

Correspondence

Grand Bargain or Bad Idea?
U.S. Relations with China and Taiwan

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To the Editors (Leif-Eric Easley writes):

In “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?” Charles Glaser identifies a mismatch between Chinese security goals and the status quo in Asia.¹ Concerned that the probability of war will increase with divergence between the distribution of power and benefits under the existing regional order, Glaser proposes accommodating China in areas “that do not compromise vital U.S. interests” (p. 50). He recommends a “grand bargain” wherein the United States abandons Taiwan in exchange for China’s peaceful resolution of maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas and acceptance of an enduring U.S. military presence in East Asia.

Glaser’s motivation—to avoid U.S.-China conflict—is laudable, and his article is a detailed assault on policy orthodoxy. Yet, it is essentially a policy recommendation framed as a desirability study, which ultimately does not demonstrate desirability or feasibility. Below I present three sets of objections regarding the article’s one-sided account of the accommodation literature, its incomplete cost-benefit assessment of abandoning Taiwan, and its selective exclusion of norms and values integral to U.S. strategy in Asia.

APPEASEMENT NOT PREFERRED IN THEORY OR PRACTICE

Glaser contrasts his defensive realist approach with structural realism and offensive realism, which he says predict that U.S.-China relations will resemble those between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, with nuclear weapons keeping the peace but with insecurity increasing as China attempts to claim regional hegemony. He does not assess competing structural and offensive realist explanations, however.² And without convincing evidence that Chinese aims are limited and nation-

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1. Charles L. Glaser, “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation,” *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Spring 2015), pp. 49–90. Subsequent references to this article appear parenthetically in the text.

2. Aaron L. Friedberg, *Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, “Revising U.S. Grand Strategy toward China,” Special Report No. 72 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, March

alism is under control, it is unclear why a defensive realist approach should be assumed rather than tested.

Glaser argues that an established power can enhance its security by pursuing territorial accommodation toward a rising power. He cites international relations theorists who lament that concessions-granting strategies suffer a stigma in foreign policy circles.³ The literature suggests, however, that appeasement usually fails, and even in the handful of historical circumstances in which it may have succeeded, its benefits tended not to last.⁴ Efforts to model strategies of accommodation suggest that a declining power may instead have incentives to hold the line early against a rising challenger to preempt its use of salami tactics and avoid engaging in a future conflict under less favorable conditions.⁵ Glaser offers almost no coverage of the most studied case of failed territorial accommodation vis-à-vis Germany, nor does he provide historical examples where accommodation succeeded.

Applications of bargaining theory are generally unresponsive of appeasement, stressing incentives that governments have to misrepresent their intentions.⁶ An accommodation strategy might make sense for a weak power with reliable intelligence that its adversary has limited aims or for a relatively matched power that seeks to buy time for rearmament.⁷ These conditions do not apply to the U.S.-China case, however. The United States lacks reliable intelligence on China's limited aims, but it is not a weak power and it has no need to abandon Taiwan for the sake of improving its military capabilities. Glaser suggests that the United States seek accommodation before Beijing amasses greater power, but China's economic growth is slowing; corruption and skills gaps plague its military; and the Communist Party faces crises of social stability, governance and legitimacy over economic inequality, land use, public safety, and environmental pollution. The theoretical need to accommodate China is thus not established.

MIS-ASSESSMENT OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

Glaser nonetheless sees benefits in accommodating China on Taiwan. He opines that current Taiwan policy could precipitate a U.S.-China cold war, even though the United States has much greater economic interdependence with China than it did with the Soviet Union and even though China is more globalized today than the Soviet Union ever was. He worries that the U.S. commitment to Taiwan will fuel an arms race, even

2015); and Yves-Heng Lim, "How (Dis)Satisfied Is China?" *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 24, No. 92 (April 2015), pp. 280–297.

3. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 193–194.

4. Richard N. Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

5. Robert L. Powell, "Uncertainty, Shifting Power, and Appeasement," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 749–764.

6. R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State: The Theory of International Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 186–189; and James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379–414.

7. On the use of rational appeasement strategies by weak actors, see Daniel S. Treisman, "Rational Appeasement," *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring 2004), pp. 345–373. On the need for good intelligence and the strategy of buying time, see Norrin M. Ripsman and Jack S. Levy, "Wishful Thinking or Buying Time? The Logic of British Appeasement in the 1930s," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 148–181.

though China is currently the only one racing,⁸ Glaser identifies U.S. arms sales to Taiwan as a major stumbling block for improving U.S.-China relations and winning the “hearts and minds of 1.3 billion people” (p. 71). But the sales have been defensive in nature and limited in scale.⁹ Although the United States’ “six assurances” to Taiwan specify that arms sales not be suspended as a result of negotiations with Beijing, such sales have been slowed by U.S. bureaucratic considerations and budgetary debates in Taipei. Glaser does not mention how Barack Obama’s administration came to office focused on strategic reassurance with China, including delaying arms sales to Taiwan and, controversially, issuing a joint statement respecting Chinese “core interests.”¹⁰ Despite these efforts at accommodation, Chinese foreign policy became more assertive rather than more cooperative.

Points of friction in U.S.-China relations abound—from cyber espionage and human rights to trade disputes and financial governance. Abandoning Taiwan will not stop Chinese military modernization, antiaccess/area denial development, or the targeting of U.S. bases in Japan and South Korea with Chinese missiles.¹¹ The United States has numerous reasons for conducting surveillance and freedom of navigation operations, so those activities Glaser identifies as irritants to China would not end, even if Taiwan were no longer a subject of disagreement. Foreign policy ambition in Beijing has outgrown the 1950s and 1990s cross-strait crises; Chinese internal debates tend to paint the United States as a global competitor, benchmark U.S. global capabilities, and derive legitimacy from contrasting Chinese political values with “Western” or “universal” values.¹² Glaser does not mention Chinese efforts at building up alternative institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, Boao Forum for Asia, and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or China using issues of historical animosity to drive a wedge between Japan and South Korea. He thus underestimates the apparent Chinese strategy of not directly confronting the United States globally, while attempting to dilute U.S. alliances in Asia, pursuing a Chinese-centered regional architecture, and changing the status quo in maritime areas without going so far as to trigger conflict or a coherent balancing coalition.¹³

Rather than alleviate frictions, a grand bargain would likely motivate beliefs that China could eventually dismantle the U.S. security architecture in Asia, emboldening actors on the Chinese side to pursue their interests more assertively. U.S. abandonment of Taiwan would entail repealing the Taiwan Relations Act, ending the legal basis for defense cooperation and arms sales, immediately undermining deterrence, and steadily

8. Adam P. Liff and G. John Ikenberry, “Racing toward Tragedy? China’s Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma,” *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Fall 2014), pp. 52–91.

9. Shirley A. Kan, *Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales since 1990*, Congressional Research Service Report RL30957 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, August 2014).

10. White House Office of the Press Secretary, “U.S.-China Joint Statement,” November 17, 2009, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-china-joint-statement>.

11. Evan Braden Montgomery, “Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China’s Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection,” *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Spring 2014), pp. 115–149.

12. Nina Hachigian, ed., *Debating China: The U.S.-China Relationship in Ten Conversations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

13. Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015).

degrading Taiwan's defense capabilities in ways difficult to reverse.¹⁴ Meanwhile, China's salami tactics, in combination with its ability to quickly redeploy military assets it might agree to pull back and its demonstrated long-term approach to the East China and South China Seas, make any such deal as Glaser suggests not credible. Chinese official documents give no reason to believe that Beijing would be conciliatory on other claims if the United States accommodated China on Taiwan.¹⁵ Taipei also claims sovereignty over the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. Beijing's legal claim to these islands, which it calls the Diaoyu Islands, heavily relies on the history of the Republic of China and the status of "Taiwan Province."¹⁶ Meanwhile, Taiwan maintains troops and recently upgraded its facilities on Taiping/Itu Aba, the largest naturally occurring feature of the disputed Spratly Islands, where China has been engaged in land reclamation and construction on features it controls. U.S. abandonment of Taiwan would likely make Chinese decisionmakers believe they could strengthen their claims in the East China and South China Seas by coercing Taipei to consolidate its positions with those of Beijing.

Beijing's assertive policies contrast to the responsible, measured, and cooperative approach Taipei has taken to managing disputed claims in the East China and South China Seas.¹⁷ Far from being the dangerous source of entrapment Glaser describes, Taiwan is a valuable strategic and economic partner.¹⁸ In June 2015, the United States and Taiwan signed the Global Cooperation and Training Framework agreement to jointly offer capacity building in areas such as public health, women's empowerment, environmental protection, and maritime safety. Leaders across Taiwan's political spectrum have internalized lessons from the provocative Chen Shui-bian years and are not about to risk the lives and treasure of their people for the sake of forcing Washington's hand vis-à-vis Beijing. Moreover, the United States has historically managed to deter challengers and restrain partners, preventing both sides from initiating or escalating conflicts.¹⁹

14. Steven M. Goldstein and Randall G. Schriver, "An Uncertain Relationship: The United States, Taiwan, and the Taiwan Relations Act," *China Quarterly* (March 2001), pp. 147–172; and Michael S. Chase, "Taiwan's Defense Budget Dilemma: How Much Is Enough in an Era of Improving Cross-Strait Relations?" *China Brief*, Vol. 8, No. 15 (July 2008).

15. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Documents on the Issue of Diaoyu Dao, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/diaodao_665718; and Shelley Rigger, "Why Giving Up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China," *AEI Asian Outlook*, No. 3 (November 2011), <http://www.aei.org/outlook/foreign-and-defense-policy/regional/asia/why-giving-up-taiwan-will-not-help-us-with-china>.

16. State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "Diaoyu Dao, an Inherent Territory of China," September 2012.

17. Dennis V. Hickey, "Taiwan and the Rising Tensions in the East China Sea," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (May/June 2014), pp. 492–514.

18. Susan Thornton, "Taiwan: A Vital Partner in East Asia," remarks at the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., May 21, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2015/05/242705.htm>; and Peter C.Y. Chow, ed., *The U.S. Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-Strait Relations: Economic and Security Dynamics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

19. Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009/10), pp. 158–196; Thomas J. Christensen, "The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Detering a Taiwan Conflict," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn 2002), pp. 7–21; Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Spring 2015), pp. 7–48; and Songying Fang, Jesse

The U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan is not preventing something good from happening, but rather preventing some seriously bad things from happening.²⁰ U.S. defense exchanges and intelligence sharing with Taipei may annoy nationalists in Beijing, but they help avoid miscalculation, support escalation control, and discourage provocation and aggression. Glaser discounts the negative effects of abandoning Taiwan on U.S. military capabilities and intelligence gathering in Asia, freedom of navigation, and maritime and energy security. Under his proposed bargain, the United States would be avoiding hypothetical costs and pursuing uncertain benefits while giving up known military benefits and incurring unnecessary strategic costs.

THE PERILS OF IGNORING POLITICS

Furthermore, Glaser's proposed grand bargain is politically infeasible. For accommodation over Taiwan to purchase the peaceful rise of China, Chinese aims should be limited (doubtful), integration with Taiwan should be peaceful (uncertain), and relevant actors would have to play along with the strategic bargain (extremely unlikely). Glaser explains that he is "bounding the analysis" (p. 52), but excluding the role of actors other than the U.S. and Chinese leaderships produces unrealistic and even counterproductive recommendations.²¹

Glaser's analysis ignores the role of Taiwan—a free society of more than 23 million—and makes no mention of identity and political preferences on the island. Comparing data from 1994 and 2014 reveals that more and more citizens self-identify as Taiwanese (20.2 percent to 60.6 percent), fewer identify as both Taiwanese and Chinese (44.6 percent to 32.5 percent), and the number identifying as Chinese has plummeted (26.2 percent to 3.5 percent).²² The Ma Ying-jeou administration's policy of economic integration—culminating in the first-ever cross-strait summit when President Ma met President Xi Jinping in Singapore in November 2015—was greeted with intense domestic skepticism. The recent "Sunflower Movement" against economic integration with China, student protests against proposed China-friendly revisions to history textbooks, and suspicion of Chinese intentions after observing the Hong Kong experience under "one country, two systems" all suggest that a U.S.-China grand bargain would be actively resisted by myriad actors on Taiwan. If decisionmakers in Taipei seriously feared subjugation to Beijing, they might look to defend their democracy with legal measures to strengthen Taiwan's de facto independence²³ or additional deterrent capa-

C. Johnson, and Brett A. Leeds, "To Concede or to Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances," *International Organization*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Fall 2014), pp. 775–809.

20. Daniel Blumenthal, "Rethinking U.S. Foreign Policy towards Taiwan," *Foreign Policy*, March 2, 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/03/02/rethinking-u-s-foreign-policy-towards-taiwan>.

21. Incidentally, Glaser uses unitary-actor language that borders on treating China as a monolithic actor and anthropomorphizing the state, for example: "China desired" (p. 51), "China considers" (pp. 61, 71), and "China worries" (p. 72). Glaser also ascribes values, motives, and goals to "China." Glaser does recognize that a grand bargain could strengthen Chinese hard-liners (footnote 78 and p. 79) who favor assertive policies, and possibly weaken liberals who favor international cooperation and domestic reforms.

22. "Taiwanese/Chinese Identification Trend Distribution in Taiwan," Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, July 9, 2014, <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=166#>.

23. Douglas H. Paal, "Accommodation Will Not Work," op-ed, Carnegie Endowment for Interna-

bilities, not limited to conventional means.²⁴ Accommodating assertive Chinese nationalism could hasten such outcomes; better for Beijing to accommodate subnational identities, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, to demonstrate good faith and soft power to Taiwan.²⁵

Glaser not only sets aside Taiwan's ability to affect outcomes; he does not consider the roles of other states in Asia. Japanese, Indian, and Southeast Asian strategists doubt that China's territorial goals are limited, based on their observation of China's expanding power projection capabilities and resource needs. Glaser writes that Taiwan is the only dispute important enough to bring the United States and China into conflict, but the divided Korean Peninsula remains an area where the two could clash in, for example, a contingency precipitated by a North Korean attack or a race to secure nuclear weapons and fissile material during post-collapse stabilization missions. When political change comes to North Korea, China should be integral to processes of peaceful denuclearization, economic integration, and eventual unification, but Washington's interests will be tied to close cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo. It would be extremely counterproductive if damaged U.S. credibility motivated leaders in Beijing to expect (and those in Seoul and Tokyo to fear) a U.S.-China deal to seal the fate of Korea.

Abandonment of Taiwan would be a greater shock for U.S. credibility than the 2008 financial crisis, Arab Spring, Syrian civil war, or Ukrainian conflict because it would contradict decades of U.S. policy, be a sin of commission rather than omission, and have greater direct relevance to Asia's geopolitics. A grand bargain with China would not only degrade U.S. soft power and alliances; it could drive Asian countries to unilaterally enhance their own defenses, fueling an arms race and further diminishing security in the region. Glaser suggests that such dynamics could be avoided if U.S. leaders visit Japan and South Korea with security treaties in hand and clarify why those countries are different from Taiwan. Alliances among democracies are based not only on treaties and national interests, however, but also on shared values and popular support. Perceptions of reliability affect how people vote and can redirect democratic processes behind alliance cooperation.

Glaser's decision not to consider U.S. domestic politics is also problematic. The article focuses on what Glaser thinks are U.S. national interests, rather than on what different political parties, branches of government, businesses, civil society groups, and bureaucratic stakeholders consider U.S. interests. Putting aside the moral failings of disregarding U.S.-Taiwan historical commitments, shared values, and human rights, treating Taiwan as a tradable commodity in great power bargaining is a nonstarter in U.S. politics. *Quid pro quo* accommodation of China would be resisted in Congress as

tional Affairs, July 1, 2011; and Denny Roy, "Trading Away Taiwan Is No Bargain for the USA," *PacNet*, No. 37, June 23, 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/trading-away-taiwan-no-bargain-usa>.

24. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Fall 2011), pp. 23–37.

25. Andrew Scobell, "China and Taiwan: Balance of Rivalry with Weapons of Mass Democratization," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 129, No. 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 449–468; Yitan Li, "Constructing Peace in the Taiwan Strait: A Constructivist Analysis of the Changing Dynamics of Identities and Nationalisms," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 23, No. 85 (January/February 2014), pp. 119–142.

appeasement or overturned by a subsequent administration. Choosing not to look inside the “black box” of U.S. foreign policy interests, Glaser discounts the bipartisan consensus, upheld over five administrations, to support Taiwan to an extent that maintains regional stability.²⁶

U.S. policy stresses that a political settlement between China and Taiwan must be decided peacefully and with the assent of the Taiwanese people. Supporting Taiwan is thus not only about preventing conflict, but also about showing people on the mainland that Chinese democracy is possible. As more mainlanders visit Taiwan and witness its freedoms, they return home asking why they do not enjoy similar rule of law. This interaction demonstrates how Glaser’s version of U.S. grand strategy in Asia—staying in the region with strong alliances—is incomplete. The National Security Strategy, Quadrennial Defense Review, and other official statements include the defense of international norms.²⁷ Such norms and values are essential for linking major components of U.S. strategy: legitimizing forward deployment, bringing together allies and regional institutions, and setting standards for China’s peaceful rise.

CONCLUSION

Glaser’s article offers a false choice: U.S. foreign policy need not decide between accommodation and military competition. Rather it should continue to be defined by extensive economic and diplomatic engagement, coupled with meaningful military hedging. Glaser is correct that Washington and Beijing lack trust in each other, but rather than justifying a grand bargain, this strongly suggests that such a bargain would not work. To enhance trust and reassurance, there are more prudent options such as agreements for mutual observation of military exercises, joint participation in humanitarian missions, and further naval cooperation in counter-piracy operations.²⁸ Achieving “win-win” relations calls for further Chinese integration into the international normative framework to which Taiwan is already committed, including peaceful resolution of disputes, economic exchange according to international legal standards, and respect for human rights.

The United States should redouble its efforts at normative convergence. While U.S.-China trade and political engagement are robust, social ties are woefully asymmetric. Washington needs to better encourage American students to study Asia, while persuading Beijing to lower barriers to American companies and nongovernmental organizations. U.S. policy should do more with China’s neighbors, not to contain or encircle China, but to forge a common message at regional forums; advance a binding code of conduct at sea; and meet commitments to global governance, such as quota reform for the International Monetary Fund, full funding of defense cooperation initiatives, and implementation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. If the United States strengthens its

26. Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy toward Taiwan and U.S.-PRC Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003).

27. See, for example, Daniel R. Russel, “Maritime Issues in East Asia,” testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 114th Cong., 1st sess., May 13, 2015; and Ashton Carter, “A Regional Security Architecture Where Everyone Rises,” remarks at the International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, May 30, 2015.

28. James B. Steinberg and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve: U.S.-China Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 209–212.

promotion of international norms—including peaceful evolution of cross-strait relations that respect Taiwan’s democracy—American interests and regional stability are much more likely to be secured than by betting on a U.S.-China grand bargain.

—Leif-Eric Easley
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To the Editors (Patricia Kim writes):

In “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?” Charles Glaser suggests that the United States should strike a grand bargain with China by ending its commitment to Taiwan in exchange for Beijing’s promise to peacefully resolve its maritime disputes and to accept the U.S. security presence in East Asia.¹ Although Glaser’s desire to mitigate the chances for future conflict with an increasingly powerful and ambitious China is laudable, his proposed grand bargain is a nonstarter.

Glaser acknowledges that territorial accommodation could come at the cost of downgrading China’s assessment of U.S. resolve to protect its interests and allies in Asia, compromising American values, and damaging U.S. credibility in the eyes of its allies. He insists, however, that by demanding China keeps its side of the bargain and by enhancing U.S. military capabilities in the region, the United States would signal its determination to stand by American interests. Glaser’s proposal is unsound for several reasons. First, if the United States did not damage its image by attempting such a bargain in the first place, it would not need to redemonstrate resolve. Second, such a bargain would undercut one of the fundamental reasons why the United States stands with its friends and allies in East Asia—a shared appreciation of democracy and liberty. Third, Glaser emphasizes that regardless of whether the United States and China were able to strike a grand bargain, the very attempt would provide useful information about China’s foreign policy decisionmaking and long-term aims (pp. 79–82). Engaging in such a costly and risky exercise to gauge Chinese motives is imprudent to say the least, especially because motives evolve and are contingent on the behavior of other actors. Fourth, giving any state a concession for doing something it ought to do sets a dangerous precedent. China and other claimant states should solve their maritime disputes peacefully and refrain from unilateral moves.

Even if one were to set aside all of the above concerns, history shows that Glaser’s proposal is infeasible, because Chinese leaders do not see the abrogation of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan as an issue over which they must bargain and offer concessions. For example, President Richard Nixon attempted a similar grand bargain while negotiating the opening of Sino-U.S. relations from 1971 to 1972. At the time, one of the Nixon administration’s greatest concerns was ending the Vietnam War. Beijing’s greatest priority was obtaining U.S. recognition of Taiwan as a part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and securing the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the island.² Understand-

1. Charles L. Glaser, “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation,” *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Spring 2015), pp. 49–90, at pp. 57–58.

2. A few months before Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s first visit to Beijing, the Politburo

ing Beijing's desires, President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger strategized that they would offer to remove U.S. troops in exchange for China's help in achieving peace with honor in Vietnam. Nixon's handwritten notes for his historic trip to China demonstrate the bargain he wanted to strike:

Taiwan = Vietnam = trade off

1. Your people expect action on Taiwan

2. Our people expect action on VN

Neither can act immediately—But both are inevitable—let us not embarrass each other.³

In preparation for Nixon's official visit, Kissinger made a secret trip to Beijing in July 1971 and proposed the bargain to the Chinese leadership. In a meeting with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, Kissinger stated that because two-thirds of the U.S. forces in Taiwan were related to American efforts in the Indochina theater, the withdrawal of those troops would depend on the resolution of the Vietnam War.⁴ He reasoned that although the United States was sincere in wanting to end the war, several issues—ranging from war reparations to the North Vietnamese government's refusal to talk with the South Vietnamese government—stood in the way of an "honorable" exit.⁵ Kissinger implied that China's help in pressuring its North Vietnamese ally to accept the administration's peace terms would speed the exit of U.S. troops from Taiwan. Chinese leaders, however, refused to strike such a bargain. In their eyes, Taiwan was a rightful part of the PRC and they did not owe the United States anything in exchange for a withdrawal of U.S. forces from territory they considered theirs. Zhou, for example, told Kissinger during their July 1971 meeting that attempting to attach conditions to the recognition of China's sovereignty over Taiwan was as absurd as China questioning U.S. sovereignty over Hawaii or Long Island. He emphasized that the United States should "unreservedly" recognize the PRC's sovereignty and withdraw all U.S. troops, as this was "the natural logic of the matter."⁶ Again when Nixon suggested during his trip to Beijing in February 1972 that ending the war in Vietnam would "help the direction on Taiwan,"⁷ Zhou replied subtly that China was willing to "wait a little while," and that because Taiwan was China's "internal affair," Beijing could not "place too much hope on the U.S. and Mr. President to achieve this."⁸ Moreover, China continued to fund North Vietnam's war efforts in the name of aiding nationalist revolutions

drafted a document that would serve as China's guiding principles when negotiating with the United States. This document contained eight points, six of which had to do with Taiwan. For the fully translated list, see Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 157-158. For the original Chinese text, see Chongji Jin, ed., *Zhou Enlai Zhuan* [A biography of Zhou Enlai], Vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she, 2008), pp. 1096-1097.

3. Nixon's handwritten notes, February 23, 1972, President's Personal Files, White House Secret Files, Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, California.

4. Memorandum of Conversation, July 9, 1971, in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1969-1976*, Vol. 17: *China* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), doc. 139, p. 369.

5. For a discussion of obstacles to the U.S.-North Vietnam negotiations, see, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 372-375.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

7. Memorandum of Conversation, February 28, 1972, in *FRUS, 1969-1976*, Vol. 17, doc. 204, p. 822.

8. *Ibid.*

abroad. Instead of pressuring its ally, Beijing sent unprecedented amounts of military assistance to North Vietnam between 1971 and 1973.⁹ China today is much more confident and ambitious than the China Nixon visited in 1972. There is little reason to believe that Beijing would entertain a bargain similar to the one it rejected decades ago.

Whereas Glaser's grand bargain is infeasible, the benefits associated with territorial accommodation, such as satisfying a rising power to reduce the chance of conflict and sending reassuring signals, are worthy of serious thought. To satisfy and reassure China, one must decipher what it wants. Determining exactly what Beijing desires may be difficult, if not impossible, given multiple interests within the Chinese state and the evolving nature of any state's aims. The central government, however, has repeatedly articulated two broad goals: the "rejuvenation" of the Chinese state at home and abroad. In fact, Xi Jinping's first remarks after his appointment as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in November 2012 were that the party's responsibility was to work toward "the great revival of the Chinese nation," so that China can "stand more firmly and powerfully among all nations around the world and make a greater contribution to mankind."¹⁰ Since then Xi has promoted the idea of the "Chinese Dream," or *zhongguo meng*, which essentially consists of achieving prosperity at home and expanding China's role and prestige in the global arena.¹¹ Importantly, these twin goals are not necessarily incompatible with U.S. interests. A domestically stable and prosperous China with a satisfied citizenry could reduce pressure on the central government to avenge China's "century of humiliation" by outsiders. Furthermore, a wealthy and civic-minded China with an expanded international role would not necessarily threaten U.S. interests. The world could benefit from China's contribution to disaster relief efforts and environmental issues, its leadership in combating terrorism and nuclear proliferation, and its generous aid to developing countries.

Chinese leaders today believe that the United States is determined to contain and divide China internally.¹² To reassure Beijing that this is not its intention, the United States can assist China in its rejuvenation efforts. For example, it can deepen economic interdependence through initiatives such as the U.S.-China bilateral investment treaty, which is currently being negotiated; share information and ideas on issues such as health care and social safety net programs; and support China's desire for a greater role in the global arena by welcoming Chinese initiatives such as the recently established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. In addition, China could be given a greater role in existing institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.¹³

9. Zhihua Shen, "Sino-U.S. Reconciliation and China's Vietnam Policy," in Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World beyond Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), pp. 358–359.

10. "Full Text: China's New Party Chief Xi Jinping's Speech," *BBC News*, November 15, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-20338586>.

11. For a list defining the major components of the "Chinese Dream," see Chen Junhong, "My Understanding of the 'Chinese Dream,'" *People's Daily*, May 8, 2013, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2013/0508/c1003-21399348.html>.

12. Kevin Rudd, "U.S.-China 21: The Future of U.S.-China Relations under Xi Jinping" (Cambridge, Mass.: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, April 2015), pp. 14–15, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Summary%20Report%20US-China%2021.pdf>.

13. Similar recommendations in support of engaging China have been made by scholars and practitioners such as Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power*

Giving China a bigger voice at the table will inevitably lead to disagreements, but it is better to debate and compromise with China at the same table than to have it create separate venues in which the United States has no influence.

To conclude, a one-time territorial accommodation is not the answer to dealing with an increasingly powerful and ambitious China. Acknowledging China's fundamental goals and shaping its behavior through engagement are better approaches to dealing with a power that is here to stay. Moreover, the United States' Asian partners would welcome such a move instead of unnecessary confrontation or compromise.

—Patricia Kim
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Charles L. Glaser Replies:

The letters by Leif-Eric Easley and by Patricia Kim provide a welcome opportunity to further engage the difficult questions I raised in "A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?"¹ Although their letters offer much to think about, in the end both my analysis and policy recommendations remain unchanged.

My article identifies and addresses the majority of the concerns raised by Kim and Easley, including that ending the U.S. commitment to Taiwan could lead U.S. allies to question the credibility of U.S. commitments to defend them—a challenge that I argue the United States can manage adequately; and would put at risk American values of promoting and protecting freedom and democracy—which I acknowledge are important and I believe would constitute the most significant risks of the grand bargain. Consequently, here, I respond to only a few of their points.

Kim's main argument is that China would not accept the kind of grand bargain proposed in my article. She explores a parallel historical period during which President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger were negotiating the U.S. opening to China. At the time, Chinese leaders held that "they did not owe the United States anything in exchange for a withdrawal of U.S. forces" from Taiwan, and they demonstrated no interest in a deal that would have involved ending China's support for North Vietnam in return for U.S. concessions. Kim argues that if a weaker China was unwilling to negotiate over a less important issue, a "much more confident and ambitious" China is virtually certain to be unwilling to make the kind of maritime and territorial disputes concessions that I propose.

The probability that China would accept the grand bargain might be low, but neither the history that Kim reviews nor current Chinese thinking make this a certainty. As I

(New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), pp. 288–312; David Lampton, "A Tipping Point in U.S.-China Relations Is upon Us," speech given at the conference "China's Reform: Opportunities and Challenges," Carter Center and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Atlanta, Georgia, May 6–7, 2015, <http://www.uscnpm.org/blog/2015/05/11/a-tipping-point-in-u-s-china-relations-is-upon-us-part-i/#pq=JLQROo>; and Rudd, "U.S.-China 21."

1. Charles L. Glaser, "A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Spring 2015), pp. 49–90. Further references to this article appear parenthetically in the text.

note in my article, there are reasons for doubting that China would make the required concessions: China's positions on its long-standing disputes in the South China and East China Seas appear to have hardened over the past decade. Meanwhile, Chinese nationalism continues to grow, and President Xi Jinping appears committed to increasing China's global prestige, which could rule out geopolitical compromises.

Nevertheless, the grand bargain would provide China with a major achievement at arguably little cost. Current Chinese nationalist claims have blown the importance of the maritime and sovereignty disputes in the South China and East China Seas far out of proportion to their material value. If China's leaders decide to prioritize other goals, they might be able to deflate these nationalist claims, bringing them back in line with their actual value and selling this new interpretation domestically. At the same time, Chinese leaders should see that the grand bargain would provide large benefits to China, including elimination of the United States as a barrier to bringing Taiwan under its full sovereign control and, closely related, a large reduction in the security threat posed by the United States. The grand bargain, therefore, could be appealing to a Chinese leadership that faces daunting domestic challenges and intensifying regional opposition to its assertive policies and growing military might. Thus, while the probability of China accepting the grand bargain may be low, one should not entirely discount the possibility.

An obvious rejoinder is that merely proposing a grand bargain would be risky for the United States and, therefore, its low probability of success makes it a bad policy option. The risks concern the potential damage to the United States' credibility for protecting its interests. As I argue in the article, however, the United States could adopt a variety of policies that would largely preserve its credibility—among them, continuing to reinforce its alliance with Japan and to cooperate with other security partners in the region. Such options would be available to the United States while it pursued the grand bargain and even afterward, if the bargain was not attained.

Easley also contends that the grand bargain is infeasible, but he focuses on the constraints imposed by U.S. domestic politics. "Choosing not to look inside the 'black box' of foreign policy interests," Easley argues, "Glaser discounts the bipartisan consensus, upheld over five administrations, to support Taiwan to an extent that maintains regional stability." This criticism is less potent than Kim's. The goal of my article was to assess the desirability of the options available to the United States vis-à-vis its policy toward China. To lay the foundation for my analysis, I spelled out my assessment of U.S. interests. Analysts who disagree, because they believe that U.S. interests in protecting Taiwan are larger or different, may well reach divergent conclusions. The key problem with Easley's letter, however, is that Easley does not appreciate the analytic value of separating desirability from domestic political feasibility. As I wrote in the article, "Analytically, the desirability and political feasibility of U.S. security policy can often be productively separated . . . changing understandings of which policies are desirable can generate changes in the political debate in the United States that influence which policies are politically feasible" (p. 55) In other words, even though assessment of the domestic political feasibility of a policy is a necessary component of a comprehensive policy analysis, assessments that focus on desirability can provide critical insights.

Easley holds that I present a biased theoretical case for accommodation, but each of his theoretical criticisms is flawed. He begins by criticizing my use of defensive realism, stating that I do "not assess competing structural and offensive realist explanations." Thus

“it is unclear why a defensive realist approach should be assumed rather than tested.” Here Easley accepts a common misunderstanding—the divergence between defensive realism and its structural realist cousins reflects disagreements over what follows logically from their similar assumptions; consequently, disagreements cannot be resolved—tested—by examining states’ historical behavior. I have explored the strength of defensive realism and a more general rational variant at length in my book *Rational Theory of International Politics*, including comparing the theory to its key alternatives.²

Easley next holds that by not discussing the insights offered by both formal models and history, I have not adequately characterized the literature on accommodation. However, the paper by Robert Powell that Easley cites finds that although vulnerable to salami tactics, appeasement is “an equilibrium solution to the strategic problem facing the declining state” across a variety of simple models.³ Easley also argues that I should have explored the failure of appeasement in dealing with Hitler’s Germany. This case has little to offer, however—a key reason that British policy failed was that Hitler’s aims were essentially unlimited. If the United States knew that China had unlimited aims, then the case against accommodation would be much stronger. Instead of certainty, however, the United States faces uncertainty about the extent of China’s aims, which leaves open the possibility that accommodation should be a component of U.S. policy. Moreover, as I argue in my article, the United States should pursue a variety of policies to hedge against the possibility that China has unlimited aims in East Asia and is determined to push the United States out of the region. Among these policies are strengthening the United States’ key alliances and maintaining its essential military capabilities.

Finally, Easley’s letter is bedeviled by inconsistencies and unsupported claims. To capture the nature of this problem, I mention just a few key examples here; a careful reading will identify many more. First, Easley claims that my concern about the military and political dangers of the military competition fueled by the U.S. commitment to Taiwan is misplaced because “China is currently the only one racing.” Although it is true that the United States and China are not engaged in a full-blown arms race and that China’s increased military investment exceeds the United States’, it is also true that the United States is reacting to increased Chinese capabilities by shifting military forces to the region, modernizing those forces, and developing a military concept to defeat Chinese capabilities.⁴ Second, Easley argues that I discount “the negative effects of abandoning Taiwan on U.S. military capabilities,” but this is an inaccurate characterization of my analysis. My article spends a few pages exploring this issue and offers a measured assessment (pp. 74–77); Easley does not analyze the issue, nor does he provide citations to works that do. Third, Easley claims that Taiwan is “[f]ar from being the dangerous source of entrapment that Glaser describes,” but he also states that “[i]f decisionmakers in Taipei seriously feared subjugation to Beijing, they might look to defend their democracy with legal measures to strengthen Taiwan’s de facto independ-

2. Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics: The Logic of Competition and Cooperation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 148–171.

3. Robert Powell, “Uncertainty, Shifting Power, and Appeasement,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 750, 755, 757; quotation on p. 759.

4. See Adam P. Liff and G. John Ikenberry, “Racing toward Tragedy? China’s Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma,” *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Fall 2014), pp. 82–84, which is the article Easley cites in support of his point.

ence. . . . Accommodating assertive Chinese nationalism could hasten such outcomes." These two claims are inconsistent, and Easley offers no way to square them.

Kim and Easley prefer the United States' current policy to a grand bargain. Both recommend some modifications designed to reassure and engage China, including joint participation in humanitarian missions, naval cooperation on counter-piracy operations, deepening of economic interdependence via the U.S.-China bilateral investment treaty, and support of initiatives that would increase China's role in international organizations. As I argue in my article, there is much to like about the current U.S. policy toward China and East Asia more broadly. If the United States adheres to this policy, then many of these recommendations would be useful refinements.

Nevertheless, proponents of the United States' current China policy tend to underestimate the risks inherent in the U.S. commitment to Taiwan, including its role in fueling military competition and supporting Chinese elites' negative views of U.S. motives. Neither Kim nor Easley says much about these risks, and certain of their remarks suggest they are not small. Kim holds that China is "much more confident and ambitious" than when President Nixon visited China in 1972 and that "Chinese leaders today believe that the United States is determined to contain and divide China internally." Easley expresses similar concerns, stating that "[f]oreign policy ambition in Beijing has outgrown the 1950s and 1990s cross-strait crises; [that] Chinese internal debates tend to paint the United States as a global competitor," and that China "is pursuing a Chinese-centered regional architecture." Given these views of China, Kim's and Easley's recommendations, though useful, are likely inadequate to meet the challenges currently facing the United States. This does not mean that such a modified U.S. policy would necessarily be inferior to the grand bargain I have recommended, given that all options for dealing with China's rise will involve costs or risks, or both. The advantage of my proposed grand bargain, however, is that it confronts the challenge posed by China's rise head on. It offers a path for eliminating the most serious geopolitical disagreement between the United States and China and for moderating the concomitant political strains and military competition, while providing valuable information about the limited nature of China's goals that, in turn, reduces the risks of accommodation. And, in combination with policies that reaffirm and deepen the commitment of the United States to its East Asian allies, it would enable the United States to protect its key interests in the region. Notwithstanding the points raised by Kim and Easley, the grand bargain remains the best bet available to the United States.

—Charles L. Glaser
Washington, D.C.