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[Pacific Alliance to Stop China must have Article 5 Equivalent](#)

By *Robert Weiner* and *Tomas Alves*

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was NATO. In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had 12 founding members to which now has ballooned to include 32 nations. This alliance coalesced on the premise that, "would be aggressors know they attack one of us, they'll be attacked by all of us" -- NATO's Article 5 -- as emphasized by President Joe Biden in a closely watched Press Conference in July.

A new legacy in the Pacific will be set by the next President in their approach to China. In a world that has already witnessed the historic success of the NATO alliance to deter major adversaries, 2024 is the new 1949.

As a way to test the U.S.' resolve in the Pacific, China has engaged in an intimidation campaign against the region's actors to demonstrate that it is the dominant force in the Pacific. It has blatantly ignored the international law of the sea and has attacked freedom of navigation of other nation's militaries in protecting their internationally recognized territory claims. In devising a counter strategy, the U.S. must not look far to realize that a playbook of deterrence can only be executed with a Pacific parallel to NATO: a pan-Pacific defense alliance.

Of course, some of the landmark achievements of the West's allies in Asia in improving their posture against China have been the creation of minilateral or mini alliances. Frameworks that will stand as President Biden's legacy in the region. In distaste, China has already claimed that the Cold War dynamics of the past have been reintroduced with these arrangements. That there is a Pacific NATO in all but name only because of the presence of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), the United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Partnership and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States Trilateral Partnership (AUKUS).

Despite these claims of a return of Cold War dynamics to the Pacific, President Biden, himself, acknowledged at a closely watched press conference that, "The Cold War is over. The post-war era is over."

Contrary to the dynamics of the Cold War, the possibility of a new pan-Pacific defense alliance would not include important dynamics found in the Cold War. Given the economic integration that each Pacific nation has with China, there bears no resemblance to the Cold War where all aspects of society were influenced by the United States or the Soviet Union.

Of China's massive trading capacity, they remain the top trading partner to Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, comprising a quarter of Chinese exports. Warning of China's ulterior motives, President Biden stated that, "Xi believes that China is a large enough market that they can entice any country, including European countries, to invest there in return for commitments."

In a world that has never seen a collective defense alliance formed in opposition to its most important economic partner, this precedent should be broken.

Yet, cooperation might be the limit with the current mini alliances in the deterrence of China. These alliances may have integrated defense capabilities and enhanced communication between allies, as highlighted by Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, "to make our trilateral strategic collaboration blossom and bloom-- But they have not deterred Chinese aggression from attacking Philippine boats and initiating joint-military exercises with Russian Air and Naval forces.

In a plan to keep China in check, the United States can begin by joining together with its closest friends like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines to start a foundation of collective defense where it already exists. A strategy that uses the existing mini alliance approach of including a small number of countries and incorporates a gradual expansion plan that was used for the strengthening of NATO.

The more important and complicated step would be to gradually branch out this alliance to other countries looking to gain assurances against China. This would include a coalition like Vietnam, Malaysia, and Taiwan that would effectively keep China out of the South China Sea. If these nations gained formal defense assurances from a pan-Pacific defense alliance, it would be a major win for the U.S.' competition with China. Yet it is uncertain given each of these nations' complex relationships with the U.S. when that would happen.

To quote the words of one of the architects of NATO in 1949, President Harry S. Truman at the signing of the NATO Charter, "The unwillingness on the part of the free nations of the world to oppose aggression was in large measure responsible for the two great wars of our time."

If the United States is to deter China's aggressive behavior they must undergo construction of a pan-Pacific alliance that starts with America's closest friends and branches out in order to deter China's aggression. For a world hinging on the outcome of the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election, the pan-Pacific defense alliance would be a bold strategy to prevent a third "great war". The Pacific Alliance needs to grow, and to have an equivalent to NATO's Article 5.

Robert Weiner was a spokesman in the Clinton and George W. Bush White Houses. He was communications director of the House Government Operations Committee, and senior aide to Congressman John Conyers and Charles Rangel, Reps. Claude Pepper and Ed Koch, Sen. Ted Kennedy, and Four-Star General/ Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey.

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