the bilateral nature of the Asia-Pacific alliance highlights the hierarchical characteristics of the alliance, which is also a kind of regional alliance. Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and other countries assume the functions of "regional axis", "local axis" and "niche specialist" respectively.<sup>①</sup> And there are no other alliance agreements between them, which results in the differences in reputation perception and observation among the members of the Asia-Pacific Alliance of the United States. For example, in the Taiwan Strait crisis, South Korea and the Philippines eagerly hoped that the United States would show its resolve and reputation to show its support for the Kuomintang, while Japan expressed indifference or even opposition for fear of implication. In the crisis, Japan showed the characteristics of "situational attribution" to the possible default reputation of the United States, that is, it did not take this as a basis for the weakness of the United

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<sup>①</sup> Luis Simón, Alexander Lanoszka & Hugo Meijer, "Nodal defence: the changing structure of U.S. alliance systems in Europe and East Asia," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.44, No.3 (2019), pp.360-388.

States.<sup>①</sup>

Third, Mercer only examines the role of resolution and reputation, and does not deal with other types of reputation. Although he recognized that the country had a variety of reputations, he did not further distinguish them, and he did not think it was worth "fighting for reputation". Yet countries can form and display different types of reputations at the same time. In terms of interactive information, reputation can cover violence, threats, honesty, commitment, resolve and other kinds of knowledge. Fennimore's study found that different types of regimes have different reputation concerns for an actor, and even the same type of regime will have a variety of reputation views on the various agreements signed by the actor, so the diverse characteristics of the actor can reflect a variety of reputations at the same time.<sup>②</sup>

### **2.3.2 Irrationality and reputation**

From an empirical point of view, even if reputation critics believe that it is difficult to obtain reputation, it can not be concluded that "there is no reputation in international politics", because it is difficult for critics to explain why leaders are still willing to "go against the advice of consultants and take high-cost and high-risk actions" when reputation is not important. Tang Shiping explained this mechanism by further subdividing the country's resolve reputation into bargaining power reputation, bargaining resolve reputation, behavioral power reputation and behavioral resolve reputation, and believed that although participating in small-scale combat could increase the country's reputation in the first three aspects, it could also increase its reputation in the first three aspects. However, it can not increase the reputation of behavioral resolve, and politicians' vague understanding of the differences between these resolve and reputation just leads to their blind "cult" of reputation, and the

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<sup>①</sup> Reputation perception differences between allies and the perception of the "interdependence" of the leader's reputation can be referred to Iain D. Henry, "What Allies Want: Reconsidering Loyalty, Reliability, and Alliance Interdependence," *International Security*, Vol.44, No.4 (Spring 2020), pp.45-83; Tongfi kim & Luis Simon, "A Reputation versus Prioritization Trade-Off: Unpacking Allied Perceptions of US Extended Deterrence in Distant Regions," *Security Studies*, Vol.30, No.5 (2021), pp.725-760.

<sup>②</sup> Martha Finnemore, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity," *World Politics*, Vol.61, No.1(2009), pp.58-85.

absence of mutual underestimation of resolve in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union also proves the danger of pursuing "futile" reputation. Accordingly, Tang Shiping suggested that in order to avoid war and use force reasonably, the state should clearly define the difference between "real interests" and "subjective interests" such as reputation, credibility, prestige and honor.

Admittedly, this view is in line with the development direction of rational and sound international politics, but in the current anarchy of incomplete information, it is difficult for countries to clearly distinguish between other interests and reputation interests. Moreover, reputation is also a reflection of past interests and a means of obtaining future interests. Its interdependence not only involves the interaction of the observer's perception, but also emphasizes the association between current and future commitments. Weisiger and Milo's research shows that countries that have retreated in the past are more likely to be challenged in the future, while countries that have always been resolute are less likely to be challenged in the future.<sup>①</sup>To some extent, this can also understand why the situation of great power competition frequently conforms to the predictions of "prospect theory", "bipolar peripheral war" and "power-transition theory". Because resolve reputation or alliance reputation represents not only absolute or relative gains, but also a buffer mechanism for loss avoidance. The "chain-store paradox" is based on assumptions that include "pure rationality" and "the limitation of the means of resistance."<sup>②</sup>Moreover, the "backward deduction" approach is also adopted for the hypothesis of "tough reputation", so the conclusion that "if the thirtieth game acquiesces, then the first game will acquiesce" is drawn. However, time is a one-dimensional vector, and it is impossible for enterprises or countries to take future decisions for granted to influence present decisions. The decision of acquiescence in the thirtieth game is bound to be influenced by the previous twenty-nine games, and the conclusion of "reputation is useless" after many games is precisely the result of "reputation is useful" in the previous games.

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① Alex weisiger & Keren arhi-Milo, "Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.69, No.2 (Spring 2015), pp.473-495

② Robert Jervis, "Domino Beliefs and Strategic Behavior," *Dominoes and Bandwagonings*, eds. Robert Jervis & Jack Snyder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.20.



Therefore, the "chain store paradox" may not be a paradox, especially for the game of big powers with incomplete information, multiple means of competition, and not purely rational. The incumbent (the established country) and the entrant (the rising country) must exchange interests to win the support of small countries, and the national competition in the state of no war between big powers will also highlight the influence of reputation factors.

## **Chapter 3                      Research Design and Hypothesis**

### **Section 1 Variable type**

As mentioned above, reputation factors have the characteristics of interactivity, perception, difference and openness, which are very important for the study of the behavior motivation of different allies in the alliance. Because the alliance is a military organization explicitly aimed at a third party, the stakeholders of the alliance's activities can be divided into three categories: first, the guarantor country of the alliance (the main country of the alliance), which is assumed by the country with the strongest military strength in the alliance; The second is the target country (ally) of the alliance, that is, the general country participating in the alliance behavior; Third, the challenging country of the alliance, that is, the third country against which the alliance acts, is considered to be the source of external threats to the alliance. The way these three interact in the context of the system shapes their respective policy characteristics. As far as the Asia-Pacific allies of the United States are concerned, on the one hand, their behavior is restricted by the system pressure of Sino-US competition, on the other hand, it is also the result of active choice, at this time, the reputation factor connecting the system and unit level has two functions of "wire" and "filter".

Therefore, when studying the logic of hedging behavior of U.S. Asia-Pacific allies, we need to put the research framework in the context of the system of competition between China and the United States, and the reputation signals received by these allies come from both China and the United States, and the positive or negative signals of "allies" and "challengers" interweave to affect their intention of behavior choice. Therefore, it is necessary to determine what kind of reputation the

"alliance country" and the "challenge country" have become the focus of other countries.

On the part of the lead nation (the United States), given the security nature and objectives of the alliance, its allies remain focused on its resolve and reputation. This resolve and reputation not only indicate practical actions to safeguard the security of allies in conflict, but also reflect in the daily interaction between allies and leaders in terms of discourse support, exchange of intentions or negotiation of issues. The perception of resolve and reputation affects the judgment of allies on the reliability of alliances, and then affects the closeness of alliances.

For a potential challenger (China), the position of allies on the spectrum from "balancing threats" to "bandwagoning threats" depends on the perception of the challenger's reputation for threat. The difference between "reputation for threat" and "threat" lies in the fact that reputation has the characteristics of "relationship", which is different from the simple threat perception. Reputation for threat is both national and open, and it includes the degree of recognition of the legitimacy of the challenging country, which to some extent belongs to the common knowledge in interaction (such as the understanding of China's behavior of providing public goods). Therefore, it can more objectively reflect the cognitive similarities and differences of the overall threat level of the challenging countries. The perception of reputation for threat affects the security expectation and hedging strength of allies.

### **3.1.1 Independent variable 1: Allies' attribution to the leader's resolve and reputation**

#### **Form of action**

Based on the previous analysis of Merser's reputation theory, we can see that the attribution of allies to the reputation of the leader's resolve does not always conform to the way of "out-group" observation. For the reputation brought by the leader's

"performance" or "breach of contract", different allies will also choose between "personality attribution" and "situational attribution" according to the situation. Among them, the countries that attribute the performance of the alliance leader to the character and the breach of contract to the situation tend to have higher loyalty to the alliance and stronger cohesion. On the contrary, countries that attribute the breach of the alliance leader to the character and the performance to the situation often doubt the reliability of the alliance, thus showing a certain centrifugal tendency.

### **Influence conditions**

There are three main conditions affecting the attribution of allies to the reputation of resolve, namely, the ability to support, the degree of interaction and the degree of ideological fit.

First, the ability of allies to support. From the perspective of reputation composition, reputation and ability belong to concept and material indicators respectively. However, the ability in alliance reputation mainly refers to the overall strength of the leader, while the support ability here refers to the ability support of the allies to the leader and the alliance, rather than the power projection of the leader to the allies. There are two main reasons why this is regarded as a condition affecting the reputation attribution of allies:

First, coalition cohesion is defined as "the degree to which coalition members identify with goals, strategies, and tactics, and the ability to coordinate actions to achieve these goals, which are influenced by both attitudes and behaviors."<sup>①</sup> Among them, the ability of allies is crucial to alliance building. Because the United States is in urgent need of allies who can help it create and manage the regional order, whether the allies have the ability to assist has become a priority, and the differences in the ability to support the US-led order in the Asia-Pacific region also affect their empathy for the change of the regional order. Secondly, the perception of known reputation is proactive, and allies such as Japan with strong capabilities can achieve greater interest

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<sup>①</sup> Jiyun Kih, "Capability building and alliance cohesion: comparing the US-Japan and US-Philippines alliances," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.74, No.4 (2020), pp.355-376.

demands and bargaining power in the process of promoting the establishment and maintenance of order, and this positive feedback strengthens their motivation to increase investment in the Asia-Pacific alliance, which is conducive to shaping their trust in the reliability of the alliance and their favorable impression of the reputation of the alliance leader. From this, we can see that the support ability of allies will affect their judgment of reputation.

Second, the degree of interaction between allies and leaders. The interaction covers a wide range of topics, including bilateral or multilateral talks, joint statements, mutual visits of leaders, military exercises, and intergovernmental cooperation. The higher the frequency of interaction and the wider the scope, the more clearly the two sides can understand each other's intentions, thus improving the judgment of signals.<sup>①</sup>For ordinary allies, the history of interaction with the leader of the alliance also reflects the importance that the leader of the alliance attaches to it. Taking the Japan-US alliance as an example, since the signing of the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1951, the two sides have been in close contact and have made clear their respective responsibilities and positions while revising and supplementing the treaty. Subsequently, documents such as the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation and the Joint Declaration on Japan-US Security Guarantee were added to consolidate and strengthen the alliance. During this period, Japan actively participated in the coordination and support of various wars and military operations of the United States, and the frequency of military exercises between the two sides remained high. In 2021, the United States and Japan held more than 40 joint military exercises, which accounted for more than half of the total number of military exercises of the Self-Defense Forces, and these exercises have made breakthroughs in scale, content and region. Effective interaction has reinforced Japan's recognition of the "cornerstone" status of the US alliance and its positive impression of the US reputation.

Third, ideological fit. Ideology is a collection of elements such as ideas, concepts and values, and political ideology is also the ideological basis for the ruling class to

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<sup>①</sup> Holger Janusch, "The Interaction Effects of Bargaining Power: The Interplay Between Veto Power, Asymmetric Interdependence, Reputation, and Audience Costs," *Negotiation Journal*, Vol.34, No.3 (July 2018), pp.219-241.

guide the people and realize their own interests. As far as the integrity of the alliance is concerned, the higher the ideological similarity between the leader and the allies, the stronger the cohesion within the alliance and the leadership of the leader, which is why the Biden administration emphasizes building a "value alliance" to repair the alliance. Taking South Korea as an example, the South Korean government in the Syngman Rhee/Park Chung-hee era took conservatism as its dominant ideology, which was mainly manifested in its hostility to North Korea and its dependence on the strength of the United States. Nationalism and progressivism entered the ideological stage of South Korea and coexisted with anti-Communist conservatism. After the inter-Korean summit in 2000, progressivism became the dominant ideology, at which time South Korea's attitude towards North Korea tended to be cooperative, and its view of the United States tended to be negative. In addition, the attitudes of the Duterte government in the Philippines and the Prayuth military government in Thailand towards the United States are also ideologically relevant. However, as a conceptual factor at the unit level, the ideological condition more reflects the identity logic of constructivism, and it is difficult to explain the fluctuating development of alliance relations (including the later relaxation) simply by the constant of identity. In the absence of drastic changes in the coalition structure, ideological conditions, together with other conditions, act on the perception of reputation, thus leading to this phenomenon.

### **3.1.2 Independent Variable 2: Allies' Measurement of**

#### **Reputation for threat of Challengers**

##### **Form of action**

The reason why the small and medium-sized countries in the alliance implement the "hedging" strategy to varying degrees lies in the uncertainty of the threat to the reputation of the challenging country, and hedging is to achieve a balance between

"maximum benefit" and "minimum risk" under uncertain circumstances. The complexity of threats stems from the complexity of threat composition and perception agents. From the point of view of composition, the threat faced by a country is often not a single threat, but a complex threat composed of military, economic, cultural and ideological threats, which makes it difficult to separate and quantify the threat. From the perspective of perception subject, Stein believes that threat perception is essentially a collective and continuous process in which subjective judgments about security threats are transmitted among audiences.<sup>①</sup>Here, threat perception is defined as an intersubjective process, and the definition and transmission intensity of threat judgment are different among specific groups in a specific period, which leads to fragmentation of perception subjects.

Similarly, on the one hand, the measurement of reputation for threat can not seek precise quantification, on the other hand, it should also consider the differences between subjects, but this does not mean that reputation for threat does not have a general indicative role, because reputation is public information about historical performance. After studying China's participation in the international human rights system, Wang Xuedong emphasized that China's efforts in the field of human rights have won a universal reputation, "gaining the support of some Asian countries and the understanding of Western countries", so he believes that gaining a good reputation through participating in the international system is an effective way for China to cope with structural pressures. It can be seen that the reduction of the level of reputation for threat is not only related to the behavior of individual countries.

For countries in the alliance system, when the reputation for threat level of external challengers is high, they must bandwagoning the leader of the alliance to take checks and balances for their own security. When the reputation for threat of the challenging country is at a low level, the allies tend to develop other interests besides security. This binary thinking of "security-interest" will also affect the choice of "hedging" policy of allies.

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<sup>①</sup> Janice Gross Stein, *Threat perception in international relations*, 2013.

## **Influence conditions**

There are three main factors that affect the measurement of the reputation for threat level of allies to challengers: security disputes, historical memory and legitimacy identification.

First, security disputes. The security disputes between allies and challengers involve the interests of sovereignty, territorial integrity, survival and development security. According to Robinson's classification, security interests belong to vital interests, that is, interests (such as territory) that the state defends at all costs and can never give up. According to Yan Xuetong's ranking of the levels of national interests, the first basic order is national survival, which shows that the security interests of survival are the basis of other interests.<sup>①</sup>Rochester (J. Martin Rochester) also regards the survival of the country and the lives of citizens as one of the three most important interests.<sup>②</sup>Because these things are essential to the survival of the country and have a certain zero-sum nature, the level of threat perception between the two countries is also high when there are security disputes between them. Taking China's peripheral diplomacy as an example, the countries that still have territorial disputes with China (India, Japan, the Philippines) hold a negative attitude towards China's reputation on related issues, and the clear perception of the threat to China's reputation also strengthens the motivation of these countries to seek extraterritorial security support. On the contrary, in Thailand, China and Thailand only maintained opposition during the administration of pro-American leader Sarit, because it involved China's fundamental security interests such as Tibet's internal affairs and its seat in the United Nations. Since then, due to the absence of major security disputes between the two sides, Sino-Thai relations have been in a friendly and stable state for a long time since the normalization of 1969.

Second, historical memory. Collective memory is the collective memory of the past, which is closely related to the construction of national identity and emotional

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<sup>①</sup> Yan Xuetong. *An Analysis of China's National Interests*. Tianjin: Tianjin People's Publishing House, 1996, p. 66.

<sup>②</sup> J. Martin Rochester, "The 'National Interest' and Contemporary World Politics," *The Review of Politics*, Vol.40, No.1 (January 1978), pp.77-96.



politics. Conflicting memories can aggravate security disputes between two countries and bring instability to cooperation. Mykola Makhortykh examines the relationship between historical memory and securitization, arguing that historical memory carries a variety of functions related to security grammar, and that comparison with past traumatic events can trigger a country's securitization process of threat referents.<sup>①</sup>Karl Gustafsson's research found that Sino-Japanese historical issues, such as visits to Yasukuni Shrine, textbooks and apologies, have strengthened the emotional politics of both sides. Japan's "restatement" of the war and its appeal for "emotional rights" during the Koizumi administration seriously deepened the traumatic memory of East Asian countries and deviated from the "1972 system". Japan's claim of "apology fatigue" also reflected the differences in attitudes towards historical issues between the two sides, which directly led to the negative reputation evaluation between China and Japan. Because historical memory is a more objective and stable conceptual factor, the value orientation of the community shaped by historical memory is difficult to change in the short term.<sup>②</sup>However, countries can control their impact on reputation through the interpretation and expression of historical memory in the process of communication (such as Duterte's expression on the South China Sea issue).

Third, legitimacy recognition. Legitimacy in international relations is directly related to the authority of the state, the legitimacy of its rise and the will of the balancing state to check and balance. Robert Gilpin emphasizes the central role of prestige in arranging and dominating the international system, and believes that the legitimacy of a powerful country depends on three factors, namely, the ability to win a hegemonic war, the ability to supply public goods, and the international recognition of values.<sup>③</sup>David Lake holds that authority depends on the collective acceptance or legitimacy of the power of the ruling state, and when the majority of the ruled recognize the legitimacy of the ruler, the ruler has the power to punish violations.<sup>④</sup>From the perspective of construction, Martha Finnemore argues that

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① Mykola Makhortykh, "Historical memory and securitisation of the Russian intervention in Syria," *International Politics*, Vol.57, No.6 (2018), pp.1063-1081.

② Karl Gustafsson, "Understanding the persistence of history-related issues in Sino-Japanese relations: from memory to forgetting," *International Politics*, Vol.57, No.6 (2020), pp.1047-1062.

③ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.32.

④ David A. Lake, "Anarchy, hierarchy, and the variety of international relations," *International Organization*,

legitimacy is largely influenced by laws and norms between countries, and that the recognition of legitimacy is equivalent to the tacit acceptance of social structures as the background for the use of power.<sup>①</sup>According to Ian Hurd, legitimacy is a normative belief about institution held by actors, which has the characteristics of subjectivity and relationship, and its essence is the perception of institution.<sup>②</sup>Chen Xiaoding discussed the counterbalancing strategies of neighboring countries to deal with rising countries, and believed that the scale of public welfare supply, the level of system construction and the degree of value sharing provided the theoretical and procedural basis for the legitimacy of rising countries, thus reducing the intensity of counterbalancing.<sup>③</sup>Sun Xuefeng also believes that the legalization strategy can help the rising countries avoid the checks and balances of the system. To sum up, whether from the perspective of power transfer, interactive construction or institutional norms, legitimacy is the basis for a country to obtain positive recognition. For the rising countries in the region, it is particularly important to improve the legitimacy perception of other countries through institutional construction, contribution of public goods and dissemination of ideas. The Belt and Road Initiative, the concept of community of human destiny and the Asian Investment Bank program currently offered by China have played a significant role in gaining positive reputation and reducing reputation for threat.

Similar to the working form of the resolve reputation influence condition, the three elements of reputation for threat may not appear simultaneously in the interaction between the ally and the challenger, but when all three elements exist, the ally will certainly increase the reputation for threat perception of the challenger. Because the threat in one field can not be offset by the positive functional spillover in other fields (for example, the threat in the high political field can not be offset by the cooperative behavior in the low political field), the consistency of the signals released

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Vol.50, No.1 (Winter 1996), pp.1-33.

① Martha Finnemore, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity," *World Politics*, Vol.61, No.1 (January 2009), pp.58-85.

② Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organization*, Vol.53, No.2 (Spring 1999), pp.379-408.

③ Chen Xiaoding and Wang Cuimei, The Strategic Choice of Neighboring Countries in Response to China's Rise: An Explanation Based on the Ability and Willingness of Checks and Balances, *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No.1, 2019, p. 72.

by the challenging countries in different fields will also affect the reputation of the threat. But unlike the resolve of reputation, the negative spillover effect of threatening reputation is very obvious. Robert Jervis believes that countries have the characteristics of "perception bias", that is, politicians in other countries will determine the image of a country according to their theories. These theories have defined the meanings and connections of some indices (for example, a democratic country is equal to a peaceful country with rapid economic growth, which inevitably pursues international status), and "in the view of observers, a country that suppresses democracy and human rights while advocating the superiority of the dominant nation will also threaten its neighbors in the future". Based on this logic of threatening reputation spillover, it is not difficult to understand why the Western countries led by the United States played up the Communist threat during the Cold War, and now they are trying to distort and fabricate China's Xinjiang issue and human rights issue, which has the motive of suppressing opponents and strengthening alliances.

### **3.1.3 Dependent Variables: Checks and Balances of Allies'**

#### **"Hedging" Behavior-Bandwagoning Tendency**

The resolve reputation of the leader and the reputation for threat of the challenger, as input factors, are perceived by the allies, and the output results are the "hedging" behavior tendency of the allies. Because hedging is a strategic option at any point between pure checks and balances and pure bandwagoning, the direction and position of hedging focus reflect both the degree of alliance weakening and the strength of checks and balances willingness. When the "hedging" behavior of allies tends to check and balance, it means that the weakening degree of the alliance is lower, the difficulty of checks and balances is greater, and the intensity of checks and balances on challenging countries is greater. When the allies tend to bandwagoning, the weakening degree of the representative alliance is higher, the difficulty of checks

and balances is smaller, and the intensity of checks and balances on the challenging countries is smaller. The variable relationships are shown in Figure 1:

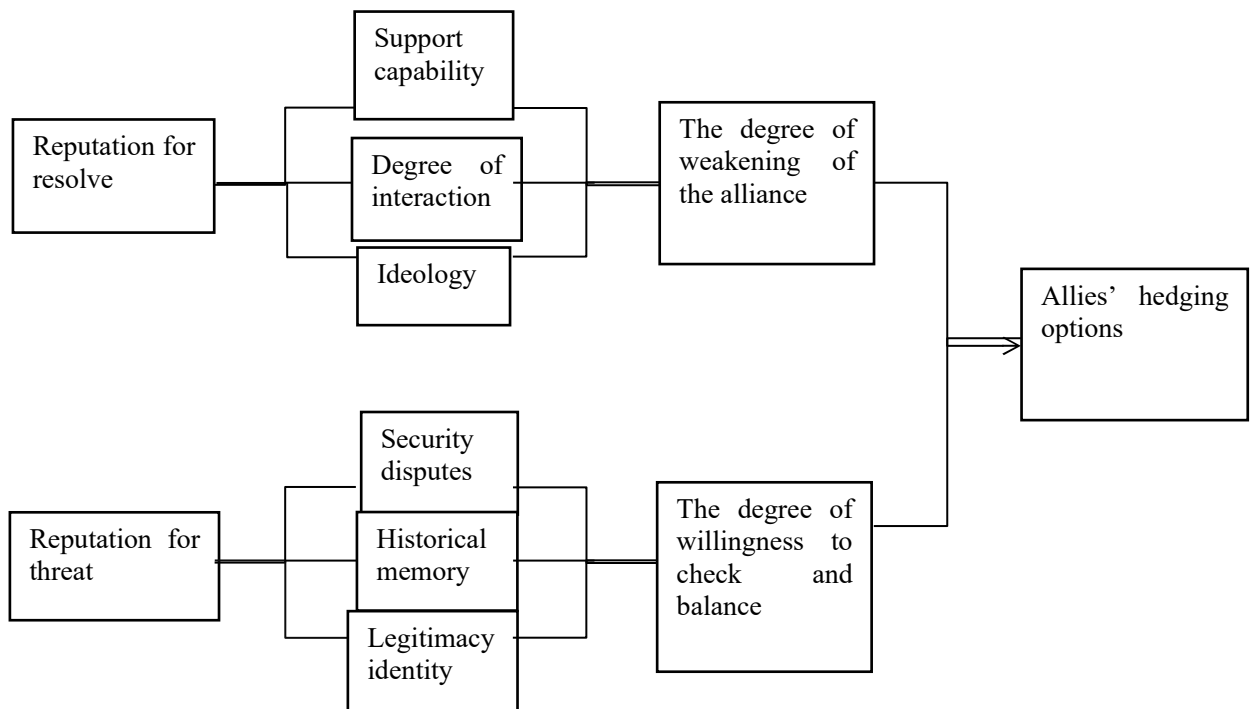


Figure 1

## Section 2 Basic Assumptions and Ally Hedging Pattern

### Classification

#### 3. 2. 1 Research hypothesis

According to the above theoretical logic, the bandwagoning assumptions are put forward.

H1: The attribution of the US Asia-Pacific allies to the resolve and reputation of the leader (the United States) determines the degree of weakening of the alliance.

H1a1: When the ally attributes the undesirable behavior of the leader's resolve and reputation (that is, the desirable behavior is attributed to the situation), the weakening degree of the alliance is higher, the difficulty of checks and balances is

greater, and the hedging behavior of the ally is far away from checks and balances.

H1a2: When the allies attribute the undesirable behavior of the leader's resolve and reputation to the situation (that is, attribute the desirable behavior to the character), the weakening degree of the alliance is low, the difficulty of checks and balances is small, and the hedging behavior of the allies leans towards check and balance.

H2: The judgment of US Asia-Pacific allies on the reputation for threat of the challenger (China) determines the strength of the willingness to check and balance.

H2b 1: When the ally judges that the reputation for threat level of the challenging country is high, the ally chooses security, the willingness to check and balance is strong, and the hedging behavior is far from bandwagoning.

H2b2: When the ally judges that the reputation for threat level of the challenger is low, the ally chooses interests, the willingness to check and balance is weak, and the hedging behavior leans towards bandwagoning.

The above assumptions are shown in Table 1.

<p>The judgment of the patron's reputation</p> <p>The judgment of the challenger's reputation for threat</p>	<p>Situational attribution</p>	<p>Dispositional attribution</p>
<p>High</p>	<p>Approach checks and balances, stay away from bandwagoning</p>	<p>Stay away from checks and balances, stay away from bandwagoning</p>

Low	Approaching checks and balances, approaching bandwagoning	Stay away from checks and balances, approach and bandwagoning
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Table 1: Variables and Research Hypotheses

The above table shows the hedging behavior choices made by the allies in the face of different reputation signals from the leader and the challenger. The special one is that the allies are in the middle zone of checks and balances and bandwagonings. At this time, the behavior shows two combinations of "away-away" and "approach-approach". Although both combinations reflect the need for allies to maintain the status quo to some extent, the motivation behind them is different. The choice of the status quo of the "far away" type of allies is a forced move under the "security repulsion" of both the leader and the challenger. The choice of "approach-approach" allies is the result of active action, and the future changes of the two alliances will be different.

### 3.2.2 Four Hedging Patterns of Allies

#### **"Approaching Checks and Balances, Moving Away from Bandwagoning" and Extreme Situational Attribution**

This type of alliance is infinitely close to the pure checks and balances of clear choice in hedging behavior, which is mainly manifested in full trust in the leader of the alliance and hostility to the challenger. Therefore, when the leader breaches the contract, such allies often choose extreme situational attribution, that is, to actively weaken the bad reputation of the leader or choose to turn a blind eye to it, such as Japan, Australia and other typical countries.

## **"Keep away from checks and balances, keep away from bandwagoning" and the attribution of mild personality**

This type of ally does not fully trust the reputation of the leader, tends to attribute to the leader's default, panics when the leader's guarantee declines and the alliance is loose, and tries to ease the relationship with the opponent in order to seek security. However, due to the prominent security problems it faces and most of its security supply comes from within the alliance, the personality attribution of the leader's default reputation is relatively mild, and it does not seek major changes in the alliance structure. The hedging behavior of such allies is manifested as "refusal to dominate" or "binding contact", but because their hedging behavior is the result of forced choice, with the increasing competition between the leader and the challenger, the repulsion from both sides will further compress the hedging space and make them fall into a "dilemma". Typical countries are South Korea and the Philippines.

## **"Approaching Check and Balance, Approaching Bandwagoning" and Mild Situational Attribution**

This type can be regarded as a "reserve" ally, that is, on the one hand, it maintains a stable but inactive relationship with the leader of the alliance, on the other hand, it has no obvious security contradiction with the challenging country. The impact of such allies on the reputation of the leader's default will not be exaggerated or promoted, and the existence of the alliance is considered to have more advantages than disadvantages, so moderate situational attribution is adopted. At the same time, it actively seeks interests outside the alliance and shows the characteristics of "economic pragmatism" in hedging behavior. Some typical allies, such as Thailand, and some non-US allies, such as Indonesia and Brunei, also conform to this feature.

## **"Stay away from checks and balances, approach and bandwagoning" and extreme personality attribution**

Such allies have been highly dissatisfied with the reputation of the leader and the reliability of the alliance, demanding changes in the existing alliance structure and seeking to establish links with challengers who do not pose a direct security threat. As the default performance of the alliance leader further aggravates the personality attribution and centrifugal tendency of these countries, their hedging behavior is closer to bandwagoning the challenger countries, and even has the possibility of breaking away from the alliance. At present, there is no such alliance in the Asia-Pacific alliance system of the United States, but from the historical record, Pakistan in the Baghdad Treaty Organization (although the United States is the observer country of the organization, it is the de facto leader) has gradually conformed to this type in its later development. The threat of the Philippines to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement (which remains in place) during the Duterte administration also reflects the characteristics of extreme personality attribution.



## **Chapter 4 Case study**

According to the hypothesis of reputation and hedging pattern proposed above, this chapter takes Japan and South Korea, two Asia-Pacific allies of the United States, as objects to further verify the hypothesis, which correspond to the "approaching checks and balances" type of extreme situational attribution and the "far-away" type of moderate personality attribution respectively. At the same time, two specific cases, the Diaoyu Island incident and Park Chung-hee's independent national defense, are selected to explore the role of the reputation factors of the main and challenging countries in national interaction.

## **Section 1 Japan: "Approaching Checks and Balances, Staying**

### **Away from Bandwagoning" and "Clear Choice" Hedging**

#### **4.1.1 Perceptions of Reputation of Resolve and Reputation of**

##### **Threat in Japan**

###### **Formation history and development overview**

As the most important component of the US Asia-Pacific alliance system, the overall situation of the US-Japan alliance is as described by Takashi Inoguchi and Ikenberry: "It is no exaggeration to say that no other alliance can reach such a high level as the Japan-US alliance in terms of unity, adaptability, and durability."<sup>①</sup> Since the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the US-Japan alliance has undergone several adjustments and transformations in terms of its cooperation background, strategic objectives, forms of mutual assistance and alliance relations, but what remains unchanged is the important position of the alliance in their respective strategies. The Obama, Trump and Biden administrations all emphasized Japan's role as a "key ally" in Asia. Japan's 2020 annual strategy report and 2021 defense white paper also regard the alliance as "the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy and security".<sup>②</sup> And "the cornerstone of security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region"<sup>③</sup>. Japan's positive perception of America's reputation is not an overnight achievement, but a gradual process. At the same time, the two sides have gradually agreed on the recognition of China's threat to reputation, and the historical problems between China and Japan and the competitive background between China and the United States have shaped Japan's clear choice of side checks and balances.

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<sup>①</sup> Takashi Inoguchi, G. John Ikenberry & Yoichiro Sato, "Alliance Constrained: Japan, the United States, and Regional Security," *The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Regional Multilateralism*, eds. Takashi Inoguchi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.2.

<sup>②</sup> *Strategic Annual Report 2020*, Japan Institute of International Affairs, 2021, pp.8.

<sup>③</sup> *Defense of Japan 2021*, Ministry of Defense, 2021, pp.2.

## **The Establishment of American Reputation in the Early Stage and the Differences of Attitudes towards China between the Two Sides**

After the end of World War II, the United States included Japan in the strategic map to deal with the threat of communism in Asia. The US alliance in Asia bandwagons a "high-pressure offensive" strategy.<sup>①</sup> That is, to control the behavior of allies through asymmetric power superiority, so as to achieve coordinated action while preventing individual allies from acting without authorization to drag the United States into "unwanted" wars. The victory of the Chinese revolution, the outbreak of the Korean War and the final formation of the bipolar camp prompted the United States to speed up the process of supporting Japan and economic reconstruction. Truman believed that the political and economic progress made in Japan "could show the advantages of close relations with the United States", and Eisenhower did not want to push Japan into the Communist camp because of a severe defeat treaty, so he showed unprecedented tolerance to the defeated country in the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and guaranteed Japan's necessary self-defense forces and membership in the United Nations. This has also become the basis of Japan's trust in the United States. After that, the two sides successively signed alliance documents such as the US-Japan Security Treaty and the Japan-US Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, which provided Japan with a reliable security guarantee.

However, there were some differences between the United States and Japan on the role of allies at first. Afraid of the Soviet Union's influence, the United States abandoned the "MacArthur Plan" aimed at weakening Japan and hoped to share the task of confronting the Communist threat in East Asia by reshaping Japan's military power. At this time, Japan's guiding ideology after the war was the "Yoshida Doctrine" put forward by then Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, the core of which was that "Japan handed over its national defense security to the United States, while concentrating all its efforts to restore its economic strength."<sup>②</sup> It can be seen that Japan

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<sup>①</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol.34, No.3 (January 2010), pp.158-196.

<sup>②</sup> Yun Zhang, *Sino-Japanese Relations in a Trilateral Context: Origins of Misperception* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.117.

trusts the resolve and reputation of the United States at this time, but opposes large-scale rearmament, which to some extent avoids the risk of being "implicated" in other disputes in the United States, and naturally arouses the dissatisfaction of the United States. For example, when the two sides negotiated the US-Japan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement in 1953, Japan tried to ask for additional economic assistance and technical projects, which conflicted with the US military line. But in the end, the United States compromised and accepted Japan's "minimum defense" policy, while bringing Japan into the international economic system.

In addition to the arms issue, there are also differences between the Yoshida Shigeru government and the US side in their attitudes toward China. In order for the US-Japan alliance treaty to be passed smoothly in Congress, the Truman administration needed to ensure that Yoshida Shigeru accepted the position of "supporting Taiwan and opposing Communist China." However, Yoshida Shigeru insisted on pragmatic goals while opposing communism. He believed that it was more in Japan's interest to establish diplomatic and economic and trade relations with Beijing, and claimed that he did not care whether China was red or green. Japan must consider the Chinese market.<sup>①</sup> Finally, he was forced to convey the "Yoshida Letter" under the pressure of the US side. At the same time, Yoshida Shigeru firmly believed that the containment policy of the United States towards China was a "misunderstanding", and he believed that China's nationalist character and independent policy would lead to the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance, and that Japan could help China break away from the influence of communism.<sup>②</sup>

Yoshida's pragmatism shows the different perceptions of China's reputation for threat between Japan and the United States. During this period, Japan did not regard China as a direct security threat, and this perception lasted until the Hayato Ikeda government in the 1960s. Masayoshi Ohira, then foreign minister, described Beijing's policy as a "cautious assessment based on reality" rather than "risky".<sup>③</sup> This also

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① Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: US-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: Norton, 1997), pp.280.

② Matteo Dian, *The Evolution of the US-Japan Alliance: The Eagle and the Chrysanthemum* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2014), pp.37.

③ "Telegram from the Embassy in Japan to the Department of State," January 29, 1964, in *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Vol.29, Part 2, Japan.

emphasizes Japan's attitude of not blindly bandwagoning the "China reputation for threat" spread by the United States. Generally speaking, the security guarantee and economic support of the United States to Japan from the post-war period to the 1960s initially established Japan's positive perception of the reputation of American resolve, but the two sides have not yet reached an agreement on the support of allies' capabilities and threat perception.

### **The adjustment of bilateral relations and the consolidation of American reputation in the medium term**

Since the 1960s, the US-Japan alliance has entered a stage of adjustment, marked by the adjustment of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the return of Okinawa Island. Because of the temporary nature of the US-Japan treaty and the instability of bilateral relations, there is a latent anti-American and pro-Communist sentiment in Japan, so Japan hopes to solve the "extraterritoriality" of the US military, the defense responsibility of Japan and the United States, and the southern territorial issues of Japan by amending the treaty, so as to seek the equality of alliance relations.<sup>①</sup> Kishi Nobusuke's government believes that the Japanese antipathy to the United States is closely related to the "one-sided dependence" and territorial issues in the security treaty, and at the same time proposes that the United States return Okinawa and both sides jointly undertake defense tasks.<sup>②</sup>

After Johnson's expansion of the Vietnam War, the United States urgently needed Japan's financial support, so Japan took the opportunity to take back Okinawa while supporting the US policy. At the same time, in the face of the anti-war sentiment and war burden brought about by the escalation of the Vietnam War, the U.S. government began to consider bilateral defense relations characterized by responsibility sharing. It was not until Richard Nixon came to power and proposed the contractionary "Nixon Doctrine" that the Okinawa issue was finally resolved. The return of Okinawa demonstrates the positive role of "private" and "government" dual-track negotiations,

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① Cui Pi, Research on the History of US-Japan Relations during the Cold War, Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 217-225 (2013).

② Cui Pi, a Study of the History of US-Japan Relations during the Cold War, pp. 227-228.

and its peaceful and friendly approach also strengthens Japan's confidence in the United States.<sup>①</sup>This shows that the asymmetry of US-Japan relations has begun to change, Japan can emphasize cooperation rather than confrontation to solve bilateral problems while extending its diplomatic autonomy, and since then, Japan's support to the United States has shifted from simple economic support to the combination of political, economic and defense fields.

Another factor that has had an important impact on bilateral relations during this period is the rise of China's reputation for threat. In 1964, China conducted a nuclear weapons test, and then Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisaku even proposed "using Japan's science and technology and industry to develop nuclear forces", which Johnson rejected. But Johnson reassured him that "the United States will spare no effort to safeguard Japan's security."<sup>②</sup>Sato also stated that Japan would "firmly uphold" the Japan-US security treaty. The interaction between the two sides has strengthened the commitment of the United States to provide a nuclear umbrella for Japan and enhanced Japan's recognition of the resolve and reputation of the United States.

In addition, Japan did not underestimate the resolve and reputation of the United States because of its defeat in the Vietnam War, but worried about the risk of escalation of the war. In 1965, Edwin Reischauer, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, expressed growing fears in Japan that "an escalation of the war would lead to Japan's involvement." He stressed that Japan held a "simplistic" view of the issue, that is, that the "best solution" to the armistice was for the United States to end aerial bombing and other military operations. Reischauer accordingly complained that "the Japanese people lack an understanding of the American perspective."<sup>③</sup> It can be seen that the domino effect of reputation that the United States is worried about is not reflected in Japan's actual perception.

With the rapid growth of Japan's economic strength in the 1970s, its support for

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① Makoto Iokibe, *The history of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.167.

② Makoto Iokibe, *The history of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.162.

③ Priscilla Clapp & Morton H. Halperin, eds., *United States-Japanese Relations, the 1970's* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp.9.

the alliance has been increasing. Although the Nixon Doctrine, trade issues and the oil crisis caused some fluctuations in US-Japan relations, they did not shake Japan's trust in the United States, and then Japan-US relations were reassured by Ford's "New Pacific Doctrine". Japan's attitude toward China also improved with the relaxation of Sino-US relations. The two countries signed the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978, and China and Japan began friendly interaction as the weaker side of the "Sino-US-Soviet" and "Sino-US-Japan" strategic triangles, respectively. However, this change is not due to Japan's mild judgment of China's reputation for threat, but a manifestation of Japan's obedience to the strategic needs of the United States, which has been weakened by the end of the Cold War and re-strengthened Japan's threat perception of China.

In the 1980s, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone further adjusted Japan's strategic position. He promised to build Japan into an "unsinkable aircraft carrier against the expansion of the Soviet Union", and approved that defense expenditure should exceed the red line of "one percent of GNP" set by the Miki Cabinet. During this period, Japan's independent defense tendency increased, and the anti-submarine and early warning capabilities of the Self-Defense Forces were improved. It also foreshadows a shift in Japan's defense policy.

### **The All-round Strengthening of Alliances and the Formation of "Approaching Balance" after the Cold War**

After the end of the Cold War, the US-Japan alliance did not collapse because of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Due to the disappearance of traditional geopolitical threats, the two sides began to re-discuss the reform and transformation of the alliance.<sup>①</sup> At first, the Clinton administration adopted a "result-oriented" trade strategy and put the importance of bilateral economic issues above military security, which caused friction between the two countries to a certain extent, but the outbreak of the Gulf War soon consolidated the interests of the alliance, and Japan changed its

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<sup>①</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "America's Asia Agenda: Coping with Japan," *Foreign Policy*, No.89 (Winter, 1992-1993), pp.96-115.

security policy and began to send non-combatants overseas. In 1995, Clinton clarified the regional objectives of the United States and stated that "no bilateral relationship is more important than the relationship between the United States and Japan".<sup>①</sup>The bandwagoning year, Hashimoto Ryutaro and Clinton signed a document entitled "Japan-US Joint Security Declaration-Alliance in the 21st Century". Japan also reiterated the importance of the alliance, and in response to changes in the regional security situation, the two sides revised the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation in 1997. In 1999 and 2000, the Japanese Parliament passed the Emergency Act and the Ship Survey Act to coordinate with the implementation of the new guidelines.

After the September 11 incident in 2001, the two countries emphasized the function of the alliance in providing security public goods, and then with the evolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis and the Iraq War, the strategic interests of the US-Japan alliance gradually expanded from Northeast Asia to the global scope, and in order to support the anti-terrorism needs of the United States, the mandate of the Self-Defense Forces was further expanded. At this time, the nature of the US-Japan alliance has undergone fundamental changes, first, from asymmetric dependence to gradually symmetrical partnership, second, security cooperation has expanded from the field of homeland defense to non-traditional security areas, such as anti-terrorism, environment, economy and so on, and third, Japan's security and political autonomy has been significantly strengthened. The equalization of alliance relations not only improves Japan's status and meets its need for political reliability of alliance, but also gives Japan an opportunity to use economic and political influence to make up for the "reputation trauma" left by the United States after the war. Japan helped rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq through foreign aid, improved the political reputation of the United States, and thus strengthened the close ties of the alliance.

With the rise of China in the 1990s, the United States and Japan began to pay attention to the changes in regional order and power structure. The informationization and modernization of China's military forces has aroused Japan's concern, which was

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<sup>①</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security Alliance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," 17 April, 1996, available at: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html>.



exacerbated by the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996. Japan's 2004 National Defense Planning Guidelines openly pointed out China's impact on regional security.<sup>①</sup> At the same time, the United States has also begun to pay attention to China's regional denial capabilities and regard China as a potential threat. In addition, the positions of the United States and Japan on the North Korean nuclear issue tend to be consistent, both believing that North Korea is an irrational factor of regional instability.

The regional situation has given Japan an incentive to strengthen checks and balances, while deepening the institutional cooperation of the US-Japan alliance. In 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe put forward the Indo-Pacific concept of building a "US-Japan-India-Australia" cooperation framework, and played up the "China Threat Theory". In the context of the re-emergence of sensitive issues between China and Japan concerning the rights and interests of Taiwan, Diaoyu Island and the East China Sea after 2010, Abe, who was re-elected Prime Minister in 2012, began to actively carry out grid cooperation with the United States and Asia-Pacific allies to promote the construction of TPP in response to China's The Belt and Road Initiative and AIIB programs. At the same time, we should promote joint military exercises, official development assistance (ODA), "values diplomacy", "2 + 2" consultation mechanism and non-traditional security cooperation (anti-terrorism, disaster relief, combating drug smuggling, etc.). The Abe government gradually abandoned the "Yoshida line", actively amended the Constitution to lift the ban on collective self-defense, and once again emphasized "Japan's reliance on the security guarantee and policy direction of the United States". The Defense White Paper of 2017 and the Defense Plan Outline of 2019 respectively focused on "strengthening the alliance" and "seeking closer strategic cooperation with the United States".<sup>②</sup> In addition, with the intensification of competition between China and the United States, Japan has maintained a high degree of ideological consistency with the United States in recent years, linking The Belt and Road Initiative with the "debt trap" in its annual

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<sup>①</sup> *The National Program Defense Guidelines*, Approved by Security Council and the Cabinet, December 10, 2004, pp.2-3.

<sup>②</sup> *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond*, December 18, 2018, pp.8.

strategic report in 2019.<sup>①</sup>The joint statement with the United States in 2021 also openly touches on China's internal affairs such as Xinjiang and Taiwan.

Generally speaking, the ties of the Japan-US alliance have been gradually strengthened since the beginning of its establishment, and Japan's judgment of the United States' resolve and reputation is more positive than negative. The promotion of the alliance status in the later period has strengthened Japan's recognition of its status as the "Asia-Pacific North Anchor", thus clarifying the resolve of the United States to support itself. Even under the DPJ's prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, this situation has not changed. As Adam Liff put it, "The DPJ's rejection of an independent foreign policy and Hatoyama's brief nine-month rule show that the alliance with the United States is of great significance, which is a judgment beyond party affiliation.". Even today, when Trump's words are astonishing, there will be no strategic vacuum between Japan and the United States.<sup>②</sup>For Sino-Japanese relations, close economic and trade exchanges can not conceal the contradictions between the two sides in territorial, historical issues and identity, which also results in short-term hedging in some historical periods of Japan is actually an "expedient measure".

## **Conditions for the Formation of Japanese Reputation Perception**

### **Positive conditions for the perception of American resolve and reputation**

From the perspective of formation conditions, support ability (+), interaction degree (+) and ideology (+) all contribute to Japan's positive perception of American resolve and reputation. In terms of support capabilities, Japan is committed to developing capabilities to compensate for the "asset relief" of the United States in the region, and the 2013 National Security Strategy mentions that in order for Japan to make "positive contributions to peace," it must first lay a solid foundation for the use of defense and deterrence capabilities. Under the guidance of the concept of "dynamic common defense force (emphasizing the coordinated action of land, sea and air

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<sup>①</sup> *Strategic Annual Report 2019*, The Japan Institute of International Affairs, November 2019, pp.31.

<sup>②</sup> Adam P. Liff, "Unambivalent alignment: Japan's China strategy, the US alliance, and the 'hedging' fallacy," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol.19, No.3 (July 2019), pp.453-491.

forces)", the SDF is transforming into a "complete" army. In addition, the SDF is equipped with space, network and electromagnetic combat capabilities, so that it can carry out flexible strategic operations at any stage of "peace to emergency".

In terms of the degree of interaction, by advocating the concept of "free and open Indo-Pacific" and putting forward the three pillars of regional cooperation: the establishment of fundamental values, the pursuit of economic prosperity and the commitment to peace and stability, Japan has successfully exploited regional uncertainty to leave behind American power, which shows that the United States is not only in material strength, but also in regional cooperation. Moreover, they agree with Japan's views on China's rise in terms of values, and the interaction makes the two sides more overlapping in geopolitical and strategic interests.

Ideologically, the process of democratization in Japan has long been a contributing factor to the Japan-US alliance. As a country on the outer edge of the traditional Confucian cultural circle, Japan has a high acceptance of European and American cultures and systems. After the end of World War II, MacArthur and Prime Minister Kijuro Shidehara launched five major areas of democratization reform, and the joint communique of Ronald Reagan and Suzuki Zenko in 1981 also emphasized that "the foundation of the alliance between the two countries is the common values of democracy and freedom".<sup>①</sup> A poll by the Pew Center in 2021 showed that despite Trump's influence, the Japanese people's approval of the image of the United States in 2020 was 41%, but after Biden took office, the figure quickly rebounded to 71%, which also showed the Japanese people's inherent good impression of the United States.<sup>②</sup>

### **Negative Conditions for Reputation Perception of China Threat**

In terms of performance, Japan's post-war perception of China's reputation for threat is related to territory (-), history (-) and legitimate identity (-). As the Diaoyu

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<sup>①</sup> Makoto Iokibe, *The history of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.195.

<sup>②</sup> Richard Wike et al., "America's Image Abroad Rebounds With Transition From Trump to Biden," Pew Research Center, June 10, 2021, available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/06/10/americas-image-abroad-rebounds-with-transition-from-trump-to-biden/>

Islands issue is also a historical legacy, the differences in historical memory between the two countries have a more profound impact on their respective reputations. Hoyst used discourse analysis to study the perception of China by Japanese political elites from 1996 to 2004. He believed that "it was China's" rising "foreign policy behavior rather than military capability that changed Japan's perception of threat", and the Diaoyu Island dispute also caused a "significant discourse shift" among elites.<sup>①</sup> Gustafson attributes Japan's negative view of China to what he calls "China's' veto 'of Japan's self-pacifist image," which "forces" Japan to "distance itself from a peaceful identity and seek national normalization."<sup>②</sup> This statement obviously ignores the facts and reverses the causal relationship of war memory, but it also reflects the differences in attitudes between China and Japan on historical issues. In 2012, Japanese Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro declared that "Japan is a peace-loving country and has continuously contributed to the peace and prosperity of Asia." He criticized China's implementation of the Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone in 1992 as a disregard of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. China, not Japan, is a "negator of the international order".<sup>③</sup> In addition, Japan's historical attitude toward war crimes has also influenced its views on East Asian countries. Right-wing forces in Japan regard the demand for a legitimate apology as a manifestation of the "aggressiveness" of other countries, and regard it as the implementation of "anti-Japan" public education. This understanding has deepened the perception of threats to other countries.

In addition, Japan maintains a vigilant and anxious attitude towards the legitimacy of China's rise. As the proponent of the concept of "free and open Indo-Pacific", Japan is committed to promoting the implementation of "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" and Indo-Pacific strategy, while improving the construction of CPTPP to hedge the impact of China's "The Belt and Road" Initiative, with the fundamental purpose of maintaining the regional order and strategic balance with the dominance

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① Peter Van Der Hoest, *Deconstructing the "China Threat": An Inquiry into Changing Perceptions in India and Japan*, 2016.

② Karl Gustafsson, "Identity and recognition: remembering and forgetting the post-war in Sino-Japanese relations," *The Pacific Review*, Vol.28, No.1 (2015), pp.117-138.

③ Gamba Koichiro, "Japan-China relations at a crossroads," *The New York Times*, November 20, 2012, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/21/opinion/koichiro-genba-japan-china-relations-at-a-crossroads.html>.

of the United States as the core. Close ties with the other three countries in the "security diamond" and ASEAN countries also serve this goal. Kei Koga summed up Japan's Indo-Pacific plan as "bringing in the US, bringing down China, and helping Australia, India, and ASEAN."<sup>①</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Case 1: The Diaoyu Islands Dispute and the Reputation**

##### **Interaction between China, the United States and Japan**

The Diaoyu Islands issue has long been the core issue of the territorial dispute between China and Japan. Japan believes that the Diaoyu Islands belong to the terra nullius occupied by Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, claiming that "no evidence of China's control over the islands" has been found, and denying that there is any dispute over the ownership of the islands. In 2012, the State Council of China issued "Diaoyu Island is China's inherent territory", emphasizing that the naming of Diaoyu Island can be traced back to 1403 (the first year of Yongle in Ming Dynasty), and that the two Dynasties of Ming and Qing Dynasty included the island in the scope of coastal defense, and according to the "Cairo Declaration", "Potsdam Proclamation" and "Japanese Surrender Letter", the two Dynasties of Ming and Qing Dynasty included the island in the scope of coastal defense. Diaoyu Island, as an affiliated island of Taiwan, should be returned to China together with Taiwan.<sup>②</sup> Both China and Japan have expressed their firm attitude towards safeguarding territorial sovereignty.

The Diaoyu Islands issue is actually a legacy of the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations in 1972, and is also the result of the US-Japan alliance. After the establishment of the alliance, the United States entrusted many islands around Japan and expressed neutrality on the final ownership of the Diaoyu Islands. However, in 1971, according to the Agreement on the Return of Okinawa between the United

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<sup>①</sup> Kei Koga, "Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" Strategy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.41, No.2 (August 2019), pp.286-313.

<sup>②</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Diaoyu Dao is China's inherent territory, website of the Information Office of the State Council, September 25, 2012. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/tt/Document/1222670/1222670.htm>.

States and Japan, the United States granted Japan administrative power over the relevant islands, and opposed any unilateral action to weaken Japan's administrative power, which also restrained the dissatisfaction of the Kuomintang authorities in Taiwan.

As early as 1960, the United States guaranteed Japan's security in exchange for the right to station troops in the treaty, and the area covered by security included the islands under Japan's administrative jurisdiction. In 2014, Obama assured Abe that "all areas under Japanese administrative jurisdiction, including the Diaoyu Islands, will be governed by Article 5 of the US-Japan Security Treaty", which once again demonstrated to Japan the resolve and reputation of the United States on this issue.<sup>①</sup>

In February 1992, China adopted the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, which stipulates that "Taiwan and its affiliated islands, including Diaoyu Dao" belong to the land territory of the People's Republic of China. In the same year, Japan's Defense White Paper reported on China's "active activities" in the surrounding waters. It also criticized "China's expansion of its maritime activities by strengthening its activities in Xisha and Nansha Islands" and "this bill claims that Diaoyu Island is China's territory, but the island is an indispensable part of Japan". Subsequently, in 2009, the Ministry of Defense of Japan identified "aggression against these islands" as one of the five emergencies that the Self-Defense Forces need to fight back.

After the Diaoyu Island incident in 2010, a Japanese poll showed that 71.5% of respondents believed that China was a threat to Japan's national security, only 7% believed that China was trustworthy, and the 2011 Defense White Paper also claimed that "China's future behavior is worrying". After the outbreak of the second Diaoyu Islands crisis in April 2012, Japanese right-wing politician Shintaro Ishihara announced that he would buy the Diaoyu Islands from private hands. Later, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda changed his name to the official direct purchase of the islands, which triggered large-scale demonstrations in China. Japan's 2012

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<sup>①</sup> "Joint Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan", White House, Apr 24, 2014, available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/24/joint-press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan>.

Defense White Paper clearly States that "China's anti-access/area denial capabilities pose a major threat to Japan."

It is worth noting that since the Diaoyu Island incident took place during the reign of three leaders of the Democratic Party of Japan, and the Obama administration had just put forward the concept of "Asia-Pacific rebalancing", the competition between China and the United States had not yet escalated significantly, so there was a slight ambiguity in the resolve and reputation signals of the United States at the beginning of the incident. In 2009, when the Chinese government refuted the Japanese Prime Minister's statement that "the Diaoyu Islands belong to the security scope of the alliance", Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary Xie Weisen said that "the United States very much hopes that the people concerned will solve this problem through calm cooperation", which to some extent aroused the concern of Japanese radicals in the later period. For example, Kitaoka Shinichi proposed to enhance Japan's security and defense autonomy on the premise of maintaining the importance of the alliance.<sup>①</sup> But Mr Obama's subsequent assurances to Mr Abe weakened the idea.

Generally speaking, the dispute over the Diaoyu Islands shows that in the case of security disputes and historical issues, Japan's threat to foreign countries has a higher reputation. The inclusion of the Diaoyu Islands by the United States, the leader of the alliance, has strengthened Japan's perception of its resolve and reputation, and has further shaped Japan's hedging tendency of "approaching checks and balances, keeping away from bandwagoning".

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<sup>①</sup> Yun Zhang, *Sino-Japanese Relations in a Trilateral Context: Origins of Misperception* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.77.

## **Section 2 South Korea: "Stay away from checks and balances, stay away from bandwagoning" and "indirect checks and balances" hedging**

### **4.2.1 Perceptions of Reputation of Resolve and Reputation of**

#### **Threat in Korea**

##### **General situation of formation and development**

As another important ally of the United States in East Asia, the US-South Korea alliance also has the same formation motivation as the US-Japan alliance, both of which are established out of the need for the United States to deal with the threat of communism, but different from the US-Japan alliance, the development of the US-South Korea alliance is more tortuous. According to Morrow's asymmetric alliance logic, alliances between countries with unequal strength are easier to maintain, and small countries and big countries ensure the stability of demand and the survival of alliances through the transaction of "autonomy for security", so the US-ROK alliance should maintain a high degree of stability when the North Korean threat persists and the balance of power between the United States and South Korea does not change significantly, but the actual situation is inconsistent with it. Whether during the Cold War or after the end of the Cold War, the intensity of the US-South Korea alliance fluctuated from strong to weak, even when the threat of North Korea was not significantly weakened. On the other hand, South Korea began to actively seek the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union and China after the July 7 Declaration of the Roh Tae-woo government. After the Cold War, South Korea's attitude toward China has undergone tremendous changes. The two sides formally



established diplomatic relations in 1992, and bilateral trade volume has also risen. Generally speaking, South Korea's alliance and foreign policy so far, as Zheng Zaihao said, "avoids immature decision-making and maintains strategic ambiguity in order to expand bilateral relations with China while maintaining the alliance between the United States and South Korea".<sup>①</sup>This hedging choice is partly related to the reputation performance of China and the United States at key points. With the intensification of competition between China and the United States, the hedging space left to South Korea may become narrower and narrower, and it will face the situation of "forced to choose sides" between the two powers, and the combined effect of Sino-US reputation factors will also affect the future policy direction of South Korea.

In terms of time period, the reputation perception of South Korea can be roughly divided into three stages by 1980 and 2006: the early stage 1953-1980, the middle stage 1980-2006 and the late stage 2006-present.

### **The Weak Foundation and Potential Hidden Dangers of American Reputation in the Early Stage**

In terms of formation motivation, the US-ROK alliance is not the result of long-term gestation, but the product of the direct catalysis of the Korean War. Before the war, the strategic value of the Korean Peninsula was discussed in the United States, and Secretary of State Acheson placed South Korea outside the US defense line.<sup>②</sup>However, the outbreak of the Korean War made the United States realize the importance of maintaining a pro-American regime in the region to contain the dual threats (North Korea and Sino-Soviet communism). However, the United States is also facing the risk of South Korea's involvement in the "double containment". Beckley's "freedom of action" theory points out that "both deterring the enemy and restraining the allies" is an effective way to avoid the "entanglement" of the alliance,

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<sup>①</sup> Chung Jae Ho, "South Korea between Eagle and Dragon," *Asian Survey*, Vol.41, No.5 (September-October 2001), pp.777-796

<sup>②</sup> Kyongsoo Lho, "The U.S.-ROK Alliance: Meeting the Challenges of Transition," Tae-Hwan Kwak eds., *The U.S.-ROK Alliance in Transition* (Seoul: Kyungnam University Prese, 1996), pp.21.

which is embodied in the establishment of the US-ROK alliance.<sup>①</sup>

Although reputation itself does not contain interest factors, the "entanglement" theory emphasizes the mechanism of reputation cost when explaining the reasons for the involvement of big powers, that is, countries will consider the relationship between future performance costs and current alliance benefits in alliance decision-making, so reputation can reflect the path of national interests. Unlike NATO and the US-Japan alliance, there was no strong interest binding between the two sides before the establishment of the US-Korea alliance, otherwise the United States should establish contact before the outbreak of the Korean War rather than after the signing of the armistice agreement (the two sides signed a covenant on October 1, 1953). Second, the United States entered the war not to satisfy South Korea's nationalist needs, but to prevent the chain reaction of failure, so the alliance's reputation is weak. The reason why the United States wanted to reduce the pressure of involvement through a controlled "high-handed policy" was mainly due to Syngman Rhee's fanatical appeal for unification, anti-Communist sentiment and warlike tendencies.

After the United States participated in the Korean War, Syngman Rhee saw a favorable opportunity to reunify Korea and advocated "marching into the North" immediately. After the United States showed its intention to negotiate an armistice, Syngman Rhee wrote to Truman to express his concern, saying that "I can't believe that the armistice negotiations are your (Truman's) opinion, nor do I think it is the right line", and stressed the need for a reassurance. "Otherwise, it will worsen the widespread fear of being abandoned in South Korea, when South Koreans would rather die in battle."<sup>②</sup> Later, the U.S. government received a threat from Syngman Rhee, claiming that "once the United Nations makes peace with the Communist aggressors, the South Korean army will withdraw from the United Nations forces. Regardless of whether he wins or loses, "he fought a bloody battle alone to the end." His vehement advocacy of reunification and his anti-Communist attitude also aroused

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<sup>①</sup> Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts," *International Security*, Vol.39, No.4 (Spring 2015), pp.7-48.

<sup>②</sup> "The President of the Republic of Korea(Rhee) to President Truman," March 21, 1952, in *FRUS*,1952-1954, Vol.15, Korea.

the dissatisfaction of the US side. In order to prevent Lee's sabotage after the signing of the agreement, Robertson suggested that "the withdrawal deterrence of the United States should be put into practice", and in response to Rhee's request for a covenant, the United States replied that "he should realize that the Senate's ratification of the covenant depends more on his own actions than on the President's repeated assurances".<sup>①</sup>To some extent, this has also aroused Rhee's dissatisfaction with the resolve of the United States.

In addition, Syngman Rhee incorporated the overall picture of American anti-communism into his assessment of reputation. In his letter to Dulles, he argued that the United States and its allies should not be satisfied with taking a break when the enemies of Korea, China, and Eastern Europe were weak, but should "boldly take advantage of the opportunity to win an unquestionable victory," and claimed that "the fate of all friendly countries is ultimately related to us."<sup>②</sup>。 In the Taiwan Strait crisis, the indifference of the United States to the request of the South Korean Foreign Minister to defend Jinmen confirms South Korea's concern, which also reflects the spillover effect of resolve and reputation on South Korea.

From the above, we can see that the reputation foundation of the United States to South Korea was not solid in the early days of the alliance, but we can not think that Syngman Rhee judged the reputation defects of the United States by character attribution. In fact, because of Lee's educational experience in the United States and Christian background, as well as his firm anti-Korean, anti-Japanese, and anti-Communist tendencies, Syngman Rhee always adopted a pro-American dependent diplomacy, and US-ROK relations remained stable in the 1950s. The first crisis in the foundation of the alliance between the two sides was in the era of Park Chung-hee.

From the mid-1960s to the end of the 1970s, in the context of the Vietnam War, Sino-Soviet hostility and the rise of the Third World, the United States began to implement a strategic contraction policy. After Nixon's speech in Guam, the United States limited its military involvement and support. The relaxation of Sino-US

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① "The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Korea," July 4, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol.15, Korea

② "The President of the Republic of Korea(Rhee) to the Secretary of State," July 11, 1953, in *FRUS*, 1952-1954, Vol.15, Korea.

relations further aroused Park Chung-hee's concern. During this period, the threat of North Korea rose sharply, typically marked by the assassination of the Blue House and the Pueblo incident in 1968. Park Chung-hee reacted fiercely to the passive and non-retaliatory attitude of the United States, saying that "you are more worried about South Korea's retaliation than getting satisfactory results from North Korea", and Park's doubts about the resolve and reputation of the United States also led to the concept of "independent national defense".<sup>①</sup> After Carter came to power, the United States formally formulated a timetable for withdrawing troops from South Korea. In addition, he also fiercely criticized the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee's military government on the grounds of "human rights diplomacy", which led to the further deterioration of US-South Korea relations. It was not until Reagan came to power that the situation was eased and the number of US troops stationed in South Korea was restored.

In contrast, the reputation foundation established by the US-South Korea alliance is obviously deficient compared with that of the United States and Japan, and the foundation was weakened during the administration of Park Chung-hee, who himself showed the remarkable characteristics of personality attribution to the reputation of the United States, but was restricted by the behavior pattern of "moderate personality attribution" due to the high external threat. But this pattern also paves the way for the middle trend of Korean hedging behavior in the future.

### **Mid-term downturn of American reputation and positive interaction between China and South Korea**

Chun Doo-hwan's military coup in 1979 led to the emergence of anti-American nationalism in South Korea. In the wake of the Gwangju incident, the South Korean people turned their attention to the United States, whose indifference to the junta's crackdown caused widespread anger. Li Jingkui believes that "anti-American themes, slogans and information have gradually penetrated into all levels of Korean popular

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<sup>①</sup> Peter Banseok Kwon, "Beyond Patron and Client: Historicizing the Dialectics of US-ROK Relations amid Park Chung Hee's Independent Defense Industry Development in South Korea, 1968-1979," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol.30, No.2 (December 2017), pp.185-216.

culture, thus forming an irreversible ideological undercurrent, which can even be seen in the mainstream Korean society."<sup>①</sup>At this time, the public's views on the alliance between the United States and South Korea have changed from positive to negative, and in terms of national defense and military command, they have also changed their past attitude of "relying on the alliance and commanding by the United States" to the demand of "independent national defense and transferring command". According to a Chosun Ilbo survey, in 1985, about 96% of the people did not support the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, while this figure dropped to 83% in 1990, which indirectly reflects that the South Korean people are actively lowering their assessment of the value of US resolve and reputation.<sup>②</sup>This is also reflected in the middle class and the elite, who propose to "get rid of foreign intervention and achieve ultimate reunification through nationalist struggle".

Considered a "subverter" of the international order and a supporter of North Korea, South Korea has been hostile to Communist China since the Korean War. Despite efforts by both Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan to improve diplomacy (such as the June 23 Declaration), China and South Korea remain aloof toward interaction. This situation was changed until Roh Tae-woo came to power. In 1988, Roh Tae-woo's government issued the "July 7 Declaration," stating that it was "willing to improve relations with the DPRK and help the DPRK improve relations with the United States, Japan, and other countries." At the same time, "South Korea sought to enhance relations with the Soviet Union, China, and other socialist countries." Subsequently, South Korea actively pursued the "northern diplomacy" policy, with two main purposes: one was to ease the tension in the confrontation between the two camps. To weaken the threat to national security, the second is to create a favorable external environment for the national reunification of the peninsula without changing the security axis of the US-ROK alliance. This policy has indeed effectively reduced South Korea's perception of the threat to the reputation of China,

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<sup>①</sup> Lee Jae-Kyoung, *Anti-Americanism in South Korea: the media and the politics of signification*, PhD thesis, University of Iowa, 1993.

<sup>②</sup> Chang Hun Oh & Celeste Arrington, "Democratization and Changing Anti-American Sentiments in South Korea," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (March/April 2007), pp.327-350.

the Soviet Union and other countries, and great progress has been made in Sino-South Korean relations. Economically, Korea's export-oriented economy is in line with the needs of China's economic system reform. Bilateral trade volume reached US \$3 billion, US \$3.8 billion and US \$5.8 billion in 1988, 1990 and 1991 respectively, achieving rapid growth. In terms of cultural exchanges, China has also actively participated in international conferences held by South Korea and the Seoul Olympic Games, which indirectly contributed to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two sides in the future.

After the release of the Northern Policy, the middle class's perception of the reputation of the United States gradually converged with the government rather than the left-wing people, and its goals shifted from "anti-authoritarian" and "anti-American" to more comprehensive issues, such as improving living standards and democracy and human rights. At this time, the national movement presented a different organizational form from the "radical popular movement" in the past, and the situational attribution shift of American resolve was also due to the change of focus from alliance security interests to domestic political interests.<sup>①</sup>In 1994, about 50% of the people believed that the United States could guarantee the security of South Korea, and the number of people who had a positive view of the United States troops stationed in South Korea increased from less than 70% in 1989 to about 95%. However, the situation worsened under Kim Young-sam, Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun.

Kim Young-sam's policy tendencies were marked by the weakening of the US-South Korea alliance, which he said at his inauguration ceremony in 1993 that "no alliance can override our country, and the happiness of our country depends on ourselves rather than an ideological guarantee", while North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in the same year forced it to take a tough line against North Korea. The policy of tentative engagement with China reflects Kim's distrust of vague reputational signals from both China and the US. When South Korea was excluded from the bilateral dialogue between the United States and North Korea,

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<sup>①</sup> Tim Shorrocks, "The struggle for democracy in South Korea in the 1980s and the rise of anti-Americanism," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.4 (1986), pp.1195-1218.

Kim Young-sam further questioned the resolve and reputation of the United States, saying that the United States had "softened its position and was not tough enough" on the issue of forcing North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons.<sup>①</sup>

Since 1998, the South Korean regime has been formally transferred to the hands of Kim Dae-jung's "progressive" opposition party (the National Assembly for New Politics), and the result of the internalization of the progressive consciousness at the public level to the ruling level is the further expansion of the differences between the United States and South Korea. The Kim Dae-jung government announced the "sunshine policy" to North Korea and adopted a dual-track engagement strategy with China at the same time. The "sunshine policy" also enabled South Korea to grasp a certain degree of dominance on the Peninsula issue. In addition, the Kim Dae-jung government has not participated in the US missile defense program, and its stance on the DPRK is becoming consistent with China's view of "independence and peaceful reunification.". With the further relaxation of inter-Korean relations after the summit in 2000, South Korea and the United States also have significant differences in their perception of North Korea's threat. South Korea pays more attention to the issues of trust building, economic and trade cooperation, and cultural exchanges, while the United States still emphasizes the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation and weapons of mass destruction. The differences within the alliance have brought China and South Korea closer together, and the bilateral trade volume has increased from 24.036 billion US dollars in 1997 to 44.071 billion US dollars in 2002, and remarkable progress has been made in cultural industry exchanges and academic and educational interaction.

After Roh Moo-hyun took office as president of South Korea, the relationship between South Korea and the United States fell to a record low. After two South Korean schoolgirls were crushed to death by an American military vehicle, anti-American sentiment in South Korea rose rapidly, which indirectly contributed to Roh Moo-hyun's success in power, and his progressive party, together with the 17th National Assembly, changed the status quo of the Korean elite. According to a poll in

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<sup>①</sup> Lee Sook-Jong, "Allying with the United States: Changing South Korean Attitudes," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol.17, No.1 (2005), pp.81-104.

2002, 86% of South Koreans wanted to see stronger relations between China and South Korea, while only 14% preferred US-South Korea relations.<sup>①</sup>In a 2004 survey of new members of Congress, more than half viewed China as a more important diplomatic target than the United States. In addition, 51% of South Koreans even believe that North Korea's stubborn stance on the nuclear issue is the result of the Bush administration's hard line. The withdrawal of the United States from its deterrent position in the demilitarized zone in 2003 was also regarded by South Korea as a sign of "preemption" against North Korea and punishment for South Korea's anti-American sentiment. Worries about North Korea's threat have thus turned into fears about US intentions.<sup>②</sup>This reflects the South Korean public's negative view of the U.S. resolve, reputation and alliance assets at this time, and the increasingly fierce debate between the United States and South Korea over the transfer of military command.

However, it should be noted that despite the tension between South Korea and the United States during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun periods, South Korea's overall policy toward the United States is still moderate, and anti-American sentiment within South Korea also shows multi-dimensional characteristics. Polls show that about 55% of the people still support the US military presence in South Korea. In terms of causes, this critical and supportive attitude toward the United States is the common result of the intergenerational change of Korean population and the democratization of the government. Even the progressives represented by Roh Moo-hyun admit that "the presence of American troops is important to the peace and stability of the peninsula at the present stage", which shows that they are subject to the domestic political system. In addition, due to the outbreak of the North Korean nuclear crisis in 2003 and the substantive differences of the six-party talks, South Korea still maintains a high awareness of the threat of North Korea's reputation. North Korea's test-launch behavior has shifted the focus of South Korea's policy from the

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<sup>①</sup> Chong Jae Ho, "China's Evolving Views of the Korean-American Alliance, 1953-2012," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.23, No.87 (2014), pp.425-442.

<sup>②</sup> Victor D. Cha, "America and South Korea: The ambivalent alliance?," *Current History*, Vol.102, No.665 (Sep 2003), pp.279-284



economic recovery after the Asia-Pacific financial crisis to the traditional geopolitical security issues. Roh Moo-hyun himself has also shown his distrust of North Korea's nuclear intentions. This has also strengthened the ties of the US-South Korea alliance and the containment of China-South Korea relations.

### **The Predicament of South Korea's Reputation Perception and the Formation of Hedging Trend in the Later Period**

Since the Lee Myung-bak government, the South Korea-US alliance has shown a significant trend of strengthening. Mr. Lee's election heralds the return of a conservative South Korean government that has focused its diplomacy on restoring and consolidating the U.S.-South Korea alliance amid a proliferation of conservative policy elites. At the Camp David talks in April 2008, Lee Myung-bak and Bush agreed to upgrade bilateral relations to a "strategic alliance for the 21st century." The level of US arms sales to South Korea was raised to the same level as Japan, and the planned withdrawal of 3,500 US troops from South Korea was temporarily shelved. In 2009, Lee Myung-bak and Obama finalized the "Future Outlook of the US-South Korea Alliance", and the nature of the alliance was formally defined as "all-round strategic alliance".<sup>①</sup>It emphasizes that it is "based on shared values such as democracy and human rights", and that the scope of the alliance has shifted from the Korean Peninsula to the Asia-Pacific region, covering peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and anti-piracy. This reflects South Korea's renewed emphasis on the value of the alliance and the security resolve of the United States towards South Korea.

During this period, under the guidance of Lee Myung-bak's "pragmatism" concept, South Korea also developed diplomatic relations with China. After 2008, the two sides upgraded the "comprehensive cooperative partnership" to "strategic cooperative partnership", and the interaction between China and South Korea in regional and international affairs increased. However, at the same time, the obvious

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<sup>①</sup> Kim Sung-han: "The Lee-Obama summit: alliance for peace and unification," East Asia Forum, July 3, 2009, available at: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2009/07/03/the-lee-obama-summit/>.

deterioration of the security situation on the peninsula has increased South Korea's concern about China's threat to its reputation. In addition to North Korea's frequent nuclear tests (May 2009, February 2013) and ballistic missile tests (April 2009, April 2012, December 2012), the most obvious examples of inter-Korean conflict are the "Cheonan" incident in March 2010 and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in November of the same year. Although China, proceeding from the overall situation of peace on the peninsula, calls on all parties to maintain "calm and restraint" and adopt a dialogue approach to solve the problem, this position has been misinterpreted by the ROK side, causing a spillover of threatening reputation. For example, professor Bong Young-sik of Yonsei University believes that "the reason why the shelling of the Cheonan warship and Yeonpyeong Island caused a rift between China and South Korea is that South Korea is dissatisfied with China's ambiguous attitude toward North Korea."<sup>①</sup>。 Zheng Zaihao believed that "the Beijing government did not support the conclusion of the joint investigation report on the Cheonan incident" and "shifted the issue of North Korea to the US-ROK military exercises", while "China's position after the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island triggered strong protests from ordinary people and opinion leaders in South Korea, thus contributing to the consolidation of US-ROK ties".<sup>②</sup>。 Yu Hyun-joo also holds a similar view, claiming that despite the common security interests between China and South Korea, the perception of threat to North Korea and the difference in response between China and the United States "drive South Korea's alliance strengthening behavior".<sup>③</sup>。

Thus it can be seen that China's measures to maintain regional stability and the release of reputation signals are interpreted by South Korea as a manifestation of "favoring North Korea". Based on the consideration of the history of interaction, South Korea binds North Korea's reputation for threat to the relationship between China and North Korea, thus raising the perception of China's reputation for threat. At this time, the United States reiterated its "firm support" for South Korea with large-

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① Bong Youngshik, "Continuity Amidst Change: The Korea-United States Alliances," *Global Allies*, ed. Michael Wesley (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017), pp.48.

② Chong Jae Ho, "China's Evolving Views of the Korean-American Alliance, 1953-2012," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.23, No.87 (2014), pp.425-442.

③ Hyon Joo Yoo, "The Korea-US Alliance as a Source of Creeping Tension: A Korean Perspective," *Asian Perspective*, Vol.36, No.2 (April-June 2012), pp.331-351.

scale military exercises, which strengthened South Korea's trust in the reputation of the United States. The increasing interaction with China in economy, trade, diplomacy and humanities has deepened Sino-Korean relations, but has not weakened South Korea's security concerns, which has also driven the formation of South Korea's "hedging" policy to a certain extent.

South Korea's "hedging" tendency and the ambiguity of its attitude towards China became more and more obvious during Park Geun-hye's administration, which was mixed with the positive and negative classification of China's reputation signals. As far as positive factors are concerned, on the economic level, South Korea's exports of goods to China reached 145.3 billion US dollars in 2014, accounting for about a quarter of its total exports in that year, and China is also considered by South Korea as "the most important economic partner in the next ten years". On the security level, because China and North Korea still maintain strong political ties, South Korea believes that China's constructive role and cooperation with China are crucial to the reunification of the peninsula.<sup>①</sup> But at the same time, South Korea also maintains its vigilance against China at the dual level of security and economy. One is that economic dependence has led to a rise in South Korea's perception of China's economic threat. Polls in 2014 showed that about two-thirds of the public regarded China as an economic rather than a military threat and expressed concern about China's rising economic influence. Second, it is still difficult for South Korea to fully trust China on the issue of reunification and security on the peninsula. Taking the DPRK nuclear issue as an example, in January and September 2016, the DPRK conducted its fourth and fifth nuclear tests respectively, and China endorsed and promoted the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council on sanctions against the DPRK, while in September of that year, when the DPRK was severely flooded, China gave it humanitarian assistance from the perspective of the people's livelihood of the DPRK, while South Korea took China's action as a reputation signal. Based on this, it is inferred that China has the intention of "delaying the reunification process of the peninsula" and "using North Korea as a buffer zone", which indirectly contributed to

<sup>①</sup> Ellen Kim and Victor Cha, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," *Asia Policy*, No.21 (January 2016), pp.101-122.

the process of "THAAD entering Korea" promoted by the United States.

In nature, "THAAD's entry into South Korea" is more a forced move for South Korea to cope with its reputation dilemma, which does not indicate the consistency of the strategic direction of the United States and South Korea. After the progressive leader Wen Zaiyin came to power, he took the "Berlin Vision" and the "Three Peace" as the center of his northern policy, released positive diplomatic signals to the DPRK, and advocated a peaceful solution to the DPRK nuclear issue.<sup>①</sup> After North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test (hydrogen bomb test) in September 2017, South Korea still deleted the negative expression of hostility to North Korea in the Defense White Paper of 2018 and signed the Pyongyang Joint Declaration with North Korea. These actions show that South Korea has taken the initiative to weaken its reputation as a threat to North Korea, and the differences in attitudes between the United States and South Korea towards North Korea have also led to differences within the alliance.

In addition, the discord between Japan and South Korea has also led to South Korea's contempt for Japan's security support, as exemplified by South Korea's attitude towards the Military Intelligence Protection Agreement (GSOMIA). The agreement aims to achieve the exchange of sensitive military intelligence between Japan and South Korea. Since its signing in 2016, the intelligence agreement has played a huge role in North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, but in August 2019, South Korea announced that it would not renew the agreement with Japan. The reason is that Moon Jae-in's government demanded that Japanese enterprises compensate for the loss of labor during the Japanese occupation era, and then the Japanese government restricted the export of chip raw materials to South Korea, which caused huge losses to the Korean semiconductor industry, while South Korea also imposed a retaliatory boycott on Japanese products, and eventually raised this friction to the decoupling of bilateral security. Although South Korea finally agreed to extend the agreement under the pressure of the United States, it can be seen that although Japan and South Korea belong to the Asia-Pacific alliance system of the United States, the historical reputation problems between the two countries make South Korea

<sup>①</sup> Zhai Fusheng, Moon Jae-in Government's Policy toward North Korea under the "Triple Squeeze", Asia-Pacific Security and Ocean Research, No.5, 2021.

dissatisfied with Japan, US-Japan relations and alliance system structure. Due to the existence of the North Korean threat and the "ambiguous" perception of China's reputation, South Korea can only choose a hedging form of "far from checks and balances, far from bandwagoning" in order to maintain a balance between alliance actions and foreign interests.

## **Conditions for the Formation of Reputation Perception in South Korea**

### **Mixed Conditions for Perceived Reputation of American Resolve**

South Korea's "doubt" about the US's resolve and reputation is the result of both positive and negative conditions, which are manifested in the relative lack of support capacity (-), the stable development of interaction (+) and the swing of ideology (N).

First, discuss South Korea's ability to support as an ally. It is undeniable that the number of troops stationed in South Korea and the growth of its military strength are crucial to the implementation of the US Asia-Pacific strategy, but from the perspective of alliance management, the US Asia-Pacific alliance is deeply influenced by the US-Japan alliance and Japan-South Korea relations because of its hub-and-spoke nature. Although the three countries share similar external threats and values, the differences in support capabilities between Japan and South Korea make their positions in the Asia-Pacific alliance system different. According to Womack's "triangle asymmetry" model, the United States, Japan and South Korea constitute a "romantic triangle" with the United States (X) as the axis and Japan and South Korea (Y and Z) as the wings, which is highlighted by the positive correlation between the axis and the wings and the negative correlation between the two wings.<sup>①</sup> Moreover, in the "romantic triangle", there is a possibility that one party is abandoned and the other two parties form a "marriage relationship", and South Korea, as a weak party, faces this danger.

At the same time, the maintenance of this asymmetric triangle depends on the stable relationship between XY and XZ. The more stable this relationship is, the less likely YZ will form an autonomous connection. The theory of "quasi-alliance" also

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<sup>①</sup> Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.103.

holds that only when the commitment of the guarantor country is fragile and the threat of the opponent is high, the two unrelated allies will try to develop an alliance relationship, otherwise "friction will arise between the two countries when they show asymmetric needs on the concerns of" abandonment "and" involvement ".<sup>①</sup>。 This may explain why the situation in South Korea did not resonate with Japan when considering the reputation of the United States for its resolve in the Korean battlefield. Because of the difference in the role of the alliance, "Japan can perceive the strong commitment of the United States, but South Korea can not", which leads to South Korea's weak sense of the resolve of the United States, coupled with the historical contradictions such as territory and war between Japan and South Korea, as a weak party, South Korea has a long-term fear of "being abandoned", and can not really believe in the resolve and reputation of the alliance.

In terms of interaction, the stable exchange of high-level visits and the frequency of military exercises between the United States and South Korea are conducive to the maintenance of the alliance to a certain extent. Even during the Roh Moo-hyun era, when relations between the United States and South Korea were at a low ebb, South Korea still participated extensively in coalition operations, such as sending 3000 combat and non-combat personnel to participate in the U.S. war on terrorism and committing \$200 million to the post-war reconstruction of Iraq. In April 2007, the United States and South Korea also reached a free trade agreement, which became the largest trade agreement signed by the United States since the North American Free Trade Agreement. Despite the adverse impact of Trump's repressive withdrawal policy, the overall performance of the US-ROK alliance remained stable, with 14 high-level exchanges between the United States and South Korea in 2020 (including summits, telephone calls, ministerial/vice-ministerial meetings) and 33, 91 and 30 joint military exercises in 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively. South Korea still regards the US-South Korea alliance as the "foundation of national defense capability".

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① Anna Kim, "Understanding Japan-South Korea Cooperation and Friction Through Neoclassical Realist Theory," *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, Vol.24, No.1 (2020), pp.28-52.

In terms of ideology, South Korea's judgment of the reputation of the United States is neutral. On the one hand, the US-South Korea alliance shows the asymmetric advantage of the United States over South Korea, on the other hand, it also shows the asymmetric advantage of South Korea over the United States in terms of "attention". The difference in attention stems from the difference in interests and needs, but it can give security dependent countries the potential to shape alliance issues, and then balance the status of both sides of the alliance. Therefore, it can be found that the South Korean government and media have consciously used some negative events involving the reputation of the United States (mainly involving the US military stationed in South Korea) to exert influence on public opinion. In addition, with the development of economy and the deepening of democratization, the intergenerational differences of Korean population have also led to the change of national consciousness. The extensive participation of the "386" generation in the civil rights movement strengthened the perception of inequality in US-South Korea relations in this context, and "took the United States as an object to test national extensiveness and autonomy". However, it should be noted that the progressive political positioning of the younger generation in South Korea is largely based on its tendency of "ethnic nationalism", which on the one hand can restrain the adherence policy of the upper class, on the other hand, it is easy to be deliberately incited and utilized by the conservative elite (such as emphasizing the so-called "external threat" to consolidate the US-South Korea alliance). As a result, the national ideology swings left and right, and then affects the election results and the trend of foreign policy. So generally speaking, the space of ideological autonomy makes South Korea hold a neutral evaluation of the role of American resolve and reputation, but this autonomy is still subject to the fundamental goal of alliance security.

### **Mixed Conditions for Reputation Perception of China Threat**

South Korea's judgment of China's reputation for threat is based on the negative side of security (-) and the neutral attitude of historical memory (N) and legitimate

identity (N).

From the perspective of security disputes, there are no direct territorial and sovereignty disputes between China and South Korea, and South Korea's insecurity towards China mainly comes from the close relationship between China and North Korea and the pressure of China's rise. The Sino-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed by China and the DPRK in 1961 has continued since its entry into force, which stipulates that the other party "provides military and other assistance" in the event of an armed attack. In fact, the treaty emphasizes more on mutual assistance, cooperation and defense, and does not have the characteristics of a similar alliance "against a third party", but South Korea believes that China's tough stance on the DPRK nuclear issue "does not indicate that China's policy towards the DPRK has changed". In addition, South Korea believes that China's rise has brought about negative externalities of security. On issues related to China's sovereignty and territorial security, such as the South China Sea, South Korea's political, academic and media circles all hold obscure critical positions on China's demands, which contain concerns about the so-called "imbalance of power structure" and "extension of great power status". It also shows the sensitivity of medium-sized countries to the balance of power of big powers and the subjectivity of judging the intentions of big powers in the sub-regional environment. South Korean scholar Kim Woo-sang believes that "a key medium-sized country like South Korea can be a powerful complement to the United States in maintaining its power superiority while containing potential challengers (China)", and that South Korea should "persuade China to become a responsible member of the status quo system".<sup>①</sup>Based on this preconceived "corrective" misjudgment of China, South Korea negatively correlates the "long-term relative gains" of its own security with the growth of China's power, thus worsening the perception of China's reputation for threat.

In terms of historical memory, China has the greatest influence on the cultural radiation of neighboring countries in East Asian history, while the geographical

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<sup>①</sup> Kim Woosang, "Rising China, pivotal middle power South Korea, and alliance transition theory," *International Area Studies Review*, Vol.18, No.3 (2015), pp.251-265.



location of the Korean Peninsula adjacent to Northeast China and the Yellow River Basin also makes it deeply embedded in the Han cultural circle of East Asia, and the cultural traditions shared by China and South Korea are the basis for building mutual trust between the two countries. At the same time, China and South Korea have similar war memories of being colonized and invaded in modern history, and have the same appeal on the issue of Japan's apology, and the geographical and historical particularity of the Korean War has not caused substantial burden to the development of Sino-Korean relations. However, there are still great differences in cultural respect and historical recognition between the two countries, which are mainly manifested in the differences in tributary relations, Koguryo history, Bohai history and Dongyi culture.<sup>①</sup>In recent years, South Korea's frequent "World Heritage Application" and its high vigilance against China's "Northeast Project" have given South Korean media space to hype the so-called "cultural hegemonism" of China, thus arousing its domestic nationalist sentiment, and the plight of South Korea's rise in modern times has also made it extremely sensitive to external cultural threats.

In terms of legitimacy recognition, South Korea also holds a neutral attitude towards China's rise, which includes a positive response to the development opportunities in East Asia and a negative view of the future regional security order, but this does not mean that South Korea's understanding of legitimacy should be simply equated with the dual dependence form of "relying on China economically and the United States for security". In fact, the perception of legitimacy comes from the cause, procedure and internalization of rule-making, which correspond to the power view of realism, the institutional view of neoliberalism and the normative identity view of constructivism. In other words, in order to meet or have met certain security needs (the origin of order corresponds to power or security aspirations), countries will consider benefiting existing members through certain procedures (international and regional institutional design), and then achieve the legitimate restraint and collective recognition of order through the internalization of rules (interaction and common knowledge), and the fundamental goal of legitimacy is to achieve the autonomous

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<sup>①</sup> Li Zongxun. The Study of Koguryo in Korea and Its Historical View: Focusing on the Ownership of Koguryo. 4 *Historiography*, 92 (2004).

acceptance of members.

From this point of view, the reason why South Korea still has a high recognition of the legitimacy of the United States is that, on the one hand, it is due to the sustained impact of the initial security supply of the United States, on the other hand, it is due to the "path dependence" on the regional order governed by the United States, but it has not yet reached the level of normative internalization. South Korea's perception of China's threat to its reputation is also largely influenced by its legitimate recognition of China. As China's power and influence has grown, South Korea has diverged sharply from the United States and other allies on a number of issues. For example, South Korea has actively participated in the construction of The Belt and Road Initiative, Asian Investment Bank and RCEP negotiations, and has carried out extensive cooperation with China in the fields of telecommunications, transportation and energy. In addition, unlike allies such as Japan, Australia and Canada, South Korea has rejected US threats and pressure demands on Huawei and 5G. However, it should also be noted that due to uncertainties about the prospects of competition among major powers and regional order, South Korea still maintains close cooperation with the United States in Indo-Pacific strategy, trust-building mechanism and intelligence exchange, and the current improvement of Sino-South Korean relations "has a ceiling".<sup>①</sup> Generally speaking, South Korea's enhanced recognition of China's legitimacy weakens its perception of reputation for threat, but the lack of security guarantees between the two sides makes the weakening effect still relatively limited.

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<sup>①</sup> Fang yuanyuan, Huang Bei, Limits to the Improvement of Sino-Korean Relations, International Political Science, No.1, 2020, p. 163.

## **4.2.2 Case 2: Thaad's Entry into South Korea and the Reputation Interaction between China, the United States and South Korea**

The "THAAD" incident in 2016 fully reflects South Korea's strategic choice of "forced hedging", and also exposes its helpless situation of being "strategically kidnapped" by the leader of the alliance in the context of the system of great power competition, resulting in a reputation dilemma.

In September 2016, the DPRK conducted its fifth nuclear test, which was condemned by all international parties, including China, and the UN Security Council imposed corresponding sanctions on the DPRK. Before the nuclear test, North Korea had conducted a test of a submarine-launched ballistic missile (August 2016), which caused panic in South Korea, which urged the United States to redeploy its strategic defense system and high-altitude ballistic missile defense capability. At this time, the United States deployed B-52 and B-2 bombers in the Guam area to demonstrate its resolve, and then Secretary of State John Kerry reiterated that "the United States will firmly defend its security commitment to its regional allies" and "will not accept North Korea as a nuclear state".<sup>①</sup>

On September 20 of the same year, the DPRK launched a satellite carrier rocket, and the United States and South Korea unanimously decided to deploy THAAD as soon as possible. China "strongly urges relevant parties to immediately stop the deployment process" and promote dialogue and reconciliation to resolve the issue while safeguarding the consistent position of international nuclear non-proliferation, while South Korea believes that China's move is a "violation of sovereignty and national security".

Before the "THAAD" incident, China and South Korea had close diplomatic and

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<sup>①</sup> John Kerry: "Press statement", DoS, Washington, Jan 6, 2016.

economic and trade relations, frequent exchanges between leaders, and several summit meetings, telephone talks and state visits. The deployment of THAAD AN/TPY2 radar and its 2000 km coverage seriously threaten China's national security, and have aroused China's high concern and strong opposition, which has seriously damaged the economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China and South Korea. In addition, the incident exposed the dilemma of South Korea's unwillingness to "choose sides" between China and the United States. On the one hand, South Korea hopes to ease the security situation on the peninsula by strengthening cooperation with China and alienate the relationship between China and North Korea (North Korea did express its dissatisfaction with the approaching relationship between China and South Korea, and North Korea conducted missile tests before Chinese leaders visited South Korea in 2014 and after the G20 Summit in Hangzhou in 2016). On the other hand, it is worried that "China will take advantage of South Korea's predicament to weaken the US-South Korea alliance" and aggravate South Korea's "abandonment" dilemma, which creates a dilemma for South Korea in security cooperation with China. In terms of relations with the United States, South Korea has many doubts about the consequences of the introduction of THAAD, and it does not want to be in a situation of being trapped by the interests of China and the United States, so it is afraid of being "implicated" by the US decision. In fact, South Korea has not received support from the United States after China's economic counter-measures, which has also led to the discontent of its domestic public opinion.

On the THAAD issue, Moon Jae-in criticized the previous government's decision for "lack of procedural legitimacy" and suspended the deployment of the THAAD system, claiming that it would be decided after a comprehensive environmental assessment. At the same time, Moon Jae-in also made a "three noes" commitment to China, that is, not to consider the additional deployment of THAAD, not to participate in the missile defense system of the United States and not to develop the tripartite military cooperation between the United States, Japan and South Korea into an alliance. The United States and Japan regard South Korea's commitment as "a move

beyond hedging to cater to the interests of Beijing and Pyongyang", and Cha Weide also believes that South Korea's actions on the THAAD issue "not only annoys its neighbors (China and North Korea), but also offends its allies". Despite North Korea's missile threat, Moon Jae-in's government finally agreed to the full deployment of the system, but unlike the Trump administration's strategy of "extreme pressure" on North Korea and China, South Korea still seeks room for cooperation on the Peninsula issue, and the contradiction between the strategic needs of the United States and South Korea and defense sharing also strengthens South Korea's character attribution to the reputation of the United States.

To sum up, South Korea has not been a "faithful" ally from the beginning of the formation of the US-South Korea alliance to the balance between the great powers after the Cold War, and the personality attribution of the US resolve to reputation and the vague perception of China's threat to reputation have caused the dilemma of South Korea's reputation perception, which has forced it to adopt a hedging policy. However, with the intensification of competition between China and the United States, South Korea's security deficit will gradually increase, while hedging space will be further compressed, and even must face the passive situation of "choosing sides" between China and the United States. In addition, in order to manage the alliance and contain China, the United States will continue to focus on North Korea's nuclear threat in the future to maintain its strategic needs in Northeast Asia. Especially in the context of North Korea's de facto possession of nuclear weapons, the Biden administration will promote the consolidation and transformation of the US-South Korea alliance and expand South Korea's regional influence as a middle power. But in the long run, South Korea's national interests and policy independence will be further weakened, the absolute dominance of the United States over the alliance will also squeeze South Korea's foreign balance policy and domestic progressive atmosphere, and conservative domestic and foreign policies will increase the risk of South Korea being "implicated".

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion**

Taking Japan and South Korea as examples, this paper studies the differences in the "hedging" behavior of the United States' Asia-Pacific allies in the context of regional power competition, and explains the differences from the perspective of reputation perception and interaction. The reason for choosing to compare Japan and South Korea is that the two countries have certain similarities in geographical proximity, threat perception, cultural background and alliance nature, but the different conditions of reputation perception lead to different hedging patterns.

For Japan, its positive attitude toward the US's resolve and reputation comes from its relatively strong ability to support the alliance, its good interactive relationship with the leader of the alliance, and its ideological compatibility, which makes it difficult for Japan and the United States to misjudge the reputation signals, thus maintaining the stability of the alliance. At the same time, there are long-term disputes between China and Japan on bilateral security, historical issues and legitimate identity, which affect the judgment of the two countries' intentions, and directly magnify the negative factors in the subsequent reputation interaction, thus strengthening Japan's perception of China's threat to reputation, and ultimately leading it to adopt the hedging strategy of "approaching checks and balances, away from

bandwagoning".

For South Korea, the threat of geopolitical security makes it dependent on the US-South Korea alliance, but at the same time, the secondary position in the alliance system and the lack of "bargaining power" heighten South Korea's fear of "being abandoned", which is manifested in doubts about the resolve and reputation of the United States. Some scholars believe that "the main logic supporting the maintenance and order construction of the US-ROK alliance is still the response of both sides to common interests", and this view that only situational factors explain the positive role of the alliance reflects the weak reputation basis between the US and ROK. In terms of relations with China, South Korea's concerns mainly come from the vague perception of China's reputation signals and the indirect threat of geopolitics, but the improvement of its legitimate identity shows that South Korea recognizes China's positive role in international affairs, so South Korea is afraid of being "abandoned" by the United States, but also worried about being "implicated" by the tough strategy of the alliance leader against China. This dilemma between "abandon-entrapment" and "common interests-special interests" has pushed South Korea into the middle ground of hedging strategies.

Through the comparison of reputation perception between the two countries, we can also find the forms of reputation interaction under a certain system background. Because reputation signals are public information, there may be a third, fourth or even more observers in the reputation interaction of any two parties in China, the United States, Japan and South Korea, which also requires the investigation of reputation interaction within a certain system framework, including both the international system of great power competition and the sub-system of alliances. Therefore, when choosing the Asia-Pacific allies of the United States as the research object, this paper includes two system factors: "Sino-US relations" and "hub-and-spoke system". If there are more powers in the region or the alliance structure is different, the policy orientation of the allies will change. As far as this paper is concerned, the hierarchical nature of the alliance subsystem makes Japan and South Korea show different concerns when

observing each other's reputation interaction with the United States (Japan is afraid of "implicating" while South Korea is afraid of "abandoning"), and Japan and South Korea also show different performances when dealing with the reputation interaction between the two system powers of China and the United States. Taking the Nixon period as an example, in the face of urgent external threats and the relaxation of great powers, Japan smoothly survived the fluctuation of the alliance and took the opportunity to enhance the equality of the alliance, while South Korea reacted fiercely to the relaxation of Sino-US relations and the decline of the reputation of the leader of the alliance. This is because Japan's ability to support the United States and its reputation base allow it to objectively examine the strategic needs and resolve of the United States from the perspective of the trilateral interaction between China, the United States and the Soviet Union, and to put forward alliance demands. South Korea can only perceive the change of the reputation of the United States from the bilateral perspective of "the United States and the Communist Camp", which results in the difference between the two.

The reputation perception of allies will also react on the future interaction between China and the United States, which mainly involves the difference of "sensitivity" and "vulnerability" of reputation between China and the United States at this stage. Because reputation is generally "interdependent" and "prestige is the reputation of power", for the United States with a large number of allies, its reputation record and the prestige of the leader of the alliance are directly related to the projection of the image of the United States, MacDonald believes that "when the degree of interdependence and concentration of foreign commitments is high, big powers will shrink. This is also the reason why the reputation of the United States in the alliance is "sensitive". As far as China is concerned, at present, China still pursues an "independent" foreign policy, does not seek foreign alliances, nor does it make security commitments or security protection to other countries. At the same time, due to the current tense situation of Sino-US relations, the rising countries will inevitably be "threatened and accused" when they evade the checks and balances of the US



alliance, which increases the "vulnerability" of China's overall reputation, which is rooted in the "third party" targeting characteristics and military nature of the alliance. The specific impact of ally perception on great power strategy is as bandwagonings:

First, as the leader of the alliance, the United States will exaggerate the risk of China's power growth in order to achieve "alliance pre-resistance". When explaining the "wedge strategy" of the alliance, Crawford defined it as "the strategy to prevent, destroy or weaken the alliance", and with the rise of China, the United States put the focus of the strategy on the "pre-emption" of potential alliances with China in order to prevent the emergence of "anti-American alliance" in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the implementation of the "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy, the United States has carried out "selective debugging" of the alliance through the "Diaoyu Island" dispute between China and Japan, the "Sade" incident between China and South Korea, and the "South China Sea" contradiction between China and the Philippines, in addition to the "South China Sea" issue between China and the Philippines. The United States has basically achieved the desired objectives in strategic mobilization, decision-making and implementation. With the Biden administration's repair and strengthening of the alliance, the United States will continue to show strong resolve on China-related issues in the future to make up for the cost of domestic and foreign audiences.

Secondly, China is actively seeking to enhance mutual trust with neighboring countries, while refuting the "stigmatization" of the United States with reliable reputation signals. Signaling theory holds that the distinction between "well-intentioned" countries and "malicious" countries should not only focus on their behavior, but also on the motivation behind their behavior. Montemogli points out that the reason why "well-intentioned" countries have some non-cooperative behavior is that the risk and vulnerability costs of cooperative behavior are too high. When Jodl studied the credibility of China's diplomatic signals, he also pointed out that the observed negative signals of China's policy focused on issues related to China's core interests, and that China's "non-cooperation" behavior in these areas reflected a country's sense of insecurity, so it could not be used as a credible negative indicator.

In addition, when the United States exerts pressure on China's sovereignty, economy and human rights, China still releases its willingness to cooperate and actively provides public goods, which reflects the reliability of cooperation signals. Therefore, the accumulation of China's positive reputation in the future will further improve the reputation perception of neighboring countries and reduce the misjudgment in reputation interaction.

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