

**The Pivot to Asia, a Pivot getting nowhere?  
A role study of U.S. leadership and contestation at home and abroad**

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**Abstract**

The phrase “unintended consequences” has reentered the political (science) discourse but it remains theoretically underspecified. What does it mean when we say that the U.S. intervention in Iraq had unintended consequences? Here, we conceptualize “unintended consequences” in role theoretical terms in three steps and apply it to the U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Asia-Pacific: First, unintended consequences are modeled as a gap between the original role-taking of an actor and the deviant but commensurate counter-role taking of an Other, resulting in an unintended social structure. Second, we examine the Obama administration’s original role-taking under the assumption that domestic contestation in the U.S. may lead to unclear signaling about the U.S. intentions of the ‘Pivot to Asia’. Thirdly, we investigate counter-role taking by Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia in the diplomatic, security, and economic realm, resulting in differentiated patterns of unintended consequences of these nations vis-à-vis China and other actors in the region.

## **I. Introduction**

Unintended consequences are prominent in explanations of policy change. Scientists, policy pundits, and decision makers know intuitively that unforeseen outcomes play a crucial role in domestic and international politics - although there is little agreement on how these consequences come about. Various scholars and policy makers have made unintended consequences a central part of their arguments. Not all have claimed, as the Historian Daniel Boorstin, that “the unintended consequences of man’s enterprise have and will always be more potent, more widespread, and more influential than those he intended” (Boorstin 1994: 143). Liberal economists argue that the unintended consequences of markets are generally beneficial while government interventions are malevolent. In the famous words of Adam Smith: “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest” (Smith 1776: 16). Sociologists, such as Robert K. Merton, have reasoned that unintended consequences could be traced back to a lack of knowledge (ignorance), seriousness of analysis (hubris), or overzealousness by decision makers to consider the consequences of their doings (Merton 1936).

More recently, Peter Galbraith has argued that the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq (2003) has left the U.S. both more unpopular abroad and less secure at home because it had unintentionally strengthened America’s enemies (Galbraith 2008; see also Hinnebusch 2007). In a similar vein, the global financial crises of 2008/09 and the ongoing Eurozone crisis has led to a new interest in the unintended consequences of decisions made by central banks, regulators, and investors for the stability of the global financial system (White 2012; FSB 2012). However, despite the considerable number of case studies on the topic (Aoi et al. 2007; Daase and Friesendorf 2010, Rosert 2011), there remains a dearth of systematic theorizing about the

mechanisms lying at the bottom of this social phenomenon and why and how it brings about change in international relations.<sup>1</sup>

This paper explores how, when and why role-taking in international politics may bring about unintended consequences. It centers on how uncertainty about the motives of role-taking by the United States in Asia, the so-called “Pivot to Asia” (or rebalancing), causes significant other parties to take up a variety of responding, but oftentimes deviant roles. We hold that these counter-role taking practices reflect significant other states’ own identity-based repositioning vis-à-vis the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and other nations, thereby diverting the original meaning of the Pivot to Asia into another direction. Although we cannot give detailed theoretical answers to all the questions raised by the study of the social phenomenon ‘unintended consequences’, this paper does provide a general role theoretical approach to the study of unintended consequences and policy change.

Section II draws upon the literature on role-taking and international social structural change in order to pose a simple model for unintended consequences. In addition, it briefly describes our methodology and data pool. Section III sets forth a short description of the role-taking by the Obama administration. In this section, we also touch upon potential effects of (policy) polarization among actors in the administration and between the executive and the legislative branch, thereby exploring the impact of “unclear signaling” on the likelihood and direction of unintended consequences. Section IV examines the commensurate role-taking by Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia, measured in the diplomatic, security, and economic realm. Based on these measurements, we identify different patterns of commensurate role-taking which, in turn, coincide with unintended social consequences of the U.S. repositioning towards the Asia-Pacific.

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<sup>1</sup> William Sherden’s study „Best Laid Plans“ (2011) is an exception but his discussion of eight social mechanisms is disparate and repetitive as it does not integrate any of these mechanisms into a coherent set of premises and deductive arguments.

## II. Role Theory and Unintended Consequences

*“By an unintended consequence, I refer to a particular effect of purposive action which is different from what was wanted at the moment of carrying out the act, and the want of which was a reason for carrying it out” (Baert 1998: 201).*

In order to better understand the catalytic effects of unintended consequences for international social structural change, it is first necessary to capture unintended consequences more specifically in role theoretical terms and to demarcate it from other concepts, i.e. paradoxical effects or feedback loops. Based on the above cited definition by Baert, we stress the gap between intention and outcome in our conceptualization. In this perspective, the original intention of the U.S. role-taking vis-à-vis the Asia-Pacific is transformed into a positive or negative social structuration caused by unforeseen interaction effects through deviant commensurate role-taking by others.

In this reading, the unintended effect can impact upon the U.S. itself or a part thereof, and/or it can affect the Other or a third party. Whereas feedback loops and paradoxical effects do not require interaction with another party, i.e. social interaction, unintended consequences, as conceptualized here, necessitate interaction: they are not cognitive, they are social phenomenon. Secondly, unintended consequences can have negative or positive effects on each or some member of the parties concerned, or both negative and positive effects at the same time. This interactionist reading implies a social constructivist perspective by which the meaning of a speech act or practice is determined through the (social) attachment of significance and meaning by the parties involved (Wendt 1999). As a result: what one party may perceive and construct as a negative unintended consequence ( the U.S. Pivot is viewed by some Chinese strategists as an attempt to contain China ) may be viewed as a positive, but intended consequence by another (concerned) party (Japan may perceive the U.S. repositioning as a necessary “reassurance” about U.S. collective defense commitments).

Third, some unintended consequences can have positive catalytic effects on the originally intended goal, e.g. the loss of life during a military operation may bolster moral so that the original goal of the operation succeeds, although this may also be considered by some or all of the original group of decision makers (Daase and Friesendorf 2010: 9-10).

To theoretically conceptualize unintended consequences, we draw upon the extant literature to pose a rudimentary model of role-taking and counter-role taking (Harnisch et al. 2011; Thies 2013; Walker 2013; Baumann 2014). We start with a simple interaction model in which states pursue a distinct role in the diplomatic, economic and security arenas. In considering the tradeoffs between the policy realms, we focus on the balance between security and economic concerns of various actors in the U.S. (the ego expectations) when discerning the original intentions of repositioning the U.S. role in Asia through the Pivot. We recognize that interests and concerns potentially vary along multiple dimensions between political parties and other domestic actors in the U.S. We also acknowledge that these very expectations may result in different role expectations as to the domestic role of the federal executive and legislative branches in the U.S. Yet, given the vast global military superiority of the U.S., we emphasize economic interests taking priority in domestic role expectations because we believe they are basic to all politics, both domestic and foreign, as actors are concerned with material well-being which in turn makes economic performance the single most salient issue for reelection in the U.S. (Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs 2010). Since both U.S. economic and military role-taking has opportunity costs for domestic actors, as they change the prospect for their individual well-being, these domestic actors evaluate the expected return from a more cooperative and engaging U.S. role-taking versus a more robust and antagonistic role-taking in the Asia-Pacific. It would be naïve in our view to believe that all domestic expectations about the U.S. international role-taking is rational, but we hold that the majority of U.S. policy makers consider the international outcome of that role-taking as more important to

their choice than the anticipated domestic political effects, e.g. having supported a president of the opposing party.

Within the domestic realm, the degree to which expectations among national actors converge around a shared and coherent U.S. role in international politics may fluctuate. Political actors, which hold a common or at least compatible identity of what the ‘United States stands for in international politics’, are more likely to support a bipartisan/common effort if the expected future returns of that role-taking are distributed fairly among interested parties. However, if that identity of what America means is contested and or if the distributive effects of international role-taking are spread unequally in the domestic realm, than incoherent role-taking or even contradictory role-taking between different actors or branches of U.S. government may occur.

Most important, U.S. economic and military role-taking in the Asia-Pacific creates incentives for Asian nations to take on cooperative or antagonistic roles towards the U.S. role, which in turn repositions these nations among Asian nations in general and vis-à-vis the PRC in particular (Tow and Stuart 2015). States, which cast the U.S. economically and militarily into a role of a protector against Chinese influence, tilt the meaning of the U.S. Pivot to Asia towards a balance of power interpretation. We argue, as Alexander Wendt has suggested, that it is the (social) interpretation of and not the material capabilities themselves which moves the social structure in the Asia-Pacific towards an anarchy between rivals if not enemies. Therefore, states, which cast the U.S. economically and militarily into a role of a collaborator vis-à-vis China, e.g. by insisting on cooperative economic schemes including China, tilt the meaning of the Pivot towards an institutionalist, engaging perception of the social structure, resulting in an Lockean, if not Kantian interpretation of anarchy or hierarchy in the region (Zhang 2014).

In a second conceptual step, we purport that within a polity, the degree of indeterminacy on its foreign policy identity affects the expectations of other nations that cooperation/conflict

will lead to future gains. From a role theoretical perspective, determinacy can be defined as the degree of predictability of a future social structure and the relative (benign) position of a role taken within it. The more determinate an Other or an social environment is, the better-known are the likely long-term results of cooperation/conflict for the domestic stability of a polity. Indeterminacy about a country's role leads foreign actors to shorten the time horizon for their expectations as they search for ways to cope with sudden turns, which may temper with their interests in the future. Thus, the relative determinacy of a role reinforces existing patterns of division of labor and costs within a group, whereas indeterminacy weakens group cohesion and respective commensurate role-taking in an institutional setting.

Having posed a simple model for understanding role-taking and counter-role taking, it is now possible to define the nature and effects of the original repositioning of the U.S. and to identify why, how and how far that repositioning triggered unintended consequences through counter-role taking by Asian nations.

### *Two role theoretical models of unintended consequences*

Role theory has produced two different models to account for indeterminacy: First, a rationalist account in which foreign policy roles derive from four master statuses in the international system (Thies 2013). In this reading, indeterminacy is low (and unintended consequences potentially substantial) because an actor's preferences are known as they are attached to a particular social position in the international system's structure: a "novice state", for example, is functionally differentiated from a "great power", resulting in systemic pressures upon the "great power" to socialize the "novice state" as a newcomer into the material and normative structure of the system. In this view, systemic changes occur when crises lead to a rapid and dramatic change of relative power capabilities (through wars) or norm compliance (through contestation by rogue states) (Thies 2013: 25).

Uncertainty, and in turn unintended consequences, emanate from the difference between structural regularities (master statuses) and the pursued state identities which may lead states to pursue policies inconsistent with their status. Thus by punishing Israel (and in the case of the U.S., allies such as France and the United Kingdom) during the Suez crisis, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, as superpowers, served as systemic gatekeepers, socializing these countries into roles commensurate with their (lesser) master statuses (Thies 2013: 147).

In this rationalist conceptualization, intentionality is measured against a standard set by “systemic incentives”, either material (power) or immaterial (norms), and unintended consequences are the product of deviant behavior as measured against these structural incentives.

Proponents of the alternative role theoretical perspective build their argument on what may be called “emerging rationality” rather than instrumental rationality (Harnisch 2012; Baumann 2014). In this view, as based on the work of social theorists such as George Herbert Mead, Georg Simmel and Charles Cooley, agents and structures do not only co-constitute each other, thereby leaving the structuralist starting point of the causal chain behind; also, agency is conceptualized as much more creative and fluid than in the structural reading, as based on Kenneth Waltz’s neorealism and the socialization bargaining games ensuing from it.

To account for the creativity of agency, Mead introduces the process of self-identification. Following William James’ conceptualization of “I” and “Me” as a stream of consciousness these two domains of the “Self” are in constant dialogue (James 1890). The Self is thus an “emerging social phenomenon”, in which an “I-part” – a sense of freedom and initiative – corresponds with a “Me-part” – the anticipation of an “Other” - towards the self (Mead 1934: 177).

Self-identification has two interrelated effects on both agency and structure: on the one hand, it may or may not balance the basic needs of the Self, such as social recognition, security, autonomy and wellbeing. As Mead and the scholarship on “ontological security” suggest



(Mitzen 2006), the creative and social dimensions of the Self correspond with each other in various compositions, representing different mixes of individuality and other-directedness. On the other hand, taking a new role vis-à-vis an Other may set in motion a “self-fulfilling prophecy” in which this Other takes up a new corresponding role, which in turn changes both the Other and the social structure as a whole. However, if the initial role-taking is not reciprocated by corresponding role behavior by Others, then social structure does not ensue as anticipated by the original role taker.

### *A role theoretical model of unintended consequences*

Based on the second, interactionist perspective, we are now able to conceptualize intended from unintended consequences more clearly. In routine situations, when social roles and identities are reified, the “Me-part” and the “I-part” have been reconciled, resulting in practices (routines) commensurate with pre-existing social norms (Mead 1934: 199). On the surface, the implication of this may be that actors are only driven by immaterial concerns of “appropriateness”, “legitimacy” or “responsibility”. But a closer reading suggests that roles, as long as they constitute the role beholder as such, also imply the pursuit of material benefits, regardless whether these are legitimate or not because agent’s that openly contest (such as rogue actors) or violate social norms (such as criminals) may also benefit from the exclusionary effects of their behavior.

For example: a government of a maverick state may boost its domestic legitimacy by claiming to stand up against an iniquitous international order; or a government of a criminal state may benefit from trading with illegal substances, the value of which is sensitive to the magnitude of prohibition in the international community. It follows that the unintended consequence of a prohibitive norm can enrich the violator of a norm as much as the same norm may regulate the compliant behavior of all the norm applicants.

However, in non-routine situations, e.g. in crisis situations, a transformation of the constitutive parts of the self, the “I-“ and the “Me-part” occurs (Harnisch 2012: 54). As old routines do not promise to achieve the anticipated material or immaterial effects anymore, the I-part becomes more prevalent and the Self acts “as-if” it was performing a new role. But this initial as-if role-taking has to be solidified by corresponding changes in the role-taking of others because only then the initial Self, and the new social structure - as based on the new corresponding roles - are stabilized.

From this interactionist perspective, the as-if role-taking cannot be thought of as a conscious act of manipulation in which an intentional role-taking causes an Other to take up a commensurate role. Ontologically speaking, the role beholder, because it is conceptualized as a stream of consciousness between the “I” and “Me”, cannot claim ontological priority as in positivistic causal analysis of role altercasting (Malici 2006). Therefore, epistemologically unintended consequences for us constitute instances in which initial role-taking is not followed upon by commensurate role-taking of others, resulting in a new social structure with both negative and positive, material and immaterial effects for the parties involved, but unanticipated by the original role taker.

Empirically, it follows then that even if a materially powerful nation takes a deliberate step towards shaping a new role, the new role has to be consolidated by commensurate role-taking of less powerful significant others to stabilize a new social structure. We hold that the probability of a commensurate role-taking by others rests on unambiguousness of the initial role-taking. Hence, if the initial “as-if” role-taking leaves open the audience of the initial move (including those excluded) and the sustainability of the role commitment, as well as the direction in which the addressed group will turn, then the probability that the significant others may reinterpret the purpose of the initial role-taking is high. It follows that if the signal of the initial role-taking is clear and coherent, then chances are low that unanticipated role-taking by others ensues.

### III. Role-taking and the Pivot to Asia

*“Future historians, however, may recall 2013 as a turning point where internal political constraints in the U.S. began to overwhelm its capacity to exercise guaranteed primacy in all but the most fundamental areas of its national economic and security interests” (Tow 2014:.21).*

The first episode of a new U.S. role-taking in the Asia-Pacific, at that time labeled ‘Pivot to Asia’, starts in the fall of 2011. On November 17, 2011, President Obama proclaimed that “the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends (Obama 2011).<sup>2</sup> In his speech, President Obama sought to reposition the U.S. from its military entanglements in the Middle East towards the economically and politically dynamic Asia-Pacific region. The Pivot, which was (inconsistently) relabeled as a rebalancing in 2012, thus entailed the claim of a reinvigorated leadership role for the U.S., encompassing various bi- and multilateral initiatives, and a robust mediation role in some of the most disputed areas of the region.<sup>3</sup> Although the initial concept focused equally upon diplomatic, economic and military issues (and was quite limited in terms of U.S. resources spent), it was interpreted by various pundits and policy makers in the region as either a clear shift towards counterbalancing a more assertive great power role of China or as an instrument to shift the burden for security and wellbeing in the region towards the U.S.’ allies and partners, or both.

#### *Diplomacy*

The enunciation of the Pivot was meant as a firm commitment to play a more visible and robust U.S. leadership role in the Asia-Pacific. Henceforth, U.S. role-taking focused on deepening American engagement with multilateral fora in the region (such as ASEAN), as

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<sup>2</sup> However, the most authoritative statement on the broader concept of the Pivot remains until today Clinton (2011).

<sup>3</sup> For the remainder of this paper however, we will stick to the term “Pivot”.

well as managing the central U.S.-China relationship more pro-actively. In contrast to the Bush years, the Obama administration displayed more willingness to bind U.S. power in multilateral fora to allow smaller nations to engage with the U.S. in a more symmetrical group context. More specifically, the Obama administration significantly bolstered its high-level presence at key multilateral conference and summit meeting since 2011 (Table 1) and deepened its longer-term commitment to the region by signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) with the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN), through increasing U.S. assistance for disaster preparedness programs under the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) framework, by reaching out for regional trade agreement facilitation through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) framework, and by directly providing funds to ASEAN in the areas of education, transnational crime and anti-corruption via the Economic Support Fund (ESF) (Manyin et al. 2012).

Table 1: U.S. Diplomatic Attendance and agreements signed or expanded in Asia-Pacific (draft)

Countries visited	Kerry total, first three years	Clinton total, first three years	Obama total	Agreements signed or expanded
Australia	2	2	3	
China	4	7	1	
Indonesia	3	3	3	South-South and Triangular Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding to Support Developing Countries (2014); Expansion of the Peace Corps Indonesia Program (2011); U.S.-Indonesia Education Partnership (2011); Comprehensive Partnership (2010)
Japan	3	4	3	Global and Regional Cooperation (2014);
Malaysia	1	1	0	
Philippines	2	2	1	Partnership for Growth (2014); Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (2014)
Republic of Korea	2	0		
Singapore	0	3	1	Extension of Free Trade Agreement (2011)
Vietnam	3	3		
<b>Multilateral Meetings</b>	<b>Attendance total (2009 – 2015)</b>			
APEC		3		
ASEAN		5		Treaty of Amity and Cooperation Accession (2009); Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) Initiative (2013); ARF Voluntary Demonstration of Response (2009); ESF drop of \$688,453 from FY2012 to FY2014;
ARF		3		Disaster Relief Exercises;

Source: U.S. Department of State “Travels with the Secretary” & White House website.

In the case of the ARF, the United States also initiated the U.S.-ASEAN Expanded Economic Engagement (E3) in 2012, which is to “promote trade facilitation, standards development and practices, small and medium-sized enterprises, and establishing open and transparent investment and information technology environments” (White House 2014). Notably, the E3 initiative’s agenda in the field of “Commercial Engagement” as well as “Advancing Entrepreneurship and Business Growth”, has targeted primarily the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia, thus casting them into the role of partners (White House 2012).

In the fields of maritime cooperation (particularly maritime security), human trafficking and climate change, the U.S. has also taken up a mediator role within the E3, focusing on financial and technological assistance without taking sides or accentuate own claims (Department of State 2013). This comes in addition to the U.S. signing of the TAC in 2009, the key agreement of ASEAN (now encompassing 28 countries, both ASEAN and ASEAN+3), which stresses mutual respect independence, state sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference as core principles of security cooperation in the region (Acharya 2009). Through its signing, the U.S. signaled that it felt not only bound by these principles but also that it would make sure that these were respected, e.g. by conflicting parties in the South-China Sea dispute (Feigenbaum and Manning 2009).

In APEC, the Obama administration also followed a two-ponged role-taking of mediation and initiation (see Table 2 below). To begin with, the Obama administration has been a key protagonist of the TPP, a Free Trade Agreement of the Asia-Pacific as part of APEC which excludes China at this time. Second, the administration also ambitiously mediates between various APEC member states to ease frictions regarding their affiliation with a future free trade agreement. Third, the U.S. also committed and bound itself to a host of agreements on environmental goods tariff reductions, energy security, food security and sustainable agriculture, fostering supply chains, as well as lowering technical barriers to trade and trade facilitation (Martin 2012).

On security issues, after long prodding, the U.S. has been able to institutionalize a ministerial triad with its allies Japan and South Korea in 2012. Emanating from earlier trilateral formats between the allies on the issue of North Korea, this defense ministerial meeting and a full-fledged trilateral exercise has been interpreted by some as casting Japan and South Korea into balancing roles vis-à-vis China. (La Mière 2013). In early 2014, the Obama administration also held the first Defense ministerial meeting with ASEAN countries.

### *Military*

The second pillar of the Pivot rearticulated the role of the U.S. as a regional protector in the Asia-Pacific. Hamstrung by historically unprecedented budget cuts, the Pivot's military dimension seeks to do address three goals: first, to shift the center of gravity of U.S. forces deployed worldwide to the Asia-Pacific; second, to cut and reshape the U.S. military posture in the region, resulting in better (geographic) power projection and higher operational flexibility; and third, to sway allies and partners to take up a commensurate counter-role in order to expand common operational capacities (Department of Defense 2012).

To underwrite this new posture, in 2011 Congress and the White House agreed upon the Budget Control Act (BCA) which called for long-term deficit reduction and budget sequestration. The BCA forces the Pentagon to plan with an approximately \$1 trillion smaller budget over the next decade, with approximately \$500 billion in direct cuts and an additional \$500 billion due to annual sequestration.<sup>4</sup> In 2012 then, the White House and the DoD released the Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) in 2012, which refines the DoD's 10-year strategic outlook to innovate "low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities (Department of Defense 2012: 3).

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<sup>4</sup> Sequestration is projected to enforce \$50-55 billion in reductions in annual budgets until 2021 (Chadha 2013); see also Dale 2014, and Dormandy and Kinane 2014.

More concretely, the DSG envisions a bolstered (but flexible) forward presence – thereby renouncing the maintenance of a large standing fleet and redistribution of naval and air forces from the former Northwest Pacific focus to the Southwest Pacific. However, Congress, through the National Defense Authorization Act, has repeatedly denied the administration’s request to close the base in Okinawa and realign U.S. military presence to the island of Guam. In turn, this blockade and reductions in non-naval military forces, including a reduction in total numbers and a 50 percent drop in readiness, signal that the Pentagon is actually less successful in setting the agenda by revamping the U.S. posture in the region (see Table 2 below).<sup>5</sup>

In a similar vein, the reduction of readiness of flying units and the 30 percent cut in operations of Navy ships and aircraft skews the DoD’s plans, because the former impacts negatively upon the Air Force’s plan to re-allocate 60 percent of its overseas-based forces into the Asia-Pacific region. Those numbers become conspicuously if one puts them in relation to large budget allocations to the Middle East (\$8.8 billion in total) under Obama’s latest budget request for FY2016 and National Security Strategy, questioning the overall emphasis of the Pivot.

Congress and the White House have also repeatedly quarreled about defense budget priorities and purposes. In a somewhat schizophrenic manner, Congressional committees have both questioned funding priorities for the security pillar, holding that U.S. engagement in the Asia-Pacific must go well beyond more warships and submarines; we will need significantly more diplomats, commercial officers, and technical experts in the region to allow U.S. businesses to take full advantage of the myriad economic opportunities (U.S. Senate Cmte. on Foreign Relations 2014: 24).” On the other hand Congress keeps funding conventional military assets, such as \$120 million and \$850 million to overhaul the aircraft carrier George Washington

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<sup>5</sup> This calculation has not significantly changed, despite a slight rectification in the Bipartisan Budget Act (2013) which simply extends the application of the BCA for two additional years (Dale 2014).



(that the administration had planned to defer until the 2016), in contrast to the Department of Defense emphasis on flexible, smaller and leaner military capacities, i.e. \$4.4 billion in additional procurement and research and development projects, (Department of Defense 2013a, McLeary and Peniston 2014).

It is important to note that U.S. military role-taking is based on increased flexibility on rotational deployments which in turn requires commensurate role-taking by allies (e.g. Japan) and partners through joint agreements (i.e. in the Philippines, Indonesia). This is particularly true when it comes to the implementation of the Air Sea Battle (ASB) concept which is aimed at protecting U.S. allies against China's anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) strategy (Department of Defense 2013).

The Pivot's underfunded agenda-setting is particularly visible in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) as well as the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs. According to the FY 2015 budget, the Obama administration is allocated \$12.5 million in IMET funding for the Asia-Pacific, less than the administration requested for every other region in the world. Regarding FMF, the administration is requesting \$40 million for the Philippines for FY 2015, \$10 million less than the administration requested in FY 2014 (White House 2014a).

Thus, while seeking a revamped leadership role in the region, the U.S. asks its allies and partners to do more for what the U.S. is doing less; or, as National Security Advisor Susan Rice put it in a speech at Georgetown University in 2013: "We are urging our allies and partners to take greater responsibility for defending our common interests and values [...] To diversify the network of security relationships in the region, we are strengthening trilateral cooperation with our allies and our security partners and encouraging them to cooperate more closely among themselves (Rice 2013).

## *Economy*

In the third pillar, the economic realm, U.S. leadership takes on a much more multilateral approach, focusing on the promotion of the TPP (Lim et al. 2012). The U.S. first entered the trade talks through plurilateral discussions with the Pacific 4 in January 2008 (Singapore, Brunei, Chile and New Zealand), regarding trade liberalization in financial services and then extended the negotiations to join the TPP (September 2008).<sup>6</sup> So far, negotiations have been stagnant because of frictions between member countries over intellectual property rights and the reluctance by Japan and the U.S. to grant direct access to its domestic markets (Ferguson et al. 2015).

More importantly, the administration's leadership on TPP has been significantly hampered by the congressional denial of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). TPA remains a crucial instrument for the executive branch to signal the U.S. willingness to not only negotiate but also ratify a long-term trade agreement (Hornbeck 2010, Ferguson 2015). Missing domestic resources to provide common goods (e.g. the U.S. home market) and to give credible assurance of U.S. commitment are exaggerated by the sheer number of rivaling regional trade initiatives, from three in 2000 to 61 in 2010, and with another 79 under negotiation (Kawai and Wignaraja 2011). It does not help either that TPP remains one of the more exclusive trade initiatives, excluding China, but also Indonesia and the Philippines, two economies which have substantial exchanges in goods and services with the U.S.

As a result, the TPP initiative has been partially overshadowed by both intra-regional and China-led regional trading schemes. On the one hand, other APEC members have similarly pushed alternative regional integration models such as the ASEAN+3 and the ASEAN+6, to facilitate a Free Trade Area for the Asia-Pacific (Martin 2012). Consequently, the 2012 APEC Leaders' Declaration does not mention the TPP explicitly (APEC 2012). On the other hand,

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<sup>6</sup> With a total population of more than 2.2 billion people, the members of the TPP combine a GDP of U.S. \$24.5 trillion in 2012, representing some 29% of global GDP and an extensive market which accounts for 28% of U.S. goods and services exports.

the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) scheme has found a strong followership: Excluding the U.S., it encompasses all ASEAN+3 states as well as India, Australia, and New Zealand. Part of this success may be that in contrast to the strict regulatory approach of the TPP, the RCEP allows for “numerous flexibility caveats ensure that no member has to adopt trade policies with which it disagrees, and it protects sensitive industries from exposure to enhanced competition (Hiebert and Hanlon 2012).

To reinvigorate its regional trade agenda, the Obama administration has complemented its TPP promotion with a National Export Initiative (NEI), initiated in 2011. The NEI targets ten emerging export markets worldwide, four of which are part of the Asia-Pacific (China, Indonesia, India, and Vietnam).<sup>7</sup> But, again, the initiative has also been scuttled by domestic opposition. Congressional critics argue that providing export assistance to U.S. firms would be of limited help as long as they face significant tariff and non-tariff trade barriers and poor protection of intellectual property rights overseas. To ensure foreign compliance with existing and future trade agreements, these critics insist, they must be part and parcel of the ongoing negotiations of new Free Trade Agreements, i.e. the TPP (Ilias et al. 2011).

*Table 2: Summary of U.S. role-taking in policy areas*

<b>Role / policy area</b>	<b>Diplomatic</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>Economic</b>
<b>Initiator</b>	X	X	X
<b>Agenda setter</b>		X	X
<b>Mediator</b>	X		

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<sup>7</sup> In 2011, American exports to the Pacific totaled \$320 billion, supporting 850,000 American jobs (Azizian 2012).

#### **IV. Counter-role taking**

##### **Japan: A welcome return and a new U.S.-Japan military posture**

Japan's role in East Asia and vis-à-vis the U.S. has evolved considerably over time. Key among the shifts in Japan's role is the Meiji restoration period, Japan's imperialism and militarism, which positioned Japan as equal among (predatory) Western Great Powers but superior towards its Asian neighbors. Japan's Post-World War II role has been described affirmatively described as a "civilian power" (Maull 1990/91) or as a "defensive/reactive state" (Calder 1988) or an "economic giant and political pygmy" which, as a free-rider, consumes security in the asymmetrical security alliance with the U.S. (Funabachi 1991/1992). Since the end of Cold War, however, Japan's traditional security role as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" in the U.S.-Japan alliance, supplying bases and focusing on territorial defense in an asymmetrical Mutual Security Treaty, has been transformed. In November 1997, the Review of Defense Guidelines on U.S.-Japan relations and regional security" expanded the role of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) beyond common planning for major international crisis and territorial defense to include international humanitarian relief, emergency relief operations, and UN peacekeeping activities. In a similar vein, in 2005, the bilateral Security Consultative Committee expanded the territorial remit of JSDF to the Far East in order to broaden U.S.-Japan cooperation. As a result, Japan's security posture has come to increasingly resemble that of a "normal nation" (*futsu no kuni*), partially shedding its post-World War II posture as a peace loving country (*heiwa kokka*) (Hughes 2009).

The U.S. announcement of a Pivot to Asia has further reshaped Japan's security policy role. The strong impact, no doubt, reflects both direct and indirect U.S. role cues towards Japan, especially in the area of common defense. And yet, the distinct pattern of Japanese commensurate role taking also shows that indigenous factors, such as the Abe government's

conservative and nationalist sentiment, domestic contestation of further trade liberalization, explain Japan's shifting role trajectory. In some areas, one could even argue that the Obama administration has urged Japan to take a less confrontational stance vis-à-vis China and Korea, e.g. facilitating a Japan-Korean summit meeting or urging Japan to engage China diplomatically on the Diaoyu/Senkaku island dispute.

Central to the strong resonance of the military Pivot are two processes: First, the U.S.' concept of "alliance diversification", in which pre-existing alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines are reshaped and trilateralised in order to encourage synergies and by engaging former enemies, such as Vietnam and Myanmar, to broaden the geographic and political reach of the Pivot; second, by reshaping the U.S. force posture in the Asia-Pacific, and Southeast Asia in particular, to increase defense capabilities to address symmetrical challenges in a marine-based theaters rather than land-based asymmetrical threats (Van Tol and Krepinevich 2011; Dormandy 2012).

In general, the U.S. has warmly welcomed recent changes in Japan's security posture, particularly those in the 2013 National Security Strategy (Prime Minister Office 2013).<sup>8</sup> The 2013 strategy substantially expands the concept of "dynamic deterrence" (Japan 2010) into a "strategy of pro-active pacifism" as one of the key roles of JSDF. The JSDF will now, in close cooperation with the U.S. Air Sea Battle concept focus on regional deterrence at sea (esp. anti-submarine warfare), patrolling and regaining control of the waters of the Sea of Japan and East China Sea (Dian 2013: 9). Also the U.S. has welcomed most recently a Japanese extension of air patrols into the South China Sea which supplements Japan's various efforts to deepen its military ties with ASEAN countries, including military exchanges, training and defense technology and equipment support (Sieff 2014).

Broadening the regional scope of its enhanced role, Prime Minister Abe started to propagate a quadrilateral security dialogue between democracies (U.S.-Japan-Australia-India) during his

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Armitage and Nye 2012; Green and Szechenyi 2014.

first term (2006-2007). The multilateralization and geographical expansion was complemented through the intensification of bilateral ties, in particular with India (see section below). Following up on its earlier initiative in 2006, the Japanese government declares in its most recent National Defense Policy Guidelines (2013) that it was actively pursuing several tri- and plurilateral security cooperation schemes, among others with South Korea and India as two leading democracies in the region (MoDJ 2013: 11).

In nuce, Japan has taken on a much more robust and pro-active role in the U.S.-Japan alliance, substantially expanding Japan's geographical and functional security perimeter. Driven by concerns of China's military modernization and its own relative economic decline, the Abe government has, through its commensurate security policy role-taking, shifted the original U.S. role towards a new regional structure in which Japan takes on a distinct role in balancing China's recent advances, in particular in Southeast Asia. While domestic contestation has prevented the Abe administration from settling the Futenma dispute, substantial changes in Japan's security process – the introduction of a National Security Council, the changes in Japan's arms export policy in connection with the attenuation of its autonomous arms industrial base, have significantly tilted Japan's posture towards a much more pro-active, even if still integrated, regional security leadership role (La Mierè 2013). Recent progress in reforming the Bilateral Security Cooperation Guidelines (October 2014) also suggest that Washington and Tokyo have reached a new understanding of the division of labor in their military alliance. In doing so, the Abe government appears to try to quench the relative decline of Japan's function for the U.S. security posture in East Asia which has been shifting from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia and from a few selected alliances towards a diversified network of multiple security relationships, including continental Asian states.

The growing importance of the security role in the U.S.-Japan alliance has not been matched by a similar intensification of Japan's commercial or trade ties with the U.S. or the region as a whole. Following Green's (2013) interpretation of Abenomics and Japan's recent trade policy

posture, the Japanese contribution to the economic Pivot has suffered from two inter-locking role-taking processes: On the one hand, the Obama administration and congressional leaders in particular, have wavered on the granting of the TPA for the TPP negotiations. As a result, it is unclear to the U.S. trading partner if trade negotiations and subsequent compromises will find the necessary ratification majority in Congress (see above). On the other hand, the Abe government faces substantial domestic opposition on its own. These interest groups vehemently contest the beneficial effects of any further market openings in several key areas, thereby blocking critical compromises which tie together converging and diverging interests of the parties concerned (Green 2013: 4).

Therefore, at this time, Japan takes on the role of a troubled economic reformer in some key areas (agriculture) which, in turn blocks any substantial Japanese regional leadership role-taking. Domestic resistance hampering multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations, such as a Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, is thus the single most important factor explaining why Japan's commensurate functional role-taking to the U.S. Pivot is so unbalanced.

And yet, there are a few exceptions to Japan's role as a troubled economic reformer. On the one hand, recent changes in Japan's strict arms export policy guidelines have opened up the spectrum of a potential boost in defense-related commercial gains (Keck 2015). In turn, these reforms could set in motion an overhaul of Japan's cartelized and underperforming defense industry which has long been based on a "policy of *kokusanka*" (internalization and indigenous production). On the other hand, Japan's strategic interest in developing a much closer and sustainable cooperation with India, has led to a substantial intensification of bilateral commercial relations. Based on the 2006 Strategic Cooperation agreement, both partners have concluded a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2011, which e.g. gradually lowers the tariffs imposed on some 90,000 goods and accords "national treatment" to each other's investors (Khan 2014). But the most optimistic of the Abe

government's expectations were frustrated when bilateral trade and investment picked up only slowly due to concerns about the notorious bureaucratic red tape in both countries.

In sum, Japan's lack of domestic economic reform has not only tilted its own role towards securitizing the U.S. pivot, it has also shaped its external economic role taking which lacks key leadership qualities. Thus, while security considerations have shaped the Abe government's drive to intensify its economic partnership with India, such considerations have not been matched by commensurate commercial interests by Japanese business leaders.

In the third pillar of the pivot, Japan's political leadership under Prime Minister Abe has invested an unprecedented amount of time, effort and personal commitment to diversify and strengthen Japan's diplomatic (and security) relations. In the first 15 months in office, the Prime Minister alone visited 49 countries (Sakaki 2014: 33). Japan's advances in its relations with Australia and India received a lot of media attention but one could argue that the Abe government specifically targeted Southeast Asian countries: After taking office, Abe first visited Vietnam, one of the main protagonists in the dispute over the South China Sea, in January 2013. In February 2013, Japanese officials travelled to Manila to discuss maritime security cooperation which subsequently led to the provision of ten patrol vessels to the Philippine Coast guard (La Mierè 2013: 35).

But as in its economic realm Japan's diplomatic role-taking has been shaped by domestic considerations, thereby shifting it away from a loyal ally or regional leadership role commensurate with the U.S. pivot. Under Prime Minister Abe, the Japanese government has started to consistently employ nationalistic rhetoric and positions when it comes to Japanese war crimes during the Pacific war, including several high-profile visits of the Prime Minister himself to the Yasukuni Shrine (Maslow forthcoming). As a consequence, Japan's traditional dominant discourse, which had casted China and Korea as victims of Japan's aggression, has been challenged by a much more ego-centered historical narrative in which Japan is displayed as a victim of external bullying. In this reading significant 'Others', in particular China, deny



Japan's (now) peaceful identity due respect, thereby undermining Japan's reassertion as a powerful nation (Hagström and Gustafson 2015: 9).

Japan's new historical self-identification under Prime Minister Abe has led to a situation in which Tokyo has intensified diplomatic relations and held important summit meetings with a great number of countries in the near and far abroad. With its two most important and immediate neighbors, South Korea and China, however, relations remained tense or deteriorated over conflicting historical interpretations and disputed territories during the same period (Green 2013: 8). In the case of South Korea, bi- and trilateral defense and intelligence cooperation, which had been a long-term goal of the U.S., has suffered from continued disagreements and nationalistic furor on both sides (La Mierè 2013: 38). In the case of China, bilateral ties were so tense that Prime Minister Abe, after considerable pressure by Japan's business elites, tried to mend fences in a brief meeting with President Xi at the APEC Summit in Beijing (November 2014). The meeting resulted in parallel statements which acknowledged disagreement over the legal status of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islets while stressing a series of bilateral concerns and common strategic interests (MOFA 2014).

In sum, in terms of functional dimensions of the U.S. Pivot we can observe some interesting Japan's role patterns and changes: First, Japan took a security first approach to the Pivot. Tokyo subsequently intensified its security cooperation with Washington but also diversified its role-taking in the region so as to limit the dependency on Washington. Secondly, Japan's counter-role taking vis-à-vis the economic and diplomatic dimensions of the Pivot have been less compatible and much more driven by domestic considerations. Third, by securitizing the U.S. Pivot, Japan through its role taking has cast China (and North Korea) into the role of the 'Other', thereby contributing to a more competitive if not hostile interpretation of the anarchy in East Asia.

## **The Philippines: A capricious democratic ally**

The Philippines' role in the Asia-Pacific has been strongly conditioned by U.S. positioning towards the region ever since the end of the Spanish-American war in 1898. Philippine role-taking has been oscillating between a close American ally and a self-contained regional protectee. Both roles are strongly related to the country's ultimate goal of independence and self-determination, as well as its democratization in the 1990s (De Castro 2010).

After independence in 1942, reliance on U.S. security assistance was accompanied by a legacy of U.S.-backed presidents, which in turn stoked substantial opposition, both within the Philippine Congress and among the public. U.S.-Philippine cooperation ensued within the framework of the Military Bases Agreement of 1947, which allowed the U.S. to operate the largest American naval installation outside of the U.S. (Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base), and the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) of 1951, which committed both sides to support one another in the event of an attack by a third party, under President Manuel Quezon's rule. Followed by a close military cooperation during the Vietnam War (American bases in the Philippines supported U.S. forces), the People Power Revolution of 1986 finally toppled the Marcos regime, expressing resentment against the country's subordinate role to the U.S. As a consequence, the succeeding President Corazon Aquino quickly decided to terminate the U.S.-Philippine Basing Agreement in 1991, arguing that it undermined national sovereignty (Lum 2012). Both countries have remained military allies throughout the post-Cold-War era - formally corroborated via the Visiting Force Agreement (VFA) of 1999. But the Philippines have continued to embrace a distinct self-help role, striving to maximize self-determination (Graham 2013).

Against this background, the effects of the U.S. most recent repositioning vis-à-vis the Philippines are ambivalent. On the one hand, the U.S. provides a very large share of military and development aid to the Philippines (\$6 billion at the end of 2012) in order to modernize

its Armed Forces (AFP), and to reduce the economic and political conditions that make radical or extremist ideologies attractive. Also, Washington designates the Philippines as a major non-NATO ally since 2003, thereby casting Manila into the role of a regional ally and economic developer. Under the pivot, these two roles correspond with U.S. efforts to prepare the country to join the TPP via the bilateral Partnership for Growth of 2014 which “focuses on creating a more transparent, predictable, and consistent legal and regulatory regime, fostering a more open and competitive business environment, strengthening the rule of law and increasing efficiency in the court system” (Lum and Oven 2014: 9).

On the other hand, however, the U.S. clearly hesitates to assert that the Mutual Defense Treaty applies to Philippine-claimed islets in the South China Sea.<sup>9</sup> Since the U.S. is not a party of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), it has so far only verbally taken a commensurate role to the Philippine claimant role. Washington has called upon Beijing to clarify its own claim and to bring it in line with international law without formally taking a side.<sup>10</sup> In turn, this has led Philippine officials to doubt U.S. support in case of military hostilities. As former Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani said in 2014: “This is the time as good as any to know that we have to stand on our own. No one is going to protect us, not even the United States.”<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) of 2014, which provides for the rotational deployment of U.S. military personnel at Philipppian bases (rent-free) and which has been promoted by the recent and former president, has elicited strong condemnation from nationalist and leftist commentators as an attack on the country’s

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<sup>9</sup> In March 2014, the two sides held the fourth Bilateral Strategic Dialogue, where the U.S. pledged greater security assistance to the Philippines as joint exercises began to focus on maritime security.

<sup>10</sup> In 2014, Washington proposed a freeze by South China Sea claimants on activities that would unilaterally change the status quo, which the Philippines and other ASEAN states generally supported.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/03/31/1307220/us-un-asean-will-not-protect-philippines-sea-row>.

sovereignty (Simon 2013).<sup>12</sup> This is accompanied by calls for the abolition of the VFA in general. The dispute has also sparked heated debates in the Philippine Congress, with Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago arguing: “The VFA is a historic document of inequity between a former colonizer and its former colony, which some global political analysts describe as ‘falling state,’[...] VFA is a failure because the Armed Forces of the Philippines was not modernized sufficiently” (Santiago 2014).

Domestic contestation has culminated in a Philippine counter role-taking that is driven by an increasing self-assertiveness and delimitation towards the U.S (Greitens 2014). The former division of labor during the Cold War between the Philippines, focusing on internal security, and the U.S., providing external security, has passed away. It has been replaced by a shift in Philippine role-taking towards internal balancing of external threats (in particular in the South China Sea) by means diversifying external defense cooperation and a politicization of the U.S.-Philippine alliance.

The diversification of the Philippines’ external defense is visible in two forms: First, the Philippine government seeks to rely less on U.S. security assurances by broadening its defense capabilities’ supplier group. Under the strategic partnership signed in 2012, Japan will deliver 10 coast guard ships contributing to maritime cooperation. Also, South-Korea will provide two FA-50 fighter jets later in 2015. The Philippines is also fostering information sharing and navy-to-navy contacts with Vietnam and it established a procedure for an exchange of troops with Australia.

Second, Manila’s efforts to broaden its list of defense partners is accompanied by its role-taking as promoter of international norms for the resolution of regional security issues, in particular maritime security. As Foreign Secretary Del Rosaria recently stated: “We appreciate the assurances of states from the Atlantic to the Pacific that they are supporting a

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<sup>12</sup> In addition, the accidental aground of the U.S. Navy minesweeper USS Guardian in 2013 at the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park amidst the archipelagic waters stressed bilateral relations, particularly since the U.S. has disputed the requirement to provide prior notification of passing (Simon 2014).

region which is rules-based and which follows international law and norms. While the Philippines is doing its part in promoting the development of a fair and just international order, it needs the greater participation of other stakeholders” (Del Rosario 2012). Thus, Manila is casting regional democracies into norm entrepreneurs while taking Chinese provocation in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea into account. In this role, the government in Manila has formally requested an Arbitral Tribunal under the UNCLOS in 2013. It has also further promoted multilateral diplomacy, i.e. ASEAN. The country perceives ASEAN as a platform to reduce its bilateral reliance and advance its domestic agenda (De Castro 2013).

On top of its diversification of external defense, Manila has also politicized non-traditional security issues, i.e. terrorism and natural disasters. In doing so, the government uses domestic security risks as a political tool to foster internal balancing and secure U.S. foreign assistance while acknowledging public resentment towards permanent military bases (Traywick 2012). In 2013, President Aquino announced a \$1.82 billion defense modernization program, intended to upgrade air and maritime capabilities by 2017, an increase that is commensurate with an overall increase in defense budget from \$51 million to \$1 billion per year (Greitens 2014). Furthermore, military cooperation with the U.S. through joint exercises, counterterrorism efforts aimed at maintaining inter-operability, and the recently signed EDCA require a non-combat role of the U.S. under the premise of renunciation of military bases on Philippine soil (Lum and Oven 2014). The U.S. also spent \$87 million in U.S. disaster aid and \$59 million in private sector contributions after Hurricane Haiyan/Yolanda, which boosted public opinion of the U.S. Hence, commensurate counter-role taking by the Philippines as a partner in the War on Terror can be explained via its domestic role-taking.

## **Indonesia: From “bebas-aktif” to “Jalesveva Jayamah”**

Indonesia’s role in the Asia-Pacific has undergone three inter-related stages of role development, all shaping Jakarta’s contemporary role-taking vis-à-vis the U.S. Since the country’s independence from Dutch rule in 1948, Indonesia’s role has been based on the premise what then vice president Mohammad Hatta called “bebas-aktif” (free and active). This role encompasses two role components: Firstly, Indonesia sought to maintain its independence from either of the great powers’ sphere of influence. As founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955, and later of ASEAN in 1967, many of Indonesia’s regional and global achievements have been based on and proposed via multilateral institutions (Sukma 1995, Parameswaran 2014). Secondly, Indonesia has been an active promoter of principles of non-intervention, regional resilience and consensus building - which became cornerstones of Southeast Asia security discourse during the Cold War (Laksmana 2011). Hence, Indonesia’s role-taking during this first stage was that of a “benevolent expositor of peace and the interests of the developing world” (Tan 2007).

The country’s democratic transition period (beginning in 1998) can be interpreted as the second major stage of role development. After Suharto’s peaceful demission, Indonesia underwent a modernization and professionalization of its main political bodies, i.e. executive ministries such as the Presidential Staff for Foreign Affairs or the Commission 1 on Defence and Foreign Affairs at the National Parliament (Ghoshal 2004, Nabbs-Keller 2013).<sup>13</sup> This maturation of Jakarta’s diplomacy allowed for the so-called “Natalegawa Doctrine” of 2005 - Indonesia’s then foreign minister - which established a foreign policy directive of a “dynamic equilibrium”. The doctrine entailed a continuation of Jakarta’s independent but active role, by taking a multilateral leadership role, especially in ASEAN (including the ARF), while pursuing greater international recognition by taking functional roles such as “peacemaker,

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<sup>13</sup> This was based on the premise to increase the civilian control on the Indonesian military, see Connelly 2014.

confidence-builder, problem-solver, bridge-builder” (Reid 2012). This symbolized a shift from a balancing approach during the Cold War to a much more constructive, even transformative foreign policy within the Asia-Pacific that is based on equidistance between China and the U.S.<sup>14</sup>

With China, Jakarta signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2005 while promoting the expansion of the EAS as an alternative to the formalization of the ASEAN+3. Indonesia has also pushed for admission of the U.S. and Russia to the EAS (Anwar 2013). In addition, Jakarta has taken a leadership role within ASEAN in order to solve the South China Sea dispute, an issue that has also affected Indonesia itself.<sup>15</sup> Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone, which generates one of the world’s largest offshore gas fields and a rich fishing ground, overlaps with China’s “nine-dash line”, forcing Jakarta to become an interested party despite its reluctance to be a claimant state.<sup>16</sup>

U.S. role-taking vis-à-vis Indonesia was strained during the 1990s due to human rights abuses by Indonesian military and security forces, especially in Timor-Leste.<sup>17</sup> But relations experienced a boost after 9/11, resulting in close cooperation in the War on Terror, i.e. under the Regional Defense Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program. During this period the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) as well as the Ministry of Defence (MoD) contributed to the securitization of internal threats such as terrorism, pandemics, cyber-crime and the disruption of sea lane security (Laksmana 2011). Hence, commensurate Indonesian role-taking in the field of terrorism led to the Comprehensive Partnership Agreement in 2010 which aims at multiple policy areas reaching from economic growth through the development of trade, to

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<sup>14</sup> Following President Yudhoyono’s guideline “one million friends, zero enemies”.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, Indonesia took a leadership role in the Phnom Penh crisis on 2012 between China and Cambodia.

<sup>16</sup> Indonesia and China have also repeatedly clashed physically. In 2010, an Indonesian patrol boat captured a Chinese vessel illegally fishing within the exclusive economic zone, which led Beijing to dispatch an armed vessel to force the Indonesian patrol boat to release the captured vessel. A similar incidence occurred in 2013. Consequently, Indonesia has promoted the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties pursuing a binding code of conduct.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, after the 1991 “Dili incident” in which Indonesian security forces killed pro- independence residents of Timor-Leste, the U.S. Congress canceled assistance to Indonesia through the IMET program, which provided training and assistance to the military.

the further development of democracy and human rights (Baswedan 2004). This also resulted in a steady increase of U.S. foreign assistance to Indonesia.

In short, Indonesia, during the first and the second stage of its role development, has evolved its role-taking from a norm protagonist for sovereignty and autonomy to a much more internationalist foreign policy role, in which regional multilateral institutions serve as platforms to exercise regional leadership and where Jakarta takes the role as a *primus inter pares*, i.e. ASEAN multilateral bodies such as the ARF and the ASEAN+3, all which Indonesia refers to as *sokuguru* (cornerstone).

Indonesia's third stage of role-taking appears to have occurred after the 2014 election. At the center of Joko Widodo's foreign policy vision "Jalesveva Jayamah" (in the ocean we triumph) is the promotion of Indonesia's identity as an archipelagic state, the enhancement of the country's global role as a middle power diplomacy, as well as the expansion of its engagement in the Pacific region. In his words, Indonesia should function as a "global maritime axis" (Connelly 2014). Under the Minimum Essential Force – a twenty year plan (2005-2014) that initiates a military modernization agenda – Indonesia is taking the role of a maritime economic and security power. Economically, Widodo envisions an inter-island connectivity to foster Indonesia's maritime trade and commerce. Regarding maritime security, Widodo envisions the creation of an advanced navy with raise in the defense budget to 1.5 percent of GDP in five years coupled with foreign investment.

And yet, under Widodo's, domestic contestation has become prevalent in two forms: On the one hand, Indonesia experiences horizontal contestation, within the executive branch. The ruling Indonesian Democratic Party Struggle is split between proponents of pragmatism (active international role) such Widodo himself and his political advisors, and proponents of nationalist independence foreign policy such as party leader Megawati Sukarnoputri and Defense Minister General Ryamizard Ryacudu. This causes more ambiguity in role-taking than during the Cold War, because external pressure on Indonesia's role-taking has increased



(see below). In addition, Widodo's minority coalition, which has been explained as a result of the political decentralization within Indonesia (Pisani 2014), is politically constrained.

On the other hand, Indonesia experiences a diagonal contestation, i.e. among the public regarding external relations. According to recent polls, public perception is divided towards China and the U.S., with favorable views of both countries revolving around 60 percent (Novotny 2010).<sup>18</sup> Thereby, Indonesia's biggest concern is the involvement of a foreign military power in its internal affairs.

Both contestations will lead to an ambiguous counter-role taking vis-à-vis the Pivot and China. As the Jakarta' maritime security modernization clearly is a commensurate counter-role to the U.S. military dimension of the Pivot (the U.S. welcomes burden sharing), Indonesia's horizontal contestation between promoting an independent or pragmatic role weakens its commensuration in the diplomatic and economic dimension of the Pivot. Diplomatically, Indonesia perceives itself as a *primus inter pares* within ASEAN, an organization the U.S. is rather carefully towards. Economically, Widodo's "Jalesveva Jayamah" clearly aims at a less interdependency with foreign powers, as it only seeks investment, not reform. China's maritime territorial claims are clearly not compatible with any of the current roles by Jakarta.

Indonesia, due to its role as a self-proclaimed leader within ASEAN, casts the U.S. and China into interactive associated within a multilateral framework preventing a completion of extra-regional powers. Simultaneously, its security perspective has transformed to an aspirated maritime prowess. This has strongly conditioned Indonesia's counter-role taking towards the Pivot, as Indonesia carefully balances its foreign policy between an increasingly assertive

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/>

China and the non-military aspects of America's repositioning. Particularly the latter reflects Indonesia's hostility to foreign military bases close to its national borders.<sup>19</sup> (Anwar 2013).

In sum, Indonesia's counter-role taking resembles that of a see-saw. U.S. role-taking, and particularly its repositioning as a part of the Pivot, fails to trigger commensurate counter-role taking in the military and economic policy area since Jakarta avoids any attempt by the U.S. to cast into a balancing coalition against China (Murphy 2014). Instead, Indonesia's role-taking, as a middle power, is that of an independent multilateral leader as it aims at a stable balance between the major powers. Economically, Indonesia remains independent towards any Free Trade Agreement promoted by any major power, i.e. RCEP and TPP, as Jakarta takes the role as a norm promoter via APEC, i.e. through ASEAN. Diplomatically, Indonesia takes on commensurate counter-role taking to U.S. ascendants to TAC and the ARF as Jakarta perceives maritime disputes to be solved via multilateral institutions. At the same time, Indonesia's domestic role contestation deviates between pragmatism and nationalism, which will continue to fluctuate as U.S. and Chinese role-taking continues to be polarized. Hence, Indonesia's counter-role taking depends on subtle factors including U.S.-China relations, their relations with ASEAN, as well as Jakarta's domestic political constraints in the coming years, making U.S. repositioning less reliable in terms of intended consequences (Mishra 2014).

## **V. Conclusion**

The evaluation of unintended consequences is never easy. In traditional analysis it (at least) requires the positive identification of intentions to separate the unintended effects. In this article, we presented an alternative, role theoretical conceptualization of unintended consequences. It focuses on the stabilization of intended social action through corresponding,

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<sup>19</sup> Many among Jakarta's elites have expressed concerns that the U.S. forces for instance in Darwin could be used to intervene on behalf of the often security-beleaguered PT Freeport Indonesia.

or commensurate, role-taking behavior. If deviant, i.e. non-intended, counter-role taking occurs, original intended action is lost in the interaction between the role takers concerned.

In our case study on the U.S. Pivot to Asia, we started with the (rationalist) assumption that the degree of ambivalence in the original U.S. role-taking – i.e. a mixed signal emerging from party polarization – would be related to the degree of deviant counter-role taking by Asian nations. In short: a mixed signal would be ‘misunderstood’, resulting in unintended consequences. Our findings from this case do support this proposition in some cases. Congressional budgeting priorities for pet defense projects reduce crucial resources for a more flexible and distributed force posture. In turn, this and the lack of a Presidential PTA has led allies and partners to question the sustainability of the Pivot. However, when weighed against other factors, the lack of clarity of the concept, diverging signals from Congress, and the administration - or from the Republican or Democratic parties - have been less important than suggested by many scholars (e.g. Kurlantzick 2015).

Rather, counter-role taking varied along national responses and not across the nation states under study. Whereas Japan reacted by taking commensurate leadership roles in the security sphere, the Philippines (to a lesser degree) and Indonesia did not respond in kind. In the Philippines, closer security cooperation with the U.S. is contested domestically, whereas Indonesia prefers a policy of equidistance between the U.S. and China, using its regional leadership role in ASEAN to hold off altercasting efforts by both great powers. Hence, the findings of our case studies do not support the notion that the U.S. Pivot has been knocking on “open doors only” (Tow and Stuart 2015). Some of those doors appear to be closed, some countries prefer different doors for security (U.S.) and wellbeing (China) etc.

Interestingly, both Japan and the Philippines have strongly diversified their set of security partners after the introduction of the U.S. Pivot, reflecting either mistrust about the U.S. intentions, reliability, or a perception that dependency upon a reliable U.S. should be reduced. This finding is amenable to (realist) alliance theory which suggests that weaker alliance

partners will try to reduce the risk of being abandoned by the stronger partner. But the difference in kind and degree of diversification between the two is so substantial that domestic expectations must be counted in to explain these differences.

Counter-role taking also varied, systematically, along functional realms: the security, economic and diplomatic pivot. Whereas the U.S. security pivot triggered commensurate (Japan) and partially deviant role taking (the Philippines and Indonesia), the economic pivot led to nowhere (yet). Two strong factors seem to be at work here: in the case of Japan, TPP negotiations with the U.S. and other partners have been skewed by domestic protectionist interests. In role theoretical terms, ego-expectations for protectionism (and closed, oligopolistic markets) override external expectations for Japanese leadership and common goods provision (market openings). In the case of the Philippines and Indonesia, it appears that the extensive regulatory changes required to enter the TPP frame cannot and will not be matched by domestic actors in these markets. One reading of this is that the U.S. strategy to keep China out of this economic grouping – through demanding very high standards and respective adjustment – backfires because it prevents many less developed economies in Asia from joining in the first place.

U.S. role-taking may transform the domestic debate by introducing new cleavages into a polity. We find some evidence of this, but again the effect comes in national colors. In Japan, the securitization of the U.S. Pivot, i.e. a commensurate response which leads to a stronger U.S.-Japan defense posture, is based on a bi-partisan consensus. There is, of course, contention about the degree of robustness of the Japanese role. But in the Philippines, the U.S. Pivot and the national Philippine response is contested and security policy appears to become a potent cleavage in domestic politics. For Indonesia, we find that the government tries to stay clear of foreign altercasting effects. Here, we found that domestic developments, i.e. the democratization of country has a much more important effect.

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