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Victor Cha. *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780691144535 (hardcover, $35.00); 9780691180946 (paperback, April 2018, $22.95).

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Contents

Introduction by Mira Rapp-Hooper, Yale Law School

For alliance scholars who are interested in institutional design and U.S. foreign policy in Asia, Victor Cha's 2010 *International Security* article, "Powerplay: The Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia" is a valuable resource.[1] Cha has expanded his article-length treatment into a thoughtful and timely book, and in so doing has given us much to digest and discuss.

Cha's monograph is motivated by a single question: Why was there no multilateral, NATO-like alliance in East Asia? Cha expands and further specifies his 2010 thesis, arguing that variation in great-power alliance design choices can be explained by two independent variables: the power symmetry or asymmetry between prospective partners, and the intensity of entrapment and abandonment fears between them. In Asia, Cha argues, early Cold War statesmen opted for a bilateral 'hub-and-spokes' system of pacts to maximize control over reckless allies while minimizing the risk of entanglement. To deduce his theory, Cha draws upon several strands of the alliance literature, building upon Glenn Snyder and other studies of entrapment and abandonment fears, Paul Schroeder, Patricia Weitsman, and Jeremy Pressman's work on alliance as tools of control, and the rationalist literature on institutional design.[2]

Cha applies this framework to three detailed, richly-sourced, and lively case studies of alliance formation decisions, exploring the decisions of U.S. policymakers to extend security guarantees to Taiwan under Chiang Kai-Shek, South Korea under Syngman Rhee, and postwar Japan.

In *Powerplay,* Cha meets a genuine historical puzzle with a novel theoretical framework and does so at an important time. Well before the 2016 presidential election, it had clearly dawned on U.S. policymakers that the structure of the alliance system in Asia was antiquated, and could be usefully supplemented by a 'security network' of ties amongst hub-and-spokes partners (see, e.g., Obama Administration calls for a 'principled security network' in Asia, particularly from Secretary of Defense Ash Carter). During and since the election, Donald Trump and his team have expressed deep skepticism about the value of U.S. alliance investments. In the face of a militarily powerful China and increasingly dangerous North Korea, this may make it all the more likely that traditional allies seek to forge ties amongst themselves. Cha's framework and case studies not only help us to understand why the Asian alliance system looks the way it does, but may give policymakers useful language for explaining how and why it is in need of a twenty-first century renovation.

Below, three terrific scholars share their reviews of *Powerplay,* wrestling with Cha's theory, supporting evidence, and policy implications. Zack Cooper argues that the biggest flaw in Cha's argument is to be found

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[1] Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the US Alliance System in Asia," *International Security* 34:3 (2010): 158-196.

[2] Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36:4 (1984): 461-495; Paul W. Schroeder, "Alliances, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management," *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). 195-222; Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Barbara Koremenos, Charles Lipson, and Duncan Snidal, "The Rational Design of International Institutions," *International Organization* 55:4 (2001): 761-799.

in its own strength. If a powerplay argument for bilateral alliances was so persuasive, why did the United States not adopt it in Europe too, where much of the same logic prevailed? Cooper notes that Cha's book lacks variation on both the independent (powerplay logic) and dependent (bilateral versus multilateral alliance) variables, making the theory itself hard to substantiate. He also notes that the scope conditions of the theory appear to change over the course of the argument. Indeed, Cooper observes that Cha's driving question appears to evolve over the course of the book: he sets out to address why states choose bilateral as opposed to multilateral alliances, arguing that institutional design can be explained by perceived entrapment risks. Cha actually ends up answering a different, but no less important question: why do states choose close versus distant alliances?

Van Jackson makes three observations about *Powerplay.* First, he notes that Cha does not explain the precise mechanism by which alliances allow great powers to exert control over their junior partners. Second and relatedly, Jackson argues that Cha does not fully make the theoretical case for why bilateralism is an ideal control mechanism, as opposed to a fallback option in cases where multilateralism is undesirable. Third, Jackson wonders whether the United States' decision to form a series of bilateral pacts in Asia might just as well be explained by historical contingency and regional constraints that would have made a multilateral system difficult or impossible.

James Curran raises a historian's lens to Cha's work and notes that *Powerplay* does not examine the formation of other U.S. alliances in Asia in the early Cold-War period, arguing that some of these historical cases might have substantiated Cha's framework. Curran examines the reasons the United States first declined and then agreed to conclude a defense pact with Australia, arguing for a typical realist logic: once the Cold War had spread to Asia, the time was right. Curran also notes, however, that Australia's preoccupation with Indonesia presented an entrapment risk to U.S. leaders, causing them to equivocate on the precise nature of the commitment. Curran's own rich treatment of the Australia case in fact returns us to Cooper's critique, however: If Cha's powerplay logic can explain the Australia alliance, which ultimately became a multilateral one, is it really explaining institutional design or is it better understood as an explanation of alliance closeness?

All three of these reviewers are keen observers of U.S. foreign policy, strategy, and alliances in Asia. All three have spent time in government, and a scholar-practitioner sensibility is reflected in their reviews. Perhaps most importantly, all three agree that U.S. alliances in Asia are at a fundamental inflection point, and that Cha's *Powerplay* lends unique insight to both the origins and the possible futures of these longstanding pacts. Their thoughtful critiques of Cha's work only strengthen the case for why this book is an important and timely contribution to the alliance literature and to our understanding of U.S. foreign policy in Asia. We are not able to include a response from Professor Cha in the roundtable at this time, but anticipate that one will be forthcoming.

Participants:

Mira Rapp-Hooper is a Senior Fellow at the Paul Tsai China Center and a Senior Research Scholar at Yale Law School. Her academic work has appeared in *Security Studies*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and others, and her policy commentary appears in *Foreign Affairs*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Washington Quarterly*, among others. Dr. Rapp-Hooper's first book is forthcoming with Harvard University Press.

Zack Cooper is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). While at CSIS, he has published numerous studies on Asian security issues and his research has also appeared in *International*

Security, Security Studies, and elsewhere. He previously served on staff at the National Security Council and the Department of Defense.

Van Jackson is Senior Lecturer in International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington. He is the author of the book *Rival Reputations: Coercion and Credibility in US-North Korea Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). From 2009-2014, he held positions in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

James Curran is Professor at the University of Sydney, where teaches courses in Australian political culture and foreign policy, as well as the history of America's relations with the world. His latest book, *Unholy Fury: Whitlam and Nixon at War*, is a study of the Australia-U.S. Alliance from the signing of the ANZUS treaty in 1951 to the early days of the Hawke government. He has served in the Australian Department of Defense and Office of National Assessments.

Review by Zack Cooper, Center for Strategic and International Studies

I n a political climate hostile to alliances, Victor Cha's *Powerplay* provides an important reminder of the virtues of the post-Cold War alliance system in Asia. Cha makes a convincing case for the value of U.S. alliances with South Korea, Japan, and others. Additionally, his "powerplay" logic establishes a new theoretical explanation for the emergence of the 'hub-and-spokes' alliance system in Asia. These are significant contributions and deserving of praise.

Cha set outs to answer a question posed by a former student: "Why did the United States choose a different framework of alliances for Asia than what was pursued in Europe?" (xi). In particular, why did Washington join the multilateral North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe but favor bilateral alliances with South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines in Asia? Cha's answer is that the United States chose to execute what he calls a "powerplay" over its Asian allies in order to minimize the risk of entrapment.

The central idea of this strategy is that "deepening the alliance tie creates more dependence, and also more control over the ally" (26). Thus, close bilateral alliances allowed the United States to control potentially revisionist allies by "chaining" Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan (65) and practicing "Rhee-straint" in South Korea (94). Most existing international relations theory suggests that states distance themselves from allies that they fear may entrap them in unwanted conflicts.[1] In his case studies on Washington's approach to Taipei and Seoul during the early Cold War, Cha demonstrates that U.S. leaders did not abide by these predictions and instead followed a different logic. Rather than keep them at an arm's length, U.S. leaders sought to control revisionist allies by holding them close.

Powerplay's main shortcoming derives not from the weakness of the powerplay logic, but from its strength. Cha is so intrigued by why the United States adopted close alliances in Asia that he seems to ultimately overlook his initial puzzle. Namely, if the powerplay rationale is so persuasive, why did the United States not adopt the powerplay strategy in Europe and construct bilateral alliances there as well?

In this respect, Cha's choice of case studies leaves something to be desired. *Powerplay* examines three bilateral alliances in Asia: Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. As a result, the case studies include little variation in either the independent or dependent variables. Detailed case studies on NATO, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), or the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) alliance would have helped to explain why bilateral alliances were sometimes shunned in both Europe and Asia.

A related limitation of *Powerplay* is the inconsistency of its scope conditions. Early in the book Cha suggests that states choose control strategies over distancing strategies when three conditions are satisfied: "(1) external threat; (2) domestic legitimacy of the target state; and (3) power asymmetries between the allies" (27). Elsewhere, however, Cha suggests that "[t]he conditions under which we see powerplays in operation are: (1) when the great power seeks an asymmetric bilateral tie to maximize power; (2) this tie is used to control or constrain the behavior of the smaller power (to minimize entrapment); and (3) the resulting bilateral

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[1] Some of the central works on such alliance dynamics include: Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 181-194; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44:2 (1990): 150-167; James D. Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security," *International Organization* 47:2 (1993): 209-217.

arrangement provides benefits that might otherwise have been harder for the hegemon to accrue in a broader multilateral setting" (188). This inconsistency manifests in the case studies.

Some cases appear to fit the scope conditions but do not appear to have followed the powerplay logic. The most obvious is NATO, which faced a direct external threat from the Soviet Union, consisted of domestically legitimate states, and exhibited major power asymmetries among the allies. Thus, one might expect that the United States would have sought a strategy of control in Europe, which Cha suggests would have necessitated bilateral alliances.

Other cases seem to adopt the powerplay logic but do not fit the scope conditions. Cha's third case study concerns Japan, which did not pose a serious entrapment risk after the Second World War was over. Cha admits as much at the outset of the case, noting that "The powerplay in US strategy operated differently for Japan than it did for Korea and Taiwan… In Japan's case, the powerplay was not about entrapment…" (122). Yet, if the Japan case did not feature entrapment fears, then it does not fit the theory's most basic scope condition and therefore should not have exhibited the powerplay rationale at all.

The Japan case also disproves Cha's initial theoretical prediction that low or moderate entrapment fears should lead to distancing strategies. He explains that because control strategies are more costly than distancing strategies, "[i]f ally A experiences *moderate* fears of entrapment regarding ally B, then A will employ *distancing strategies* to discourage B from acting" (33). Thus, U.S. entrapment concerns should have led Washington to distance itself from Tokyo.

The fact that U.S. leaders adopted the powerplay strategy with Japan highlights a theoretical flaw that emerges again in the case of Germany. Cha repeatedly highlights similarities between Berlin and Tokyo's strategic positions at the outset of the Cold War, noting at one point that "Japan was the key to Asia, just as Germany was the key to Europe" (123). In fact, Cha goes so far as to include a mini-case showing that the United States followed a powerplay strategy with Germany in the 1960s, despite their shared membership in NATO. Yet, if Washington adopted a powerplay strategy for both Germany and Japan, neither of which represented a high entrapment risk, then one is left to wonder why the United States did not apply the powerplay strategy to all its allies.

If the powerplay was effective with Germany when it was a NATO member in the 1960s, then the powerplay logic cannot have driven the United States to eschew multilateral alliances. This disconnect between the degree of control exhibited by the United States and the number of allies in any individual alliance is most evident toward the end of the book. In the last chapter, Cha states that "[p]owerplays happen all over the world" (188) and then highlights U.S. powerplays vis-à-vis Spain in the 1950s, Israel in the 2000s, and Iraq and Afghanistan more recently. None of these states are formal treaty allies, demonstrating that powerplay strategies can be used regardless of the formality of alliance arrangements. Moreover, considering the variety of regimes with which the United States has had such relationships, the domestic legitimacy scope condition seems unnecessary for explaining the application of alliance control strategies.

This discussion highlights the core weakness of *Powerplay*: whether states adopt close or distant alliances is independent from whether those same states adopt bilateral or multilateral alliances. Cha sets out to answer a question about bilateral versus multilateral alliances but ends up exploring a different line of inquiry about close versus distant alliances. Both questions are worthy of study, but their conflation leads to theoretical confusion.

Cha makes such a convincing argument for the value of bilateral alliances that the reader is left wondering not why the United States formed bilateral alliances but why it would ever consider multilateral alliances. Thus, for those looking to understand why NATO succeeded but SEATO failed, this book will be unsatisfying.

None of this undermines the theoretical and empirical contributions that Cha makes on the powerplay and its use by the United States in alliances with South Korea, Taiwan, and beyond. By plugging theoretical gaps on the virtue of close alliances for limiting entrapment risks, Cha provides insights that are vital to scholars and policymakers alike. In fact, the ubiquity of the powerplay demonstrates its significance to policymakers and reinforces the book's timeliness.

Cha's findings are particularly worthwhile today, given the questions being raised about the value of longstanding U.S. alliances with leading states in Europe and Asia. As policymakers in Washington consider how best to manage tricky alliance relationships, they would be wise to consider whether it might be possible to use adhesion strategies to maximize control over allies while minimizing entrapment risks. After all, alliances are relationships between states, and holding partners close is usually more effective than pushing them away.

Review by James Curran, University of Sydney

Victor Cha could not have foreseen when writing this important account of the making of the United States' post-war Asian alliance system that its very foundation stones would be so carelessly, and recklessly thrown into question by the coming of President Donald Trump. Still, Cha does concede that the factors which were so predominant in the making of this system in the wake of the Second World War are not as relevant today. Cha puts this down to the proliferation–with U.S. backing–of a greater array of bilateral and multilateral institutions in Asia, thus assuaging U.S. concerns about entrapment by "overzealous small allies" (7). But it is surely ironic that many of those very same Asian allies now worry about becoming embroiled by Washington in a conflict with China. Trump's withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership, along with the inability of the U.S. to counter Beijing's progressive militarisation of the South China Sea means that the US is failing to drive any kind of agenda in the region. Coupled with the uncertainty and volatility created by Trump's sometimes lurid prescriptions for alliances, the system so carefully constructed by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and others is coming under renewed strain. It might be holding, for now, but the debate in the region and particularly in Australia is now considers what Asia may look like without US strategic predominance.

Cha's book is significant not only because of the theory it advances about American alliance management as it was growing into the role of a great power in the wake of the Second World War, but because it is one of only a small number of works to take a panoptic view of American policymaking in Asia. Whilst there are a plethora of studies examining the bilateral treaties and relationships the U.S. has in the region–most particularly with Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, surprisingly few American historians of foreign relations take a broader view of how U.S. politicians and policymakers approached the region. In recent times, Robert McMahon's *The Limits of Empire*, Michael J. Hunt and Steven I. Levine's *Arc of Empire* and Mike Green's *By More than Providence*, have moved beyond the bilateral lens.[1] There is some continuity between these works and Cha's view that the U.S. alliance system created "an informal empire of sorts" (3), but his focus is much more on explaining just why the U.S. approach to Asia differed so starkly from that in Europe (3). Cha's argument, in essence, is that the creation of this system was not simply concerned with containment, but that it was also for the "constraint of potential 'rogue' allies from undertaking adventurist behaviour that might drag the United States into an unwanted larger military contingency in the region" (3, 19).

Although it is entirely understandable that Cha's book focuses primarily on the pre-eminent U.S. alliances in the region, most particularly those with Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, it is disappointing that his lens did not include a chapter on other allies such as Australia and New Zealand, or indeed the Philippines. Again, he is not alone here: as the scholar David McLean pointed out some time ago, American historians and political scientists–with only a few exceptions–have generally displayed little interest in Australia, "to the detriment of

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[1] Robert J. McMahon, *The Limits of Empire: The United States and South East Asia from World War Two* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Michael J. Hunt and Steven I. Levine, *Arc of Empire: America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Michael J. Green, *By More than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia-Pacific Since 1783* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

their understanding of the Cold War."[2] Not even the transnational turn, it seems, can alter the old beltway quip that 'in Washington you need to have very good peripheral vision to see Australia.' This means that Cha passes over examples and crises that might have given more weight to his argument.

The efforts by Australia to achieve some kind of security arrangement with the U.S. after the Second World War, and the disagreements between Canberra and Washington over Indonesian President Sukarno's aggressive nationalism in the early 1960s, are cases in point.

Cha is correct in stressing that it was changing international circumstances in the late 1940s and early 1950s, most particularly the victory of the Chinese Communists and the advent of the Korean War–that were most decisive in transforming the United States' East Asia policy and in convincing President Harry S. Truman that America needed an alliance system in Asia. It might have been worth developing this transmogrification in U.S. policy a little further, if only to highlight more clearly the speed with which U.S. policy assumptions were revised and the impact this had on alliance formation. This, if you like, is the pre-history of the making of the U.S. alliance system. The process thus emerged much more from the contingencies born of rapid changes in the global security environment and less by a carefully calculated set of pre-existing alliance design principles. After all, America was new to this game.

Thus in the four years following the end of the Second World War, the Australian government worked feverishly to try to establish a defense pact with the United States. The war had shown Canberra that only American power was sufficient to provide for Australia's protection. But these Australian attempts clashed with American traditions and preoccupations—first, the United States' historical reluctance to become involved in 'entangling alliances' and second, its overwhelming focus on the emerging Cold War in Europe. Officials in Washington saw no reason to take on extra commitments in an area of the world where they had few interests and discerned no threat. They could not understand Australia's lingering suspicion of Japan, particularly since it was now under American control. In mid-1946 Australian External Affairs Minister H.V. Evatt travelled to Washington to seek a mutual defense alliance but was coldly rebuffed, Truman telling him that "a strict treaty would be difficult on the grounds that American obligations would be extended to an area far outside their present hemispherical sphere of influence, meaning North and Latin America."[3] In other words, he was not prepared to contravene America's Monroe Doctrine.

Evatt was not a man easily deterred, and he next tried to secure an 'informal statement of policy' from the White House—in effect a presidential decree of support covering the defense of Australia and New Zealand—but that too was rejected. Finally he attempted to secure the reciprocal use of wartime bases in the Pacific, a move designed to warn potential enemies of at least the tacit cooperation of the U.S. and the British Commonwealth in the region, but this likewise failed to bear fruit. Indeed, at the end of 1946 the Americans withdrew from the Manus Island base altogether. As the Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson observed,

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[2] David Mclean, "Australia in the Cold War: A Historiographical Review," *International History Review* XXIII:2 (June 2001), 300.

[3] Diplomatic telegram, HV Evatt to JB Chifley, 21 November 1946, in Neville Meaney, *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1985), 523.

it was not of "significant importance to the US."[4] In the words of historian Neville Meaney, that move signaled the "abandonment of any plans for a regional defence arrangement."[5] All of Australia's efforts had thus proved futile. In 1947 Evatt was again frustrated by American moves which he felt would concede a 'soft peace' for Japan in order to gain Japanese support against Soviet expansionism in north-east Asia.

After the signing of the North Atlantic treaty (NATO) in April 1949, Australian Prime Minister Ben Chifley again sought the Americans' agreement to a defense pact. Again, however, the Australians came away empty-handed. As the Prime Minister told Parliament, the Truman administration's eyes and ears were trained elsewhere: "the United States of America is deeply involved in Europe, and regards its work in that theatre as its outstanding and fundamental task, at least for the time being."[6]

So when the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) treaty was ultimately signed in 1951, it was not due to the superior diplomacy of the new Menzies government (Cha strangely lists Robert Menzies on one occasion as the New Zealand Foreign Minister,178) but because American policy had undergone a transformation. In other words, it was as a result of the extension of the Cold War to Asia that Australia had finally achieved what it had long sought: a security treaty with the United States. And for Australia it was primarily to cover fears that pre-dated the coming of the Cold War: namely Japan. Only in the 1960s did Australians come to share the same kind of ideological fervor as the Americans in talking about the threat of Chinese Communism.

Neither the U.S. nor Australia got what it originally wanted from ANZUS. From the beginning, the United States was quite clear that it saw no Communist threat to Australia and was agreeing to enter into the Treaty in order to persuade the Australians to accept a 'soft peace' for Japan and perhaps to provide a framework for a more comprehensive containment alliance that would include the East Asian offshore island states: an 'island chain' incorporating other regional allies such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan. But as Cha shows, the ongoing distrust in both Australia and New Zealand towards the old wartime enemy—and a largely unspoken fear of Indonesian political instability (on which, however, Cha is silent) meant that the original plan never saw fruition. Nevertheless, right from the beginning the Americans were clear-headed about how they interpreted ANZUS and its provisions. As Dulles expressed it in a letter to General Douglas Macarthur immediately after its terms had been settled: "the United States can discharge its obligations … in any way and in any area that it sees fit."[7] And it would seem clear that the Americans, understandably, came to act in full accord with that spirit.

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[4] Diplomatic telegram, Dean Acheson, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State to U.S. Embassy Canberra, 9 December 1946, in Meaney, *Australia and the World*, 526.

[5] Evatt and Chifley's efforts to enjoin the Americans in some kind of regional defence arrangement are detailed more fully in Neville Meaney, "Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 38:4 (November 1992): 315-333.

[6] Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD), House of Representatives (H of R), 31 May 1949, 293.

[7] Lot 54D423, "Mr. John Foster Dulles, the Consultant to the Secretary, to the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (MacArthur), Top Secret, Washington, 2 March 1951, in Fredrick Aandahl, ed., *Foreign Relations of the*

Similarly, Australia's lead negotiator and External Affairs Minister, Percy Spender, who wanted access to the Pentagon's global planning processes, had in the end to accept that the United States would never allow the presence of a junior ally at the center of its policy making. "Cold War globalism," stressed his biographer, "only seemed to involve Australia incidentally," and Spender was compelled to concede that the Americans were never going to invest ANZUS with the same kind of strategic weight as NATO.[8] And so Australian officials, ever mindful that the treaty obliged the U.S. to do not very much at all, remained profoundly concerned about what sort of protection ANZUS afforded it. Article IV of the document only committed the parties to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes."[9] It stood in stark contrast to the more emphatic declaration contained in the equivalent clause of the NATO treaty. The result was that from the beginning Australian politicians and policy makers lived in a state of near permanent discomfort concerning the level and nature of America's commitment to its security under the terms of the treaty.[10]

Sometimes, too, allies did not entirely bend to Washington's will, and the story of the U.S. alliance system is as much about divergence as convergence; as much about allies choosing to challenge American orthodoxies as it is about falling in with Washington. Thus Menzies was not reluctant to take a different line to the U.S. when it came to matters directly touching Australia's regional affairs. Indeed, nowhere was this more dramatically illustrated than with China. Australia did defer to the Americans in not recognising China–even though it was somewhat embarrassed by Washington's blunt stand on the issue. Australian leaders feared too that policies adopted by the U.S. would lead to an unwanted expansion of the Korean War. But unlike the Americans, who forbade any trade with the Communist regime, Menzies pursued a profitable trading relationship with Beijing in non-strategic goods, especially wheat. This infuriated the White House and the State Department throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. Australia also refused to open an embassy in Taiwan and indeed urged restraint on the United States in the first Taiwan Straits crisis in 1954-1955 and 1958.[11]

Cha's work is strong on the way in which the U.S. made it clear that any kind of assistance to an ally who felt under threat–or who became involved in a military contingency–would be limited. Another Australian example is pertinent here.

United States (FRUS), 1951, vol. VI (Asia and the Pacific), Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 177. Available online at http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v06p1.

[8] David Lowe, *Australian between Empires: The Life of Percy Spender* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010), 150-152.

[9] "Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America [ANZUS] (San Francisco, 1 September 1951)," Entry into force generally: 29 April 1952, Australian Treaty Series, 1952 No. 2, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra Commonwealth of Australia 1997, http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1952/2.html, accessed 2 March 2018.

[10] David McLean, "Australia in the Cold War," 320.

[11] Gary Woodard, "Australian Foreign Policy on the Offshore Island Crisis of 1954–5 and Recognition of China," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 45:2 (1991), 242-263.

Almost exactly at the time that Indonesia took possession of West New Guinea, President Sukarno commenced a policy of confrontation towards the new Malaysian Federation, believing it to be a western imperialist plot to encircle Indonesia. Under pressure from the British to send troops in response to Indonesia's militant stand, the Australians were initially loath to commit to a conflict that might well make a long-term enemy out of their nearest neighbour. Accordingly, they approached Washington to ask whether Australia could rely on the protection of the ANZUS treaty if its territory or forces came under attack from the Indonesians.[12] But by the end of 1963 the United States already had 10,000 troops in South Vietnam. President John F. Kennedy had no desire to become involved in another guerrilla war in a region that was already giving the United States much trouble.

The Australian government then set out on a course which, in the end, was to prove far from reassuring. When U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Averill Harriman visited Australia in June 1963 and was asked about possible U.S. assistance in the event of armed conflict with Indonesia, his tone was evasive. Speaking to Australian ministers, he said he 'did not think that the US would let Australia down … [but] he could make no commitments. There was a grey area between the two countries. Australia's other activities in Southeast Asia would also influence the U.S."[13] This 'grey area' continued to cast a cloud over Australian deliberations, and as a consequence the Australians embarked on a sustained diplomatic campaign to elicit a stronger guarantee from the White House. Both Prime Minister Menzies and Treasurer Harold Holt tried to extract firmer pledges from their great ally, but none were forthcoming. In July 1963, during a meeting in the Oval Office, Menzies told Kennedy that he would be "hesitant to undertake commitments north of Indonesia unless he could be sure that the U.S. would back [Australia] if [it] got in trouble." He wanted there to be "no possibility of misunderstanding between the U.S. and Australia" on the nature of American commitments under the treaty.[14] Howard Beale, Australia's Ambassador in Washington, went much further, recording in his memoirs that when Kennedy asked him for his interpretation of America's ANZUS obligations, he replied that "every Australian believes…that if we get involved in some military clash in our part of the world which we can't handle ourselves, then the United States is committed under the treaty and also morally and honourably to come to our aid." [15]There were no shades of grey in Beale's formulation.

But when the American president relayed this to a subsequent meeting of the National Security Council, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Maxwell Taylor, was incredulous. "My God," he exclaimed,

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[12] On negotiations over the scope of ANZUS during Confrontation, see especially John Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961-65* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000). See also Memorandum of Conversation, McGeorge Bundy, Sir Howard Beale, Australian Ambassador to the United States, and Michael V. Forrestal, "ANZUS treaty and Malaysia," Washington, D.C., 16 October 1963 in Edward C. Keefer, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961–63, Vol. XXXIII, Southeast Asia (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 747-750, 750-753 (respectively).

[13] Record of Discussions, Mr. Harriman's discussions with Australian Cabinet, 7 June 1963, A 1838 TS686/1/1, Part 1, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

[14] Conversation between President and PM Menzies, July 8, 1963, National Security Files, Office Files (Australia) Box 8A, John F Kennedy Library (JFKL).

[15] Howard Beale, *This Inch of Time: Memoirs of Politics and Diplomacy* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1977), 181.

"does that mean if some drunken digger in a slouch hat gets his ear shot off by an Indonesian sniper we've got to send down the Seventh Fleet?"[16] But the Americans remained unmoved. They too, found themselves in something of a dilemma over ANZUS: not wishing to give the Australians a blank cheque, but equally mindful of the need to keep encouraging them to support the British military effort. For some advisers in Washington–as Cha shows in so many cases–the treaty was useful as much for the capacity it gave them to influence allies' policy towards positions more harmonious with U.S. interests as it was to contain the scope of American commitments.

Australian ministers and officials, meanwhile, kept pushing. Indeed they were relentless in their pursuit of the form of words that they hoped would provide the security they clearly struggled to find within the language of the ANZUS treaty itself. When Holt and Beale met with Kennedy in early October, they tried to force the U.S. Commander in Chief into recognising that should Australian troops move into North Borneo and come under fire from Indonesia guerrilla units, the U.S. would be automatically engaged under the terms of ANZUS. But Kennedy's reply sent shockwaves all the way back to Canberra: "this," he said with some emphasis, was "not what the United States thinks." While the 'Australians felt that if they got themselves involved we would also be obliged to be involved … this was not the US view." Indeed he had to try to gently steer the Australians away from inflaming the situation.[17]

Kennedy delivered an even blunter message to the Australian External Affairs Minister, Garfield Barwick, when he came to Washington later the same month with the hope of breaking the impasse on the language of the treaty. Kennedy told Barwick he "wanted to make sure the record was straight'. Speaking of the domestic reality in his own country, the president remarked that 'people have forgotten ANZUS and are not at the moment prepared for a situation which would involve the United States." He reiterated the need for cool heads: "Our policy toward Indonesia had been deliberately ambivalent—not to face Sukarno with a white trio."[18]

As a result of this meeting, the Americans did agree to come to Australia's aid under the terms of ANZUS if Indonesians attacked Australian armed forces. But they placed so many conditions on their consent that, in the given circumstances, the agreement was almost emptied of meaning. In a formal memorandum handed to Barwick, United States leaders laid down the law as they saw it: they required first of all that Australia should consult with them before sending troops to Borneo. Furthermore the promise of aid would apply only to a

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[16] Beale and Taylor cited in Beale, *This Inch of Time* 181.

[17] Memorandum of Conversation, President with Holt and Beale, October 2, 1963, National Security Files, Office Files (Australia) Box 8A, JFKL. The Americans stepped up their efforts to clarify the meaning of the treaty and American commitments—U.S. briefing at the time stresses the need to 'plot a course between two difficulties: 'while we do not wish to construe Articles 4 and 5 of the ANZUS treaty to provide the Australians with a blank check on us to support them in any adventures they may choose to become involved in, we do not want to construe the Treaty so narrowly that we have no basis to give the Australians the kind of assurances which would encourage them to back up the British in Malaysia'. Memorandum, Forrestal to Chayes, 15 July 1963, National Security Files, Office Files (Australia) Box 211A, JFKL.

[18] "Memorandum of Conversation, President and Garfield Barwick, 17 October 1963" in Edward C. Keefer, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1961-63, vol. XXXIII, Southeast Asia, ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 750-753.

conventional military attack on Australian forces and not to a guerrilla or subversive war. And last, in the event of the Australians invoking the agreement, U.S. assistance would be limited to air, naval and logistical support. Canberra had little choice but to accept that this was how it had to be.

These episodes, and Washington's reluctance to promise military assistance in the event of Australia becoming involved in armed conflict with Indonesian forces, raised doubts about the meaning of the ANZUS alliance, and about Australia's ability to rely on America for support or even consultation about issues which touched its vital interests in the region. In 1964 the best Menzies could say about any ANZUS guarantee was that it was a "contract based on the utmost goodwill, the utmost good faith and unqualified friendship. Each of us will stand by it."[19] It was sweet rhetoric, but it could not mask the enduring uncertainty that pervaded the Australian diplomatic mind. 'Goodwill' was to prove a remarkably shallow commodity on which to base Australia's faith in the alliance. As Paul Hasluck, Minister for External Affairs, conceded in early 1965: "we have been put on notice by a former President that the American understanding of its obligations was such as to exclude help from them to Australia in certain circumstances."[20] As a consequence, Hasluck believed the best policy was to simply keep quiet: the "more we try to spell out the meaning of Article IV and V the narrower that meaning will become."[21]

Whether Cha's 'powerplay' theory is a broader one of relationship management rather than an alliance theory is worthy of further debate. British leaders, for example, were just as adept at inhibiting reckless behaviour on the part of their junior partners, especially where that behaviour threatened British priorities in Europe and elsewhere in the empire. More to the point, however, is the fact that Cha's thesis is written within–and therefore limited by–the familiar interpretative framework of American exceptionalism. But the differences between Washington and its allies in political culture and national style are equally, if not more, important in understanding the range of responses to Asia in the Cold War. And allies were just as concerned about the direction of American policies as was Washington in limiting the chances of being roped into unwanted conflicts in the region. These problems and perspectives, however, await the attention of future historians.

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[19] Menzies, CPD, H of R, 21 April 1964, 1280.

[20] Minute, Arthur Tange (Secretary, Department of External Affairs) to Hasluck, 10 February 1965, A 1838, TS686/1/1, Part 1, NAA.

[21] Minute, Hasluck to Arthur Tange, 12 February 1965, A 1838, TS686/1/1, Part 1, NAA.

Review by Van Jackson, Victoria University of Wellington

The most widely held understanding of alliances locates their origin in the shared need of states to balance a common threat.[1] Rejoinders to this view conceive of alliances as security institutions[2] or a form of ideational consensus,[3] either of which affects how and why we might expect them to endure beyond the initial threat that catalyzed them. Victor Cha adds to these perspectives the "powerplay" rationale: great power patrons can use bilateral alliances with smaller states to assert maximal control over otherwise reckless client behavior, rendering alliances as "tools of risk management" (20). This argument complements other, mostly large-N, findings by Michael Beckley and others, which find that not only do alliances *not* entangle the United States, but in many instances they expand US policy optionality and help prevent conflict.[4]

Powerplay also makes a meaningful contribution to the scholarly understanding of multilateralism. The rationalist literature on multilateralism tends to view it as an "efficient" outcome for a lot of the familiar reasons associated with institutions: reducing transaction costs; facilitating issue linkage; benchmarking intentions; and enforcing rules, among other benefits.[5] Cha's framework is thoroughly rationalist, yet it asserts that multilateralism is not always efficient for great powers because it results in the dilution of a great power's ability to control smaller states and an enhanced ability for smaller states to exercise greater influence over larger ones. This logic establishes power asymmetry as a boundary condition for theories of multilateralism. Whatever multilateralism's benefits *ex ante* of a specific context, the logic of bilateralism is likely to prevail when a great power finds itself needing to control and restrain the behavior of smaller foreign, but friendly, governments.

Unanswered Questions

Overall, *Powerplay* is a model for what good qualitative international relations research should be: the theory builds upon existing literature and is clearly laid out; the case studies are detailed and systematic; Cha makes lucid connections between his study and twenty-first century policy challenges; and he acknowledges the limits of his argument. Nevertheless, three lingering questions stand out as unresolved.

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[1] Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[2] Celeste Wallander, "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: NATO after the Cold War," *International Organization* 54:4 (2000): 705-735.

[3] Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-US Base Protests* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[4] Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts," *International Security* 39:4 (2015): 7-48; Songying Fang, Jesse Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds, "To Concede or to Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances," *International Organization* 68:4 (2014): 775-810.

[5] John Gerard Ruggie, *Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Lisa L. Martin, "Interests, Power, and Multilateralism," *International Organization* 46:4 (1992): 765-792.

First, what are great power strategies of control? Cha's theory chapter does an admirable job of sketching the logic of the powerplay rationale as an extension of Glenn Snyder's classical conception of security dilemmas within alliances,[6] linking the desirability of more tightly coupling with (or distancing from) an ally to two factors: whether the state is a great or small power, and the intensity of the entrapment fear it faces. In this discussion, Cha mentions a number of distancing behaviors to which he never returns again because they are irrelevant to his argument: abrogation, voice, and hedging, among others (34). But Cha never lays out different strategies of control with the same specificity, even though control is the central rationale in his argument for why the United States pursued bilateral alliances in Asia. To his credit, he describes motivations for and specific examples of control—from domestic politics to territory and natural resources (30-31)—but these are objects of control, not a typology of, or strategies for, control. How, in general terms, does a great power influence domestic politics, or determine how another state uses territory or allocates resources? What is the precise mechanism by which a major power ally constrains a smaller ally's vicissitudes?

Second, how specifically does bilateralism enable control over a smaller state? This question is related to the first and is similarly underspecified. The book makes a compelling case that in many instances, bilateralism allows great powers to avoid constraints and costs it might incur in multilateral arrangements, but this relative efficiency compared to multilateralism does not amount to greater absolute control per se. Missing from the powerplay framework is a clear conceptual statement of how bilateralism enhances absolute control.

On this question and the prior one, the book would have benefited from extracting some cross-cutting details found in the vivid historical cases of U.S. ties with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. With Japan, the United States established wide-ranging political and even cultural hegemony on the heels of the former's unconditional surrender in World War II, permitting the United States to take a direct hand in shaping Japanese political institutions and actively intervening in its relationships with third parties. With South Korea and Taiwan, the United States bargained for secret and public commitments from each foreswearing unprovoked aggression in exchange for U.S. protection; it also limited the types of military capabilities available to these governments, institutionalized numerous consultation mechanisms to give the United States veto power over ally retaliatory decision-making, and frequently threatened to cut or withhold its vast military assistance programs to induce restraint. A more compelling validation of Cha's theory would have also tested the mechanisms or processes of control, which appear in the cases yet not only are untested but also unspecified as part of the powerplay framework.[7]

Finally, how much of the causal story is actually a function of historical contingency? A tension surfaces between the deductive theory that Cha builds in the first two chapters of the book and the historical narratives that follow. The theory is logical, parsimonious, and tightly argued. Yet at times the case histories involving Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan often point us less toward the powerplay rationale and more toward relational, historically contingent explanations for how America approached alliance/institutional design in Asia. As Cha spends the better part of the penultimate chapter acknowledging, existing patterns of amity, enmity, and resource distribution within the region heavily constrained alliance design.

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[6] Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36:4 (1984): 461-495.

[7] Indeed, the ability to test causal mechanisms is one of the purported advantages of qualitative research.

At the start of the Cold War, political, economic, and security ties among Asian nations were sparse. Asian leaders openly considered regional pacts, but none had the resources or military capacity to meaningfully share in a collective burden. Nobody in the region trusted Japan after its widespread aggression in World War II. And Australia and New Zealand in particular refused to be in any politico-security arrangement that included either Japan or Taiwan. The United States needed to design a 'risk management' architecture for the region, but only within these significant constraints. How could the United States have chosen anything but a series of bilateral alliances? This convergence of factors seems to do the explanatory heavy lifting, which has a logical implication: the existence of a powerplay rationale in institutional design does not necessarily trump a relational explanation for institutional design. To be sure, the United States did seek to rein in aggressive allies (in Taiwan and South Korea anyway) and Cha's theory gives a plausible explanation for why bilateralism may have seemed appropriate. He does us all a service by conceptualizing this logic. But a NATO-like multilateral structure—the main alternative to bilateralism—simply did not fit with Asia's political circumstances at the time. The powerplay rationale was present in the cases examined, but the powerplay itself was only possible because of the existing relational structure of sparse intra-peripheral ties in the region.

Policy Implications

Simultaneously writing for IR scholars and policy wonks is difficult, and not always possible. While Cha's primary audience is the former, he threads the needle by devoting the final chapter to addressing the continued relevance of the powerplay rationale in contemporary foreign policy. Beyond Cha's own discussion, his basic argument bears on at least two major issues in the current Asian security landscape: preventing inadvertent war in Korea, and assessing China's expansionist foreign policy agenda.

During the Obama administration, U.S. policymakers were frequently focused on the need to restrain South Korea from taking military actions against North Korea that might lead to inadvertent crisis escalation. South Korea emerged from North Korea's twin attacks against it in 2010 (which killed 50 and injured dozens more) with renewed resolve to prevent future North Korean violence, even at the risk of precipitating a larger war. At the time of the November 2010 attack, South Korea's President Lee Myung-bak scrambled fighter aircraft to bomb North Korean targets in retaliation. Believing this would invite the renewed outbreak of war, senior officials in the Obama administration pleaded with their South Korean counterparts to turn their fighters around and restrain themselves.[8] South Korea's President grudgingly agreed, but subsequently adopted a "never again" mentality, publicly promising "manifold retaliation" for any future attacks, and developing a defense doctrine that threatened disproportionate retaliation, delegated retaliatory decision-making to local commanders (to circumvent Washington), and prepared the South Korean military for preemptive strikes.[9] Since South Korea's adoption of this 'active deterrence' doctrine, U.S. officials have been keen to restrain South Korea from inadvertently igniting another war. The powerplay argument provides a basis for discerning how: the United States more tightly coupled itself with South Korea politically and at the level of military operations. The Trump administration does not seem to share Obama's concern that South Korea might be responsible for starting World War III, but I know of no theoretical framework that better explains

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[8] Van Jackson, *Rival Reputations: Coercion and Credibility in US-North Korea Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 170-190.

[9] Abraham M. Denmark, "Proactive Deterrence: The Challenge of Escalation Control on the Korean Peninsula," *Academic Paper Series* (Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2011).

contemporary circumstances of the U.S.-South Korea alliance given the Obama administration's intense fear of entrapment.

Beyond the United States, the powerplay framework may also aid our understanding of Chinese strategy toward Asia and, by extension, allow scholars to better assess Chinese strategic intentions. Few doubt that China is becoming increasingly central to the economic life of its Asian neighbors (for better and for worse), and there are many examples of China leveraging that centrality to secure its periphery and increase its political influence in the region.[10] But how China pursues this process matters. If China seeks greater influence by bolstering new regional institutions that allow it to play an outsized role, it is plausible that its ambitions will be constrained and enmeshed. Indicators that China is pursuing this path might include the China-proposed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, its 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership free trade alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and a host of other multilateral (and largely non-Western) groupings in which China plays a prominent role. But China has also systematically engaged in exclusionary bilateralism with peripheral powers and eschewed multilateralism on matters of "high politics" and "core" national interests.[11] If Cha is correct in his claim that great powers seek close bilateral ties to manage risk in their security environment, then we should expect to see much more of the sphere-of-influence diplomacy and quasi-hegemonic control over select neighbors that we have started seeing over the past decade. The more the powerplay rationale is operative in China's foreign policy, the more we should expect to see structural imperialism, which itself would have dramatic implications for the region.

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[10] Jeffrey Reeves, *Chinese Foreign Relations with Weak Peripheral States* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[11] Van Jackson, "Asian Security after U.S. Hegemony: Spheres of Influence and the Third Wave of Regional Order," *The Asan Forum* 5:5 (2016), http://www.theasanforum.org/asian-security-after-us-hegemony-spheres-of-influence-and-the-third-wave-of-regional-order/.