

Alliance Commitment to East Asian Countries and US Party Politics

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Abstract

International Relations scholars provide the contradictory empirical findings as to democratic alliance reliability. They place very different assumptions about the similarity of preference of domestic political group vis-a-vis alliance commitments. The studies in supporting the thesis that the democracies are more reliable partners make the assumption that there is a national consensus about keeping the promises it made in a form of the formal treaty. The scholars in the opposite side of the debate assume that the preferences for an alliance commitment significantly vary among different political actors. This paper illustrates how differently/similarly competing political parties consider alliance commitments. As a trial, I select three US alliances in northeast Asia and explain the differences between the Democrat.s and Republican.s preferences to maintain US commitments.

Key words: alliance commitment and reliability, US party politics, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan

I. Introduction

Security alliances were highly institutionalized after World War II. For instance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) located its permanent headquarters in Brussels with numerous affiliated organizations and agencies to coordinate military cooperation among member states. According to official NATO statistics, “More than 5,000 meetings take place every year among NATO bodies.”¹⁾ Similarly, the Organization of American States has a permanent secretariat in Washington D.C. and conducts multinational military operations under its approval (Tago 2007).

Like multilateral alliance systems, even bilateral alliance treaties after WWII have become legally formalized and highly institutionalized. For instance, the US-Japan alliance is a treaty-based, security arrangement. It was strengthened in the 1970s and 1990s by adding a variety of institutionalized instruments to assure the alliance’s proper function in times of crisis. Examples include the introduction of an agreement about how military bases will be used in a

1) NATO homepage (http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49284.htm) [Accessed on Feb. 18, 2011]

crisis, how US armed forces will obtain civilian cooperation, and how logistical support will be provided by the Japanese self-defense forces.

The institutionalization of an alliance might be a sign of the strength of security promises, or it could demonstrate the uncertainty of an alliance partner to keep its commitments. If there is a common danger to alliance members, cooperation in defending each other would automatically be secured and ought to be done without institutionalized promises. Recently, scholars have regarded the institutionalization of an alliance as a reflection of the uncertainty of the alliance commitment and a measure taken to prevent a partner's defection from its commitment.

In such a world of institutionalized alliances, Gartzke and Gleditsch (2004) believe that democratic allies are especially defective, because they have a system of leadership cycles (through national elections) and information asymmetry between the leadership and individual voters. In contrast, scholars who disagree with Gartzke and Gleditsch believe there would be a national consensus about alliance commitment (especially once it comes into force as the formal treaty) in a democratic regime and political cycling does not change the likelihood of continuation of alliance partnership among the democracies (Gaubatz 1996; Leeds 2003; Choi 2003, 2004).²⁾

This paper, as an attempt to unpack the assumption of those contradicting studies on alliance commitment and the political regimes, conducts *a pilot* empirical research to observe the partisan variances vis-à-vis the US alliance commitments. By studying three US alliance commitments in northeast Asia - the US-Japan, US-Korea (ROK), and US-Taiwan alliances - this paper shows that the differences in Democratic and Republican policy preferences over the alliance commitments are constant and there is only a minimum national consensus to maintain the alliances with Asian partners. Also, this paper theoretically argues the possible courses of American alliance policy under different domestic political conditions

Needless to say, this is a very preliminary study, and the author acknowledges the importance of international conditions, such as changes in power parity and the appearance of a new threat, but this particular study puts more emphasis on national (domestic) level politics vis-à-vis alliance commitment since the purpose of the project is to advance scholarly debate over alliance reliability and political regimes through an examination of the validity of the assumptions made by previous studies.

2) Leeds, in her latest study (Leeds, Mattes and Vogel 2009) does not assume little division between conservatives and liberals over the course of national security policy; however, she assumes that there is a sort of consensus that a state must keep its international commitment including alliance treaty obligations.

II. Alliance Reliability and Political Regimes

Alliances are all about commitment and reliability. No matter what is promised, a formal alliance clarifies the commitment of member states, such as collective defense against a shared enemy and mutual neutrality. Alliance members cannot be one hundred percent certain that promises will actually be carried out in times of war and crisis, so they need international treaties to make the alliance into a credible commitment.

International Relations (IR) scholars have accumulated empirical studies about alliance reliability, especially by focusing on the differences between democratic and nondemocratic alliance partners. By raising both normative and institutional reasons, Gaubatz (1996) claims that liberal democracies are more reliable alliance partners than nondemocracies, and shows empirical evidence that democratic alliances are distinctively durable. Specifically, he shows that legalism and the state's reputation for reliability have significant rhetorical appeal in domestic polities (Gaubatz 1996: 119).

Similarly, Leeds (2003) maintains that democratic states are more inclined to respect their alliance commitments to help their partners in interstate wars. This is confirmed by an analysis of the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) dataset for the period from 1816 to 1944. Choi (2003, 2004) further elaborates the causal mechanisms for why democratic allies are reliable. She argues that coalitions of democracies are better at maintaining wartime commitments because their domestic institutions include veto players, and the alliance commitments that come into force by overriding those veto players' oppositions must be respected (2003: 144). Autocratic governments are less reliable, since their commitments can be easily changed by a single or a limited number of decision makers. In a similar vein, Smith (1996: 28-29) hypothesizes that democratic states face higher domestic audience costs for failing to respect alliance commitments, and thus they should be more reliable. However, his statistical analysis of a dataset of wars and crises in Europe after 1815 does not confirm the hypothesis.

Recently, Leeds and its co-authors (Leeds, Mattes and Vogel 2009) claim that there may be a division between conservatives and liberals over alliance policy in the democracies but they are not so different in preference for keeping the international commitments. Especially, once a state made a promise in the form of treaty, they argue that the domestic consensus eventually emerges that the obligation must be respected and thus the democratic states even after changes in societal supporting coalitions would not terminate the alliance prematurely. They provides empirical evidence by using the bilateral alliance treaties included in the ATOP dataset.

In contrast, Werner and Lemke (1997) provide ample evidence that democracies are not as reliable as autocracies in intervening as a third-party disputant to assist their alliance partner states. Their statistical analysis of the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) interventions between 1816 and 1986 suggests that autocracies are more likely to assist their

partners, but democracies are not.

Moreover, using the same MID dataset for the period from 1816 through 1992, Gartzke and Gleditsch (2004) also provide evidence that democracies are 2.5 times more likely to violate alliance obligations than nondemocracies. They list two reasons to explain their results. First, democracies face a cycling problem because commitments are subject to future challenges in a democratic system. An alliance treaty that requires a state to join a war or militarized interstate dispute to support allies may not be honored in a subsequent administration, which might have different priorities and preferences in foreign policy from its predecessor. Democracies may thus be less likely to keep promises to help their partners. Second, complex foreign policy issues, such as the details of alliance treaties, are bound to be less carefully followed and thus more easily approved by the citizens in democracies than is the decision to go to war, which is a much more salient and critical issue for a domestic audience. Therefore, domestic opposition to a decision to go to war (the implementation of a commitment) would be difficult, whereas it would not be so hard to form a formal alliance commitment by signing a treaty.

Tago (2009) follows Gartzke and Gleditsch's line of argument and finds that democratic leaders fail to respect a commitment to coalition participation during an election period. He creates a dataset with a state-month unit of analysis that contains information about thirty-seven coalition partner states and finds that the occurrence of a national election serves as a strong driving force to accelerate an exit from the coalition. An incumbent political leader who faced an electoral challenger who opposed military contributions to Iraq would reverse the policy to support the United States and exit a coalition to win an election, even at the risk of damaging a bilateral relationship with the United States. A change in leadership *after* an election, on the other hand, failed to be a predictor of the timing of defection. Tago's analysis is limited to a single coalition case, but it suggests that democratic states are less reliable allies during an election cycle.

III. Unpacking the Assumptions

There is a clear divide between scholars who believe that democratic states are more reliable and those who reject such claims and support the opposite view. The scholars conduct an empirical testing using the aggregated data of wars, crises and disputes and basically *assume* a particular baseline preference of domestic actors about the alliance commitment.

The existence of a national consensus about alliance commitment is an assumption of and the logical consequence of the argument that claims that democratic allies are more reliable partners. The normative argument by Gaubatz suggests that people in a democracy are more inclined to keep alliance promises because of legal norms. It is assumed that the same norm exists, no matter with which political party a person is affiliated. For instance, Gaubatz does

not say that the conservatives are less/more norm-oriented thinkers. Furthermore, the institutional argument by Choi and Leeds leads to the logical conclusion that existing alliances are approved by various domestic political players who hold veto powers and, thus, to maintain a commitment to an alliance is the focal point of decision-making elites. This suggests that those who believe in democratic alliance reliability will predict that changes in the international environment (such as the rise of a rival competitive state) might generate a larger change in alliance policy and preference shift than a change from conservative to liberal rule (or vice versa) in domestic leadership.

In contrast, Gartzke and Gleditsch, and Tago find a clear difference between political parties (liberal and conservative) over security policies, including a state's alliance commitments. If there is no significant difference between the parties over alliance policies, Gartzke and Gleditsch's "political cycling problem" argument would present no problem of failing to keep a promise. Tago's strategic position using national elections would not function if there were an ignorable difference over alliance commitment. The mechanism works as long as there are disagreements among political parties about security commitments.

In sum, the two scholarly camps hold very contrasting assumptions. If Gartzke and Gleditsch's and Tago's arguments are based on a reasonable assumption, there must be a *salient difference* between political parties regarding alliance commitment policy. If Gaubatz, Leeds, and Choi are correct about their assumption, there must be more *bipartisan consensus* to keep alliance commitments, and we would not be able to observe much difference in parties about alliance policy and instead would be able to observe the temporal dynamics of policy shifts due to changes in the international environment. Our problem here is that those scholars rarely provide empirical evidence about the validity of their assumptions. Therefore, we do not really know (or more precisely, we do not have good evidence to judge) which assumption would fit better to the reality. The scholars provide case illustrations about their assumptions but nothing more is provided as systematic evidence.

I argue that one way to advance the scholarly debate of alliance reliability and political regime type is to conduct an actual validity test of the assumptions about domestic preferences. However, it would be difficult to compile a large N data of comparable preferences of different political groups for the entire democracies in the World for a long time period. There are too many of them and no simple source of data exists. Therefore, to start this kind of scientific research, it is reasonable to do a pilot study of one country and see how we can expand the coding and research strategy to the others.

Here, I begin with the easiest case in regards to data availability, and thus focus on the United States of America. US domestic politics is relatively simple since there have been two major parties: the Democrats and the Republican. It has many of alliances, especially after World War II. At a presidential election, the political parties reveal their preference in the form of "party platform". This indeed enables us to trace periodic (every four years) party political positions and accumulate comparative information (Monroe 1983; Busby and Monten

2008). Platforms are one of the promising sources of information about policy preference.

In the next section, a comparison of policy preference of the two parties will be provided; also, by using a key Congressional vote and a case illustration, I will generate a theoretical expectation about a shift of alliance policy under different domestic political conditions in the US.

IV. Case Studies of Three, US Alliances in East Asia

Three bilateral alliances in northeast Asia - US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Taiwan are selected to contrast with the United States' European and Latin American alliance relationships, which are based on multilateral treaties. The three northeast Asian alliances are each based on a bilateral agreement with the United States. (The original defense alliance treaty with Taiwan was voided when the United States restored diplomatic relations with the government of the Peoples' Republic of China, but a de-facto alliance was maintained under the Taiwan Relations Act.) The three bilateral alliances are comparable. They have lasted for more than fifty years; a long history means that there is a basis for reliability in each alliance relationship. They are sample of alliances among the democracies (for the ROK and Taiwan, this has been the case since their democratization at the end of the 1980s), and democratic alliances are the population of the research.

Table 1 lists the key phrases in the three East Asian alliances taken from the Democratic and Republican policy platforms for the presidential elections from 1992 to 2008.³⁾ The table shows the different policies of each party in the same election year and how they evolved over time. In general, it is obvious that Republican platforms emphasize security and clarify their position vis-a-vis the three alliance partners. The Democratic platforms, in contrast, mention nothing about their alliance relationship with the three partners (see the platform for 1992).

In 1992, because of an emphasis of economic issues by the Clinton campaign, the Democratic platform avoided committing anything for Japanese and Taiwanese security. It mentioned only its promise to South Korea and made it clear that US troops would remain on the peninsula. The Republican platform stated its policy to maintain a commitment to Japan and South Korea. It confirmed assistance to deter North Korea and China. In particular, the platform mentioned the Taiwan Relations Act, which states that presidents will provide adequate support to Taiwan for the self-defense. Needless to say, a clear difference exists between the two platforms.

3) Some may believe that these are merely party platforms and not crucial to understand how alliances are actually managed by administrations in power. However, it must be noted that alliances are indeed a creation of words. The party platforms are key political statements that inform the public and alliance partner states how a new president/majority party would conduct its alliance policy once elected. They are not random statements without political value, but are strategically chosen words to take a certain political position.

Table 1 Commitment to East Asian Allies: Differences in Political Party Platforms

Year	Target	Democratic Party	Republican Party
2008	Japan	“maintain strong relationship with allies like Japan”	“Our longstanding alliance with Japan has been the foundation for peace and prosperity in Asia, and we look for Japan to forge a leadership role in regional and global affairs”
	ROK	“maintain strong relationship with allies like South Korea”	“Another valued ally, the Republic of Korea remains vigilant with us against the tyranny and international ambitions of the maniacal state on its border.” “The U.S. will not waver in its demand for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear weapons programs, with a full accounting of its proliferation activities.”
	Taiwan	“committed to a One China policy and Taiwan Relations Act”	“Our policy toward Taiwan, a sound democracy and economic model for mainland China, must continue to be based upon the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act.” “We oppose any unilateral steps by either side to alter the status quo in the Taiwan straits on the principle that all issues regarding the island’s future must be resolved peacefully, through dialogue, and be agreeable to the people of Taiwan.” “If China were to violate these principles, the U.S., in accord with the Taiwan Relations Act, will help Taiwan defend itself.” “As a loyal friend of America, the democracy of Taiwan has merited our strong support, including the timely sale of defensive arms”
2004	Japan	“must maintain our strong relationship with Japan”	“Japan is a key partner of the United States and the U.S.-Japan alliance is an important foundation of peace, stability, security, and prosperity in Asia.” “America supports an economically vibrant and open Japan that serves as an engine of expanding prosperity and trade in the Asia-Pacific region.” “Republicans support an American policy in the Asia-Pacific region that looks to Japan to continue forging a leading role in regional and global affairs based on our common interests, our common values, and our close defense and diplomatic cooperation”
	ROK	“seek enhance relations with our historic ally South Korea”	“The Republic of Korea is a valued democratic ally of the United States.” “two nations are maintaining vigilance toward North Korea while preparing our alliance to make contributions to the broader stability of the region over the longer term.” “Republicans support the Bush Administration’s efforts to protect the peace on the Korean peninsula.” “Americans have shed their blood to stop North Korean aggression before and remain prepared to resist aggression today”
	Taiwan	“committed to a One China policy”	“There are, however, other areas in which we have profound disagreements including . . . and America’s commitment to the self-defense of Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act” “If China violates the principle for peaceful solution and attack Taiwan, then the US will respond appropriately in accordance with the TRA.”

Table 1 Commitment to East Asian Allies: Differences in Political Party Platforms (cont.)

Year	Target	Democratic Party	Republican Party
2000	Japan	“must strengthen our alliances ... in Asia, with Japan” “intensify our strategic cooperation with our ally Japan”	“will strengthen our alliance with Japan.” “Japan is a key partner of the US and the US-Japan alliance is an important foundation of peace”
	ROK	“must strengthen our alliances . . . in Asia, . . . with South Korea” “remain committed to the defense of South Korea”	“will help to deter aggression on the Korean peninsula” “The Republic of Korea is a valued democratic ally of the US”
	Taiwan	“will fulfill its responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act.” “will also remain committed to a One China policy.”	“will honor our promises to the people of Taiwan, a longstanding friend of the US and a genuine democracy. Taiwan deserves America’s strong support, including the timely sale of defensive arms to enhance Taiwan’s security.” “If China violates the principle for peaceful solution and attack Taiwan, then the US will respond appropriately in accordance with the TRA.”
1996	Japan	“applauds the important new security charter with Japan”	“will keep the mutual security treaties with Japan . . . as the foundation of our role in the region.”
	ROK	“applauds close cooperation with the Republic of Korea toward the goal of a unified and non-nuclear peninsula”	“will keep the mutual security treaties . . . with the Republic of Korea as the foundation of our role in the region.”
	Taiwan	“applauds the deployment of an American naval task force to the Taiwan Straits to ensure that China’s military exercises did not imperil the security of the region.”	“The Taiwan Relations Act must remain the basis for our relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan.” “reaffirm our commitment to Taiwan’s security and will regard any threat to alter its status by force as a threat to our own security interests.” “will make available to Taiwan the material it needs for self-defense, particularly theater missile defense and coastal patrol submarines.”
1992	Japan	no mention (on security policy)	“will work with Japan for common progress and maintain our military presence in Japan and in Asia.”
	ROK	“A U.S. troop presence should be maintained in South Korea as long as North Korea presents a threat to South Korea”	“will maintain our close relationship with the Republic of Korea, helping to deter aggression from the north. North Korea remains an outlaw state and must not be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons”
	Taiwan	no mention (on security policy)	“reaffirm our commitment to the security of Taiwan and regard any attempt to alter its status by force as a threat to the entire region.” “adhere to the Taiwan Relations Act, the basis for continuing cooperation with those who have stood loyally with us for half a century.”

Source: Woolley, John and Gerhard Peters. 2011. “Political Party Platforms Database” *The American Presidency Project* (americanpresidency.org). [Accessed on February 18, 2011]

Contrasts along party lines are again obvious for the 1996 platforms. The Democratic platform applauded its alliance policy in the previous four years and again did not express its commitment to the three countries. In contrast, the Republican Party stated that it would keep

alliance commitments to Japan and South Korea, the basis for the United States' role in the region. Furthermore, the Party's commitment to Taiwan was suggested with even stronger words: "... reaffirm our commitment to Taiwan's security and will regard any threat to alter its status by force as a threat to our own security interests" and "... will make available to Taiwan the material it needs for self-defense, particularly theater missile defense and coastal patrol submarines."

In 2000, the Gore campaign changed the Democratic Party platform and began to emphasize alliance commitments. As for alliances with Japan and South Korea, it used the phrase "must strengthen our alliances in Asia" for the first time to express its will to fortify ties with Asia.⁴ As for Taiwan, the campaign added the phrases that it "will fulfill its responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act" and "will also remain committed to a One China policy." This was the first mention of the Taiwan Relations Act in a Democratic Party platform. However, even if we recognize the change in Democratic policy preferences about alliances, the Republican position was far stronger than the competitor. The Republican commitment to Taiwan was crystal clear: the platform said that it "will honor our promises to the people of Taiwan, a longstanding friend of the US and a genuine democracy. Taiwan deserves America's strong support, including the timely sale of defensive arms to enhance Taiwan's security," and "if China violates the principle for peaceful solution and attack Taiwan, then the US will respond appropriately in accordance with the TRA." It did not mention the One China policy and stated its will to defend Taiwan in case of Chinese attack.

The Democratic Party's 2004 platform continued to mention maintenance and enhancement of alliance ties with Japan and South Korea. It may appear that there is a salient difference between the Democratic and Republican platforms. However, whereas there was only one mention of Japan (about security issue) in the Democratic platform, there were ten references in the Republican platform to Japan concerning its alliance ties and security cooperation. The Democratic platforms mentioned South Korea only one time, whereas the Republicans mentioned the ROK six times. Indeed, the differences between the Democrats and Republicans were again prominent concerning alliance commitment to Taiwan. The Democratic Party mentioned only a One China policy and failed to confirm its commitment to Taiwan's security by referring to the Taiwan Relations Act. In contrast, the Republican Party confirmed its strong commitment to the island by saying, "If China violates the principle for peaceful solution and attacks Taiwan, then the United States will respond appropriately in accordance with the TRA."

The contrast between the two parties continued in 2008. Phrases for the US-Japan and US-ROK alliances did not change much, but the Democratic platform added one key word for

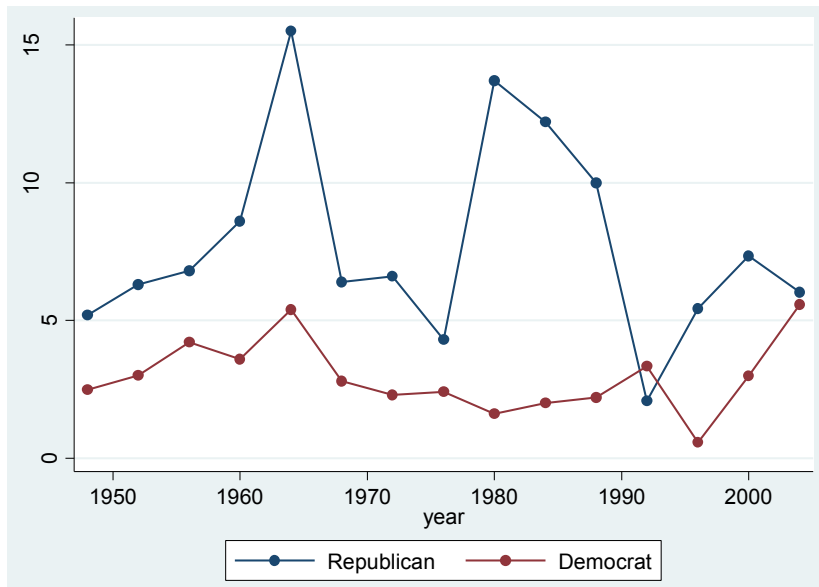
4) Konishi (2000) suggests that Bush and Gore had "vastly different foreign policy prescriptions" mainly due to a difference in China policy. According to Konishi, the only mention of Japan in the Democratic platform was "lip service to relations with Japan."

the Taiwan relationship. It again included mention of the Taiwan Relations Act and the One China policy. This could have been a gesture to win votes from more conservative voters, who wanted a responsible commitment to the security of the region. The Republican Party maintained the same emphasis on the alliances with Japan and South Korea. There were some changes in words about the commitment to Taiwan, but they basically clarified their consistent promise of support for Taiwan to defend it from Chinese attack.

An analysis on the party platforms over two decades reveals that considerable differences existed in alliance commitments to the three Asian partners. Whereas the Democratic Party after 2000 mentioned the enhancement of alliance ties with Japan and South Korea, their commitment to the alliances was not as strong as the Republicans. The differences are more obvious in the two parties' commitment to Taiwan.

The German-based “Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project (MRG/CMP)” provides information about different aspects of political party performance and the structure of party systems. I use their most recent database about party platforms and create Figure 1. The figure shows scores of favorable mentions of military and alliance obligations on Republican and Democratic platforms from the 1948 to the 2004 presidential elections. In the project’s coding rule, favorable mentions include “need to maintain or increase military expenditure,” “modernizing armed forces and improvement in military strength,” “rearmament and self-defense,” “need to keep military treaty obligations,” and “need to secure adequate manpower in the military.” The scores were created for the purpose of international comparison

Figure 1 Scores of Favorable Mentions of Military and Alliance Obligations on Party Platforms



Note: PER104 is the score for Military; positive.
 Source: Volkens, Laceywell, Regel, Schultze and Werner, 2010.

and would not let me conduct specific temporal preference mapping on the three Asian alliances. However, this helps us understand the general trend of the two parties' policy positions in military- and security-related issues over time.

The data show clear differences between Republicans who emphasize a greater military role and alliance commitment, versus Democrats, who want less commitment. The difference was clearer in the cold war era, but it still exists today with a smaller divide. The only time the Democrats mentioned security/alliance issues more than the Republicans did was during the 1992 election campaign. This is a bit surprising, because the Clinton campaign did not commit to Japan's and Taiwan's defense at all on the 1992 platform, and the same year's Republican platform made more and clearer promises to East Asian security. This suggests that the Republicans' reduced the mention of security and alliances of other regions in their platform.

It is reasonable to conclude that Democrats and Republicans differ greatly about East Asian alliance policy. Although both parties are in somewhat of a bipartisan consensus that the United States should not lose any of the existing alliance partners in East Asia, the level of commitment expressed by the two parties is quite different. Republicans consistently support strengthening alliance ties and make their position clear to deter common enemies with the alliance partners. Democratic commitments to those alliances, in contrast, fluctuate over time, with a much lower level of promises to Asian allies. Again, this is particularly true in the Taiwan case.

There is further evidence of a policy preference divide between the two parties. The party platforms are not the only sources for understanding the differences in policy preferences. Voting records of key defense/military-related Congressional bills enable us to see if the party line is an important factor in alliance policy. For instance, the vote for the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act is the most controversial and salient case to examine how party difference matters to a particular alliance commitment. The bill was authored by two representatives, Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) and Sam Gejdensen (D-CT) -- one Republican and one Democrat. It required "direct secure communications" between the militaries in the United States and Taiwan and encouraged the administration to sell more military equipment to Taiwan. It came to a vote in the 106th Congress (H.R. 1838) and successfully passed in the House (341-70), but was never voted on in the Senate.

Table 2 shows the results of logit regression analysis on the House members' voting action for the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act bill.⁵ It is obvious that the variables DWNOMINATE1 (a widely used measure of legislators' ideological locations over time) and Democrats are highly

5) For a record of voting action and representative's party id, the Library of Congress's THOMAS is used. For DWNOMINATE1 score, Keith Poole's data are used (<http://www.voteview.com/>). The data on Asian population and military quarters, US census data are used (<http://www.census.gov/>). Finally, to identify "economically reliant district" to military industries, Thorpe (2010) is used.

Table 2 106th Congress House Vote on Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (logit model)

	Model 1			Model 2				
	dF/dx	Coef.	Robust Std.	dF/dx	Coef.	Robust Std.		
DWNOMINATE1	0.261	0.98	0.22	***	-			
Democrats		-		-0.212	-0.79	0.17	***	
Asian Population	-0.003	-0.01	0.01	-0.005	-0.02	0.01		
Military Quarters (/100)	0.032	0.12	0.06	**	0.031	0.12	0.06	**
Economically Reliant Dist.	0.093	0.40	0.26	**	0.109	0.47	0.26	**
Constant	-	0.73	0.10	***	-	1.17	0.12	***
Pseudo R2			0.13				0.11	
Obs.			435				435	
Log-likelihood			-197.2				-201.1	

*** significant at 1%; ** significant at 5% (all one tailed)

significant. Conservative ideology holders and Republican Party members were more inclined to vote for the bill. It must be especially noted that the effect remains after controlling for the variables, such as Asian population, the number of military personnel and family members in a district, and a district that is economically reliant on the military industry.

The analysis clearly suggests that the party line determined the House representatives vote to strengthen alliance ties with Taiwan. Republicans were more inclined to do so, but Democrats were less enthusiastic.

V. A Theoretical Expectation

Given alliance reliability cannot be taken for granted and the ties between the allies could be easily in question, such partisan differences are not ignorable. Logically speaking, as long as the party platforms accompanies substantive policy commitments and the parties members (president, prime minister and congresspersons/parliamentarians) must follow what they have promised at an election since constituencies can easily penetrate false promise and punish it in the next election, “change of leadership from one party to another” would cause significant shift in alliance policy albeit it would not completely negate the alliance treaty itself.

If we think of implications by the accumulated systematic studies on the effects of partisan politics to US national security policy that Presidents cannot ignore Congress especially in its important/salient security policies (e.g. Fordham 2002; Tago 2005), for instance, the Democratic Presidents under a unified government would take actions reflecting its party’s preference and select the least level of commitment to the alliance. Democratic Presidents under a divided government, in contrast, would face the difficulties to persuade the Republican majority in Congress, who are more committed to the alliances. Thus, Presidents would not easily pursue his preferred alliances policies of less commitment. In a similar vein, under a unified government, Republican Presidents would attempt to and he will be more successful to change its national

security policy to fortify its ties with the alliance partners in Asia while Republican Presidents with the Democratic majority in Congress would not fulfill its preferred policy of fortification of the alliance ties.

For instance, after the vote on the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, it was the Bush administration with the Republican majority in Congress that decided to sale substantive amount/quality of arms to Taiwan and announced that he would drop the 20-year-old annual arms talks process used to discuss arms sales to Taiwan's military in favor of normal, routine considerations of Taiwan's requests on an as-needed basis -- similar interactions with other foreign governments (Kan 2011: 4). This important policy change was possible since it was under a Republican's unified government. President Bush could make this decision with knowing that Congress would not oppose to but endorse the policy shift for fortification of the alliance. In contrast, it is consistent that the Bush administration started to depart from its pro-Taiwan stance after 2007 when the Democratic party regained the majority both in Senate and House (Kan 2011: 45-48).⁶⁾

Table 3 summarizes the theoretical prediction. Under a Republican unified government, the US would be more inclined to strengthen the alliance commitment to the three Asian nations while under a Democratic unified government, it would be less likely to do so. Under a divided government, the Presidents cannot simply pursue their preferred policy in line with the party's ideal status of the commitment. The Presidents must overcome Congressional majority's opposition against the initiatives to change the alliance policy.

Table 3 Theoretical Expectation

	Unified Government	Divided Government
Republican Presidents	Strengthening the Alliance Commitment	Disagreements over Preferred Alliance Policy between the White House and Congress
Democratic Presidents	Minimizing the Alliance Commitment	= Possible Reversal from its Preferred Policy

VI. Conclusion

This paper, as a pilot study of unpacking the assumptions made by previous research on alliance commitment and the regime types, reveals that bipartisan consensus is limited to a

6) The Bush administration refused even to accept Taiwan's formal "Letter of Request" for purchasing F-16C/D fighters in June-July 2006, February 2007, and June 2007. An incentive of de-politicization of the sensitive issue before the mid-term election explains why President Bush did not accept the letter in June-July 2006.

minimum for maintaining three US alliances in East Asia (i.e., not losing ties to the three countries). Instead, the differences in Republican and Democratic desires to further strengthen the alliances are clear. The former prefer to provide more resources and firm commitments to the allies, whereas the latter are reluctant to do so. The differences would generate observable changes in actual alliance policies, depending on which party was in the White House and in the majority on Capitol Hill. Democratic Presidents are considered to be pro-China and inclined to reduce the commitment to the three countries. This is probably inevitable, based on the Democratic Party's traditional preferences.

How will the differences of commitment to the three East Asian allies in party line affect the actual US policy and actions? As far as the party platforms and Congressional votes are concerned and as long as we can believe that the platforms and the votes are reflection of the true preference of the domestic political groups, Republican administration/Republican dominated Capitol Hill would take more reliable policies to defend Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, but Democratic administration/Democrats dominated Capitol Hill would conduct actions that are less committed to the alliance and generate/deepen its fear of "abandonment."

In short, the study confirms the *salient differences* between political parties regarding alliance commitment policy, and thus Gartzke and Gleditsch's and Tago's arguments are somewhat supported, especially in terms of the level of further fortification of the alliance. Of course, it must be also noted that Gaubatz, Leeds, and Choi's assumption about *bipartisan consensus* exists at the very least level (as to not losing the alliance partners) --- this means that their assumption is also somewhat valid. Obviously, further research to unpack the assumptions is needed in the future.

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