




OPEN PEER REVIEW

Analyzing the Impact of U.S. Strategy in East Asia on Sino-Japanese Relations

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The introduction discusses the strategic competition between the U.S., China, and Japan but does not explicitly define "structural realism" until later sections. A brief introductory sentence clarifying how structural realism explains great power behavior would help orient the reader earlier.

The claim that "The U.S. has formed a strategic alliance with Japan, encouraging it to strengthen its military capabilities and play a more active role in international affairs..." needs a clear timeline and reference to specific policy actions. For instance, mentioning Japan's security policy shifts under the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) 2018 would provide empirical grounding.

The phrase "power competition for security maximization" in the theoretical section is somewhat vague. Does the article refer to military, economic, or technological competition? Providing an example—such as the U.S.-Japan semiconductor restrictions against China—would clarify the argument.

Several paragraphs in the Theoretical Framework repeat the claim that "states maximize security rather than power per se." Streamlining these discussions and summarizing the main takeaway in one strong paragraph would improve readability.

In discussing "Japan's balancing role against China," the article does not sufficiently reference Japan's recent involvement in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the U.S., India, and Australia. Integrating this would enhance the empirical credibility of the argument.

The statement "Japan pledged to provide logistical support for U.S. military operations in the Taiwan Strait under revised U.S.-Japan security cooperation guidelines." should include a reference to Japan's 1997 or 2015 defense cooperation agreements, rather than a general citation to Chang & Chiang (2022).

The phrase "turning this region into a gray zone of contention" regarding the South China Sea lacks a clear definition of what constitutes a "gray zone conflict." Expanding this with references to hybrid warfare, economic coercion, and maritime militia activities would improve clarity.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The introduction states, "Historically, Taiwan has always been a significant strategic factor in the interactions between China and the United States, but Japan also appears to have developed an interest in Taiwan." This claim requires supporting references to substantiate Japan's role in Taiwan's geopolitical relevance, particularly in military or economic dimensions.

In the Theoretical Framework section, the phrase "Neorealism prioritizes security concerns..." could be expanded by explicitly linking it to the "security dilemma", a fundamental concept in structural realism. This would strengthen the theoretical argument.

The article states that "Since Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012, China's foreign policy regarding Taiwan and East Asia has undergone significant changes." While true, this lacks specificity—what exact policies changed? Referencing the Anti-Secession Law (2005), military posturing, or Taiwan's international isolation strategies would provide a clearer picture.

In the section discussing Taiwan's impact on Sino-Japanese relations, the claim that "Taiwan's strategic role is increasingly shaping Japan's military calculations" is made without empirical evidence. Including Japanese defense white papers, security documents, or official statements would validate this assertion.

The article discusses "economic containment of China" but lacks direct references to key U.S. policies such as the U.S.-China trade war (2018–2020) or semiconductor export restrictions (2022–2023). Adding these would strengthen the economic analysis.

The article states that "Sino-Japanese relations remain precarious at best." This assertion is broad and would benefit from empirical validation. Are there recent diplomatic summits, trade agreements, or military confrontations that support this claim?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.