

# Should the Quad Become a Formal Alliance?

DR. JOHN HEMMINGS

*It is my purpose, as one who lived and acted in those days to show how easily the tragedy of the Second World War could have been prevented . . . how counsels of prudence and restraint . . . how the middle course adopted from desires for safety and a quiet life may be found to lead direct to the bull's eye of disaster.*

—Winston S. Churchill

There is a growing contradiction in the security situation in the Indo-Pacific. The more possible a conflict over Taiwan has become, and the more that China's hegemonic intentions are revealed<sup>1</sup>—at both the regional and global level—the more that the leaders of the US-Japan-Australia-India Quadrilateral, (herein called the “Quad”) hedge about the group's ultimate purpose. Indeed, they seem to go out their way to avoid defining the Quad as an alliance<sup>2</sup> or a form of security architecture, which is quite at odds with what both history and international relations theory suggest should occur. In an interview with media in September 2021, for example, a senior US official called the Quad “an unofficial gathering,” adding that “there is not a military dimension to it or a security dimension.”<sup>3</sup> Only six months previously, India's Army Chief General M.M. Naravane told the Indian media that while there would “definitely be military cooperation both bilaterally between the countries of the Quad and as a quadrilateral also, it would not be a military alliance in that sense.”<sup>4</sup> Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison—fresh from the diplomatic flurry caused by the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) submarine deal—was also ambiguous: “The Quad is a partner, whether it be for China or any other country in the region, we're there to make the region stronger, more prosperous, more stable.”<sup>5</sup> This approach seems counter to international relations theories that examine the rise of expansionist or hegemonic aspirants.

According to one of the most prominent theories, neorealism,<sup>6</sup> state behavior is driven primarily by the distribution of material capabilities in the international system and changes in that distribution are a source of anxiety: “Rising states pose a challenge to others and inspire them, almost automatically, to balance against the challenger either internally by arming or emulating one another's military practices and technologies, or externally by allying with other states.”<sup>7</sup> While it is true that the Quad members are internally fortifying themselves with military capabilities and that they have created the Quad, a quasi-alliance, it is still a form of underbal-

ancing since they are underplaying its military aspect and eschewing collective defense commitments. This article examines alignments and alliances before the First and Second World War and during the Cold War. Looking at the first two periods, we can see that underbalancing by democracies is not particularly unusual historically. It happens more often than not and often fails to deter aggression by other powers. If one looks at how different types of states create alliances, it is arguable that democracies find it more difficult—for reasons related to the domestic debates within their foreign policy elites<sup>8</sup>—to balance rising threats. This is partly because neither publics nor policy elites are willing to bear the entrapment costs associated with an alliance if there is not a sufficiently threatening rationale to justify it. Indeed, until relatively recently, the very nature of Chinese assertiveness was widely debated among Western international relations scholars.<sup>9</sup> However, those debates are of decreasing relevance as attitudes toward China evolve and it is viewed less positively,<sup>10</sup> and even as a “threat”<sup>11</sup> within all four Quad nations. Thus, this article will argue that not only are policy elites within the Quad underbalancing by avoiding mutual defense commitments, but also that they might be inviting the very aggression by China that they seek to avoid.<sup>12</sup>

### **Alignment Rather than Alliance**

Before addressing this assertion, it is worth exploring the conventional wisdom—generally accepted by this author and many others that the Quadrilateral is not an alliance—informal or otherwise—but rather a form of alignment, a distinction made clear by Thomas Wilkins in his 2012 essay “Alignment not Alliance.”<sup>13</sup> While some Chinese scholars and government representatives have accused the Quad of being an “Asian NATO,” this is incorrect for a number of reasons.<sup>14</sup> It is correct to argue that the Quad—and AUKUS and other trilaterals—should be defined as an alignment. While the terms are used interchangeably, there are key differences between an alignment and an alliance. Michael Ward defines alignment as “more extensive than alliance since it does not focus solely upon the military dimensions of international politics.”<sup>15</sup> One could argue that alliances are a form of alignment, but not the other way around because of the necessary characteristics of alliances—that of mutual or one-sided defense obligations. If we examine the Quad’s 2021 Joint Statement, for example, we can see there are a broad range of issues of cooperation—including COVID-19 vaccinations, emerging technologies, and support for “a rules-based order,” “a shared vision for the free and open Indo-Pacific,” a willingness to address “challenges to the rules-based maritime order in the East and South China Seas,” and support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ “unity and centrality.”<sup>16</sup> Alliances, by contrast, are defined by Glenn Snyder as “formal associations of states for the

use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership.”<sup>17</sup>

We might go further and say that alliances lay a more specific commitment—that of military cooperation or mutual defense—upon their members, while alignments do not. These commitments are traditionally spelled out in a treaty—open or secret<sup>18</sup>—and though sometimes couched in ambiguous language,<sup>19</sup> are reinforced politically, during senior bilateral visits, important anniversaries, or during tensions with a third country. So, to summarize, we can say clearly that the Quad is not an alliance because it does not rest on a principle of collective defense and its members do not anticipate or expect that. Some might argue that the Quad is a *de facto* alliance because it contains members of two alliances—the US-Japan Alliance and the US-Australia Alliance—indeed there is a certain fuzziness there—but those obligations do not make the Quad itself a collective arrangement. In the late 1990s, Ralph Cosa and others referred to the US-Japan-ROK trilateral as a “virtual alliance,”<sup>20</sup> but agreed that it was not a full alliance. In the case of the Quad, Australia does not expect either the Quad or the US-Japan Alliance to come to its defense in the case of hostilities with a third country.<sup>21</sup> It relies on its own pact with the United States. This does not mean that the Quad or the US-Japan Alliance do not play a role in Australia’s strategic calculations, but that those calculations do not fully anticipate reliance on those bodies.

### **Making the Case**

Some historical events have had a lasting impact on Western policy elites and how they view alliances. Nearly every schoolchild learns how alliances helped lead Europe into war in 1914.<sup>22</sup> However, there is a good argument that historians and policy elites have drawn the wrong lessons from that period. This because the Triple Entente—consisting of Great Britain, France, and Russia—was not in fact a binding alliance at all. Instead, it was an informal agreement which lacked defense obligations, similar to the contemporary US-Japan-Australia-India Quad. It was, as I will argue, a form of underbalancing, which lacked strong mutual defense obligations—and thus—a strong deterrent posture. Mirroring the softening language of the Quad’s “unofficial gathering,” Lord Grey called the Triple Entente a “diplomatic group” in August 1914, in remarks to the House of Commons. Rather than seeking to reassure his allies, he sought to allay the domestic fears of entrapment: “Nothing which passed between [our] military or naval experts should bind either government or restrict in any way, their freedom to make a decision as to whether or not they would give that support when the time arose.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Britain stood by when Germany declared war on Russia and France, only coming in on the side of its allies after Germany invaded neutral Belgium.<sup>24</sup> So,

while Britain's desire for autonomy and aversion to entrapment sounds like a natural foreign policy decision, it likely meant that it lacked the ability to deter Germany and the Central Powers from waging war or establishing hegemony.

The origins of the Second World War reveal how the lack of strong alliances invited aggression from a revisionist state. In the months before the Munich Crisis, the Soviet Union (USSR) attempted to form an alliance with France and Great Britain to deter German adventurism. While the formation of an alliance with Stalin's USSR would have been difficult politically, the subsequent threat of a two-front war would certainly have stayed Germany's hand and weakened German territorial ambitions in Central Europe.<sup>25</sup> The lack of a UK-France-Russia united front emboldened Adolf Hitler and ultimately led to Stalin's defection to the Axis side.<sup>26</sup> In fact, if one looks at the history of alliances in the twentieth century, one can see that underbalancing by democratic powers in the face of rising or expansionist powers is more common than one might expect. At a domestic level of analysis, this is because democratic political elites can find it difficult to justify the costs—both in terms of resources and sovereignty—in balancing.<sup>27</sup> Rising defense costs and the loss of sovereignty are unpopular and are often used against them in the political arena. Resistance to “entangling alliances” within US domestic discourse has already been noted, but it should be noted that Great Britain has also had a history of “Splendid Isolation” in an attempt to avoid conflict on the European continent.<sup>28</sup>

If one considers the decade after the Second World War, it is equally clear that the creation of a counterbalancing alliance—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with a credible deterrent—helped contain rising Soviet power and deterred it from expansion into Western Europe. While it is true this did provoke the USSR to build its own alliance bloc—the Warsaw Pact in 1955—it nevertheless created a stable setting for military competition and stymied Soviet political warfare and coercion against individual Western states while creating a group around which smaller and medium sized states could rally. Over time, its memberships, capabilities, and territorial size grew. While there is a cottage industry in academic circles among the original NATO members that criticizes the post-Cold War expansion into Eastern Europe for having worsened relations with Russia,<sup>29</sup> these debates sideline or ignore the reason post-Soviet states were so eager to join NATO in the first place.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, even Russia itself sought NATO membership until 2004,<sup>31</sup> and by some accounts, it was Kosovo—not enlargement—that destroyed Moscow-Washington ties.<sup>32</sup> The fact that many young democracies—newly shorn from the Soviet Empire—would seek their security in a multilateral alliance is testimony to the appeal and success of traditional alliance systems. That is not to say that alliances are perfect, nor to argue that the Quad should recreate the sort of organiza-

tional structures and institutions of NATO—those are unlikely to be desirable or even possible—but it is to argue that the concept of the alliance—with mutual defense commitments—remains salient and useful. In an age of increasing Chinese military capabilities, Chinese nationalism, and its growing appetite for hegemony, only a full alliance can act as a lynchpin for regional security.

### **Is China a Sufficient Threat?**

One argument for not turning the Quad into a formal alliance is that its members are not sufficiently threatened by China to warrant the burdens and risks of such a grouping. While this has been true, it is clear that the trend lines do not bode well for this line of reasoning. The 2018 US *National Defense Strategy* states that “As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future,”<sup>33</sup> while the Japanese *Defense White Paper 2021* states “China has sustained high-level growth of its defense budget without transparency, engaging in broad, rapid improvement of its military power in qualitative and quantitative terms with focus on nuclear, missile, naval and air forces.”<sup>34</sup> The Japanese paper also highlights China’s coercion in the East China Sea and raises concerns about a contingency concerning Taiwan. Australia’s 2020 *Defence Strategic Update* (to the 2016 *Defence White Paper*) says that “Since 2016, major powers have become more assertive in advancing their strategic preferences and seeking to exert influence, including China’s active pursuit of greater influence in the Indo-Pacific. Australia is concerned by the potential for actions, such as the establishment of military bases, which could undermine stability in the Indo-Pacific and our immediate region.”<sup>35</sup> Even India, with its long policy of nonalignment, has suffered a dramatic increase in its threat perception of China in the wake of Chinese encroachment on its northern border. Asked whether China was “enemy number 1” for India at a security conference, India’s Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, responded, “No doubt. . . the threat on the northern borders is much bigger.”<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, the speeches and policies of Xi Jinping indicate that Chinese leaders themselves believe that China should be more assertive and “stand up.”<sup>37</sup> In his 2017 speech to the National Security Work Forum, for example, Xi Jinping argued that Deng Xiaoping’s low-profile approach to Chinese foreign policy was outdated: “At this moment, our diplomatic strategy must keep pace with the times and step out of the stage of ‘hiding our capabilities and biding our time.’”<sup>38</sup> And these exhortations can be seen in the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) rising defense spending<sup>39</sup> and military modernization. Crucially, it has broad maritime territorial

claims across the South China Sea and in the East China Sea, which it seeks to resolve through various gray zone, economic, and paramilitary means<sup>40</sup>—and then attempting to create rules after-the-fact,<sup>41</sup> eschewing both legal and diplomatic compromises. While the South China Sea could not be said to be of existential interest to the Quad members, it is a clear attempt by the PRC to control vast amounts of international waters, and by extension, the global trade that transits those seas. Finally, it has indicated that it has the military capability<sup>42</sup> and the political drive<sup>43</sup> to reinforce them. Most worrying, is the sheer number of exhortations by Xi Jinping for the PRC military to be ready for war at any time, examples of which occurred in July 2017,<sup>44</sup> January 2019,<sup>45</sup> May 2020,<sup>46</sup> October 2020,<sup>47</sup> January 2021,<sup>48</sup> and March 2021.<sup>49</sup>

### **Alliance Skepticism**

Security practitioners and policymakers reading this might surmise that international relations theory is simply insufficient to explain the complex dynamics occurring in the modern international system. Some have argued that alliance theory needs an overhaul<sup>50</sup> and that “virtual alliances” are merely a new development, fitting to the modern security environment. Those who are averse to alliance commitments have a sophisticated understanding of what groupings like the Quad can accomplish without collective security arrangements. However, this aversion to military obligations is not new. In fact, the father of neorealist theory, Kenneth Waltz, directly states that some states do not always obey systemic imperatives, and either misunderstand or misread the structural variables in the system. This is because states are comprised of foreign policy elites who debate and contest interpretations of a state’s national interests, its threats, and which policies will secure it.<sup>51</sup> Democracies are, as I have pointed out, more vulnerable to these internal debates because of their inherent plurality when it comes to the creation of national strategy. When thinking about the Quad, there is in current debates a skepticism toward alliances, which believes that turning the Quad into a formal alliance might antagonize China.<sup>52</sup> To some extent, this argument is related strongly to states in Southeast Asia and the desire to maintain the status quo. In remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue, for example, Singapore prime minister Lee Hsien Loong argued against the creation of “rival blocs” that might “force countries to take sides,” remarks that are repeated in one form or another when considering the geopolitical situation in the region. While these arguments have salience and have shaped how Quad members de-emphasize the China-threat aspect of the Quad, underbalancing a more assertive China is not in their long-term interests as it may impair their ability to deter future aggression. Nor is it really in the interests of Southeast Asian states to delay or weaken efforts by military-able states to build a deterring bloc to Chinese adven-

turism since it is their territory that is at most risk. However, as noted before, this underbalancing behavior is not historically unusual. Consider Belgium in 1940. Prior to its invasion by Germany, it continued to eschew any joint security cooperation or staff talks with France or Britain,<sup>53</sup> and blocked efforts by the two to create a common military bloc against Germany. Its desire to maintain the status quo was higher than its fear of invasion and occupation even though it had previously suffered invasion in 1914 by Germany under the Schlieffen Plan. Consequently, we can see that its strategy of underbalancing—intended to avoid antagonizing a threat—actually enabled and facilitated that same threat. So, while it is clear that some states in Southeast Asia—like Belgium before them—seek to maintain the status quo, it is not clear that their strategies for achieving that are likely to succeed given trends in Beijing’s behavior. Thus, while the Quad states should not ignore the concerns of Southeast Asian states or the implications of Chinese strategic messaging, they must prioritize deterrence and security.

### **Alliances and the Security Dilemma**

Underbalancing on the part of the Quad members, therefore, is in part driven by a “security dilemma issue.” The argument is as follows: the forming an alliance prior to an increased threat environment could in fact lead to a security dilemma,<sup>54</sup> causing the threat to counterbalance to worsen the threat environment. In other words, if the Quad members were to prematurely create a “NATO-in-Asia,” China might respond by becoming more aggressive and relations will suffer a downward spiral similar to that which occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This argument, if examined closely, holds a key assumption that requires testing: that doing X will decrease security, while doing nothing will increase or allow security to remain the same. This is problematic for two reasons, one theoretical and one historical. Theoretically, this overemphasizes the Quad’s agency over that of China in terms of impacting the security environment. One might respond to this argument with the following counterfactual: “Did the absence of the Quad between 2008 and 2017 lead to a decrease in Chinese assertiveness?” If one considers Chinese policies during this period, it is clear to us that this is not true. China went on a major island-building spree across the South China Sea, increased its pressure on Japan in the East China Sea, increased pressure on Taiwan, and began what Rush Doshi calls China’s second displacement strategy (to remove the United States from the region).<sup>55</sup> Thus, we must argue that while the danger of a Chinese response is a real one, the risks in not deterring Chinese adventurism bring with them equivalent or greater risks of emboldening Beijing’s ambitions. There is a follow-on, closely related argument that states that if the United States and other Quad partners create a formal alli-

ance, Beijing will respond by creating its own alliance grouping, perhaps with Russia, or with willing members of the Shanghai Security Cooperation Organization and the region would swiftly fall into rival blocs of nations—a notion discussed within Chinese academic circles.<sup>56</sup> There is a three-part response to this. First, Russia and China are already beginning to align over their dissatisfaction with the liberal rules-based order and their willingness to change it unilaterally or coercively. Their actions across the South China Sea and Arctic Sea indicate a systemic challenge to the fundamental principles of the maritime order,<sup>57</sup> while their rhetoric and arms build-up over Ukraine and Taiwan indicate a willingness to expand territory by force. The strongest counterargument to this line of reasoning is that Sino-Russian military cooperation and coordination is already taking place in the absence of a Quad-alliance. One need only consider how Russia has raised the number of overflights and joint exercises with China in Northeast Asia as well as China's criticism of NATO during the Ukraine crisis. And finally, if rival blocs do arise, this in and of itself need not destabilize the region. It may even stabilize what has been—since 2014—a period of great instability. One need only consider how—after some initial testing of resolve—the two Cold War-era blocs fell into “strategic stability,”<sup>58</sup> which in turn opened room for détente and disarmament downstream.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This article has sought to push back against the accepted wisdom that the Quad should never become an alliance and in fact argued that the four states are underbalancing China in the current security environment. Indeed, this underbalancing has been quite a common mistake for states throughout the history of great-power competition. I have sought to argue—through the lens of twentieth-century history—that alliances are not only useful to prevent conflict and hegemonism, but are also vital. I have noted that, over the past century, there were three separate instances of great-power conflict—the first two involving a hegemonic-minded Germany and the third involving a hegemonic-minded USSR. In the first two instances, liberal democracies were disorganized and unable to present a united front to a potential aggressor and failed to deter aggression. In the third example, liberal democracies were able to present a united front to an aggressor and deterred Soviet invasion. While it is true that they ultimately were compelled to wage a long drawn out “cold” war, aided no doubt by the threat of mutually assured nuclear destruction, this was ultimately preferable to the existential threats of invasion and occupation and both sides were able to de-escalate from a position of “strategic stability.” Again, this is not ideal, but it is far more appealing to great-power conflicts and expansion through war.



Finally, I have argued that the primary argument against turning the Quad into a formal alliance—that of creating a security dilemma with China—can be countered on several points. First, in the absence of the Quad—the years between 2008 and 2017—China did not restrain its own behavior and in fact hastened its aggressive behavior in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Second, while there may be risks in making the Quad a full alliance, there are greater risks in failing to deter China. China’s increasing aggressiveness must be factored into this. Third, looking at the broad totality of Chinese behavior, it is clear that it seeks to reorder or shift the current rules-based system in favor of its own preferences and has not sought to promote this change diplomatically or peacefully, but rather employed military coercion. A full alliance would seem to be a proportionate response to that and might even push China to the negotiating table or to pause its ambitions. It’s worth remembering Churchill’s thesis that it was Hitler’s diplomatic success at Munich in the face of Western weakness that actually empowered Hitler vis-à-vis the German military, and that war could have been prevented by a united front. In terms of strategic messaging, the Quad could attempt to allay Chinese concerns by making two points clear: that the alliance is defensive, and it only seeks to deter the use of force to change territorial boundaries. While such language clearly points to China, it points to what Elbridge Colby—a noted US strategist—calls a “strategy of denial,” not an offensive or invasive strategy.<sup>59</sup>

There are several issues beyond the scope of this article that are worthy of mention, some of them already discussed by the foreign policy community in all four countries. How would the Quad fit into the United States’ traditional alliance system in Asia? Would it be merged or remain separate and distinct? Those questions are beyond the scope of this article, but those issues would have to be settled with New Delhi since it has traditionally been wary of the US alliance system. How might the Quad deal with today’s threats outside of the broadly military? How might it, for example, be established to deal with influence operations, political warfare, and economic coercion? A number of papers indicate that today’s military alliances should have more than just a mutual defense commitment—that they should set the stage for other types of competition and nonkinetic deterrence, perhaps cooperating in supply chains, on key technologies, and over diplomatic incidents. That the four Quad members might do this while still avoiding a NATO-like bureaucracy and structure is possible. The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue’s loose and functional working-group structure might serve as a template for the Quad going forward, particularly since three of its members are already in the Quad. While this article has not fully established all the parameters for becoming a full military alliance, it has shown that democracies that underbalance hegemonic-minded rising states have suffered the consequences. For that reason alone, the

national security communities in all four nations should consider turning the Quad into a full alliance. ♣

### **Dr. John Hemmings**

Dr. Hemmings is a professor at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. His areas of focus are Northeast Asian security, the US alliance system, Japanese defense policy, and Chinese technology policy. He holds adjunct fellowships with a number of think tanks, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Pacific Forum, and the Council on Geostrategy. He earned his master's degree in international peace and security from King's College London in 2007 and his PhD in international relations from the London School of Economics in 2017.

### **Notes**

1. See, for example, Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Daniel Tobin, "How Xi's 'New Era' Should have Ended US Debate on Beijing's Ambitions," CSIS Report, 8 May 2020; "A 'China Model?' Beijing's Promotion of Alternative Norms and Standards," US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Roundtable, 13 March 2020; David Dorman and John Hemmings, "Xi's 'Digital China' Strategy: Renewing National Rejuvenation for the Digital Age," *National Texas Security Review* (under review); "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge," US Department of Defense (Washington, DC: Pentagon, 2018).

2. In most international relations literature, an alliance is a security-minded grouping in which its members commit to each other militarily, for either offensive or defensive reasons. There is usually an implicit or explicit military commitment.

3. Nikki Carvajal, "Biden Officials Stress Quad is an 'Unofficial Gathering Not a Military Alliance,' Ahead of First In-Person Meeting," CNN, 24 Sep 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/>.

4. "Quad Won't Be a Military Alliance but There Will Be Military Cooperation Among Members: Army Chief M.M. Naravane," *Economic Times*, March 26, 2021, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/>.

5. Katheryn Diss, "Scott Morrison Meets Quad Leaders as Australia Gets Serious about Tempering China's Strength," ABC News Australia, 24 Sep 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/>.

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

7. Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 17.

8. See the domestic difficulties and debates on the formation of NATO in Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1969), 264–84; Joe Scarborough, *Saving Freedom: Truman, the Cold War and the Fight for Western Civilization* (New York: Harper Collins, 2020), 144–58; Mira Rapp-Hooper, *Shields of the Republic: The Triumph and Peril of America's Alliances* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 27–31.

9. See, for example: Kathy Gilsinan, "Cliché of the Moment: 'China's Increasing Assertiveness,'" *The Atlantic*, 25 Sep 2015; Bjorn Jerden, "The Assertive China Narrative: Why it is Wrong and How so Many Still Bought into It," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 37–88; Dingding Chen, Xiaoyu Pu, and Alastair Ian Johnston, "Debating China's Assertiveness," *International Security* 38, no. 3 (Winter 2013/14): 176–83; Alastair Ian Johnston, "Is China a Status Quo Power?," *International Security* 27, no. 4 (Spring 2003): 5–56.

10. Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, “Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries,” Pew Research Center, 6 Oct 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/>.
11. Sandeep Unnithan, “Enemy Number One,” *India Today*, 8 Aug 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/>.
12. This article owes much to Elbridge Colby’s discussion of Chinese hegemony in *Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2021), 8–11.
13. Thomas S. Wilkins, “Alignment’, not ‘Alliance’ – the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 2012): 53–76, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210511000209>.
14. Feng, Zhu, “TSD – Euphemism for Multiple Alliance?,” in William Tow et al., eds., *The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue: Facilitating Community-Building or Revisiting Containment?* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), 43.
15. Michael D. Ward, *Research Gaps in Alliance Dynamics* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 194.
16. “Joint Statement from Quad Leaders,” White House, 24 Sep 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.
17. Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 4.
18. There are even *implicit* alliances—those that are unstated—though they are considerably rarer than those discussed. The United States and Israel are not in fact formal allies, but it is understood between the two countries that domestic pressures in the United States would not allow the state of Israel to suffer an existential threat.
19. One can see examples of this ambiguous language in US alliance language. Domestic pressures within the United States, particularly from a US Congress jealous of its prerogatives to declare war, added the phrase “meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes” to US treaties with Australia and New Zealand, with Japan, and with South Korea.
20. Ralph Cossa, ed., *US-Korea-Japan Relations: Building Towards a Virtual Alliance* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 1999).
21. The Quad fits Victor Cha’s definition of a “quasi-alliance” in Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The US-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 36. “The Quasi Alliance is defined as the relationship between two states that remain unallied despite sharing a common ally.”
22. Patricia Weitsman, “Alliance Cohesion and Coalition Warfare: The Central Powers and the Triple Entente,” *Security Studies* 12, no. 3 (2003): 79–119.
23. Statement by Sir Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Hansard Website, HC Deb 03 August 1914, Vol. 65, cc1809-32, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/>.
24. Statement by Sir Edward Gray.
25. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946), 325–27.
26. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, 325–27.
27. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, 325–27.
28. Marie-Christine Veldeman, “Britain and Europe: From ‘Splendid Isolation’ to ‘Semi-Detachment,’” *Equivalences* 39, no. 1–2 (2012): 39–58.
29. See for example, Michael MccGwire, “NATO Expansion: ‘A Policy Error of Historic Importance,’” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 1998); Joshua R. Shiffrin, “Put It in Writing: How the West Broke Its Promise to Moscow,” *Foreign Affairs*, 29 Oct 2014 <http://>

[www.foreignaffairs.com/](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/); John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (October 2014).

30. The idea that some great powers deserve "strategic buffers" is an imperial hangover and an obvious challenge to those nations that are intended to provide that service by dint of their geography.

31. Dimitri V. Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2011), 107.

32. Ted Galen Carpenter, "How Kosovo Poisoned America's Relationship with Russia," *National Interest*, 19 May 2017.

33. "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge," US Department of Defense (Washington, DC: Pentagon, 2018), 2.

34. "Defense of Japan 2021," Ministry of Defense of Japan, 17, <https://www.mod.go.jp/>.

35. "Defence Strategic Update 2020," Australian Department of Defence, 11, <https://www.defence.gov.au/>.

36. "China Biggest Security Threat, says General Bipin Rawat," *Times of India*, 13 Nov 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>.

37. Nadege Rolland, "China's Vision for a New World Order," National Bureau of Asian Research, special report no. 83, 27 Jan 2020.

38. "Xi Jinping's First Mention of the 'Two Guidances' has Profound Meaning," *Study China*, 20 Feb 2017, sourced from Rush Doshi, *The Long Game*, 279.

39. Matthew Funaiole and Brian Hart, "Understanding China's 2021 Defense Budget," CSIS, 5 March 2021, <https://www.csis.org/>.

40. Andrew S. Erickson and Ryan D. Martinson, eds., *China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019).

41. Remarks sourced from interview with Peter Dutton, former Director of the China Maritime Studies Institute, US Naval War College, telephone interview, 8 Sep 2020.

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