Understanding Institutional Power Politics: 
Theory, Method and a case of U.S.-China Competition

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements 
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy 
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
2017
Abstract

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Despite the common understanding that states compete over international institutions and jockey to define international order, our understanding of institutional power politics is underdeveloped. The dissertation sets out to answer three sets of questions relating to the specific areas that need developing – theory, methods and empirics.

First, how do we think about the concepts of “power” and “international institutions”? And, how do states interact with each other in the competition over or with international institutions? Second, if institutional competition is a strategic interaction for which our current empirical knowledge is limited, how do we select cases to examine competitive processes between states? From the selected cases, what is the best way to test our theories of competitive processes while ensuring that our analysis contributes to the relatively thin empirical case knowledge? Finally, while we think the competition between U.S. and China is one of the key contemporary cases of states competing over international institutions, is the evolution of international institutions really a function of U.S.-China competition? If not, how does institutional competition work?

Paper 1 deals exclusively with building a comprehensive theory of institutional power politics. From the basic concepts to the specific strategic interactions of interstate
competition over international institutions, the theory of institutional power politics
challenges the long-held view in IR that international institutions are solutions to power
politics and signifiers of an international politics that is more cooperative. The key idea
comes from applying insights from defensive realism to the context of institutional
competition with the institutional power dilemma. The theory highlights how even with
the most benign and cooperative intentions, states may slide into power political
dynamics over international institutions.

Paper 2 develops two case study methods for examining competitive processes, or
more broadly, “intensive processes” – streams of processual phenomena for which the
conditions and eventual outputs are ontologically distinct or of lesser analytical interest.
The prototypical case selection strategy provides guidelines for selecting cases for
intensive processes where the universe of cases is often difficult to know in advance. The
dual process tracing (DPT) method then provides a way by which a researcher can test
theories of intensive processes as well as provide substantive knowledge about the
selected prototypical case. The two methods developed in this paper provide an
alternative way to think about political phenomena beyond the dominant covariational
and mechanismic approaches in political science research.

Paper 3 is the first theoretically driven empirical examination of the “U.S.-TPP
vs. China-RCEP” case of institutional competition. The paper tests the common
understanding that TPP and RCEP is a product of the competition between U.S. and
China. The paper finds that the competition is generated from mechanisms of
misperception, uncertainty and poor signaling of intentions from both countries. The
paper thus offers a powerful revision to the current understanding of the TPP-RCEP case
and theoretically arrives at a defensive realist model of unintended institutional competition. The paper concludes by identifying a number of overlooked policy implications for contemporary U.S.-China relations and institution building in East Asia.
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Acknowledgements

While there are so many people I am with the bottom of my heart thankful for, I want to take the “necessary condition” approach here: listing people who without, I would not have got through the first years of Columbia, passed my comprehensive exams, do fieldwork in China, secured a post-doctoral fellowship at Stanford, and have the courage and perseverance to survive and finish the dissertation to write this note. Seven years is not a short time. And for the first half of this time at Columbia, I was told by different faculty members to leave or consider leaving the Ph.D. program on one too many occasions. I therefore do not say it lightly when I say I would not have been able to get my Ph.D. without the following people. Thank you.

Andrew Nathan
Robert Jervis
Gerry Curtis

Tonya Putnam
Wang Zhengyi
Liu Lening

Andrew Cheon
Albert Fang
Bjorn Gomes
Hiroaki Abe
Anatoly Detwyler
Camille Strauss-Kahn
Lauren Young
Kuemin Chang
Sara Bjorg-Moller

Susan Schwab
Chris Adams
Da Wei
Brian Ciao
Kartika Octaviana
Liu Yucheng
Yang Shiqi

Dr. Mia Ihm
Dr. Leslie Alakalay
Dr. Regina Lara
Dr. Allyson Nelson

My mother, Heekyung Kang, my father, Myungrae Cho, my brother, Hyun Binn Cho,
My wife, Nahyun Park and my son Jea Nathan Cho.
Finally, my mentor and friend, Barry Buzan.
A Theory of Institutional Power Politics:
Concepts, Strategies and the Institutional Power Dilemma

International institutions are primarily understood as tools to overcome collective action problems and construct social environments that embody international customs and norms. The formation and change in international institutions is therefore the result of intelligent responses by states to a variety of collective action problems and normative challenges from global financial shocks requiring states to construct international financial regulatory systems to crimes against humanity strengthening norms of Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

International institutions are also understood as solutions to a variety of power political challenges from power transitions to security dilemmas. International institutions make power transparent and power asymmetries legitimate such that smaller states and rising powers are not fearful or dissatisfied with the status quo. International institutions also solve information problems by providing stable institutional channels to resolve misperception, rectify strategic mistrust and more broadly construct norms of communication.

The conventional understanding is thus that more international institutions are better. International institutions signify the move away from an anarchic world where international politics is merely the interaction between self-interested states striving for survival and security to a world where states are coordinating and cooperating to produce collective goods and achieve positive conceptions of a good international life. More
international institutions thus mean more cooperation and pro-norm behavior, and less competition and power politicking in international politics.

The current article challenges the dominant thinking about international institutions. I argue that international institutions can be devices for states to maximize power and thus institutional formation and change are functions of strategic interaction between states in the competition to maximize relative institutional power. Moreover, I make the argument that even under the conditions where a state constructs and changes international institutions for positive-sum and normatively attractive purposes, states may still get locked into a spiral of competition over institutional power through institutional power dilemma dynamics. In this alternative world of institutional power politics, institutional formation and change is not only the unintended consequence of interstate competition, but institutional competition itself may even be unintended by the states involved.

The alternative theoretical viewpoint I develop here has worrying implications. If institutional formation and change is a function of power politics, international institutions can be captured by and cause the very power political pathologies that international institutions were designed to mitigate in the first place. International institutions can be mired by problems of misperception and uncertainty of intentions, the construction of international institutions can push two states down an unwanted path of power transition, and solutions to local security dilemmas can become problems for systemic power transition. This makes the task of empirically examining the political processes of institutional formation and change an urgent one.
The article, however, is primarily a theoretical exercise. It develops a comprehensive theory of institutional power politics from the conceptual foundations to the specific models of interactive processes between states. It therefore answers a number of questions about how we might think about a world of institutional power politics: Why would states compete over and with international institutions? What are the power political concerns for states vis-à-vis international institutions? What strategies might states employ and what kind of interactions might characterize institutional power politics?

In answering these questions, the article updates realist theory regarding institutional formation and change. The theory of institutional power politics can thus be thought of as a form of institutional realism. The key mechanisms characterizing the two models of interstate interaction in the theory I develop, for example, are applications of offensive and defensive realist mechanisms in the context of international institutions and institutional change. The article’s central goal, however, is to comprehensively question some of our longest held views about the nature and function of international institutions in both the study of IR and in the policymaking world.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. First, I point to three specific theoretical gaps in our understanding about institutional power politics that motivate the theoretical exercise of this article. Second, I conceptualize “institutional power” and redefine international institutions as “groups.” In doing so, I shift our focus away from dominant efficiency concerns of the collective action problem and towards power political concerns of constructing international institutions of the group membership problem: how do states construct and define institutional group membership that best
maximizes its institutional power? Third, I define three preferences states may have for solving the group membership problem as well as delineating five possible competitive institutional strategies that a state may deploy to maximize its relative institutional power. Fourth, I outline two ways in which states may engage in institutional competition and cause institutional change. The first is an offensive realist variant, the *institutional power competition* (IPC) model, where states intentionally deploy competitive institutional strategies in a bid for maximizing institutional power. The second, the *institutional power dilemma* (IPD) model, is the defensive realist variant where despite the state’s best intentions to capture positive-sum gains and promote what it deems to be cooperative and peaceful institutions and norms, various mechanisms result in the unintentional undermining of the other’s institutional power, triggering a competitive institutional strategic response and locking them into institutional competition. Finally, I discuss a number of implications that arise from the theory of institutional power politics developed here, highlighting that international institutions may not be the solutions to power politics, but rather the causes of them.

1. **Three Theoretical Gaps**

From the efforts to reform vote shares in the IMF and the World Bank, the politics of coalition-formation in the WTO processes, to rising powers and China challenging the U.S.-led liberal international order with alternative institutional arrangements like the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the power politicking with and over international institutions is understood to be a common
phenomenon for practitioners and observers of international politics. However, IR’s theoretical toolkits for understanding institutional power politics is greatly underdeveloped and manifests itself as three interlinked theoretical gaps in our knowledge of international institutions,

First, for the most part, international institutions and cooperation have been theorized in juxtaposition to power politics and competition. One of the consequences of the realist-liberal debates in the 90s is that our understanding of international institutions and power developed in opposition to each other.¹ On the one hand, in the realist world where states competed for security and power, international institutions are fleeting and epiphenomenal.² On the other hand, in the liberal world, international institutions could be constructed by self-interested states and ameliorate the pernicious structural effects of international anarchy.³ Thus, either power makes international institutions and cooperation worthless or international institutions effectively contain power and competition. While this juxtaposition is ingrained in the very theoretical and conceptual foundations of IR’s understanding of international institutions and power, what we need is a theoretically nuanced position in between the two extremes of realism and liberalism. That is, the conceptual middle ground that allows us to think about how the power-constraining function of international institutions appeals to power-driven states as both strategies and strategic landscape over which they end up competing.

Second, and relatedly, the understanding of the formation of international institutions is currently dominated by the efficiency concerns of the collective action problem. International institutions are therefore primarily understood as intelligent devices and tools that overcome the collective action problem and harness un-captured gains from international cooperation through a variety of efficiency mechanisms such as the reduction of transaction costs, clarification of property rights and extending the shadow of the future. Yet, despite our observation that the power politics of international institutions is very real, there is very little work that theoretically fleshes out what the power political concerns about institutional formation and change might look like.

There are currently two strands of literature that provide the exceptions. The first is regime complexity theorists who argue that because international governance structures are not centralized and hierarchic, but characterized by a horizontal complex patchwork of international regimes, states engage in what Alter and Meunier call “chess board politics.” Here, states seek to maximize their national interest using a variety of “cross-institutional strategies” from “forum-shopping,” “regime shifting,” to the exploitation of “strategic inconsistency.”

While regime complexity provides a useful framework to analyze institutional power politics as states strategizing across international regimes, the framework takes the

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“chessboard” of institutional power politics as fixed. It thus overlooks how states can directly manipulate the institutional strategic landscape by constructing international institutions. Institutional power politics does not just occur on a fixed chessboard, but it also revolves around defining the very dimensions of the chessboard itself.

The second is institutional balancing theory developed by Kai He where the formation of international institutions is theorized to be endogenous to the state’s power political concerns and is manifested as a variety of “institutional balancing strategies” such as “inclusive,” “exclusive,” and “inter-institutional” balancing. However, while treating international institutions as important tools of statecraft, the theory of institutional balancing is fundamentally grounded in states’ calculations about the underlying distribution of material capabilities. Institutional balancing therefore occurs because of material power concerns and, additionally, under the conditions where states cannot engage in traditional forms of balancing. Institutional power politics is thus pigeon-holed as a sub-set of traditional balancing behavior under strategies of “soft

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11 “inclusive balancing” binds a target state by including it within multilateral institutions He, “Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia,” 493; He, “Contested Regional Orders and Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific,” 213; “exclusive balancing” keeps the target state out by alienating it from the institution, while increasing cohesion within it He, “Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia,” 493; He, *Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific: Economic Interdependence and China’s Rise*, 10; He, “Contested Regional Orders and Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific,” 215–216; “inter-institutional balancing,” uses “one institution to challenge the relevance and the role of another institution” Ibid., 217. Lee also makes a further distinction between “inter-institutional balancing” and “intra-institutional balancing” Soong joo Lee, “The Evolutionary Dynamics of Institutional Balancing in East Asia” (EAI Working Paper, 2012).
balancing,“¹² and is not theorized as an independent set of international political phenomena.

The limitations of institutional balancing theory partly stem from the ambiguous treatment of the concept of power and the role power plays in the theory. Unlike in the traditional balance of power theory where states balance hard power with hard power, in institutional balancing theory, states balance hard power with “non-material” power.¹³ However, it is unclear why institutional power politics is a substitute for hard power balancing and not an arena for non-material power competition in its own right. In Kai He’s analysis it is ambiguous whether the observed institutional balancing behaviors are in fact strategic responses to changes in material or non-material power.¹⁴ If states operate in response to the latter, institutional balancing theory has no explanation about what the logic of non-material power competition might look like.

The third theoretical gap in our understanding of institutional power politics concerns how states compete over international institutions under power transition. The rise of BRICs, and especially that of China, has put power transition theory back on center-stage.¹⁵ As power transition theorists and long-cycle theorists have found, there are durable historical patterns where revisionist rising powers eventually engage in


¹³ Kai He’s independent variables are distribution of capability He, “Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia”; He, Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific: Economic Interdependence and China’s Rise; He, “Contested Regional Orders and Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific.” and threat He, “Undermining Adversaries: Unipolarity, Threat Perception, and Negative Balancing Strategies after the Cold War.”.

¹⁴ In the empirical analysis, Kai He seems to shift between the two.

disruptive systemic wars with the incumbent status quo power. For many pundits, scholars, as well as the highest decision-makers in the Chinese and the U.S. governments, the power transition framework directly structures the challenges and solutions of navigating today’s Sino-American relations and serves as one of the most pressing questions in the international politics of our time.\footnote{Stephen Walt suggests that “the future of Sino-American relations should be on everyone’s list of Top 5 “Big Questions,” for those studying world politics. Stephen M. Walt “How Long Will China Tolerate America’s Role in Asia?,” \textit{Foreign Policy}, December 2, 2013, \url{http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/02/how-long-will-china-tolerate-americas-role-in-asia/} (last accessed: July 31, 2017).}

However, the question about what happens in the middle period of a power transition cycle has been overlooked. If the estimation by long-cycle theorists are correct and each cycle is roughly 100-120 years,\footnote{George Modelski, ed., \textit{Exploring Long Cycles} (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987).} this means that we are in the middle of our current power transition cycle. The world we live in today is somewhere in between exhausted states emerging out of war and enjoying the immediate benefits of the U.S.-constructed liberal international order,\footnote{G. John Ikenberry, \textit{After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars} (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).} and the existence of dissatisfied rising powers powerful enough to wage systemic war for change. What does the politics of international institutions look like after the construction of a new international order, but before the radical breakdown of international order through systemic war?

A closer read of Gilpin’s classic \textit{War and Change} shows that before the outbreak of systemic war and radical changes to international order, international governance structures change “incrementally” and in a relatively peaceful manner through the everyday politics of states tussling to define international institutions and rules. As Gilpin notes, this actually “constitute[s] the bulk of international politics.”\footnote{Robert Gilpin, \textit{War and Change in World Politics} (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1981), 46, emphasis added.} In the middling
period between hegemonic victory and systemic war, institutional change is thus thought to occur primarily through some form of institutional power political dynamic.²⁰

For those wishing to understand our current international condition, it should be of great theoretical interest then that we flesh out Gilpin’s underdeveloped theory of non-radical institutional power politics and change. If we read Gilpin’s treaties from the angle of institutional power politics, we can see that it is when the everyday politics of international institutions fails to accommodate the aspirations of the rising power and the concerns of the incumbent state that the two states take extra-institutional measures to change international order. That is, engage in power transitional war. This also means that the potential path by which the U.S. and China could slip into power transitional war would be as much down to the failure of international politics conducted through international institutions, as it is down to the variety of power transitional security challenges that currently occupy the majority of scholarly attention.

The theory of institutional power politics is developed in this article against the larger theoretical backdrop that the international politics of today is somewhere in between victory and war, order construction and order destruction, where power transitional pressure is thought to manifest as the everyday politics of competition over international order. It is yet too early to talk about systemic war, but we have moved far beyond the initial conditions where international institutional arrangements were decided among the victor states and unchallenged by the rest. Today, states are engaging in

strategic competition to maximize their power political concerns about international institutions. The theory of institutional power politics gives us some ideas as to why and how this might be happening.

2. Concepts

2.1. Institutional Power

The first step to a theory of institutional power politics is to understand that states care about institutional power, which I define as the ability to set the rules, agendas, norms and customs of international institutions to get other states to do what they would otherwise not do.

International institutions are understood by neoliberals to constrain the action of states and by constructivists to socialize them to have pro-group identities and preferences. Scholars have however observed that states are not constrained equally or socialized with uniform malleability. Within international institutions, states have unequal bargaining leverage in determining collective outcomes, distribution of benefits, and parameters of change that systematically create “winners” and “losers” within international institutions.\(^{21}\) A state’s susceptibility to socialization is also not uniform,\(^{22}\) meaning some states are not only less socializable but are in fact better understood as


socializers rather than as socializees. That is, rather than being subject to socialization, these states set the social parameters of the international institution as social environment and define the very content and direction of socialization dynamics, reinforcing their own legitimacy and leadership within them. A state’s varying ability to influence and control international institutions as constraining rules and procedures as well as social structures with socializing norms and customs is the degree to which a state has institutional power.

Scholars have in fact long been aware of the existence of institutional power and have casually referred to institutional power asymmetries as varying degrees of a state’s “influence,” “control,” “dominance,” and “capture” of international institutions. However, the concept has not been adequately clarified, particularly with respect to other more popularly employed concepts of power in IR.

Barnett and Duvall offer the most concerted and systematic effort to conceptualize institutional power. They define institutional power as “the control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse relations of interaction.” Thus, through “the formal and informal institutions that mediate between A and B,” A’s institutional power works “through the rules and procedures that define those institutions, guides, steers, and

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23 We have in fact long understood states to care about institutional power. Hegemonic states typically create a ‘system of governance’ that reflects its material interests Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics. or construct international institutions and international order that ‘locks in favorable conditions’ for itself Ikenberry, After Victory. Middle powers like Canada have focused on amassing greater influence in institutions to attain disproportionate influence in international affairs Adam Chapnick, “The Canadian Middle Power Myth,” International Journal 55, no. 2 (April 1, 2000): 188–206, doi:10.2307/40203476., a similar strategy employed by Switzerland in its hosting of the UN organizations (Interview with former Swiss diplomat, March 2015). Regime complexity scholars have explored how international institutions help weak states punch above their weight by using cross-institutional strategies Drezner, “The Power and Peril of International Regime Complexity”; Helfer, “Regime Shifting in the International Intellectual Property System.”, and Goh finds that we increasingly observe demands by weaker states to renegotiate institutional bargains undergirding the current international governance structures as a result Goh, The Struggle for Order.

constrain the actions (or non actions) and conditions of existence of others.”

Barnett and Duvall distinguish the concept of institutional power with Dahl’s authoritative definition of power as “the ability of A to get B to do what B otherwise would not do,” by suggesting that institutional power works indirectly through institutions. Highlighting that difference lies in the “specificity” and “social proximity” in which power relations are established, the authors explain that “[i]nstead of insisting that power work through an immediate, direct, and specific relationship, these conceptions allow for the possibility of power even if the connections are detached and mediated, or operate at a physical, temporal, or social distance.”

However, Barnett and Duvall’s conceptualization of institutional power has a number of limitations. First, the conception detaches power from the agent and situates it within the structure. According to their definition, since international institutions are never completely “possessed” by a state, institutional power is theorized to be located in the international institution. Institutional power is therefore an institutional condition that states are subject to. However, stripped of agency, this renders the concept inoperable for forming the basis of understanding how states might be motivated and compete for institutional power.

Second, the understanding of “possession” contradicts Barnett and Duvall’s own emphasis that power is fundamentally a relational concept. Moving away from power as “resources” or “assets” that states possess, Barnett and Duvall argue for a relational

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25 Ibid., 51.
27 Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” 51, fn.43.
29 Ibid., 51.
understanding of power or “power as a type of causation,” such that “power is best understood from the perspective of the recipient, not the deliverer, of the direct action.” However, it can be argued that a state wielding institutional power does in fact possess the actions that produce institutional power effects such as deciding on the rules, wielding its veto, setting the agendas as well as the rhetoric and speech-acts that establish and reinforce norms and customs of the given international institution.

Third, the criteria based on “possession” also contradicts the theoretical foundations undergirding Barnett and Duvall’s taxonomy of power. In the rare case that international institutions are completely possessed by a state, Barnett and Duvall argue that this is no longer institutional power but an “instrument of compulsory power,” defined as “power as relations of interaction of direct control by one actor over another.” However, even as an instrument of compulsory power, influence is projected indirectly through socially diffuse relations mediated by international institutions. In other words, it still satisfies the one theoretical criteria that Barnett and Duvall use to define “institutional power” in their taxonomy. The implicit criteria of “possession” therefore makes the distinction between institutional and compulsory power theoretically untenable.

Moving beyond these theoretical contradictions, the definition I adopt treats institutional power as both resource-based and relational. States are conceived of having varying degrees of institutional power to the extent that they “possess” the international institution to varying degrees. In other words, unlike Barnett and Duvall, how much a

32 They use the example that victims of collateral damage from aerial bombing experience the power of the bomber Ibid.
33 Ibid., 51.
34 Ibid., 43.
state “posses” an international institution is actually an indicator for how much institutional power a state has. This understanding of institutional power also serves as a starting point for understanding why international institutions are objects of competition for states that may try to maximize it. This understanding is also invariably relational in that the more state $A$ dominates an institution, the more state $B$ experiences $A$’s institutional power and vice versa.\(^{36}\)

Institutional power can be further clarified on four dimensions: nature, scope and domain, outcomes and sources. First, the nature of institutional power is non-coercive. It therefore manifests as a state’s ability to set the agenda, create norms and ideas, and construct social doxa such as customs and systems of knowledge. In the seminal ‘faces of power’ debate, these abilities refer to the “second” and “third” faces of power associated with Bachrach and Baratz\(^{37}\) and Luke’s\(^{38}\) definitions respectively.\(^{39}\) Institutional power therefore departs from IR’s most commonly understood form of power associated with realism and employed in the studies of balance of power, power transition as well as in security studies, the “first face” of power or “coercive power.”\(^{40}\)

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\(^{36}\) While the relational and possessional aspects of institutional power may be different - in that there could be a disjuncture or even work in opposite directions - for our purposes, they are treated as covarying and moving in the same direction. More possession is more influence, and more influence is more possession.


\(^{38}\) Power: A Radical View, 2nd ed. (MacMillan, 2005).

\(^{39}\) Second face of power is agenda-setting power, the ability to influence the decision-making agenda and process by influencing the range of choices from which decisions are made. Third face of power is the ability to shape what people want and believe, such as through the spread of norms and the creation of interests and identities. $A$ can get $B$ to do something $B$ would not otherwise do by affecting $B$’s preferences, wants, or thoughts. For an overview of the different faces of power refer to Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, “The Power Politics of Regime Complexity: Human Rights Trade Conditionality in Europe,” Perspectives on Politics 7, no. 1 (2009): 52–57. and Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” 276..

\(^{40}\) This includes both material and non-material sub-forms. The former emphasizes components of material capability such as military personnel, iron and steel production, and population size. It is typically associated with traditional realist conceptions of power resources and widely used measures such as the Composite Indicator of National Capabilities (CINC) in the COW dataset (The Correlates of War Project http://cow.dss.ucdavis.edu/data-sets/national-material-capabilities/national-material-capabilities-v4-0). The latter affects the ability of states to win kinetic conflict and coerce other states by determining how well
therefore shares the core premise with Joseph Nye’s “soft power” in that it is non-coercive in nature.\footnote{Defined by Joseph Nye as ‘the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment’ Joseph Jr. Nye, \textit{Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics} (PublicAffairs, 2004), x. Nye’s definition has evolved over time to build on Bachrach and Baratz’s “Two Faces of Power.” ‘second-face of power’ as well as Lukes’ \textit{Power: A Radical View}. ‘third-face of power,’ the ability to shape another state’s long-term attitudes and preferences Joseph Jr. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” \textit{The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science} 616 (2008): 94–109; Joseph Jr. Nye, \textit{The Future of Power} (PublicAffairs, 2011).. Baldwin notes that Nye’s definition of soft power has in fact been shifted, from the ability to affect preferences with intangible power resources to later emphasizing “attraction” rather than through coercion and payments. Baldwin suggests that although Nye explicitly claims to build on the second face of power, in reality, it its operation, it is closer to the third face of power Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” 289..}

Second, institutional power is exclusively about international institutions and regimes. Theories of power are distinguished by how it treats the \textit{scope} and \textit{domain} of power, namely the issue-area and actors over which power operates.\footnote{Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” 275–276.} As Jack Nagel states “[a]nyone who employs a causal concept of power \textit{must} specify domain and scope... Stipulating domain and scope answers the question ‘Power over what?’”\footnote{Jack H. Nagel, \textit{The Descriptive Analysis of Power} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 14.} Institutional power’s primary domain is the issue-area of the given international institution\footnote{I say “primary,” because institutional outcomes also can influence those outside institutions also.} and the scope of institutional power is the members and actors that compose the international institution, meaning, institutional power is primarily felt among elites, diplomats and international bureaucrats who work directly with and within the international institution. This is the first difference that institutional power has with soft power, whose domain is much wider due to its high fungibility and its scope includes the material resources translate into force. It encompasses factors such as courage, training and leadership in the military Niccolò Machiavelli, “Money Is Not the Sinews of War, Although It Is Generally So Considered,” in \textit{Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius} (1531), trans. Christian E. Detmold (Modern Library, 1950), ‘military culture’ that includes the quality of tactical leadership, information management and technical and weapons handling Kenneth M. Pollack, \textit{Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991} / (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), and ‘force-employment’, which encompasses military doctrinal and tactical level matters that alter military effectiveness Stephen D. Biddle, \textit{Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle} / (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).
citizens of other countries.\textsuperscript{45} The politics of institutional power is therefore about maximizing influence in and over international institutions and distinct to the soft power politics of winning the “hearts and minds” of citizens of another country.

Third, institutional power is instrumental for maximizing material and non-material outcomes of an international institution.\textsuperscript{46} International institutions are governance mechanisms that solve collective action problems and provide collective goods.\textsuperscript{47} Having institutional power means institutional design features can be manipulated to influence and constrain other states in the institution to maximize the tangible material benefits that come from it. International institutions also uphold a legal normative framework that defines the boundaries of appropriateness in state action and codifies positive conceptions of a collective life in international society.\textsuperscript{48} Having institutional power therefore also means these legal normative structures can be manipulated to affect the preferences, wants and thoughts of another state in the institution to maximize its legitimacy, construct itself as an authoritative and moral leader, as well as promote its soft power. The second difference to soft power is that institutional power can thus be causally prior to soft power. A state therefore cares about institutional power to the extent that it cares about

\textsuperscript{45} Nye thus suggests that ‘[w]hether a particular asset is an attractive soft power resource can be measured through polls or focus groups’ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 95.. Holyk, for example, surveys a random sample of 1,000 adults in each East Asian country asking respondents to rate the attractiveness of given state’s culture, economic and political system, human capital and foreign policy Gregory G. Holyk, “Paper Tiger? Chinese Soft Power in East Asia,” Political Science Quarterly 126, no. 2 (2011): 223–54..

\textsuperscript{46} While the first-order definition of institutional power is “A’s power over B,” this power relation can be unpacked into two additional power relations: (i) A having power over the international institution through which it indirectly influences B, and (ii) A’s power over B leading to A having power over the collective outputs of the international institution. The third dimension of institutional power therefore refers to the (ii) in the second-order definition.

\textsuperscript{47} Keohane, After Hegemony.

getting the lion’s share of the material and normative collective rewards of the international institution.

Fourth, institutional power has its sources in both coercive and non-coercive forms of politics. The third difference to soft power is then that while the resources and outcomes of soft power are both non-coercion or “attraction,” in contrast, institutional power can come from a number of different sources that span the full spectrum of attractiveness, inducements and payments, to coercion. On the one end, a state may use its soft power to enhance its institutional power and persuade other states in the international institution, meaning institutional power can be both causally prior and subsequent to soft power. On the other end of the spectrum, a state may also use coercion to enhance institutional power. International institutions and rules can therefore be constructed at gun-point allowing the coercive state to wield maximal institutional power. An example would be Commodore Matthew Perry’s gunboat diplomacy and the signing of the ‘Unequal treaties’ in the mid 19th Century. In the middle-range, institutional power can be enhanced through inducements and payments. In this wide range of actions, states are neither attracting normatively or forcing states to do what they would otherwise not do. Rather, a state enhances its institutional power based on instrumental calculation and

52 This also means soft power can be used to enhance soft power, a dimension that is not fully explored among soft power scholars that conceptualize it in a uni-directional manner from sources to outcomes.
strategic interaction. A state may thus maximize its institutional power by capitalizing on cross-cutting interests and employing a strategy of issue linkage. For example, the U.S. in the WTO leveraged the attractiveness of opening up its large markets to push developing countries to accept unattractive intellectual property rights provisions with the TRIPS agreement. Cross-institutional strategies explored by regime complexity scholars would also fall under this middle-range where states capitalize on legal inconsistencies to “forum shop” and “regime shift,” taking diplomatic contention into regimes where it can wield more institutional power.

2.2. Institutional Group

Institutional power politics starts from understanding that states care about institutional power. The specific ways in which it unfolds, however, hinges on how states understand the second foundational concept – international institutions. International institutions have been most commonly understood in IR as intelligent devices – laws, rules and decisions-making procedures – that are functional in overcoming the collective action problem and coordinating states.\(^\text{53}\) Much of the discussion in IR has thus focused on how

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\(^{53}\) Institutions have most authoritatively been defined as “the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction” in pp. 97, North, Douglass C. 1991. “Institutions” *Journal of Economic Perspective* 5 (1): 97-112, or “recognized patterns of practice around which expectations converge” (Young 1980: 337) quoted in pp.8, Keohane, Robert O. 1984. *After Hegemony*. Princeton University Press. In International Relations, institutions have been referred to as “international regimes” that are defined as “set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations” in Krasner, Stephen D. 1982. “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” *International Organization* 36 (2): 325-355, pp. 186. International institution has also been used interchangeably in the institutionalist literature with “multilateralism” (Mearsheimer 1994, 8). Keohane defines this as “practice of co-ordinating national polices in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions” in Keohane, Robert O. 1990. “Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research,” *International Journal* XLV. Ruggie defines this as a “generic institutional form…which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of ‘generalized’ principles of conduct” Ruggie, John G. 1991.
states anticipate the problems of monitoring, enforcement and non-compliance and spend
much energy designing the best possible rules that mitigate state incentives to renege on
their commitments to cooperate.54

However, states also importantly understand international institutions to be groups
and think hard about which states are to be included in them. What traditional IR research
agendas have largely overlooked is therefore the question of group membership: which
states are privy to a seat at the bargaining table and have the chance to design the
institutional rules that constrain them?55 If as Zakaria notes, “[i]t’s ancient political rule:
if you’re not at the meeting, no one will protect your interests and agenda,”56 membership
composition of institutions should matter a great deal to states when constructing or
changing international institutions.57

The question of who is in the group and who is excluded from the group is
primarily a question about the distribution of institutional power. A state’s membership to
a group determines whether it gets a say when deciding what principles, rules, and

International institutions also vary from being formal agreements such as International Governmental
Organizations (IGO), forums and international treaties to informal agreements such as norms, principles
and customary international law.
54 Much of the debate concerning international institutions between realists and liberals revolved around
how states design institutions (the bargaining problem) and the degree to which they constrain state
behavior (monitoring and enforcement problem). Weighing in more on the latter question, constructivists
analyze how international institutions act as social environments that socialize member states and are co-
constituted by them / function of inducing pro-norm behavior and identities among member states.
55 For an important exception see constructivist work Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2003. *The EU, NATO and
the Integration of Europe. Rules and Rhetoric*, Cambridge University Press., in the East Asian literature see
*Journal of East Asian Studies* 11: 79-104. While there is some literature on how different sizes in
institutional membership affect institutional performance, particularly with regards to military alliances and
interaction with regime-type, there is little discussion on the process of how this gets decided. See for
example Fariss, Christopher J., Erik Gartzke and Benjamin A. T. Graham “Allying to Win Regime Type,
Alliance Size, and Victory” Draft paper. Accessible from Social Science Research Network,
57 In fact, as Victor Cha notes, states often spend “a great deal of attention and energy” defining the criteria
for membership Victor D. Cha, “Complex Patchwork: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional
decision-making procedures will guide the group, which issues the group will consider for discussion, and what collective goods the group will eventually coordinate to produce. In the study of social persuasion, researchers have also found that persuasive messages coming from an out-group produces almost no attitude change, even when accompanied by strong evidence.\textsuperscript{58} Additionally, group-directed criticisms are received in a more defensive way when they come from out-group members than when the same comments are made by in-group members.\textsuperscript{59,60} In other words, whether a state is included in the institutional group or not directly bears on how much institutional power a state wields.

The political challenge that structures how states construct and maintain international institutions is not only limited to the efficiency concerns of the collective action problem, but also includes the power political calculus of the group membership problem: which state is included and which state is excluded from the international institution for a state to maximize its institutional power. When it comes to an institution’s membership structure, the collective action problem is often thought of as highlighting what the optimal group size is for overcoming the collective action problem and producing self-reinforcing equilibria.\textsuperscript{61} The group membership problem, however, focuses on what the optimal group composition is for maximizing a state’s institutional power. Whether a state is included in the group or excluded from it does of course impact the ease and efficiency by which states can coordinate their expectations and behavior.

However, joining or creating an institution and the questions of inclusion or exclusion


\textsuperscript{60} Thanks to Jamie Gruffydd-Jones for highlighting this body of literature.

more immediately bears on a state’s expectations about how much it will control the international institution, exercise influence over its member states, and derive benefits from the collective enterprise. A state is therefore more likely to worry first about how much its membership or another’s will further or diminish its national interest materially and normatively, rather than whether it will undermine the overall efficiency of coordination between the member states. In so far as states care about institutional power and treat international institutions as groups, states therefore confront the group membership problem when constructing or joining institutions.

3. Strategies

For states who care about institutional power and understand the challenge of constructing and joining international institutions through group membership problem, what is the optimal solution to the group membership problem? And, what set of actions allow states to achieve these solutions?

3.1. Preferences

Three assumptions about state preferences are made in order to link motivations and beliefs to a set of viable actions and strategies that further them.

The first assumption is that a state not only prefers more institutional power, but prefers to have more than its rival. This is an extension of stating that, all things equal, a state prefers to have greater influence and larger shares of the collective goods from an
international institution relative to its rival. What matters for states in competition is therefore the relative institutional power they possess. By logical extension, preferring more institutional power than their rival can be further unpacked as meaning that states wish to solve the group membership problem “better” than their rival. This means a state wishes an optimal group membership composition for itself, while preferring to see a rival state solve its group membership problem only sub-optimally.

The second assumption is that when considering the question of what composition of states maximizes a state’s institutional power, a state prefers to surround itself with “friends” rather than “rivals.”62 It is better to be surrounded by friends because this makes

62 Theoretically, the meaning of these terms occupy a conceptual space defined by social constructivists on the one end and rational choice functionalism of neoliberal and neorealists on the other. Social constructivists focus on the degree of convergence between states at the deep level of identities and the degree to which an understanding of norms and social structure is shared. The use of “friend” and “rival” therefore loosely maps onto Wendt’s three-fold distinction of state identities – enemy, rival, friend – that co-constitute the Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian international cultures respectively Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics. “The posture of enemies is one of threatening adversaries who observe no limits in their violence towards each other; that of rivals is one of competitors who will use violence to advance their interests but refrain from killing each other; and that of friends is one of allies who do not use violence to settle their disputes and work as a team against security threats” Ibid., 258.. In a culture of enemies Self and Other are existential threats and fears extermination dominate Ibid., 262–5.; in a culture of rivals, Self and Other recognize rights of co-existence Ibid., 279–80., and in a culture of friends, “the cognitive boundaries of Self are extended to include the Other” Ibid., 305.. Neoliberals and neorealists focus on the degree of convergence between states at the level of preference structures manifested as harmony, cooperation and discord Axelrod and Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy”; Robert Jervis, “Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate,” International Security 24, no. 1 (July 1999): 42–63, doi:10.2307/2539347; Keohane, After Hegemony.. Neoliberal view in the social constructivist understanding would actually constitute “rivals” – “Neoliberals operate largely within the assumption that the prevailing international social structure is one of rivals. They start from the idea that international systems are composed of egoistic, self-interested, rational actors prepared to consider the absolute as well as the relative gains if conditions allow” Behaviour in this system is based largely on the logic of calculation about how to best pursue self-interest” Barry Buzan, The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-First Century (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 78.. Friends here occupy the space between harmony and cooperation, while rivals would occupy the space between cooperation and discord.62 Maximally, then, friends have shared identities, values and goals, with patterns of amity defining the relationship, while minimally they have similar preference structures. Conversely, rivals maximally have conflicting identities with patterns of enmity defining the relationship, while minimally they have divergent preference structures. Finally, the amity-enmity relations and preferences structures that define ‘friends’ and ‘rivals’ are in principle variable; socialization mechanisms may alter a state’s identity, while exogenous shocks can reconfigure a state’s preferences. However, following both functionalist and constructivist practice, they are treated here as more-or-less exogenously given. For example, Wendt says that change is difficult and that social structures can be taken as more-or-less given structures Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics.. Neoliberal and neorealists also largely treat preference structures
the international institution an amicable environment where the protection and pursuit of
the state’s interests is facilitated. With similar preference structures, friends can first
overcome the collective action problem with greater ease. Moreover, with shared
identities, values and goals, friends see eye-to-eye on common problems as well as
solutions. Among friends, persuasion is also easier as they share well-established lines
of communication as well as deeply internalized norms and common discursive structures
of diplomatic exchange. Persuasion is also easier because friends are more socially
sensitive. Friends therefore share a similar understanding of the goals and values that
should undergird an international institution. Even when this is not the case, friends are
easier to persuade and are more willing to make concessions for the maintenance of the
friendship and the continued integrity of the shared institution.

Conversely, a state prefers not to surround itself with rivals or competitors as this
makes the international institution a hostile environment. In a group where a rival is
present, the state’s pursuit of institutional power is more likely to be resisted, undermined
and obstructed. With divergent preference structures, collective action problems are acute

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63 For example, J.J. Suh shows, allied states come to share threat perception and develop similar notions of
what an ‘enemy’ is through discursive processes and representational practices such as joint military
exercises and regular consultative mechanisms. J.J Suh, Power, Interest, and Identity in Military Alliances
(Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

64 An important norm shared among friends is the norm of diffuse reciprocity. Cooperative schemes and
decisions that would have been impossible if there was only egotistical quid pro quo exchanges is made
possible with norms of diffuse reciprocity. Keohane remarks, states who share these norms ‘contribute
one’s share, or behave well toward others, not because of ensuing rewards from specific actors, but in the
interests of continuing satisfactory overall results for the group of which one is a part, as a whole” Robert O.

65 Dennis Chong argues that collective action problems take on a different nature when a well-established
communities confront them. When long patterns of iterative games have been played and there are low
prospects of exiting these interactions, new collective action problems occur on top of these pre-existing
interactions, altering actors to become more sensitive to social mechanisms of compliance to the group
such as persuasion. Dennis Chong, Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement (Chicago: University
and security dilemmas are a real concern. Moreover, in the absence of shared values and goals, rivals are not only unlikely to see eye-to-eye on common problems and solutions, but they may actually see each other as the source of common problems. At the extreme, states in rivalry may thus believe that the elimination of the other is the goal of an institution’s collective enterprise, such as with an offensive military alliance. Not only is persuasion difficult due to poorly established lines of communication, but coupled with the presence of conflicting norms and discursive structures, patterns of rivalry are reinforced. Rather than norms of diffuse reciprocity, strategic mistrust and deep-seated historical animosity therefore define the relationship. A rival is therefore more likely to undermine a state’s institutional power by pushing for its own agenda and construct counter-norms and customs it deems beneficial to itself. Even when good intentions may exist, credible commitments are difficult to make due to misperception and the initiation of negotiations itself is difficult as negotiating with the enemy is considered politically unpalatable.66

The third assumption is that for its rival, a state prefers that it does not surround itself with its friends. Driven by relative institutional power concerns, a state not only wishes to solve the group membership problem, but wishes to do it better than its rival. This means a state hopes that its rival arrives at a sub-optimal group membership composition. Understanding that a rival has similar preferences to surround itself with its friends and not rivals, a state in competition therefore prefers that the rival fails to achieve this.

All things equal, when solving the group membership problem to maximize institutional power relative to its rival, a state prefers to have a membership structure that includes friends and not rivals. Conversely, a state prefers that a rival does not manage to surround itself with its friends, but is instead surrounded by rivals.

### 3.2. Competitive Institutional Strategies

Given state preferences for solving the group membership problem, there are at least five competitive institutional strategies a state can use to further its relative institutional power: *exclusion, sapping, block, dilution, and multiple dilution*. Although all the strategies alter the relative institutional power balance and therefore simultaneously increase a state’s institutional power and reduce that of its rivals, the competitive institutional strategies can be grouped into two types – self-group or other-group – depending on whether the strategy is primarily concerned with the group membership problem of the state’s own institutional group or the rival’s.

![Figure 1-1. Self-Group Strategies](image)

(1) Exclusion \hspace{2cm} (2) Sapping
The self-group strategies in Figure 1-1 are institutional moves made with respect to the state’s own group membership problem. They primarily alter the state’s own institutional group composition satisfying the second preference of solving the group membership problem with friends and not rivals.\(^{67}\)

In institutional exclusion (1), state A constructs an institutional group composed of friends C and D and excludes the rival state B from its institutional group.\(^{68}\) A therefore maximizes its institutional power in the friend group and denies its rival B both the potential gains from cooperation as well as any institutional power.

A strategy of institutional sapping (2) involves strengthening A’s institutional group by convincing other-group states E and F to join A’s group. With an expanded institutional group, this strategy increases A’s institutional power over a greater number of states. Specifically, A now has influence over E and F where it previously may have had little and thus undermines the monopoly influence state B had over states E and F, sapping B’s institutional power in its own institutional group. The sapping strategy may also be coupled with a strategy of exclusion where B’s exclusion to A’s institutional group is made more prominent by further isolating B with a strategy of sapping.

\(^{67}\) More accurately, a strategy of sapping furthers both the second and third assumptions. By getting E and F to join A’s institutional group, E and F become A’s friends more, and relatively less that of B’s. Therefore, A’s group is surrounded by more friends, and B is surrounded by lesser friends than previously.

\(^{68}\) For a similar strategy developed under institutional balancing theory as “exclusive institutional balancing” see He, “Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia”; He, *Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific: Economic Interdependence and China’s Rise*; He, “Undermining Adversaries: Unipolarity, Threat Perception, and Negative Balancing Strategies after the Cold War.”.
The other-group strategies in Figure 1-2 are institutional moves made with respect to the rival state’s group membership problem. They primarily alter the institutional group composition of the rival state’s institutional group satisfying the third assumption of preferring that a rival does not surround itself with its friends.

With institutional block (3), state A forestalls B’s efforts to construct an institutional group altogether, denying it of any institutional friends. State A achieves this by pressuring states E and F not to join B’s institutional group. A successful institutional block denies B a potentially exclusive institutional environment where it could monopolize its institutional power by surrounding itself with its friends E and F.

With institutional dilution (4), state A enters rival B’s institutional group that it was previously excluded from. B’s monopoly hold of institutional power is diluted as A can now obstruct and undermine B’s agendas, norms, legitimacy and leadership in the group. A thus increases its institutional power over the institutional group where it previously had none and is also now eligible to the gains from cooperation.

A strategy of multiple dilution (5) is a dilution strategy that involves multiple states. Instead of undermining B’s monopoly hold of institutional power by entering B’s
group on its own, state $A$ enters with a number of friends thereby diluting $B$’s institutional power more effectively. Crashing a party with many friends is more likely to ruin the party than crashing it on your own.$^{69}$

Beyond the five competitive institutional strategies outlined above, other strategies may also be possible. A state may, for example, pursue a strategy of institutional restraint where a state includes the rival state within its institutional group in order to subject it to its institutional power. The strategy of restraint is well documented in the IR literature as “tying down”$^{70,71}$ or “inclusive institutional balancing.”$^{72}$ Also, a similar logic has been explored extensively in the alliance literature where alliances are seen as mechanisms and venues for constraining allies$^{73}$ and “tethering” adversaries.$^{74}$

This strategy is put aside as it is understood as primarily the exercise of institutional power, rather than a means through which institutional power is competed over. A state that is reasonably confident about its institutional power within an institutional group can be thought of as no longer needing to guard its membership against an entering rival. Rather it is ready to engage and include the rival and subject it to its institutional power. While it is a fine line, this distinction is akin to a state being...
happier to engage with a military adversary in a skirmish at a strategic terrain that it
dominates, as opposed to terrain where its knowledge and domination of it is only partial.
Nonetheless, institutional restraint serves as a useful alternative explanation when testing
for the operation of the five competitive institutional strategies outlined above.\textsuperscript{75}

4. Interactions

The concepts, preferences and strategies flesh out the beliefs and goals of states and links
these to a set of possible actions. They together construct a world of institutional power
politics where states treat international institutions as both strategic means and ends that
they compete over. In this world, states care about their relative institutional power and
maximize it through a variety of competitive institutional strategies. But how does the
competition for institutional power unfold between two states?

\textsuperscript{75} Institutional restraint is premised on an alternative assumption about what constitutes the optimal
composition of group membership. Rather than surrounding itself with friends and seeking to obstruct
rivals from surrounding itself with its, institutional restraint exhibits the opposite: including rivals within its
group to undermine the rival’s institutional power, and joining a rival’s institutional group as costly to its
institutional power. This is in fact grounded in the more commonly held assumptions in IR where joining
another’s institutional group is done bearing the cost of accepting constraints to its institutional power and,
conversely, a state with existing membership does best to limit the rival’s influence by including it in the
group. Quddus Snyder, for example, argues that China’s aversion to institutional constraint had put it off
from joining international institutions until the benefits of maintaining economic competitiveness
outweighed these anticipated costs Snyder, “Integrating Rising Powers.”. A strategy of dilution takes an
entering state to be an active socializer or rule-maker, rather than passively subjecting to the constraining
institutional rules and social environment. It joins not at the cost of constraint, but in order to alleviate it.
Joining an institution as dilution is therefore an offensive strategy where a state increases its institutional
power. Also, in contrast to the emphasis on constraining a rival’s institutional power within institutions, be
it through changing incentives or through the operation of socialization mechanisms such as opprobrium
and shaming Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change,”
Institutions as Social Environments,” International Studies Quarterly 45, no. 4 (December 2001): 487–515;
Princeton University Press, 2008), the strategy of institutional exclusion operates as a negative
socialization mechanism through isolation outside institutions. By denying the rival state from the social
environment, the rival is denied institutional power altogether.
I introduce here two models of competitive interaction over international institutions. The two models capture different logics by which individual competitive institutional strategies are aggregated and produce an overall change in the international institutional landscape or institutional architecture. The first is an offensive realist model of intentional competition, the institutional power competition (IPC) model, and the second is a defensive realist model of unintended competition, the institutional power dilemma (IPD) model.76

4.1. Institutional Power Competition (IPC)

In institutional power competition (IPC), two states in rivalry consciously employ a variety of competitive institutional strategies to maximize relative institutional power. When these competitive institutional strategies interlock in sequence, the overall institutional architecture changes as a result. This model is therefore the simple summation or sequential aggregation of the competitive institutional strategies employed by two rival states.

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76 This label is useful to highlight one of the general distinction between offensive and defensive realists that competition and conflict may be either intended necessities or unintended pathologies. However, I do not necessarily prescribe to the larger body of the theories that places anarchy and distribution of capabilities as central and the relative scarcity of security in the international system as important differentiators Jervis, “Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate”; Jack Snyder and Keir A. Lieber, “Correspondence: Defensive Realism and the ‘New’ History of World War I,” International Security 33, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 174–94. While this is not incompatible with the theory I develop, since the theory focuses on causal mechanisms rather than structural or conditional attributes, this is beyond the scope of the theory. Thus, when I invoke these labels, I am only referring to the differences in the mechanisms.
Take a hypothetical international system populated by six states $A$ through $F$, where state $A$ and $B$ are rivals competing for relative institutional power. Figure 2, exhibits one scenario in which institutional power competition may unfold between $A$ and $B$. In step 1, state $A$ surrounds itself with friends $C$ and $D$, while excluding its rival $B$ with a strategy of institutional exclusion. In step 2, faced with the relative decline in its institutional power, state $B$ responds with its own strategy of institutional exclusion. It constructs an institutional group consisting of its friends $E$ and $F$, while excluding its rival $A$. In step 3, observing the new and potentially robust exclusionary institutional group led by state $B$, state $A$ gains membership to $B$’s group with a strategy of institutional dilution, breaking the monopoly hold of institutional power held by state $B$.

Figure 3 illustrates yet another scenario in which institutional power competition may unfold, this time with $A$ and $B$ employing more complex competitive institutional
strategies. Step 1 is the same as the previous scenario, where $A$ employs exclusion against $B$ to increase its relative institutional power. In step 2, faced with the relative decline in its institutional power, state $B$ responds this time with a multiple strategy of institutional exclusion and sapping. State $B$ therefore gets $C$ to join its institutional group from $A$’s, on top of keeping state $A$ out of this expanded group. In step 3, observing the new and potentially robust exclusionary institutional group led by state $B$, state $A$ gains membership to $B$’s group, this time with friend state $D$ in a strategy of complex dilution.

Figure 3. Scenario 2 - Institutional Power Competition between rival states $A$ and state $B$

For illustrative purposes, the states in the two scenarios only employed two to three competitive institutional strategies out of the five at their disposal. If states can employ all five competitive institutional strategies at each round, then there are at least $5 \times 5 \times 5$
= 125 different scenarios by which a three-step competitive sequence may pan out. This excludes the possibility that a state may employ simultaneous strategies in a given round (such as by B in step 2 of Figure 3) and that institutional competition may go beyond three rounds. Institutional power competition as an interactive process is therefore complex: there are multiple competitive institutional strategies at any given point, multiple combinations in which these can interlock in sequence, and no uniform direction or average magnitude in which the dynamics of institutional power competition causes the overall institutional landscape to change.

It is therefore difficult to determine or predict the exact change in institutional structure that institutional power competition will produce. Competition may produce a lot of institutional change, but it is also possible that it produces next to no change. For example, a full competitive sequence may involve two states successfully employing strategies of block, in which case, we would observe no change in the overall governance structure despite the operation of institutional power competition.

In the two scenarios in Figure 2 and 3, institutional proliferation and the overlapping of membership are results of institutional power competition. While we would typically think that two international institutions mean more cooperation than one, the IPC dynamic highlights that two international institutions actually represents more competition. The IPC therefore highlights how we must be empirically attentive to the processes that lead to the changes in the institutional landscape that we observe, before discussing the cooperativeness of the given international or regional system.
4.2. Institutional Power Dilemma (IPD)

Individual actions not meant as competitive challenges to another state can also produce dynamics of competition when aggregated through the second interactive process, the institutional power dilemma (IPD). Unlike the IPC model where two states are from the onset rivals that compete for relative institutional power, competition and rivalry in an institutional power dilemma are both unintended and generated in the process of their interaction. Thus, not only are changes in the overall institutional landscape an unintended byproduct of states competing for institutional power, but competition itself is also unintended in the IPD model.

While I will clarify the important differences, as a conceptual short hand, the institutional power dilemma can thus be thought of as security dilemma and spiral dynamics operating in the realm of international institutions. An institutional power dilemma thus similarly embodies three “dilemmas.”

The first dilemma is that although constructing an international institution may be absent malign intentions (that is, undermining the other’s relative institutional power), this may inadvertently reduce another state’s relative institutional power. This could be because institutional construction invariably comes with a state amassing more

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For the only example where the security dilemma has been applied to regional institutional change see Victor Cha, “Complex Patchworks: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture,” *Asia Policy*, 2011, Vol.11: 27-50. Despite the welcome application and insight, without clearly labelling the dynamics of security dilemma in institutional context, there is some confusion throughout the analysis as to whether Cha is referring to institutional dynamics or military dynamics of the original security dilemma concept. To avoid such confusion, I label the processual cause here an “institutional power dilemma.” More importantly, Cha adopts the label of security dilemma but does not theorize how a security dilemma dynamic applies to the context of regional institutions. As I will explore later, this results in Cha mistakenly equating solutions to collective action problems as solutions to security dilemma in institutions. To avoid these pitfalls, this sub section theorizes the core components that make up a security dilemma operating in an institutional context as well as how it importantly differs from the traditional security dilemma concept.
institutional power, which reduces another state’s relative possession of it. It could also be because the other state perceives the institution-building effort as intentionally undermining its relative institutional power.

The second dilemma leads from the first in that the benign construction or joining of an international institution may therefore lead to a competitive and strategic response by the other state, triggering spiral-like competition over cooperation in an institutional power competition dynamic.

The third dilemma is the element of tragedy in the overall outcome given original intentions. In an institutional power dilemma, states are locked into competition and rivalry when they had strived for the exact opposite. A state’s benign intentions to enhance cooperation by constructing or joining what it deems to be a Pareto improving international institution may, in other words, paradoxically lead to more competition and even threaten the breakdown of meaningful cooperation between states in the system.

These three institutional power “dilemmas” parallel three dilemmas identifiable in the original security dilemma concept explored by Herbert Butterfield, John Herz and Robert Jervis.  

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even war may be generated Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951); Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities*; John Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. As Jervis notes: “When the security dilemma is at work, international politics can be seen as tragic in the sense that states may desire – or at least be willing to settle for – mutual security, but their own behavior puts this very goal further from their reach” Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?,” 36. My reading here most clearly differs with Shiping Tang’s most recent reading of the security dilemma. Tang understands the security dilemma as a set of causal factors. He finds that some factors (anarchy, lack of malign intentions, and some build up of capabilities) are necessary conditions for a security dilemma and therefore treats them as the hardcore of the concept. Tang treats the other factors that are not always causally associated with the security dilemma as dispensable from the concept. Factors that I define as the third dilemma, for example, are therefore not treated as part of the security dilemma because they are possible, but not necessary, outcomes of the security dilemma. Shiping Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009): 587–623; Shiping Tang, *A Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time: Defensive Realism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). The understanding I adopt here, arguably, tracks closer to the original insight that there are several dilemmas surrounding the actions taken by defensive states to increase its security, which includes causal factors as well as processes and outcomes that Tang overlooks. For example, Jervis states quite clearly that the “unintended and undesired consequences of actions meant to be defensive constitute the ‘security dilemma’” Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 66, emphasis added..
Take a hypothetical international system populated by six states $A$ through $F$, where states $A$ and $B$ are not rivals (Figure 4). In step 1, state $A$ constructs an international institution with friends $C$ and $D$ to capture positive-sum gains from cooperation between the three states. State $A$ means no harm to $B$ and does not intend to undermine the relative institutional power of $B$. In step 2, however, finding itself excluded from the new institutional group, state $B$ confronts a relative decline in its institutional power. State $B$ therefore responds strategically with institutional exclusion, constructing an institutional group with its friends $E$ and $F$, while excluding state $A$, which it now considers a rival. In step 3, observing $B$’s new institutional group as an intentional effort to undermine $A$’s institutional power, state $A$ responds strategically also. With institutional dilution, state $A$ therefore gains membership to $B$’s group to break and forestall the formation of an institutional power stronghold for $B$.

In this hypothetical system, despite the initially benign construction of an international institution by $A$, a strategic response is triggered at step 2, and a spiral of competition over institutions ensues from step 3. The result is that in an institutional power dilemma, despite efforts by a state to promote cooperation, states get locked into competition over institutional power. This, moreover, has the same effect on the formation and change in the overall structure of institutional landscape as we previously explored with the IPC model (Figure 2, Figure 3).

There are at least five “trigger” scenarios that could result in an institutional strategic response by state $B$ in step 2, the switch point to intentional institutional power competition.
These are the five changes in the institutional structure that impact state B’s relative institutional power, which are at the same time the observable implications of five competitive institutional strategies that may have been employed by state A:  

- construction of an institutional group that excludes B (exclusion),
- members of B’s institutional group moving to join another state’s institutional group (sapping),
- another state allegedly putting pressure on other states not to construct an institutional group with B (block),
- a state wanting to join B’s institutional group (dilution), and
- a state wanting to join B’s institutional group with other of its friend states (complex dilution).

The switch to intentional institutional power competition dynamics may also occur at different points of the interaction, such as the third, fourth, or a later step in the sequence of interaction. The scenario in Figure 4 is therefore one outcome from a number of combinations and sequences in which an institutional power dilemma can unfold. Analogous to the intentional IPC model, IPD is therefore also causally complex in its relation to international institutional change. The key difference, however, is that not only can institutional proliferation and expansion mean more competition between states as seen with IPC, but in the IPD the competition itself may not have been intended by the states involved.

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79 While I will discuss below the mechanisms by which a benign action can trigger a strategic response, we can note that the inability to ascertain A’s intentions play an important role in triggering a strategic response, as well as the fact that irrespective of A’s intentions institutional power is invariably affected as a result of certain changes in institutional structure.
4.3. Traditional Security Dilemma vs. Institutional Power Dilemma

While having many commonalities, there are three distinct characteristics of an institutional power dilemma that importantly differentiates it from the traditional security dilemma concept. These characteristics relate to the conceptualization of original intentions, mechanisms of competition, and generated competition, and are what makes the IPD a dynamic unique to the realm of institutional power politics.

4.3.1. Original Intentions

In an institutional power dilemma two states initially construct or join institutions without harboring malign intentions. In clarifying the traditional security dilemma concept, Shiping Tang defines the absence of malign intentions of a defensive or status quo power as “not intentionally threatening others” 80. In the context of institutional politics this means a state constructs or joins an institution without the intention to undermine another’s relative institutional power. A state thus builds or joins an international institution for a variety of other reasons: to internalize the costs of negative externalities such as cross-border pollution, create international financial safety nets in anticipation of world-wide financial crises, coordinate transnational production networks for sub-state actors, or establish confidence building measures and accountability mechanisms to reduce the potential for kinetic conflict.

These all fall under the mainstream understanding of state intentions behind institutional formation implied in the functionalism of neoliberalism and rational choice

institutionalism. A state that does not harbor malign intentions therefore genuinely believes that its institution-building efforts capture positive-sum gains and drive Pareto improvement for states in the international system. It therefore believes that its actions do not reduce the institutional power of another state.

The lack of malign intentions also importantly includes the possibility that a state lacks strategic awareness. Not only could a benign state believe that its institution-building efforts benefit or at least do not undermine another state’s institutional power (a Pareto improvement), but a benign state is also one that is unaware that its actions have strategic consequences for other states. A state therefore may not realize that it is in a relationship of strategic interdependence such that another state’s previous actions and expectations of its future responses do not figure in the state’s calculus when constructing or joining institutions. In step 1 of Figure 4, it may therefore be the case that the absence of malign intentions of state A means that the question of B’s potential membership simply did not cross A’s mind when it was constructing the international institution.

With regards to the initial mover, state A, there are therefore two key differences that an institutional power dilemma has with the traditional security dilemma concept.

The first is the understanding of what counts as a benign state. Embodied variously in the terms “defensive,” “status quo,” “security-seeking,” “defensive

82 Lack of malign intentions, or benign intentions, also includes a more maximal understanding that moves beyond improvements in material benefits, but also of positive conceptions of a good life. This point is further elaborated below when differentiating the first move by a state in the institutional power dilemma with the traditional security dilemma concept.
83 Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics; Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.”
realist” states, the lack of malign intentions and the unintentionality of threat to another state’s security is central to the security dilemma concept. While ambiguous in earlier explorations, defensive realists have assumed that a degree of strategic interdependence exists between the two benign states in a security dilemma. The first mover in the security dilemma therefore does not intend to undermine another state’s security, but still makes the (mis)calculation that its actions will do no harm and anticipates what the other state’s response would be. As such, the security dilemma has often been conceptualized in game theoretic terms. Although it does not perfectly model the entirety of the security dilemma dynamics, it has been closely associated with the Prisoner’s Dilemma game, where state interaction is by definition theorized under the assumption of strategic interdependence. Defensive realists therefore overlook how a state lacking strategic awareness can also cause inadvertent harm and unintentionally generate strategic competition and conflict. A state may thus simply be unaware that it is a player in a

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87 For example, Butterfield understands states as pursuing security in response to the “fearful situation” generally Butterfield, History and Human Relations,.
88 For example, Jervis notes “States are then seen as interdependent in a different way [in the security dilemma and spiral theory] than is stressed by the theorists of deterrence” Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 67, emphasis added.
90 Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics; Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.”
91 Although not explicit in the theorization, Jervis’s examples of unintentionality of threat in security dilemma do include examples of decision-makers lacking strategic awareness. For example at the start of World War I, the tsar ordered mobilization of the Baltic fleet “without any consideration of the threat this would pose even to a Germany that wanted to remain at peace” Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 70, emphasis added.. Later, Jervis explores more systematically how states may enter or trigger strategic interactions unintentionally in Chapter 7, “Acting in the System” in Robert Jervis, System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life, 1997. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Prisoner’s Dilemma game or unaware that the other player is in fact state C, and not B, which it based its calculations off of. The first key difference of the IPD is thus that the non-malign initial move can be either well intentioned or simply “ignorant” of the consequences of its moves.

The second difference is the motives of the first mover state. In the traditional security dilemma concept, the first move to build up one’s defenses is motivated by insecurity, fear, and uncertainty in a self-help system under anarchy. Because the other state is always a potential menace in a setting of anarchy, a state builds its defenses driven by insecurity and “[t]he fear of being exploited (that is, the cost of CD) most strongly drives the security dilemma.” Elsewhere Jervis notes: “Although other motives such as greed, glory, and honor come into play, much of international politics is ultimately driven by fear.”

While anarchy and anarchy-induced action is compatible with an institutional power dilemma, the IPD is unique in that the first mover’s institution building efforts can also occur in and be driven by non-anarchical settings of international society or

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92 The structure or anarchy plays a key part in both John Herz and Robert Jervis’s security dilemma Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities*; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”; Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?”. Herz, for example, states: “Groups and individuals who live alongside each other without being organized into a higher unity... must be... concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attacks they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the effects of the power of others” Herz, *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities*, 157. Jervis notes that the “core argument” of the security dilemma is that “in the absence of a supranational authority that can enforce binding agreements, many of the steps pursued by states to bolster their security have the effect – often unintended and unforeseen - of making other states less secure” Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?,” 36. Reviewing their work, Tang goes as far as concluding: “only a competitive, self-help anarchy can give birth to the security dilemma” Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis,” 604. For the role of fear see Sheping Tang, 2008. “Fear in International Politics: Two Positions” *International Studies Review* 10 (3):451-471.

93 Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 75.


95 Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?,” 36.
community. A state triggering IPD can initially create or join institutions for functional purposes to capture positive-sum gains from cooperation. This is of course possible under anarchy and is a reiteration of neoliberalism’s position (against neorealism) that there can be “cooperation under anarchy,”96 as well as defensive realism’s position (against offensive realism) that “cooperation under the security dilemma” is also possible.97,98

In addition to these motives, however, the first mover state can also create or join institutions for positive conceptions of a good life that promote and sustain international society or community as understood by constructivists and English school theorists.99 Thus even in the absence of instrumental and material rewards that make cooperation possible under the security dilemma and anarchy, states may engage with and build international institutions in order to foster group norms and preserve common identities, therefore acting in the logic of appropriateness.100

98 Another way anarchy could work on the dynamics of institutional power dilemma is not on the initial move, but on the second move or later. Through the uncertainty in intentions and the “fear” that this generates, intentional competition for institutional power may be triggered. This point is elaborated below as part of the second core component of an institutional power dilemma.
100 Qin and Wei, for example, make the argument that this is one of the reasons why China accepts and engages in institutions when it clearly has not been materially rewarding Yaqing Qin and Ling Wei, “Structures, Processes, and Socialization of Power: East Asian Community-Building and the Rise of China,” in China’s Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics, ed. Robert S. Ross and Feng Zhu, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).. Keohane has also made this argument earlier in a more general context, such that cooperative schemes and decisions that would have been impossible if there were only egotistical quid pro quo exchanges is made possible with norms of diffuse reciprocity. As he remarks, states who share these norms “contribute one’s share, or behave well toward others, not because of ensuing rewards from specific actors, but in the interests of continuing satisfactory overall results for the group of which one is a part, as a whole” Keohane, “Reciprocity in International Relations,” 20.
In an institutional power dilemma, insecurity and fear are therefore not the central motives behind the first mover state.\(^{101}\) Also, anarchy is not a necessary condition for an institutional power dilemma as it is for the traditional security dilemma concept.\(^{102,103}\) Finally, since states that lack malign intentions is a more expansive set that includes strategically unaware states as well as states driven by positive conceptions of international life, the degree of “benign-ness” of the initial-mover state and the magnitude of unintentionality in the threat posed to another state is in fact greater in the institutional power dilemma than it is in a traditional security dilemma concept.

4.3.2. **Mechanisms of Competition**

The second core characteristic of an IPD is that benign changes in the institutional structure triggers a strategic response due to information *and* group membership

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\(^{101}\) A wider conception of both “fear” and “insecurity” is in fact compatible with the motives behind the first mover state in an institutional power dilemma. International institutions can be created out of a certain degree of “fear” that absent global or regional governance mechanisms certain costs of externalities do not get internalized, such as the costs generated from regional financial crises and environmental hazards. Jervis acknowledges that “there are ambiguities in the basic concept of security, including what the object of security is (e.g., individuals, the regime, the state, or the values that any of these hold dear) and what is needed to make state or individuals feel secure” Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?,” 39. This is such that statesmen often define national security – and therefore insecurity – in expansive ways to include referent objects beyond the immediate “survival” of the state, such as international institution, a possibility is acknowledged in Jervis’s original formulation, where the protection of “interests that go well beyond defense of the homeland” can create “conflicts even if neither side desires expansion” Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 198. He also explicitly mentions that “defending the status quo often means protecting ... [n]onterritorial interests, norms, and the structure of the international system” Ibid., 185. as well as “less tangible power and influence” that come from an “expansion of responsibilities and commitments” from defending the homeland Ibid., 169. While Jervis also acknowledges more directly that a more expansive definition of security can be adopted “subjectively” by leaders independently of the objective conditions Ibid., 174., the process by which leaders socially construct referent objects into existential national security threats is more systematically explored with the concept of securitization in the works of the Copenhagen School Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).


\(^{103}\) An additional point is that in the theorization of institutional power dilemma, structure altogether drops out of the theoretical frame as it is understood as a processual cause.
problems. Specifically, the switch from benign institution building to intentional competition over institutional power is triggered through three mechanisms: uncertain intentions, misperception, and the group membership problem.

The first two are information problems of the uncertainty surrounding present and future intentions and the other is the misperception of intentions. The former refers to how imperfect information causes a state to act on the basis of the worst-case scenario, and the latter captures how cognitive biases result in the incorrect perception that the situation is in fact the worst-case scenario. When observing one of five trigger scenarios, state B cannot be sure of A’s intentions behind its institutional move. Furthermore, even if it knew A’s present intentions with certainty, there is no way to know whether A has more expansive agendas for the institution in the future or whether it will simply change its mind at a later point to become more malign. Given that it is easier to change the purpose or build on top of pre-existing institutions than construct de novo institutions, such as with institutional layering\(^{104}\) or institutional adaptation\(^{105}\), state B worries, for example, that today’s multilateral functional cooperation for anti-terrorism could become tomorrow’s military alliance for power projection. State B therefore errs on the side of the worst-case scenario and is prudent to respond strategically to defend its institutional power.

It may also be the case that B misperceives A’s intentions as aggressive and malign. State B may find that state A pro-actively changing the institutional status quo

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can only be explained by its aggressive designs to amass more institutional power. The misperception that a change in the status quo would only be pushed by a dissatisfied revisionist state is moreover intensified if state B believes that the current institutional order benefits all states including A and that B’s own role in the institutional status quo is benign: why would any state try to change the current institutional order that benefits all states in the international system, if it were not vying for hegemony and aggressively pursuing its own relative institutional power?106 Therefore, not only is it the case that state A is a potential menace for B due to the uncertainty of its intentions, but B can misperceive A’s behavior as evidence of the fact that it is malign and seeks to increase its relative institutional power at the expense of B.

These two mechanisms directly draw on parallels identifiable in the traditional security dilemma concept. As Jervis notes: “Information problems are central to the security dilemma.”107 Schweller states that misperception or “misplaced fear” plays a key role in driving the security dilemma and competition and conflict.108 As Jervis explores most comprehensively, cognitive pathologies result in the misperceptions of (i) its own actions being correctly perceived as benign by the other state, and (ii) the other state’s benign intentions as being incorrectly perceived as malign, both of which serve to intensify security dilemma and spiral dynamics.109

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106 State A’s incorrect belief that it is benign and state B correctly perceives this, means that it fails to see that B’s actions are in fact provoked by A’s own actions. Therefore, A comes to conclude that B’s “aggression” is due only to its malign intentions. This dynamic is explored carefully by Jervis who concludes: “Since each knew that there were no grounds for the other’s supposed anxiety and believed that the other had enough of a grasp on reality to see this, each sought a darker meaning for the assertion” Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 74.
For Jervis, however, the key mechanism through which the security dilemma operates is the problem of uncertainty surrounding present and future intentions of states. Jervis thus states that:

“The underlying problem lies neither in limitations on rationality imposed by human psychology nor in a flaw in human nature, but in a correct appreciation of the consequences of living in a Hobbesian state of nature. In such a world without a sovereign, each state is protected only by its own strength. Furthermore, statesmen realize that, even if others currently harbor no aggressive designs, there is nothing to guarantee that they will not later develop them. So we find that decision-makers, and especially military leaders, worry about the most implausible threats.”


111 Also this understanding is in Butterfield “It is the peculiar characteristic of the Hobbesian fear... that you yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear that you have of the other party, but you cannot enter into the other man’s counter-fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous...it is never possible for you to realize or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurances of your intentions that you have... neither party can see the nature of the predicament he is in, for each only imagines that the other party is being hostile and unreasonable” Butterfield, History and Human Relations, 19–20.

112 Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 62, emphasis added.

113 Although Jervis is most closely associated with the problems of misperception in international politics, he does not make it a necessary mechanism through which the security dilemma operates. In another passage, he states: “The heart of the security dilemma argument is that an increase in one state’s security can make others less secure, not because of misperception or imagined hostility, but because of the anarchic context of international relations” Ibid.. Most recently Jervis writes about the insufficiency of accurately judging present intentions as “the security dilemma is also driven by the fact that even if the other is benign today, it can turn malign in the future, a nasty possibility that leads some to say that states should and must make worst-case assumptions, which inevitably leads to severe competition” Jervis, “Dilemmas About Security Dilemmas,” 417.. Tang therefore argues that perception or psychology is a “condition” or “complementary” variable – or in his terms a “regulator” – that conditions the strength or intensity of the security dilemma. Condition variable is defined as a “variable framing an antecedent condition. The values of condition variables govern the size of the impact that IVs or IntVs have on DVs and other IntVs” Stephen Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 11.. Complementary variable is similarly defined as variables “that add to or subtract from the effects of the main variable of interest, but do so independently, or without interaction effects related to the main variables” Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” in Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool, ed. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.. It is therefore not treated, as I do here, as an alternative mechanism through which the security dilemma can unfold independently of uncertain intentions Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis”; Tang, A Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time: Defensive Realism...
Thus even in the absence of misperception problems, under anarchy, another state is always by definition a “potential menace” that can trigger a traditional security dilemma.\textsuperscript{114,115}

The third mechanism by which a benign move triggers a strategic response is unique to the institutional power dilemma - the group membership problem.\textsuperscript{116} Some neorealists argue that there are barriers to meaningful cooperation between states because positive-sum gains from constructing international institutions translate into the relative gains domain of security.\textsuperscript{117} Similarly, it is also the case that positive-sum material or

\textsuperscript{114} Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 75.
\textsuperscript{115} Another mechanism that interacts with uncertainty of intentions is the “dual use” problem of defensive capabilities that causes a security dilemma absent cognitive pathologies. This is further discussed below.
\textsuperscript{116} Although I have suggested this mechanism is unique to an institutional power dilemma, a close analogue in the traditional security dilemma concept is the dual-use problem of defensive capabilities: a state’s effort to increase its security with defensive capabilities always threatens another state to some degree because some of the capabilities can be used for offensive purposes Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics; Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”; Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis.” Since a state’s efforts to construct or join an institution to capture positive-sum material and normative gains always increases a state’s institutional power to some degree, international institutions could also be thought of as having a “dual-use” problem also. For a discussion on differentiating offensive and defensive weapons and its effect on the security dilemma see pp.186-210, Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” World Politics. 1978. 30 (2): 167-214 and pp.64-65, Robert Jervis Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 1976. Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press. Jervis talks about the dual-use problem as a condition variable such that it influences the intensity of the security dilemma Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 63, fn.12; Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma.”. Tang picks up this interpretation and therefore treats this as a “regulator” Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis”; Tang, A Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time: Defensive Realism.. However, at different points, Jervis explores the difficulty in differentiating offensive and defensive capabilities as an independent mechanism through which the security dilemma can be triggered. Jervis therefore notes it is a “crucial variable” and a “condition” under which security dilemma operates Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 186–187.. Therefore the “other’s intentions must be considered to be co-extensive with his capabilities. What he can do to harm the state, he will do (or will do if he gets the chance). So to be safe, the state should buy as many weapons as it can afford” Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 64–65.. In one telling passage, Jervis moreover treats the dual-use problem as a necessary condition for the security dilemma. If weapons and policies that protect the state do not also provide the capability for attack “the basic postulate of the security dilemma no longer applies. A state can increase its own security without decreasing that of others. The advantage of the defense can only ameliorate the security dilemma. A differentiation between offensive and defensive stances comes close to abolishing it” Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 199.. More recently, Jervis has weakened the necessary statement to a probabilistic one: “But as each state seeks to be able to protect itself, it is likely to gain the ability to menace others” Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?,” 36, emphasis added..
normative gains from cooperation translate into relative institutional power gains within the domain of cooperation itself. The increased ability of a state to wield an institution to produce and capture positive gains from cooperation is by definition an increase in a state’s institutional power. Since states understand institutions to be groups, this simultaneously confronts another state with relative institutional power concerns central to the group membership problem: am I included/excluded from the institutional group and how does it affect the relative degree of influence I have over other states through institutional channels?¹¹⁸

In the institutional power dilemma between non-rival states A and B illustrated in Figure 4, whether state A initially constructed the international institution with a narrow agenda to capture material gains from cooperation between the three states or with a more ambitious goal to promote system wide norms using the institution as a platform, state A ends up better “possessing” the institution and wielding more influence over its member states. State A has thus managed to increase its relative institutional power vis-à-vis state B. Also, for state B, since it is not party to A’s institutional group, it has been denied institutional power in the new institution and may even be subjected to A’s increased institutional power projection. State B’s relative institutional power has therefore declined irrespective of A’s benign intentions. The alteration of institutional membership structure by A thus translates into a sub-optimal group membership for B, lowering its institutional power and posing a new group membership problem. Therefore, a state that

¹¹⁸ Technically, this is therefore not a “translation” of positive-gains into relative-gains, since it is not the case that the gains from cooperation are then employed to increase its institutional power as national income raised from trade can be used to develop weapons. Rather, the means with which to capture positive-gains, not the positive-gains itself, is what affects relative institutional power balance. See discussion below for how institutions therefore have a “dual-use” problem.
constructs or joins an institution cannot avoid being a menace to other states in so far as states care about the group membership problem and the possession of relative institutional power.

An important implication here is that solving the collective action problem and solving the group membership problem are thus different but often connected problems for institution building, where solving the former can exacerbate the latter. In the same illustrated example of Figure 4, each successful construction of an institutional group by A and B represent solutions to their respective collective action problems. However, what is a solution to the collective action problem for A, simultaneously confronts B as a new group membership problem, and vice versa. This is because the newfound control that the state wields over the institutional design features that constrain the member states and overcome the collective action problem is by definition an increase in the state’s own relative institutional power and therefore a decline of another’s. In an institutional power dilemma, solving a collective action problem for one group of states, inadvertently undermines another state’s relative institutional power, and generates a string of new collective action problems and group membership problems to be solved as a function of a spiral of competition over institutions.

4.3.3. Generated Competition

The third and final core characteristic of an institutional power dilemma is that the competition between two states over institutional power is generated over the sequence of their interaction. In the first IPC model, “competition” as a cause is located in each action
at the level of individual states. Therefore, the sum of the actions by states striving for
relative institutional power equals the total causal effect that competition over institutions
has on institutional change. In contrast, in the IPD model, since competition is only
generated once a benign action triggers a strategic response and locks the two states into
rivalry, “competition” is located at the level of relations and processes. 119

More specifically, the generation of competition over institutions is two-fold in
the IPD. Not only do two states end up competing for relative institutional power when
they were initially not, but since benign states include strategically unaware states, a
relationship of strategic interdependence is also generated over the process of their
interaction. This second point is what differentiates the generated nature of competition
in the institutional power dilemma from the traditional security dilemma.

In the security dilemma, generated competition is often thought of as an “illusory
incompatibility” of interests 120 or a subjective conflict of interests when objective
interests are in fact reconcilable. 121 While it is not entirely clear as to what preference
structures the “irreconcilability” or “conflict” of interests precisely encompass, one way
to think of the security dilemma is a situation where states mistakenly play a Prisoner’s

119 However, this does not mean that the institutional power dilemma model can occur in the absence of the
previously theorized action-formation mechanism. States in the institutional power dilemma still share the
same action-formation mechanisms as the institutional power competition because positive-sum
improvements still confront a state as relative institutional power gains concerns and a new group
membership problem, the third mechanism of the institutional power dilemma. It could therefore be
understood that while states are non-competitive and benign, they still see institutions as groups, care about
relative institutional power, have preferences for friends over rivals and understand there to be a variety of
competitive institutional strategies. In other words, the action-formation mechanism is a necessary though
not sufficient prior mechanism for the institutional power dilemma to operate in the way it is theorized here.
Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics; Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A
Conceptual Analysis.”
Time: Defensive Realism.
Dilemma (PD) game or an iterated PD,\textsuperscript{122} when in fact, the objective preference structure is one more amenable to cooperation such as a Coordination game or even Harmony. In other words, states interact\textit{as if} they are playing a game of PD, when it is in fact not.\textsuperscript{123} This can occur if one or both states believe there is subjective conflict of interests,\textsuperscript{124} such that both states subjectively play the PD or one state’s subjective belief in the PD structure forces the other state to also believe the structure of their interaction is a PD, fearing that believing and acting otherwise may result in receiving the sucker’s payoff in subsequent rounds.

What is overlooked in this set up, however, is how two states that were not “playing” with each other, can end up locked into playing a strategic game. In an IPD, the initial-mover constructs or joins international institutions for positive-sum material gains from cooperation or for positive conceptions of an international life. In the latter case, a state is operating under the logic of appropriateness and therefore believes it is not part of any “game.” In the former case, a state is operating under the logic of consequences and can be thought of as playing a “game” as it is solving the collective action problem with other potential member states. In both scenarios, however, it is entirely possible that the initial-mover state is unaware that its actions could affect other states and that its actions

\textsuperscript{122} Jervis does warn us that “the formalization is limited; what is most important is the basic structure of the game and the analogies that are provided” Jervis, “Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation,” 318. For the pitfalls of thinking about the problems of security dilemmas and cooperation using a PD or an iterated PD more generally, see Jervis, “Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation.” However, an iterated PD better approximates the security dilemma dynamics. Thanks to Robert Jervis for clarifying this point.

\textsuperscript{123} Another way to think of this is that in the Prisoner’s Dilemma scenario two prisoner’s believe the officer’s description of their payoff structures being a PD, and end up playing the PD and ratting on each other, when in fact the officer was bluffing and making up the scenario all along.


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can end up locking the state into a strategic competition over institutions through an institutional power dilemma.  

Thus, at an earlier point in time in an IPD, a state is unaware that its institution building effort either enters into another state’s calculus as a cost or is even mistaken to be a competitive institutional strategy. But over the course of the interaction, two states that did not initially consider each other as rivals, increasingly observe each other as such. This means they are increasingly taking into account the other’s actions and reactions into their calculation. In an IPD, there is therefore both unintentionality behind single competitive institutional strategies as well as the formation of strategic interdependence between the two states over time that increasingly “links” the action of two states as interlocking competitive institutional strategies.

5. Implications

The theory of institutional power politics has several important implications on our understanding of international institutions, security dilemmas and power transitions, especially in the context of institution building efforts in East Asia and U.S.-China relations.

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125 Jervis, in fact, is conscious of this problem when modeling the security dilemma with Game Theory. As he raises the question “What do we say about cases in which neither side thinks about the impact on the other?” Jervis, “Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation,” 330. Also see above notes in the discussion about the lack of strategic awareness also being included in the definition of a benign state. There I note how Jervis’s original examples of the security dilemma actually take into consideration that leaders may lack strategic awareness Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, as well as highlighting his later work in *System Effects* that explore states triggering strategic interactions without being aware Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).
5.1. Rethinking International Institutions and the case of East Asia

In the theory of institutional power politics, the rivalry for power is an important determinant of the shape and size of individual international institutions as well as the overall complex of international institutions. Each instance of institutional change is a product of a carefully considered strategy to increase a state’s influence and better secure its national interests. However, the changes in the overall institutional architecture are unanticipated byproducts of the rivalry between states. Each state is therefore the architect of its own dream home, but the city they live in is a sprawling structure of competing architectures that neither one had designed and perhaps even wanted.

The theory of institutional power politics thus provides new grounds from which to question the intelligent design of governance structures and the promise of international institutions more broadly. One of neoliberalism’s central contributions to IR was that international institutions are tickets out of the conflict-ridden anarchy and into a world where meaningful cooperation is possible and states can enjoy positive-sum gains. However, the theory of institutional power politics suggests that the world of cooperation and international institutions is not all sanguine. An institutional power dilemma can be triggered by a first-mover state that is positively benign and since the group membership problem is intrinsic to international institutions, even in a perfect information setting where misperception problems and uncertainty of intentions are absent, institution building efforts invariably come with group membership problems.

126 Defensive realists also accept that meaningful cooperation is possible Jervis, “Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate”; Tang, “The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis.” and Jervis notes more specifically that generated competition and conflict from security dilemmas will be absent in a non-anarchical world Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics.
This means that even the move away from anarchy fails to abolish the possibility of an institutional power dilemma because there is always a mechanism through which cooperation and positive-sum gains are undergirded by competition and zero-sum institutional power concerns. The construction of international institutions therefore does not necessarily signify the move towards more cooperative forms of international politics. Not only can states compete over cooperation, but the IPD dynamic also illustrates that cooperation can in fact be the generator of competition.

The existence of the group membership problem highlights a more commonly committed error in IR where normative value is automatically attached to international institutions by virtue of their role in overcoming collective action problems. The variety of collective actions from inter-state wars, mass killings to organizational racism, should remind us that successfully overcoming the collective action problem has no necessary link to its normative value. The institutional power dilemma helps to highlight that international institutions as solutions to collective action problems do not solve the power political concerns of the group membership problem. In fact, solving a collective

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127 This is confined to the understanding that structural effects of anarchy work through the mechanism of uncertainty and misperception. However, non-anarchy is more expansive than this. In the social constructivist’s Kantian international culture or English school’s World Society, norms that undergird international social structure are deeply held by each state who also have other-regarding preferences. Here, it is possible that the action-formation mechanism of institutional power competition simply do not hold and therefore there are no dormant institutional power dilemmas. A more expansive definition of non-anarchy thus does in fact allow for the resolution of potential institutional power dilemmas. As such, the world that I describe is more accurately a Locken world or a mix of Hobbesian-Lockean or Lockean-Kantian, where as long as one state holds the action-formation mechanism of institutional power competition, it can push the other state into generated competition through an institutional power dilemma.

128 Below I also show how international institutions can fail to solve security dilemmas and institutional power dilemmas can act as an alternative pathway by which processes leading up to power transition wars are reinforced.

129 In part, this is because international institutions were initially theorized on the backdrop of anarchy and therefore conceptualized as a way to ameliorate the anarchical effects on states and partially exit the Hobbesian international world.
action problem for a group of states, poses a group membership problem for another, triggering competition for institutional power.

Overlooking this dynamic is the biggest weakness in Victor Cha’s otherwise excellent survey of East Asia’s institutional architecture. Cha argues that in order to “circumvent” or “overcome” a potential security dilemma dynamic operating on institutions, positive-sum solutions that overcome the collective action problem are critical in East Asia. Having not theorized how a security dilemma dynamics might operate uniquely in an institutional context, he explicitly grounds his analysis in a theory of collective action and mistakenly conflates solutions to collective action problems as solutions to security dilemma dynamics. He thus wrongly evaluates that the structure of East Asia’s institutional architecture is a product of pragmatic functionalism and not power politics.

Cha, moreover, argues that the U.S. system of bilateral alliances is “critical to overcoming the security dilemma” in the regional institutional context and has thus acted as “as a “thread” that keeps the patchwork architecture together.” This argument is deeply problematic in view of the group membership problem, however. Constructing institutional groups around the U.S.’s friend group is precisely what would increase U.S.

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130 Cha, “Complex Patchwork’s: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture.”
131 Ibid., 33, 41.
132 At no point, does Cha refer to these dynamics as actually operating. Rather it is “conceptual security dilemma” Ibid., 32, emphasis added. a “potential that any multilateral initiative by the great powers will lead to a set of mutually reinforcing insecurity spirals” Ibid., 33, emphasis added.
133 Cha, “Complex Patchwork’s: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture,” 34–44.
134 These are create a variety of institutions with overlapping membership (complexity), create multilateral institutions that are ad hoc groupings (informal), construct multilateral institutions around bilateral ties (U.S. hub-and-spokes system)
135 Though he does not adopt the label, here, I label Cha’s use of the term “institutional security dilemma” dynamics to distinguish it from my theory of institutional power dilemma.
137 Ibid., 41.
138 Ibid., 48.
relative institutional power and intensify an institutional power dilemma with China.\textsuperscript{139} Moreover, rather than keeping the patchwork architecture together, this may ultimately cause it to fragment and proliferate as we explored before with the IPD model (Figure 4). The existence of a group membership problem would, moreover, suggest that a “thread” that mutes institutional power dilemmas would include efforts that construct regional institutions that cross-cut traditional friend-rival divides, not reinforce them. The U.S. would need to not only thread together its traditional allies Japan and South Korea,\textsuperscript{140} but most importantly thread rival China into the complex patchwork.

Cha’s evaluation of East Asia’s patchwork regional architecture is therefore one of misplaced optimism. For Cha, the complexity of the region’s architecture and its low degree of institutionalization not only allowed states in the region to overcome collective action problems, but helped mute potential institutional security dilemma dynamics in the future. He thus concludes that the region’s emerging architecture is “organized on a functional basis” and “more akin to a business model” where states most concerned and affected come together to solve regional problems when and where they are most needed.\textsuperscript{141}

However, as the theory of institutional power politics highlights, solutions to collective action problems represent nothing about whether group membership problems are solved and whether institutional power dilemmas are muted. Not only are the

\textsuperscript{139} This emphasis on U.S.-bilateral relations is curious because at different points Cha seems to understand that this is a core problem: “The dilemma is that U.S. alliance-initiated regional efforts are seen as latent efforts to contain China, while regional- or China-initiated proposals are seen as attempts to exclude the U.S.” Ibid., 29.; “any multilateral initiative by the great powers will lead to a set of mutually reinforcing insecurity spirals” Ibid., 33., “the most potentially troublesome groupings may be ones of more than three members that exclude China. From a policy-prescription perspective, it might be best to avoid these, or at least to ensure that there are comparable groupings in which China can participate in order to mute security dilemmas” Ibid., 48, fn.40.

\textsuperscript{140} Cha, “Complex Patchwork’s: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia’s Regional Architecture,” 48–49.

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 44.
successful “spin-off” institutions from multiple U.S. bilateral relations in East Asia likely to trigger institutional power dilemmas with China, but the fragmented, proliferated, and low degree of institutionalization marking East Asia’s regional architecture may in fact be products of institutional power dilemmas. What Cha takes to be pragmatism among East Asian states in solving collective action problems may actually be byproducts of institutional power politics and mistrust.

5.2. Rethinking Security Dilemmas, Power Transitions and the case of U.S.-China relations

The theory of institutional power politics also importantly questions the efficacy of international institutions in solving traditional security dilemmas. International institutions have always been thought of as solutions to security dilemmas. The way in which states can overcome their mutual mistrust and correct the misperception of the other as malign is through the construction of international institutions. This is not only explicit in the theoretical formulations of the security dilemma concept, but it also informs the current policies for overcoming “strategic distrust” or “trust deficit” in U.S.-China relations, as well as the previous policies where U.S. sought to encourage China

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142 Institutional power competition in the forms of an institutional power dilemma and institutional power competition dynamic however may be the cause of complexification (Figure 2, 3, 4). Also, while outside the scope of the theory, it is plausible to think that low level of institutionalization is also a sign of regional institutions being captured by power politics rather than genuinely wanting to produce deep cooperation.

143 The one exception is Victor Cha’s work, the shortcomings of which I elaborated above.

144 Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 67.

and its neighbors to collaborate in multilateral settings to reduce historical mistrust and

In a game of Prisoner’s Dilemma, states need to find ways to commit to both
cooperating rather than defecting. The goal is therefore to arrive at cooperation-
cooperation (CC) and the construction of international institutions. Similarly, in the real
world, policymakers and pundits argue that in order to build trust and avoid unwanted
conflict, U.S. and China should find more areas of cooperation while increasing
institutional avenues through which tension and discord can be managed.\footnote{Thomas J. Christensen, “Shaping the Choices of a Rising China: Recent Lessons for the Obama Administration,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (2009): 89–104; Avery Goldstein, “First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Instability in U.S.-China Relations,” *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 49–89.} However, the
institutional power dilemma suggests that uncertainty of intentions and misperception
also hold international institutions hostage. What scholars and policymakers consider to
be solutions to a security dilemma may be products of the same dynamics that generate a
security dilemma. It may therefore also be the case that East Asian regional institutions
are also marred by the trust deficit between U.S. and China, rather than being solutions to
them.

The misperception mechanism of an institutional power dilemma also highlights
an overlooked pathway by which two states can end up in a power transitional war. In
power transition theory, a dissatisfied rising power wages war with the incumbent status
quo power to correct the disjuncture between its material capabilities and the system of
governance in which the rising state feels it has frustrating less power.\footnote{Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics.*} The institutional
power dilemma brings to attention how two states could also come to misperceive each
other’s intentions, locking them into an *unintended* power transition competition and war. The status quo power may misperceive the rising power’s efforts to construct cooperative institutions as confirming its fears that it is a revisionist power intent on subverting its incumbent position in the international order. Conversely, convinced that it is benign and others correctly perceive this, the rising power may also misperceive the status quo power’s concerned actions as groundless and unwarranted, confirming its fears that the status quo power had intended all along to stall its legitimate path to continued growth and development. When the mutual misperception is acute, both states may find that pursuing a change in or defense of the international order through international institutions is no longer efficacious. At this point, one or both states may opt to pursue their goals through non-institutional means of change through a power transition war. Power transition is therefore not only a function of asymmetric growth rates, degree of dissatisfaction, ideology or regime type, but also the acuteness of the mutual misperception between two states working through the institutional power dilemma.

What makes the misperception mechanism more problematic is that the link between the traditional security dilemma and the institutional power dilemma may be zero-sum. A rising power’s effort to solve a local security dilemma by constructing international or regional institutions can be misperceived by the incumbent state as challenging the international status quo. Through the institutional power dilemma, a status quo power in a security dilemma context becomes a revisionist power in a power transition context. The consequence of this is that both states are further pushed along the path of power transition when none had intended it. A rising power therefore faces the impossible choice of either paying the price of insecurity in a security dilemma or risk
triggering an institutional power dilemma and paying the price of power transition. The negative causal relationship with an institutional power dilemma suggests that a security dilemma is in fact a double dilemma: whether a state solves it or not, a self-defeating spiral of competition can be triggered.

This does not augur well in the context of East Asia where power transition frames the U.S.-China bilateral relation and misperception is also acute between the two states. Both U.S. and China have a strong tendency to believe that their own actions with regards to institutions in East Asia are benign. While China sees its institution building efforts as “win-win,” “harmonious,” and part of its “peaceful rise,” the U.S. sees itself as upholding the status quo rule-based international order that not only benefits all states in the international community, but the U.S. has contributed selflessly and disproportionately. Although it is laudable that both states have consciously incorporated the concerns of power transition dynamics into their foreign policies, the theory of institutional power politics highlights that this may not be enough. In the presence of an institutional power dilemma, the U.S. and China may end up in a power transition war even though both had actively sought to avoid it.149

149 Another is of course that both states underestimate their own sheer size and the ability that it menaces others. Jervis notes early on that “United States statesmen in the postwar era have displayed a similar inability to see that their country’s huge power, even if used for others’ good, represents a standing threat to much of the rest of the world. Instead the United States, like most other nations, has believed that others will see that the desire for security underlies its actions” Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics, 71. Also see Robert Jervis, “Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective,” in International Relations Theory and the Consequences of Unipolarity, ed. G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). and Luttwak’s concept of “great state autism” Edward N. Luttwak, The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy (Harvard University Press, 2012).
5.3. Is Institutional Power Politics bad?

Perhaps the greatest normative elephant in the room is the question of whether competition over cooperation is overall such a bad thing. The final leg of the traditional security dilemma is that the increase of a state’s security reducing another’s may ultimately bring about self-defeating and tragic outcomes of less security and unwanted wars. Do institutional power competitions and dilemmas actually mean less cooperation and more conflict?

Victor Cha’s bottom line argument is that having the current complex of regional institutions is still better than the lack of any such institutions that marked the region until only recently. In similar vein, Thomas Christensen argues that competition over institutions and cooperation is better than competition through military means. Therefore, channeling U.S.-China competition through and over institutions should actually be encouraged. Additionally, these views not only accord with the idea of “healthy competition” previously embraced by top leaders of both U.S. and China, but they make intuitive sense when we consider how competitive mechanisms are often encouraged to produce better social and political outcomes, such as with competitive political parties, elections and markets.

There are still good reasons to question these optimistic positions however. Institutional complexity and fragmentation has been shown to undermine the clarity and

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151 Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power.*
unity of international rules, lower the ability of institutions to constrain states, and ultimately cause institutions to become more vulnerable to the capture of power politics and narrow state interests.\(^{153}\) As Drezner notes “Paradoxically, after a certain point institutional and legal proliferation can shift global governance structures form a Lockean world of binding rules to a Hobbesian world of plastic rules.”\(^{154}\)

Moreover, as just explored, the existence of institutional power dilemmas means international institutions may fail to solve security dilemmas and lock states into an unwanted path of power transition. Not solving institutional power dilemmas and competition would eventually cause states to slide back into military conflict. As Gilpin states when changes “cannot be realized in the framework of the existing system, ... states may believe that their interests can be served only by more sweeping and more profound changes in the international system.”\(^{155}\)

However, the theory of institutional power politics does not provide a definitive answer to the question of whether institutional power politics is fundamentally bad. Answering this requires moving beyond the scope of the theory and engaging with a different set of debates, such as measuring institutional effectiveness and quality of cooperation.\(^{156}\) One important research direction that arises from this discussion is to then treat institutional structures as independent variables rather than dependent variables, and measure the effects of institutional power politics on the quality and quantity of cooperation. How strong and pervasive is the negative relationship between traditional

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\(^{155}\) Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 47.

\(^{156}\) Amitav Acharya and Alastair Iain Johnston, eds., *Crafting Cooperation: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
6. Conclusion

The article dusts off and actively re-engages with some of the canonical theoretical discussions of power and international institutions in IR, updating a variety of key IR ideas that both structure and constrain our understanding of the politics of international institutions. The article challenges one of the biggest theoretical relics passed down from the paradigm debates that international institutions mean cooperation and power politics means competition. I break down this dichotomy and theoretically reconstruct how states may engage in institutional power politics. Moreover, by carefully applying well-known security dilemma dynamics to the institutional political context, I highlight how even with the best intentions of promoting cooperation and positive conceptions of international life, a state can trigger power political competition over international institutions.

The article also sheds light on a host of overlooked problems surrounding the potential power transition between U.S. and China and the health of East Asia’s institutional architecture. Efforts by both the U.S. and China to emphasize the construction of win-win cooperation and protect the rule-based order do little on their own to solve the strategic mistrust and forestall the potential power transition between the two states. If U.S. and China do not consciously seek to mute the institutional power dilemma and solve the group membership problem in East Asia, current U.S. and Chinese
foreign policies may amplify misperception and misunderstanding, undermine the belief that regional institutions in East Asia can bring about cooperation, and inch the two states towards eventual conflict.

This article is as close as it gets to a pure non-formal theory-building exercise in IR. The theory of institutional power politics was developed paying close attention to the criteria of good theorization that “the assumptions and key concepts are carefully defined, and clear and rigorous statements stipulate how those concepts relate to each other” 157. The article, however, did not begin to specify the observable implications of the theory, identify the relevant case or sample of observations for testing, and present the empirical findings. While I deal with this elsewhere, 158 theory-testing is essential to render a full judgment regarding the ultimate utility of this theory-building exercise. However, the theory of institutional power politics presented here should suffice to challenge long and deep-held views in IR about the international politics of institutional formation and change. The larger hope is that this theoretical exercise frees us from the theoretical straight jacketing of the paradigmatic debates and reanimates research on the relationship between power politics and international institutions.

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doi:http://dx.doi.org/ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1017/S0260210511000593.


Intensive Processes in IR:  
A Case Selection and Process Tracing Technique  

From the strategic interactions in classic systemic balancing behavior, interstate bargaining in the construction of international regimes, to the socialization processes of states and non-state actors within these international regimes, the study of IR has often revolved around relations, interactions and processes between and among states and non-state actors in the international system.

The IR research community is also routinely confronted by international political events and phenomena deemed more pressing than others; the Cold War and the superpower nuclear standoff; ethnic cleansing and genocide in the 1990s and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), 9/11 and transnational Islamic terrorism, and more recently cyber-attacks on the U.S. by Russia, China and the DPRK. While often treated as a lesser “puzzle” for motivating and designing research, beyond gaining general insights into the broader phenomenon, IR scholars also want to learn about what happened in important cases. Not all cases are created equal. And, as Gerring notes, scholars often want to say something about the general and the specific.

How do we test and uncover international processes and interactions? How do we select cases that provide the best and most meaningful opportunities to do this? And, how

160 In other words, beyond questions of whether and to what extent our theories are correct, we are also pressed by the questions of “so what did happen?” or “so what did cause the changes if not by the hypothesized cause or condition?”
do we select and examine cases to acquire important case-specific knowledge without compromising the objective of making disciplined causal inferences?

In this article, I present a case selection and process tracing method that allow researchers to test and uncover causal and temporal processes. Conceptualized by Falleti as “intensive processes,” these are streams of processual phenomena for which the conditions and eventual outputs are ontologically distinct or of lesser analytical interest.\textsuperscript{162} The prototypical case selection strategy and the dual process tracing (DPT) method introduced here, moreover, capitalizes on the strength of case-level research by building in criteria and procedures by which the researcher selects consequential cases and uncovers substantively important case-specific knowledge.

Despite the major theoretical and methodological advances in political science, there is little theoretical foundation to treat processes as \textit{sui generis} and, unsurprisingly, no research method geared towards examining them. Furthermore, questions about selecting and investigating substantively important cases and intensive processes within them have been brushed aside as an essentially non-methodological issue.

In mainstream political science and IR, research is designed and conducted based on covariational and mechanistic understandings of causation or, increasingly, some practical combination of the two in mixed methods designs. The underlying assumption about causal relations in international political phenomena thus takes some form of “cause $X$, causes outcome $Y$, through mechanism $M$.\textsuperscript{162}” In the dominant covariation-mechanism approach to understanding political phenomena, theorizing, testing and developing our understanding of processes and interactions has largely been confined to

the study of “causal mechanisms” and “causal processes.” Here, processes play an auxiliary role as directional pathways that link an established correlation of X and Y. Processes have thus not been treated as political phenomena that warrant our independent scholarly attention.

Much of the mainstream research is also geared towards finding empirically strong, recurrent and general causal patterns at the level of the population. Random sampling techniques for observations in statistical analysis, recruitment of participants for survey experiments, or case selection strategies for case study research allow the researcher to examine a select sample of observations to make important inferences about the entire population. The observation, the experiment, and the case are important only in so far as they shed light at the population level. The majority of available case selection strategies therefore require the researcher to know the values of X and Y for each case and is able to map out the full universe of cases before selecting the cases.

However, these approaches offer little guidance for examining intensive processes. On the one hand, the values for X, the conditions that give rise to a certain process, are often unknown or analytically irrelevant. On the other hand, for phenomena that are primarily processual, the universe of cases is often difficult to know in advance. For example, the conditions that give rise to certain cyber attacks are perhaps of less immediate interest for researchers compared to the processes through which these attacks

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 occur and how they interact with different cyber defense mechanisms.\footnote{Of course, the questions of “conditions” may be of more interest to scholars than the “processes.” But a researcher should be able to research either one, and not just one of the two (conditions) or both (conditions and mechanisms).} Moreover, it may be difficult to know \textit{ex ante} how many cyber attack cases exhibit a certain type of sequence or pattern of interest for the researcher to delineate the relevant universe of cases at the onset of conducting case study research. Because processes and sequences are temporally longer phenomena, they are more difficult to accurately identify without the close examination of the cases.

Additionally, current research methods brush aside questions of how to select substantively important cases and systematically incorporate case-specific knowledge for important political interactions and processes. Existing case selection strategies that select cases based on their position in the distribution of cases, for example, may end up systematically pushing researchers to turn a blind eye to cases that exhibit processes and interactions with important political and normative consequences.\footnote{Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, \textit{A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences} (Princeton University Press, 2012), 185.} Furthermore, in the pursuit of systematizing process tracing methods such as with informal and formal Bayesian techniques, the function of providing substantive case knowledge and the provision of rich narrative has increasingly been sidelined.\footnote{Nina Tannenwald, “Process Tracing and Security Studies,” \textit{Security Studies} 24, no. 2 (2015): 219–27; David Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference,” \textit{Security Studies} 24, no. 2 (2015): 239–50.}

To re-align the mismatch between questions about important processual phenomena in IR with a suitable research methodology, I introduce the prototypical case selection and the dual process tracing (DPT) method. The prototypical case selection offers justifications and rules for selecting cases for examining intensive processes in IR. The prototypical case selection strategy is also useful in providing guidance for...
researchers wishing to examine emerging and unique phenomena for which the universe of cases is limited, unknown or difficult to know in advance. The paper also develops a process tracing technique, the DPT method, which allows the case study researcher to examine causal mechanisms and intensive processes while balancing two goals of theory testing and the provision of substantively importance case-knowledge.

The logic of using the two case study techniques together can be understood loosely in informal Bayesian terms. The prototypical case selection strategy is a nonrandom case selection process that involves using “readily accessible knowledge” as the first clue regarding whether the intensive process is operating. In the within-case examination that follows, the researcher collects and analyzes new evidence and updates our prior knowledge of the case and the logics of the intensive process using the DPT method. While the prototypical case selection strategy and DPT need not be used in conjunction, and ultimately depends on the researcher’s specific aims, the article introduces them together with two primary research goals in mind: (1) examining intensive processes and (2) balancing two goals of making causal inferences to test theories and systematically acquire substantive case-knowledge.

The paper contributes to case study research methodology for IR scholars in at least three ways. First, clarifying intensive processes in the discussion on causation

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168 And furthermore, within the scope conventional understanding assessing whether the case is substantively and theoretically important.

169 Although the prototypical case study is unique in providing a way to select cases for studying intensive processes, it is not limited to this function and can be adopted as a case selection strategy for examining substantively important cases, relatively new phenomenon, or even mainstream covariational theories. DPT is one type of process tracing method that integrates within-case causal inferences and the provision of substantive case narrative in one framework. DPT can thus be used for any type of research wishing to balance these two research goals for within-case examination. Unlike the prototypical case selection strategy, the DPT does not uniquely examine intensive processes and the researcher may opt to use other process tracing methods instead.

170 The sections in this article examining the two methods can thus be read independently from each other.
dominated by covariation and causal mechanisms, the paper carves out important
central explanandum for IR research. Second, the prototypical case selection technique offers
guidelines for researchers to select substantively important cases for understanding
intensive processes and, more broadly, for phenomena where the universe of cases is
often difficult to know in advance. Third, the DPT method offers a systematic framework
that balances theory-testing and case-knowledge acquisition through process tracing. By
clarifying some of the most recent advances made in the process tracing literature and
operationalizing it into a readily applicable procedure, DPT thus also contributes to the
wider discussion on process tracing methodology.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section, I review the dominant
understanding of covariational-mechanistic approaches to causation. Then, building on
Falleti’s recent work, I flesh out the alternative “intensive processes.” Second, I review
existing case selection literature, highlight three criteria for selecting prototypical cases,
and then offer a two-step procedure to implement prototypical case selection. Third, I
introduce the dual process tracing (DPT) method and explain its two components: process
testing and case reconstruction. Finally, I conclude by discussing some limitations of the
case study techniques I present.
1. Covariation, Mechanisms and Intensive Processes

1.1. Covariation and Causal Mechanisms

In IR and political science more generally, there are two models of causation rooted in two different philosophies of science: “covariational” causation based on logical positivism and “mechanistic” causation based on scientific realism.\(^{171}\) While proponents of the latter, emphasize the distinctiveness of mechanistic approaches from covariational approaches, they still attach causal priority to the initial causal input or condition. The consequence is that, in practice, the focus on causal mechanisms becomes a supplementary exercise to the approach of covariational research and does not offer IR researchers a separate framework by which processes, interactions and relations can be examined *sui generis*.

Covariational causation can be modeled as “\(X\) causes \(Y\)” (\(X \rightarrow Y\)). Based on the logical positivism of Humean constant conjunctions, covariational causation is constructed with covering laws or law-like probability statements of concurrence and correlation of certain phenomena or events.\(^{172}\) Covariational causation therefore undergirds standard modes of constructing hypotheses in political science with causal statements like “If \(X\), then \(Y\)” or “if \(X\) is more/less, then \(Y\) is more/less.” These hypotheses


typically seek to answer questions about covariation such as “under what conditions \( X \), do we observe variation in \( Y \)?”

Mechanistic causation, on the other hand, can be modeled as “\( X \) causes \( Y \), through mechanism \( M \)” (\( X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y \)). Proponents of the “causal mechanisms-based approach” have been actively discussing how the approach differs from the mainstream covariational approach to causation.\(^{173}\) The mechanistic approach distances itself from so-called “naïve positivism” undergirding covariational causation, criticizing its inability to provide grounds for distinguishing between causal relationships and non-causal regularities.\(^{174}\) Treating scientific realism as the underlying philosophy of science,\(^{175}\) the mechanistic approach, thus, treats “causal mechanisms as the locus of scientific explanation.”\(^{176}\) Jon Elster is often quoted by the proponents that “mechanism explains by opening up the black box and showing the cogs and wheels of the internal machinery,” causal mechanisms thus providing a fuller explanation of why \( X \) comes to cause \( Y \).\(^{177}\) As Falleti and Lynch apply this back to political science, causal mechanisms “serve to open the black box of law-like probability statements...[such that] “If \( I \), then \( O \)” become “If \( I \), through \( M \), then \( O \)”.”\(^{178,179}\)

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\(^{174}\) Bennett, “The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory.”

\(^{175}\) Ibid.; Gerring, “Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But...”

\(^{176}\) Bennett, “The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory,” 465.


\(^{179}\) Where \( I \) is input, \( O \) is output, and \( M \) is mechanism.
While there are many definitions of “causal mechanisms” and the debates surrounding its definition and philosophical foundation are complex, it is most widely understood as a “causal pathway” or “causal process,” $M$, which links the input or independent variable $X$ to the output or dependent variable $Y$. A causal mechanism is thus an intermediary link that must be defined in its relation to $X$ and $Y$ in a causal model of $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$. Since it is the process or pathway through which a conditional cause exerts or delivers the effect, the conditional cause or independent variable is both logically necessary and causally prior to the causal mechanism. Thus, despite being rooted in different philosophies of science, in practice, defining causal mechanisms as intermediary to inputs and outputs has largely served to supplement covariational research rather than replace it.

Surveying the literature on causal mechanisms, Mahoney thus argues the usefulness of a causal mechanisms is contingent on its ability to shed light on covariational knowledge. Gerring similarly observes that “typically, the

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182 For the argument that causal mechanisms should become the central focus of IR, see Bennett, “The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory.”


184 Whether it can “integrate existing correlational knowledge,” “explain why diverse kinds of variables are empirically correlated with a phenomena of interest,” and “suggest new correlations not previously discovered” Ibid.
investigation of causal mechanisms serves an adjunct role in the analysis of some covariational relationship.”\textsuperscript{185}

The recent emphasis on mixed-methods and popularly employed research designs such as “nested analysis”\textsuperscript{186} have also reinforced the use of causal mechanisms as generating additional observable implications to a central covariational theory. Even in mixed methods where “the inferential focus [is] on potential outcomes at the level of the case” and the causal process,\textsuperscript{187} mechanisms are ultimately examined to verify that the relationship between $X$ and $Y$ is not spurious and operates in the hypothesized direction.\textsuperscript{188}

1.2. Intensive Processes

Many political phenomena, however, are neither captured by covariation of $X:Y$ or causal mechanisms that link $X$ and $Y$. They take the form of relations, interactions and processes where initial conditions that generate them as well as the outcomes they produce may be ontologically independent or simply of less theoretical and substantive interest to the researcher. These are what Falleti labels intensive processes: processes that “mediate between a putative cause and the outcome of interest but do not include the triggering cause or the outcome.”\textsuperscript{189,190}

\textsuperscript{185} Gerring, “Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But...,” 1515.
\textsuperscript{186} Liberman, “Nested Analysis as Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.”
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 656.
\textsuperscript{189} Falleti, “Process Tracing of Extensive and Intensive Processes,” 459.
\textsuperscript{190} She adds “intensive processes are triggered after the cause and end before the outcome of interest. That is to say, intensive processes take place between cause and effect and do not include them” Ibid., 460.
While it is not entirely clear from Falleti’s discussion whether intensive processes are ontologically distinct from causal mechanisms and processes,\textsuperscript{191} in practice, we can think of intensive processes as “stand-alone causal mechanisms”\textsuperscript{192} where the researcher simply “does not include the analysis of the cause, other than considering it as an initial trigger” and looks to “focus on the sequencing of events.”\textsuperscript{193}

An intensive process $I$, is thus analogous to a causal mechanism or causal process\textsuperscript{194} defined independent of its location subsequent to an independent variable $X$. Omitting the input, condition or independent variable $X$, an intensive process gives us a $I \rightarrow Y$ causal model or, in Falleti’s conceptualization, $I$ on its own.\textsuperscript{195}

In Humphrey and Jacobs’ illustrative example of whether economic shock ($X$) causes authoritarian regime collapse ($Y$), the causal mechanism is the process of diminishing rents and the undermining of the regime’s capacity to rewards its supporters ($M$).\textsuperscript{196} A researcher interested in examining intensive processes would focus solely on theorizing and testing the processual phenomenon of diminishing rents and regime

\textsuperscript{191} On the one hand she explains it in terms of a conceptual difference that “extensive and intensive terminology refers exclusively to whether the originating cause and the final effect are included as part of the process to be traced.” On the other hand, she explains that the “ontological intervening steps are different,” where extensive processes are made of intervening steps that can be recorded as variables, and thus intervening variables, whereas intensive processes are captured by causal mechanisms Ibid., 460–461.. If there was ontological difference, we could define causal mechanisms as the processes and pathways through which $X$ exerts causal force to $Y$, and an intensive process as the process or pathway that itself acts as a cause.

\textsuperscript{192} Author’s own labeling

\textsuperscript{193} Falleti, “Process Tracing of Extensive and Intensive Processes,” 450.

\textsuperscript{194} Where the terms causal mechanism and causal process is understood to be synonymous.

\textsuperscript{195} At different times, scholars have in fact defined causal mechanisms without reference to inputs and independent variables. However, they have not been consistent in their definitions. For example, while Bennett defines it in relation to an $X$, at different times he writes that “causal mechanisms are processes in the world that generates outcomes” Bennett, “The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory,” 465.. Similarly Gerring at one point defines it as “a causal pathway or process leading from $X_1$ to $Y$” Gerring, “The Mechanistic Worldview: Thinking inside the Box,” 166. and then later defines it as “the pathway or process by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished” Ibid., 178.. The definition adopted here emphasizes the standalone meaning, while making its relation to an independent variable permissible, but not necessary.

\textsuperscript{196} Humphreys and Jacobs, “Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach,” 657.
capacity to reward supporters, irrespective of the various trigger factors and combination of conditions that must be present to generate this process. We can imagine that a theory of intensive processes of diminishing rents and regime capacity would put more emphasis on clearly delineating the sequence in which the process unfolds and the empirical analysis would require figuring out different observable implications for each theorized step in the sequence. The intensive process-based research would therefore look quite different to a covariation-mechanistic research where the researcher is tasked with coding the existence of the entire causal mechanism $M$ in cases where $X$ and $Y$ take a certain value.\textsuperscript{197}

In Falleti’s own research on decentralization, she finds that understanding the initial cause, the first decentralization event, is causally incomplete and does not account for the specific type and content of decentralization thereafter. Instead, she finds that she must examine the intensive process – the “overall sequential pattern of decentralization events” – where different territorial coalitions are formed at different temporal junctures and come to determine the type and contents of decentralization reforms that follow.\textsuperscript{198,199}

Intensive processes also include phenomena that are primarily relational or interactional,\textsuperscript{200} such as the process of interaction between states or non-state actors in the international system. In IR, security dilemma and spiral dynamics are an example of interactional intensive processes. To examine whether security dilemma dynamics

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{197} For example, in Humphreys and Jacobs’ two illustrations, the first on the origin of electoral systems has three observable implications Ibid., 664., while the second on natural resources and conflict, has 5 observable implications Ibid., 665.
\textsuperscript{198} Falleti, “Process Tracing of Extensive and Intensive Processes,” 450.
\textsuperscript{200} Falleti does not make further distinctions within the category of intensive processes.
\end{footnotesize}
operated between two states, the researcher must clearly delineate a theorized sequence of strategic interactions and then empirically examine the evidence at each strategic turn for whether original intentions were benign, misperception or uncertainty over present and future intentions was the basis for an offensive response, and whether over a series of interactions both states end up intentionally engaging in the buildup of offensive weapons against each other.

In this manner, Jervis examines whether the Cold War exhibited security dilemma dynamics by carefully examining the evidence regarding intentions and mutual perception between the U.S. and the Soviet Union over the course in which the arms race unfolded. In another important study, Duelfer and Dyson reveal that chronic misperception between U.S. and Iraq acted as “both cause and effect” over a sequence of interactions to produce full-scale conflict in the U.S.-Iraq war, which neither side had originally intended. In both studies, the identification of structural variables such as international anarchy (a constant) or even important conditional variables such as the objective conditions of offense-defense dominance and the degree of distinguishability between offensive and defensive weapons reveal little about whether and how the intensive processes of security dilemma dynamics operated.

Similarly, in my research on institutional competition, I explore state-to-state competition over regional trade rules using regional free trade agreements (FTAs). There may be recurring contexts or conditions under which competition over trade rules are

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generated or vary in intensity, but the primary question is how competition over regional trade rules unfolds. By bracketing initial conditions as beyond the necessary scope of the analysis, I theorize and examine the overall interactive sequence between states as a series of potential competitive strategic turns, uncovering how competition over FTAs unfold. The phenomenon of “institutional competition” is thus more usefully understood as an interactive intensive process rather than boxed into a causal model of independent variable, a mechanism and a dependent variable.

If intensive processes are distinct political phenomena that can be explored in their own right, what kind of research methods can we use to examine them? In other words, how do we first select cases when intensive processes do not have relevant X, Y values and the universe of cases are difficult to determine beforehand? Second, how do we test and uncover intensive processes after cases are selected for further examination?

In response to the first question, I introduce the prototypical case selection strategy. For the second, I improve on existing process tracing methods to balance theory-testing and acquisition of substantive case-knowledge with the dual process tracing (DPT) method. Let me explain each in turn.

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203 Falleti and Lynch, for example, make the opposite argument that a causal theory should not only theorize causal mechanisms and the inputs that generate the mechanisms, but also the context in which inputs and mechanisms operate: “theory can and should be used to specify, before the fact, what aspects of a context are likely to be relevant to the process and outcome under study, above and beyond the input variables directly included on the I → M → O” Falleti and Lynch, “Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis,” 1153.
2. Prototypical Case Selection

2.1. Existing Case Selection Strategies

Almost all of the case selection literature focuses on how to select cases to test theories that are covariational (i.e. variation in $X$ causes variation in $Y$) and make valid cross-case causal inferences. For these techniques, case selection provides a means to control for other variables and ensure that the cases are representative of the population. The selected cases thus allow the researcher to isolate the causal effect of $X$ on $Y$ and generalize the results to the population of cases. They naturally say nothing about how to select cases for testing and uncovering intensive processes and how to make within-case causal inferences more broadly.

Long standing case selection strategies that fall under comparative methods, also labeled “comparative design” or “controlled comparison,” are cases in hand. The foundation for case selection in comparative designs is experimental design, where two or more cases are selected for comparison based on some form of matching procedure. The selection of cases thus provides a way to control for other variables and allow for

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204 Comparative method is the “systematic analysis of a small number of cases,” a “small-N analysis” and offers stronger basis for evaluating theories using case studies, allows for systematic comparison and could be used as first step to statistical analysis Arend Lijphart, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,” American Political Science Review 65, no. 3 (September 1971): 682–93; Arend Lijphart, “The Comparable-Case Strategy in Comparative Research,” Comparative Political Studies 8, no. 2 (July 1975): 158–77. The term “controlled comparison” is used by George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. and Blatter and Haverland refer to this as “covariational” case studies Joachim Blatter and Markus Haverland, Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

valid cross-case inferences.\textsuperscript{206} Perhaps the best-known case selection techniques are Most and Least-similar designs\textsuperscript{207} or Mill's Method of difference/agreement,\textsuperscript{208} as well as “Before-After case study design.”\textsuperscript{209} They all aim to capture variation in the variable of interest while holding other variables and contextual factors constant.

More recent developments in case selection strategies similarly treat experimental design as the gold standard, but more closely model and incorporate large-N statistical analysis.\textsuperscript{210} The core challenge for these techniques is to achieve external validity – how to ensure through case selection that the findings from the cases can be generalized to the broader population.

The goal of case selection is therefore treated as analogous to random sampling in statistical studies. The researcher therefore seeks to select cases that act as a representative sample and avoid selection bias. Cases are also selected to capture useful variation on the dimension of the theoretical interest.\textsuperscript{211} Cases are therefore selected based on their position in the theoretically specified population, a position that is ultimately determined by their “cross-case characteristics,” i.e. values on $X$ and $Y$.\textsuperscript{212,213}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{206} Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-Tracing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously,” 2; George and Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences}, 83. \\
\textsuperscript{207} Lijphart, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method”; Lijphart, “The Comparable-Case Strategy in Comparative Research.” \\
\textsuperscript{208} John Stuart Mill, \textit{A System of Logic} (London: Longman, 1970). \\
\textsuperscript{209} George and Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences}, 166–167. \\
\textsuperscript{211} Gerring, \textit{Case Study Research: Principles and Practices}, 88; Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” 296. \\
\textsuperscript{212} Gerring, \textit{Case Study Research: Principles and Practices}; Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.” \\
\textsuperscript{213} As Seawright and Gerring add, “This is how the term case selection is typically understood, so we are simply following convention by dividing up the subject in this manner” Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” 296. \\
\end{footnotes}
For “nested analysis,” cases are selected based on the size of the residual terms with respect to a regression analysis on the universe of cases. In Gerring’s various discussions on case selection techniques, the position of the case relative to the $X:Y$ correlation is also what comes to differentiate the nature of inferences that can be made about the broader population. The case’s position relative to the regression line therefore forms the basis for the seven-fold typology of cases in Seawright and Gerring and the nine-fold typology of cases in Gerring. The cross-case characteristic of the case is indispensable for Gerring who strongly states that “case study does not exist, and is impossible to conceptualize, in isolation from cross-case analysis.” Case selection strategies supported by comparative methods and large-N sampling techniques that aim to isolate causal effects thus provide little guidance to test and identify intensive processes, which fundamentally require us to make within-case causal inferences.

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216 Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.”
217 Gerring, Case Study Research: Principles and Practices.
218 The seven are: typical, diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, most similar, and most different. The only exception where the case is not defined in relation to the population and the degree that it affects the generalizations that could be made to the population made is the influential case. Gerring also discusses separately the use of ‘single-outcome’ case studies that are idiographic in function Gerring, “Single-Outcome Studies: A Methodological Primer.” and actually do not qualify as a “case study” in the definition he adopts in the rest of his work.
220 Issues of controlling variables at the case selection level are also a concern when the goal is to estimate the average effects of a cause across cases. However, they do not figure as a concern when we are looking to identify the specific instantiations of causal processes within selected cases. Moreover, process tests in process tracing essentially offer the analogue to “controls” at the case level Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-Tracing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously.”
With the rising interest in mechanismic approaches that focus on causal mechanisms,\textsuperscript{221} there is some discussion about case study techniques for making within-case inferences. For example, George and Bennett identify “process tracing” and the “congruence method” as two case study types that do not attempt to achieve the functional equivalent of an experiment.\textsuperscript{222,223} Blatter and Haverland categorize case studies as three-fold. They label the first as “covariational” case studies and include the comparative method and large-N based case selection techniques just discussed. The second and third type directly borrow from George and Bennett’s two within-case methods and are labeled “process tracing” and “congruence analysis” respectively.\textsuperscript{224} Levy, moreover, provides a typology of five case studies, of which “process tracing case study” focuses on making within-case inferences.\textsuperscript{225,226}

The problem with these case study types is that while within-case studies are offered alongside cross-case case selection techniques, the former are actually case study methods and not case selection strategies. More accurately speaking, for cross-case analysis, the required cross-case inferences are actually achieved through the case selection procedure itself. This contrasts to within-case analysis where the challenge of making inferences and selecting cases are relatively distinct methodological concerns.

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\begin{itemize}
  \item George and Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences}, 181.
  \item For the congruence method the “investigator begins with a theory and then attempts to assess its ability to explain or predict the outcome of the particular case” Ibid.. The researcher thus examines “whether the independent variable and dependent variable are congruent; that is, whether they vary in the expected directions, to the expected magnitude, along the expected dimensions, or whether there is still unexplained variance in one or more dimensions of the dependent variable” Ibid., 183..
  \item Blatter and Haverland, \textit{Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research}.
  \item The others are “comparable,” “crucial case design” (Most/Least likely case designs) and “deviant case design.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
typically achieved with process tracing and selecting cases for process tracing respectively.

As Levy notes more generally, many of the central typologies for case studies that build on Eckstein and Lijphart’s classical studies,227 “combine research objectives and case selection techniques, and consequently … result in nonparallel categories.”228 This conflation still runs deep in the case selection literature and contributes to the absence of systematically developed case selection techniques for making within-case inferences.229

There are three existing exceptions to this. The first is Blatter and Haverland, who suggest that the “primary criterion” for case selection in process tracing case studies is “accessibility.”230,231 They argue that this is because a process tracing case study “depends on the ability to provide quite comprehensive storylines on the temporal unfolding of the causal process, to provide a dense description of critical moments, and on opportunities to gain deep insights into the perceptions and motivations of important actors.”232

The second, and only explicit exposition of case selection techniques for identifying causal mechanisms is Beach and Pedersen’s “mechanism-centered design.”233

229 In fact, most of these studies implicitly embrace a mixed-method approach when it comes to case selection by highlight that within-case methods can be combined with cross-case methods George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences; Levy, “Case Studies: Types, Designs and Logics of Inference.”.
230 Blatter and Haverland, Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research.
231 This is also the only criterion they put forward.
232 Blatter and Haverland, Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research, 10–11.
233 Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-Tracing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously.”
They argue that similar to Seawright and Gerring\textsuperscript{234} and Lieberman,\textsuperscript{235} the starting point for selecting cases is the mapping out of the entire population of cases based on their $X$ and $Y$ values.\textsuperscript{236} However, rather than selecting ‘on-lier’ cases, as suggested in the large-N sampling approach,\textsuperscript{237} Beach and Pederson argue that we should only select cases that have positive values on $X$ and $Y$, what they label “typical cases.”\textsuperscript{238} Their intuition is that if we want to examine the operation of causal mechanisms, we should examine cases where we theoretically expect to see them.\textsuperscript{239,240}

The third is Humphreys and Jacob’s case selection technique based on an integrated Bayesian mixed-method framework. Humphreys and Jacobs suggest that from the random sample selected for large-N analysis, a random subset of cases are selected to examine the within-case analysis.\textsuperscript{241} The cases are selected based on the values on three parameters, the values of $X$ and $Y$ as well as the configuration of $\phi$, the possibilities that a piece of evidence adjudicates between different case “types”: positive causal, positive spurious, negative causal, negative spurious. For example, in the situation where a piece

\textsuperscript{234} Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.”
\textsuperscript{235} Liberman, “Nested Analysis as Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.”
\textsuperscript{236} Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-Tracing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously,” 12.
\textsuperscript{237} Liberman, “Nested Analysis as Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research”; Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.”
\textsuperscript{238} They argue that once there is some certainty that causal mechanisms actually operate in the way we expected them to, we can examine the secondary questions of under what conditions they break down in “deviant cases.” As they note: “The argument here is that there is no reason to investigate mechanism breakdown before we are more confident about the actually existence of a mechanism linking $X$ and $Y$ in one or more typical cases” Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-Tracing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously,” 26..
\textsuperscript{239} Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-Tracing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously.”
\textsuperscript{240} Another reason is because of the existence of causal asymmetry. This means causal mechanisms that operate when $X$ is a positive value to cause $Y$, does not necessarily operate in reverse when the $X$ value is negative. For example, a distinction is made between theory of democratic dyads causing peace is not a theory of autocratic dyads causing war Ibid., 11–12..
\textsuperscript{241} Humphreys and Jacobs, “Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach,” 661.
of within-case evidence has equal probability of being found in the a “positive causal”
case type and a “positive spurious” case type, examining X =1, Y = 1 case is not
informative as the evidence cannot adjudicate between the two types. In contrast, if the
same piece of evidence has probability of 0.5 for “negative causal” and 0.1 for “negative
spurious” case types, looking at cases with X = Y = 0 will yield insight into the operation
of causal relations.\footnote{242} Unlike standard large-N cross-case case selection methods,
Humphreys and Jacobs importantly highlights the role of the probative value of within-
case evidence in determining case selection.

All three case selection techniques highlight important considerations for
selecting cases for examining intensive processes that are overlooked in the mainstream
case selection literature. Practical and logistical concerns are routinely sidelined as
factors that should not dictate the formulation of a research design.\footnote{243} However, they
naturally play a more important role when all or majority of the analytical heavy lifting
has to be done by making within-case inferences from case-level evidence.\footnote{244} Process
tracing and qualitative methodologists more generally have thus highlighted the
importance of a researcher’s prior knowledge and familiarity with the case being
examined, such as the operational use of a foreign language. They acknowledge that

\footnote{242} Ibid., 671.
\footnote{243} George and Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences}; Gary King, Robert O.
Keohane, and Sidney Verba, \textit{Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research} (New
\footnote{244} Even the case for Humphreys and Jacobs who state “BIQQ’s (Bayesian integration of quantitative and
qualitative data) typological framework, in an important sense, keeps the inferential focus on potential
outcomes at the level of the case” Humphreys and Jacobs, “Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach,” 671,
emphasis original.}
accessibility greatly determines the quality of case knowledge that can be acquired as well as the ability to make valid inferences from them.245

Yet, Blatter and Haverland’s only criterion of “accessibility” cannot be basis for constructing a case selection strategy for within-case examination. For some cases, we would indeed expect to find the hypothesized intensive processes and it would be worth our time and effort to examine them. However, in other cases, we might expect not to find the intensive processes and therefore examining the cases would offer very little in return for our efforts. Borrowing an often-used analogy in the process tracing literature, it makes little sense for an inspector to look at cases of “non-murder” to understand the processes that led to murder, on the basis that it is more accessible and the detective is more familiar with the cases. Analogously, it would make little sense to examine cases we have access to but have sound reasons to believe that the hypothesized intensive processes are not operating in them.

Beach and Pederson’s mechanism-centered design also has its limitations. As Beach and Pederson suggest, since causal mechanism $M$ is defined with respect to $X$ and $Y$, identifying cases to study $M$ can come after establishing the overall $X:Y$ relation in the initial phase of research. As Beach and Pederson define, a typical case that is selected for examination is “understood as the cases where a priori we can expect the theorized $X \rightarrow Y$ relationship through the theorized mechanism to be present.”246,247 However, for intensive processes $I$, which are analogous to $Ms$ without the $X$s, mapping out the full $I:Y$

247 “The theorized mechanisms are front and center in our analysis, with the analytical focus on assessing how the causal arrow(s) in-between $X$ and $Y$ actually works in particular cases” Ibid., 4.
relationship instead of $X:Y$ is not something we can achieve at the initial phase of research. In fact, assigning a “value” on the occurrence of the intensive process approximates the actual goal of within-case research. The full mapping of the co-occurrences of $I$ and $Y$ would actually constitute the final output of this kind of study and not the premise from which to select cases from.²⁴⁸

Similar limitations exist with Humphreys and Jacobs’ case selection strategy. The two parameters of $X$ and $Y$ are irrelevant for the study of intensive processes and, similarly, the full mapping of a universe of cases with $I$ or $I:Y$ values is an impractical first step. Moreover, since the within-case evidence related to the specific instance in a sequence of the complete intensive process may be different at each stage and across different cases, there are likely to be many and different types of within-case evidence that eventually corroborate the operation of $I$. It is difficult to know in advance what the relevant piece of evidence is and approximate its probative value *ex ante* to inform our case selection strategy.

### 2.2. Prototypical Cases

I introduce here the prototypical case selection method where the researcher selects cases for the purpose of testing and uncovering intensive processes, as well as providing

²⁴⁸ Another strategy would be a $Y$-centric design, where we select all occurrences with the relevant $Y$ value and examine whether the intensive processes operated or not. This kind of design is rare, referred to as a medium-N CPO analysis. Stephen Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, “Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 3 (August 2012): 495–516. and Michael L. Ross, “How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases,” *International Organization* 58, no. 1 (2004): 35–67. provide examples of this type of research design.
valuable substantive knowledge regarding the broader phenomena in which the processes are embedded.

Prototypical cases are cases whose examination would have the most utility when the population of cases is unknown or difficult to know *ex ante*. In the broadest sense, prototypical case selection method allows the researcher to select cases that provide the most utility as a first test case or set of test cases of a broader phenomenon we have limited knowledge on, whether they are difficult to identify or relatively new.

Prototype as a noun is defined in Oxford English Dictionary as “The first or primary type of a person or thing; an original on which something is modeled or from which it is derived; an exemplar, an archetype.”249 The first defining feature of a prototypical case is that they are typical or exemplary of the hypothesized intensive processes. Additionally, they are cases most closely associated with extant theories and current understanding of the process or interaction, and are considered to be the most substantively important cases among them. Without the mapping of the entire universe of cases, prototypical cases are selected based on three criteria – likelihood, theoretical and substantive. The prototypical case selection method is thus a non-random case selection technique for when the relevant parameters of the case and its universe are relatively unknown.

2.2.1. *Likelihood Criteria*

The first criterion for prototypical case selection is the consideration of whether the case is with some measure considered typical of the intensive processes of our interest and

thus viable for further examination. The central intuition closely follows Beach and Pedersen’s recommendation of selecting typical cases.\[^{250}\] If we want to examine the operation of an intensive process, we should examine the cases that are most likely to exhibit them. Prototypical cases differ to Beach and Pederson’s typical cases, however, in that our expectations are based not on the known values of \(X\) and \(Y\), but on preliminary values given to \(I\), which is nominally assigned by the researcher based on first-cut examination of readily available case information from case experts and commentators.\[^{251}\]

Likely prototypical cases are thus identified by a preliminary review of scholarly literature, media reports, policy papers and/or conducting preliminary interviews where appropriate. Adjudicating with confidence whether the process actually exists in these cases will ultimately come down to the results from conducting the actual within-case examination, typically with process tracing. However, for the first-cut examination, the researcher makes a preliminary assessment as to whether \(I\) likely operates or not, and thus whether they may be worth additional examination.

In this process, the researcher should indicate clearly what sources are used to assign this nominal value and what sources are used for the main theory-testing task carried out with process tracing. This way, the researcher can clearly demarcate between the inductive and deductive components of the research and avoid criticisms that the

\[\text{References:}\]

\[^{250}\] Beach and Pedersen, “Case Selection Techniques in Process-TRacing and the Implications of Taking the Study of Causal Mechanisms Seriously.”

\[^{251}\] This would also follow Beach and Pederson’s suggestion for when there is uncertainty in \(X\) and \(Y\) values: “When there is residual uncertainty either because of theoretical or empirical reasons, we recommend only selecting cases that are widely accepted by case experts as being within the set of the concept; that is, there are clear substantive and theoretical arguments for set membership that can be documented in a transparent fashion.” Ibid., 13.
evidence that forms our expectations and theories are not the same evidence for which the test is carried out.

Note, however, that likely prototypical cases are very different to Gerring’s conception of a typical case. For Gerring, the term “typical case” and “representative case” are used synonymously, and refer to typical examples of some cross-case relationship found in the population of cases, specifically, low-residual cases or on-lier cases. As discussed earlier, however, the population of cases is difficult to know ex ante for intensive processes and a prototypical case is not defined in relation to the universe of cases. For Gerring, if nothing or very little is known about the population, the method of case selection “cannot be implemented or will have to be reimplemented once the true population becomes apparent.” Prototypical cases are thus not typical in the sense that they are cases with mean, median, or modal values on selected dimensions, but are typical in that we are most likely to observe the hypothesized processes in these cases.

Likely prototypical cases should also not be confused with Most-likely case designs in crucial case study research. Most-likely cases, distinguished here by the capitalization and hyphenation of the term, are by definition cases where we would also most likely expect the theorized causes and causal mechanisms to operate. However, crucial case studies are based on a Bayesian logic of how to infer the results of one case to the population of cases. If a theory fails a most-likely case study where the variables, 

253 Ibid., 89.
254 Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” 296.
256 Ecktstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science.”
contextual factors and conditions suggest it should operate, then we can infer that the theory is false across other cases.\textsuperscript{257} Conversely, if a theory passes a least-likely case study, we can infer that it is true across other cases. The “most likely-ness” of a prototypical case, however, quite literally means we “most likely” see the hypothesized processes without any connotations on their inferential value across cases.

A related way of understanding prototypical cases is that they are exemplary or archetypal of the hypothesized intensive processes. They are therefore closely related to “prototypical cases” used by\textsuperscript{258} and “index cases” identified by,\textsuperscript{259} which both refer to the study of some kind of flagship case that is considered exemplary of a given phenomenon.

However, they differ to my definition of prototypical cases in that these cases are by definition the “forerunners of trends.”\textsuperscript{260,261} Index and prototypical cases for Gerring and Cojocaru and Hague et al. are therefore the first(s) of their kind and are hence by definition unrepresentative cases. They warrant examination because the causes and processes from them are likely to shed light on similar future cases, acting as a “a prime mover or as an illustrative or standard-setting case.”\textsuperscript{262}

In contrast, in my definition, while accepting that prototypical cases may be forerunners, we are fundamentally uncertain whether the cases are representative of the population and thus whether they are “first movers,” “late movers,” or anywhere in between. The case is considered “prototypical” here because of this uncertainty vis-à-vis

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{259} Gerring and Cojocaru, “Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods.”
\item \textsuperscript{260} Hague, Harrop, and Breslin, \textit{Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction}, 277.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Or “patient zero” if we adopt a medical science analogy Gerring and Cojocaru, “Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods,” 398.
\item \textsuperscript{262} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the population. The prototypical case study is the first test case of a broader phenomenon we have limited knowledge on, which includes but is not restricted to new or unique phenomena.

2.2.2. **Theoretical Criteria**

The second criterion for prototypical case selection is the theoretical prominence of a case. Certain cases are closely associated with a theory or, when the theory is not adequately developed, with certain commonly understood arguments and narratives. For example, the Cold War is closely associated with structural theories of bipolar peace, World War I with theories of the “cult of the offensive,” and the Peloponnesian War with power transitional wars and security dilemmas dynamics.\(^{263}\)

Many of these cases have been closely examined in accordance with the highest standards of empirical tests. However, there may be newly discovered or declassified set of primary documents or data that allows for the re-examination of the case, putting the associated theory back on the chopping board. Other theoretically important cases may technically be in the form of “illustrative cases” or “plausibility probes.”\(^{264,265}\) Subjecting \(^{263}\) Likewise, in comparative politics, the French Revolution is a flagship case for Marxist theories, as the democratization of South Korea is for modernization theory, and Mexico’s PRI is for theories of competitive authoritarian regime stability. 


\(^{265}\) *Plausibility probe* is “comparable to a pilot study in experimental or survey research. It allows the researcher to sharpen a hypothesis or theory, to refine the operationalization or measurement of key variables, or to explore the suitability of a particular case as a vehicle for testing a theory before engaging in a costly and time-consuming research effort, whether that effort involves a major quantitative data collection project, extensive fieldwork, a large survey, or detailed archival work” Ibid., 6. *Illustrative case* is considered a subtype of a plausibility probe and are “often quite brief, and fall short of the degree of detail needed either to explain a case fully or to test a theoretical proposition.” As Levy notes “the aim is to give the reader a “feel” for a theoretical argument by providing a concrete example of its application, or to demonstrate the empirical relevance of a theoretical proposition by identifying at least one relevant case” Ibid., 6–7.
these cases to a full set of empirical tests would upgrade them into “theory-testing cases” and provide important opportunities to update our confidence in extant theories as well as the substantive details of the case at hand.

Yet other cases may serve to support theoretical positions that are implicit in certain arguments or narratives and may not be in the guise of political science research. These cases may thus be upholding common or pervasive narratives in the media, commentary and analysis put forward by pundits and case experts. By making the theoretical argument explicit and re-testing the case in light of the observable implications would greatly contribute to both our substantive and theoretical understandings of the phenomenon. The exercise of intellectualizing common arguments also provides an opportunity to critically interrogate popularly circulated narratives in public discourse.

The underlying intuition common for selecting the variety of theoretically prominent case types is that we are “taking the fight to enemy grounds.” By (re)examining the cases from which specific arguments and theories are built off of, we are ensuring the greatest theoretical returns from the intensive examination of a limited number of cases. This would be akin to challenging bipolar peace thesis using the Cold War case, demystifying the “Thucydides trap” narrative used in U.S.-China relations by disproving the logic in the Peloponnesian War, or proving that WWI was not triggered

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by “cult of the offensive” and “short-war illusion” by reinterpreting the historical

Theoretically prominent cases could be seen as functionally similar to “influential
cases” because they are both cases that most influence the validity of the theory. As
Gerring and Cojocaru note: “What makes a case influential is not its model fit but its
influence on the model.”\footnote{Gerring and Cojocaru, “Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods,” 404.}\footnote{In the later definition of influential case, Gerring subsumes crucial cases and therefore Most and Least-
likely cases \textit{Ibid.}, 404–405..} Influential cases are, more specifically however, cases
whose results “may be influential vis-à-vis some larger \textit{cross-case} theory.”\footnote{Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” 303.} They are
therefore theoretically influential to the extent that the case affects the stability of the
results on the $X:Y$ correlation. This contrasts to the theoretical prominence of prototypical
cases, which understands “influential-ness” in the more sociological sense of having a
prominent role in the extant academic literature, research community as well as in the
narratives and arguments that structure public discussions of the phenomenon. The
researcher can thus identify theoretically prominent cases as they take the forms of
illustrative case studies, plausibility probes, cases that are invoked in media reports and
policy analysis papers in support of certain arguments and narratives.
2.2.3. Substantive Criteria

The final criterion for prototypical case selection is substantive importance. One of the important functions of prototypical cases is that they provide the greatest opportunity for improving our case knowledge regarding the class of phenomena we wish to understand. While we want to be sure that the few cases that are selected for intensive examination are viable and theoretically consequential, no less importantly, we want to be sure that the case is also substantively worth our attention. Prototypical cases are thus also cases that are considered politically or normatively important. If possible, a researcher should therefore avoid cases that may be theoretically relevant and methodologically viable, but are trivial and insignificant substantively. As Goertz and Mahoney argue, “the ability to explain important cases should be highly valued. Theories that can only explain minor cases are less valued.”

Those who adopt experimental design-based case selection strategies treat the intensive examination of cases worthwhile only to the extent that they allow cross-case inferences and therefore have the correct $X$ and $Y$ values of interest. Other than this criterion, “the norm is that all cases should be a priori weighted equally when testing a hypothesis.” For various IR communities, researchers and readers, however, one case is often more important than another, independent of their cross-case inferential value. When selecting prototypical cases, the researcher should be sensitive to the relative substantive importance of the case and, if possible, select the cases that are considered more significant.

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271 Goertz and Mahoney, A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences, 185.
272 Ibid.
The Cold War, for example, is a substantively important case whose study has structured the modern field of IR and continues to attract the attention of many IR scholars. Research questions can indeed be framed with empirical or theoretical puzzles, but the Cold War case is rarely selected for examination because it is representative of the universe of war cases or because it offers the best opportunity to test certain theories. Rather, one of the central reasons for selecting the Cold War for examination is because it was the most normatively pressing international political condition that the IR community faced.\textsuperscript{273}

Studying East Asia or China by some definitions is an $n$ of 1, a single case from a larger class of cases, i.e. regions and countries in the world across time and space. However, many East Asian experts and China specialists embrace the “selection bias” because of their substantive importance.\textsuperscript{274} In fact, not only did the majority of IR scholars in the U.S. select East Asia as the most strategically significant region for the U.S.,\textsuperscript{275,276} but the largest and second largest states in the international system, U.S. and

\textsuperscript{273} Goldstone makes the argument that we should select and test substantively important cases. He argues that, for example, the French Revolution should be explainable by Marxist theory. Even though Marxist theory may be proven correct in a variety of revolutions cases, if it does not hold for the French Revolution “this would certainly shake one’s faith in the value of the theory” Jack A. Goldstone, “Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolution,” in \textit{Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences}, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 45–46. Goertz and Mahoney apply Goldstone’s argument more broadly by concluding, “Good qualitative theories must be able to explain substantively important cases. When they cannot, it counts against them” Goertz and Mahoney, \textit{A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences}, 185. For our purposes, however, the French Revolution is simultaneously a substantively important case, a theoretically prominent case for Marxism and a case most likely to exhibit the processes of a proletariat revolution. Likewise, if we identify a case in a media commentary piece, it most likely exhibits the intensive process and by virtue of the case being used to support a certain argument or narrative it is also theoretically valuable.

\textsuperscript{274} Even when this comes at an almost certain loss in the researcher’s ability to gather high quality data, arrive at results and point estimates with high degrees of confidence, and generalize the results of the case(s) beyond the immediate confines of China or East Asia.


\textsuperscript{276} For example, Alastair Iain Johnston finds that while 46% of US IR scholars believe that East Asia is the greatest strategic importance in 2011 and 72% further believe it will be the case in 20 years time, only 9%
China, have both emphasized East Asia to be of paramount importance for their respective foreign policies.

In fact, for IR, many of the phenomena of interest are events that are rare, sporadic or unique. IR therefore tends to have a greater tolerance towards idiographically-oriented case studies, valuing “bounded” or “contextualized generalizations” and middle range theories. If we follow the gold standard of experimental research and use random case selection, however, “the odds of choosing these substantively important cases are usually low.” We may therefore end up providing a great deal of information for trivial cases, leaving significant cases and debates surrounding them untouched. Prototypical case selection therefore consciously selects cases that are significant and substantively important.

2.2.4. Prototypical Case Selection in Practice

Because we cannot select all the relevant cases for intensive examination and also cannot randomly select cases from a known population of cases, we want to be sure that the handful of cases we do select provide the greatest analytical utility when closely examining the operation of intensive processes.

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277 George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.
279 This is also related to IR scholars pushing research to be more policy-relevant and policy-consumable.
280 Goertz and Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, 185.
Prototypical cases selection achieves this by selecting cases in a two-step process that involves the researcher carrying out a first-cut examination of “readily available information” on cases in order to assess a case’s value on the three criteria previously outlined. “Readily available information” here includes academic literature, think tank and media reports as well as unstructured preliminary interviews where appropriate. The two steps for prototypical case selection are as follows.

First, using the likelihood criteria, the researcher surveys readily available information to collect a “viable set” of cases where intensive processes most likely operate. That is, an incomplete universe of cases that the researcher assesses to most likely exhibit the intensive processes and/or are considered to typify them, therefore meriting further attention and empirical examination.

Second, from the viable set, the researcher arrives at a final selection of cases using the two remaining criteria – the relative theoretical prominence and substantive importance of the cases. The researcher, here, provides further justification for selecting a final case or collection of cases for examination based on an assessment on the theoretical and substantive criteria. The idea here is to select cases that would have the greatest impact on our theoretical understanding and contribute most to our substantive knowledge and discussions surrounding the phenomenon of interest.

In my own research on institutional competition between U.S. and China in East Asia, a preliminary survey was conducted on scholarly literature in IR, media reports and think tank reports that cover East Asian regional institutions. In addition, a limited number of unstructured preliminary interviews were carried out with former and current policymakers, mostly from the U.S. Finally, the preliminary survey also included
eyeballing the original East Asian regional institutions dataset that I collected that lists all East Asian regional institutions between 1945 to 2015.281

A case was defined as a spatially and temporally bounded set of events that constitute an instance of a competitive intensive process between U.S. and China, where observed changes in given regional institutions282 could potentially be attributed to a sequence of competitive strategic moves made by U.S. and China.

From the preliminary survey, I was able to identify a viable set of five cases where two or more regional institutions were associated, or able to be associated, with some form of Sino-American competition.


While the regional institutions in Case 1 were developed in temporal sequence in what appeared to be initially regional groups that included only China and ASEAN countries and then, after year 2000, entirely by U.S.-led groups, I found no reference to Case 1 in the academic literature, think tank papers, media reports, and the preliminary interviews.

281 Dataset included in Appendix I (i)
282 Including the construction of de novo regime or membership change.
*Case 1* was therefore considered substantively and theoretically less significant compared to the other cases and a risky case selection. A null result would not update our theoretical priors about the case, and a positive result would only provide limited substantive value relative to other cases. Therefore *Case 1* was dropped.

In contrast, *Case 4* and *Case 5* satisfied all three criteria for prototypical cases: first, they were heavily covered with an explicit narrative of Sino-American competition by all major Western media outlets including *the Financial Times, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post* and *the Economist*. Second, the two cases contributed most to the popular narrative that there is Sino-American competition over East Asian regional order and were central to the notion that there was institutional competition. Third, they are also substantively important: a null result would serve to debunk the narrative of competition in popular discourse and a positive result would systematically nuance our hunches about the phenomena.

Finally, I found that *Case 2* and *Case 3* were more heavily analyzed in the IR academic literature than by the media. While I assessed that both cases 2 and 3 are substantively important and likely to have an element of Sino-American competition operating within them, I selected *Case 3* over *Case 2* because the former offered a dyad of regional institutions that was more clearly associated with an argument of Sino-American competition. In contrast, delineating sets of regional institutions, which had strong potential to be strategically interdependent and therefore characterize institutional competition, would have required extra analysis beyond the preliminary analysis of *Case 2*. 

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From the original dataset that collects all regional institutions in East Asia from 1945, more than 70 regional institutions were identified. From the starting position of being unable to map out the full universe of cases and not knowing which of these institutions are strategically interdependent and therefore form a relevant dyad or set of regional institutions that warrant further examination, I was able to select 3–4 prototypical cases to closely examine how and whether the intensive process of institutional competition between U.S. and China operated in East Asia.

3. Dual Process Tracing (DPT) Method

Now that we have selected cases that offer the best opportunity to examine intensive processes, how do we proceed and test our theories of intensive processes? How do we also ensure that we acquire substantive knowledge regarding the case?

The methodological challenge for examining intensive processes is actually little different from that of examining causal mechanisms. They both share the goal of making within-case causal inferences. That is, inferring causation in a case from evidence drawn from within the case. Although a causal mechanism $M$ is defined in relation to $X$

283 I identify at least 70 regional institutions formed in East Asia since 1945. This means that even when instances of significant membership changes are not considered, there are more than 70 cases of institutional change. Yet, relevant cases where institutions are used for institutional competition may also include multiple regional institutions purportedly formed from the process of institutional competition between the U.S. and China. When we adopt this more expansive definition of institutional change, the number of potentially relevant cases increases exponentially. Unlike the single-institutional change cases where the universe of cases could be outlined by counting all instances of institutional formation and significant changes in membership, there is virtually no way of identifying all the multiple-institutional change prior to conducting preliminary research. In other words, there is no way of mapping out the universe of cases i.e. knowing which of the 70 plus regional institutions in East Asia are strategically interdependent and therefore form a relevant dyad or set of regional institutions that warrant our examination as a prototypical case.

284 Goertz and Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. 
and $Y$, process tracing does not test the covariational relationship between $X$ and $Y$. The value of $X$ is held constant at the case selection stage of the analysis and then process tracing is employed to trace $X$’s effect on $Y$ through causal mechanism $M$. It is thus no coincidence that the concept of “intensive processes” was developed in the context of advancing process tracing methodology.

While there is thus a richer wealth of knowledge about making within-case causal inferences for intensive processes compared to case selection strategies, the literature on process tracing is still has limitations. In this section, I review the literature on process tracing and introduce the dual process tracing (DPT) method as a remedy.

### 3.1. Overview of Process Tracing

Process tracing is the go-to qualitative case study method for testing and identifying causal mechanisms. So much so that for many political scientists, “doing qualitative work” or “a case study” has almost become synonymous to “doing process tracing.”

Process tracing was originally explicated by Alexander George and Timothy McKeown, building on George’s work that traces decision making processes that...
lead to foreign policy outcomes. Process tracing came to occupy its central place in qualitative research methods with George and Bennett’s *Case Studies and Theory Development*.²⁹⁰ one of the most important and widely read reformulations of process tracing and the only IR-specific methodological rebuttal to King, Keohane and Verba’s influential *Designing Social Inquiry*.²⁹¹,²⁹² Process tracing, however, is also widely employed by quantitatively oriented scholars. While the analytical burden still rests heavily on the quantitative tests, it has almost become an industry standard to adopt a form of mixed method design and carry out process tracing to check the direction of causation and the operation of the hypothesized causal mechanisms.²⁹³,²⁹⁴

Process tracing is thus a method for discovering and testing causal mechanisms.²⁹⁵ It most clearly contrasts with statistical methods that test for the average effect of causes

²⁹⁰ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.
²⁹¹ King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*.
²⁹⁴ For examples see Goertz and Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, 106..
²⁹⁵ Bennett, “The Mother of All Isms: Causal Mechanisms and Structured Pluralism in International Relations Theory”; Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices”; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*; Goertz and Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*.
on outcomes at the population level. The process tracing method also contrasts with other case study methods in that it is a within-case analytical technique rather than a cross-case one. Therefore, rather than comparing across cases to infer causation such as with comparative case study designs, process tracing examines evidence within the cases to infer the operation of causal mechanisms and processes. Process tracing’s key function is thus to provide within-case causal inferences.

As Bennett defines, process tracing is “the technique of looking for the observable implications of hypothesized causal processes within a single case.” It therefore identifies and tests a sequence of causal processes or mechanisms to provide a “historical explanation” of an individual case, where historical explanation is defined as “identification of causes of outcomes that have already occurred.”

Despite its central place as a qualitative, case study and within-case method, standards for good process tracing and procedures for systematically making causal inferences are not clear. Process tracing is thus criticized as leading to “lazy

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296 Goertz and Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, 102.
298 The only other within-case method that has received sustained discussion is the “congruence method” or “pattern matching” Blatter and Haverland, *Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research*; George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. However, process tracing is overwhelming the more commonly adopted and discussed method of the two.
mechanism-based story telling"304 and “just-so” narratives that explain away anomalies in an ad hoc manner.305 The lack of rigor and transparency not only contributes to the continued perception that case studies do not provide strong causal inferences and the basis for adjudicating between competing hypotheses, but it also limits the extent to which the “mechanisms-turn” in the philosophy of sciences and social science theory can contribute empirically to political science and IR.306 As Waldner points out, as it stands, “there is substantial distance between the broad claim that ‘process tracing is good’ and the precise claim that ‘this is an instance of good process tracing’.”307

To correct many of the method’s associated weaknesses, important advances have been made to process tracing methods in the past decade. By focusing on how to systematically make causal inferences from within cases, process tracing methodologists have clarified and explored the nature of within-case “data,” the type of inferences that can be made from them, the assumptions undergirding these inferences and the degree of uncertainty surrounding inferences made from process tracing. However, these advances have not come without problems.

First, the “state of the art methodological writings on process tracing”308 lacks a unified statement and have, perhaps as a consequence, yet to be employed beyond heuristic purposes. A researcher or student wishing to use up-to-date process tracing methods is immediately confronted with dense and technical discussions surrounding the

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304 Hedstrom and Ylikoski, “Causal Mechanisms in Social Sciences,” 58, 64.
recent advances in process tracing without applicable guidelines. Gerring, for example, recently reviewed the various advances made in process tracing methods and concluded: “Thus far, applications of set theory, acyclic graphs, and bayesianism to qualitative methods have focused on making sense of the activity rather than providing a practical guide to research. It remains to be seen whether these can be developed in such a way as to alter the ways that qualitative researchers go about their business.”

A second criticism is that the progress made in process tracing methods has come at the cost of what process tracing was originally good for: providing a comprehensive description of an unbroken chain of events and entire processes of a case. Tannenwald, for example, while welcoming the push for greater transparency and rigor with process tracing methodology warns that the “method should not become such a fetish that it overwhelms the narrative.” In another sharp critique, Waldner also points out that the original meaning of process tracing as systematically tracing entire processes “is conspicuously absent from virtually all recent writing in process tracing.” He argues that the emphasis on making disciplined causal inferences and searching for evidence within cases that have high probative value has come at the cost of the classical approach emphasizing the “continuity criterion.”

The dual process tracing (DPT) method I develop builds directly on these two limitations. First, I synthesize the “state of the art” methodological writings on process tracing into a coherent framework I term *process testing*. This provides the basis for

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312 Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference,” 245.
313 George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 245.
rigorously testing theories of intensive processes. It also can be read as a succinct summary of the most recent advances in process tracing methodology and an exposition of the variety of work that have sought to clarify what it means to be making within-case causal inferences using process tracing. Second, I reformulate the classical understanding of process tracing as tracing entire processes with *case reconstruction*. This is a procedure that allows the researcher to provide a full account of the process and therefore provide substantive case knowledge. The DPT method therefore integrates into one framework two strands of process tracing, delivering the best of both worlds: systematic procedures for testing processes and a means to provide a full account of the case and the processes under examination.
3.2. The Dual Process Tracing (DPT) Technique

The structure of DPT and its component parts are illustrated below in Figure 5. On the left-hand side, I label the two main procedures that make up the DPT framework: (1) Process Testing and (2) Case Reconstruction. On the right-hand side, I label the contents of each layer.

Claritying the theory as it relates to the empirics is the starting point to good process tracing. A causal graph represents in graph form, the theory to be tested with process tracing. This can be either an intensive process or a causal mechanism. The nodes $X$, $M$, and $Y$ can thus be thought of as theoretical variables of an $X:Y$ relationships and a mechanism $M$. The nodes can also be thought of as theoretical steps that make up an intensive process, $I$, where $X$ and $M$ can therefore be thought of as distinct theoretical steps of an unpacked intensive process $I$. The arrows between the nodes in the causal graph can be loosely read as “causing” the next node.
For researchers interested in strategic interactions between states and/or non-state actors, the entire process depicted by the causal graph can more accurately be thought of as a single sequence of strategic interaction. The causal graph would therefore be analogous to one possible line of outcomes of a game tree and each step $X$ and $M$ would depict single strategic moves. However, whether they are variables, steps, actions or moves, the causal graph serves to make explicit the theoretical components that make up the general causal model that the researcher wishes to test.

Given the theory and the causal graph, dual process tracing tests each theoretical component or node using evidence within cases in the first procedure, process testing. Then, based on the process testing results, the researcher provides a full descriptive narrative of what happened and did not happen in the case with case reconstruction.

3.2.1. Process Testing

Process testing is the first step of DPT and is the deductive theory-testing component of the framework. With a series of empirical tests administered on evidence within cases, process testing checks the validity of the specific steps or components of the underlying causal graph. Process testing is ultimately what allows the researcher to make causal claims and adjudicate between competing theories for the case being examined.

Process testing more accurately involves understanding three parts: causal-process observations (CPOs) are the within-case evidence used for process testing; the

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314 Process testing is a synthesis of the most recent advances made in process tracing methodology. I should also note that the term “process testing” is not used by the process tracing methodologists themselves. I adopt the label here to more readily distinguish it with the case reconstruction component of dual process tracing.
process tracing tests (PT tests) are the empirical tests designed to make inferences from the CPOs; and process test assumptions or PT assumptions are the assumptions and generalizations that determine the nature of the inferences. Due to the limitation of space, PT assumptions are discussed in the conclusion and a more detailed discussion is included in the Appendix I (ii) “PT Assumptions.”

a. Causal Process Observations

Causal process observations or CPOs are variously referred across the literature as “within-case observation,” “within-case evidence,” “diagnostic evidence,” “qualitative observation,” or “process-based data.” CPOs form the basic empirical building blocks of process testing. The label was first given by Collier, Brady and Seawright to differentiate more generally between within-case evidence as a basis for causal inference in qualitative analysis and observations that populate a data set in quantitative analysis, termed data set observations or DSOs.\textsuperscript{315,316}

CPOs are pieces of information about the case that with varying degrees of certainty provide direct or indirect evidence for the validity of the theory or some component of it.\textsuperscript{317} This means that not all within case information are CPOs. Rather, CPOs are the subset of case information that have evidentiary value for the theory in


\textsuperscript{316} CPO is defined as “an insight or piece of data that provides information about context or mechanism” contrasted with data-set observation (DTO) “observation in the sense of a row in a rectangular data set” Ibid., 252–253.

\textsuperscript{317} As Collier highlights these do not necessarily have to be qualitative information. They can also involve quantitative data such as frequencies and other counts Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing.”.
question.\textsuperscript{318} CPOs are single pieces of case information or a collection of them that act as empirical nodes, where each node corroborates or falsifies the corresponding theoretical node on the underlying causal graph. The total collection of CPOs within a case serve to identify a single or complex of processes and sequences while disconfirming others.

CPOs are therefore similar to clues for a detective solving a murder case.\textsuperscript{319,320,321} A single clue or a collection of clues shed light on an instance of a hypothesized sequence of motives and actions leading up to the murder. When these clues are pieced together, they serve to identify one or more suspects as guilty, while exonerating others.

Like clues in a murder investigation, a key characteristic of CPOs is that they have different evidentiary or probative values.\textsuperscript{322} As Bennett explains: “Not all data are created equal. With process tracing, not all information is of equal probative value in discriminating between alternative explanations ... What matters is not the amount of evidence, but its contribution to adjudicating among alternative hypotheses.”\textsuperscript{323,324} A

\textsuperscript{318} The understanding adopted here is that CPO's relation to process tracing is analogous to data to statistical analysis. This is slightly different to Collier who states that CPO and process tracing are “two facets of the same research procedure” and “two labels to what is basically the same method” Ib., 823.. Within-case evidence is defined as: “We define within-case evidence as evidence from within the temporal, spatial, or topical domain defined as a case. This can include a great deal of evidence on contextual or background factors that influence how we measure and interpret the variables within a case” Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” 8..

\textsuperscript{319} Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices”; George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences; Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences”; Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation.”

\textsuperscript{320} Another often used analogy is “a doctor trying to diagnose an illness by taking in the details of a patient's case history and symptoms and applying diagnostic tests that can, for example, distinguish between a viral and a bacterial infection.” Bennett, “Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective,” 208.

\textsuperscript{321} Collier's succinct summary of process tracing and teaching aid, for example, actually illustrates the use of process tracing and CPOs by going through Sherlock Holmes story of “Silver Blaze” Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing.”


\textsuperscript{323} Bennett, “Process Tracing and Causal Inference,” 209.

\textsuperscript{324} The idea that “some pieces of evidence are far more discriminating among competing explanations than others” Bennett, “Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective,” 708. also forms the central starting point of
single CPO, such as evidence of a smoking gun held by the suspect, has strong corroborative value. In contrast, evidence of the suspect being present in the state where the murder took place only provides weak evidence. In quantitative analysis, causal inferences can only be made when the representative sample or full set of DSOs are collected. Moreover, increasing the number of observations increases the validity of the inferences.

With process testing, however, causal inference is made from a single CPO, which means that more CPOs are not necessarily better. In fact, in contrast to quantitative analysis, effective process testing would actually rely on the least number of CPOs that can adjudicate between competing theories.

Another way to understand this is that CPOs are “non-comparable observations - observations that pertain to different aspects of a causal or descriptive question.” Each observation is drawn from a different population in order to shed light on different aspects or components of theory and causal graph. Since it is the non-comparable nature or the “different-ness” in the observation that allows the researcher to triangulate on a

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325 King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research.

326 Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices”; Brady and Collier, Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards; Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing”; Goertz and Mahoney, A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences; Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences.”

327 As Gerring notes, what qualitative and quantitative scholars refer to as “causal inference” is in fact different: “When we speak of causal inference... we are concerned about inferences drawn for the studied cases, not for a larger population” Gerring, “Qualitative Methods,” 11. However, note that this is different from Gerring's earlier focus on making inferences about the population from the selected cases. Case selection, he notes, thus has “an inherent problem of inference from the sample (of one or several) to a large population” Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” 296.

328 Since the primary function of CPOs is to confirm or falsify a theory, they are not themselves the empirical building blocks that make up the case narrative. Also, given that multiple CPOs, rather than a single CPO, may have to be used to corroborate a component of the theory, in Figure 6 there is not a direct vertical arrow between the CPOs and the Event Histories.

329 Gerring, “Qualitative Methods,” 5, emphasis original.
specific theoretical component, the question of “What is the n?” is not only difficult to answer, but becomes an irrelevant question for designing process tracing procedures.\textsuperscript{330}

Finally, we can think of CPOs varying and being non-comparable in at least two ways: what part of the theory or causal graph the case information sheds light on, its \textit{object}, and whether it is direct or indirect evidence of the object, its \textit{directness}.\textsuperscript{331} To recount, the objects that the researcher wishes to find case information can be, but are not limited to variables, causal mechanisms, steps of a causal sequence or actions in a strategic interaction or intensive process. CPOs therefore vary by the object or component it is associated with, the $X$, $M$, or $Y$ of the causal graph. We can therefore have “independent variable CPOs” and “mechanisms CPOs” as Mahoney suggests.\textsuperscript{332} But we can also more generally get “Step 1” or “Step 2 CPOs” if the causal graph represents a intensive process. The relevant CPOs are therefore contingent on the specific theoretical model and underlying causal graph. Some theories by construction may not involve independent variables. In some cases, the burden of proof lies heavily on identifying the operation of the explanatory variable thus making the exploration of independent variable CPOs key.\textsuperscript{333,334} In other instances, variable CPOs are relatively trivial and the burden of proof lies on showing that the causal mechanism was correctly operating, highlighting the

\textsuperscript{330} Ibid., 4–5.

\textsuperscript{331} Here, I build on Mahoney, “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research.”’s basic typology of CPOs, but suggest a more expansive and open-ended version. Specifically, I develop on Mahoney's typology of CPOs in Ibid., 125–131. Here, however, he only provides three: independent variable CPOs, mechanism CPO, auxiliary outcome CPO. Later, Mahoney implicitly allows for the differentiation between descriptive and causal inferential CPOs, and more broadly, how there are CPOs for all the components of a theory Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences.”. My organization of CPOs here explicates what is implied in Mahoney's later work Ibid..

\textsuperscript{332} Mahoney, “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research.”

\textsuperscript{333} Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences.”

\textsuperscript{334} For example, several process tracing methodologists point to Nina Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use,” \textit{International Organization} 53, no. 3 (1999): 433–68.’s study of the nuclear taboo and US nuclear policy as an example of process tracing that rests heavily on identifying the actual taboo itself Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing”; Mahoney, “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research.”.
importance of mechanism CPOs.\textsuperscript{335} In yet other instances, CPOs about temporal sequence may be more useful in adjudicating between competing hypotheses. In this regard, the exercise of constructing a full typology of CPOs based on its objects is not very meaningful. We need only note that the modifier to the CPO depends on the relevant objects of the specific theory and causal graph that is being tested.

While a CPO can be direct evidence of the nodes in the causal graph, a CPO can also be indirect. Indirect CPOs are not part of the main causal model but nonetheless provide useful inferential leverage. These consist of auxiliary CPOs and conditional CPOs.\textsuperscript{336} Auxiliary CPOs are additional “traces” or “markers” left subsequent to the occurred objects of explanation.\textsuperscript{337} The idea here is that causes, mechanisms and outcomes are often necessary or sufficient ingredients for certain subsequent traces to be produced. By finding one or more of these auxiliary CPOs, a researcher can infer that the associated object of interest took place.\textsuperscript{338} This is similar to diagnostic tests in medical science,\textsuperscript{339} where additional lab tests utilize separate chemical reactions to diagnose the existence of a bacteria or virus.

Conditional CPOs, on the other hand, are causally prior to the objects of explanation. Certain causes, mechanisms and outcomes are understood to require specific conditions for their operation. Similar to auxiliary CPOs, by finding one or more of these

\textsuperscript{335} Structural theories like balance of power theory exhibit this trait where the correct identification of anarchy and a certain change in the distribution of power would be insufficient to prove that the balance of power theory explains states' balancing behavior. We would additionally want to see CPO mechanisms that prove that the change in distribution of power actually altered state calculations and resulted in the foreign policy outcome.


\textsuperscript{337} Mahoney terms these “Auxiliary outcome CPOs” defined as “outcomes besides the main one of interest that should be present if cause really affects outcome” Mahoney, “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research,” 127.

\textsuperscript{338} Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences,” 576.

\textsuperscript{339} Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” 7.
conditional CPOs, a researcher can infer that the associated object of interest operates.\textsuperscript{340} Skocpol’s classic study of social revolutions illustrates the use of conditional CPOs.\textsuperscript{341} Skocpol’s independent variable is strong rural community solidarity. Private possession of land and having autonomy from landlords and state agents are considered prerequisites for strong rural community solidarity. Therefore, by showing that these conditions do not exist, Skocpol infers that strong rural community solidarity could not have existed in the cases under consideration.

\textit{b. Process Tracing Tests}

Process tracing tests or PT tests are empirical tests that allow the researcher to make inferences from CPOs. Process testing is composed of a series of these PT tests that collectively affirm or falsify the theory in question.\textsuperscript{342} PT tests are what determine whether a piece of case information has probative value, a CPO, and what type of inference the researcher can make from the specific CPO. PT tests are therefore similar to the collection of systematized hunches that determine what clues the detective looks for, and what type of conclusions to take away in the presence or absence of that clue.\textsuperscript{343} Causal inference in process tracing thus lies here with the PT tests.\textsuperscript{344}

\textsuperscript{340} Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences,” 575.
\textsuperscript{341} Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences.”
\textsuperscript{343} This is not the case for process tracing that starts with CPOs and works backwards to determine its evidentiary value, the approach implicitly adopted in Collier's guide to process tracing Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing.”.
\textsuperscript{344} Gerring, “Qualitative Methods.”
PT tests are what most clearly distinguish the recent advances made in process tracing methods to the classical approach. For example, in George and Bennett's *Case Studies and Theory Development*, PT tests are only mentioned once in a footnote and, moreover, mentioned only in the general context of theory testing and case studies.\(^ {345}\) Despite highlighting that process tracing is distinct from historical narrative because the “narrative is interlaced with the language of theory,”\(^ {346}\) applications of the classical approach to process tracing have tended to only loosely connect the theory to the case empirics.\(^ {347}\) The approach roughly translates as utilizing only the bottom and top level of Figure 5 of DPT.\(^ {348}\)

Mahoney, however, argues that this is not enough: “Scholars should be explicit about how specific piece of evidence from within a case support or challenge a given hypothesis. They should not assume that a narrative presentation automatically makes it clear.”\(^ {349}\) Bennett and Checkel similarly write: “We cannot stress enough that theories are usually stated in general terms; they must therefore be operationalized and adapted to the specific processes predicted in particular cases.”\(^ {350}\) PT tests are what provide the missing link between the theory and the specific pieces of case information. The middle two levels in Figure 5 that make up process testing – PT tests and CPOs – are therefore

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345 George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 117, fn.15.
347 In some applications, the theory is outlined and the case study is presented as the sequential instantiation of the stated theoretical model. In other applications, a presentation of a seamless case narrative is followed by an evaluative discussion about the implications the narrative has for the validity of one theory over another.
348 Event history maps are rarely used, though mostly implicit in process tracing in case study.
349 Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation,” 217.
essential for process tracing to provide causal explanations and not simply “glorified historiography.”

PT tests originate from Steven Van Evera’s various empirical tests that differentiate within-case evidence by their uniqueness and certitude. They have been incorporated as a core component of modern process tracing method by Bennett and consist of four tests: hoop tests, smoking gun tests, straw in the wind tests, doubly decisive tests. The four tests are summarized below in Box 1.

In social sciences, however, doubly decisive tests where one CPO can both confirm a hypothesis while disconfirming another are difficult to find. Scholars have thus suggested that combining multiple tests can achieve an overall doubly decisive test. As a result, in practice, process testing will usually consist of the first three PT tests.

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351 Ibid., 9.
354 Though it was only later that CPOs and PT tests were introduced together as parts of the process tracing method Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing”; Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences.”
355 As Bennett explains, “unique predictions are those accounted for only by one of the theories under consideration, while certain predictions are those that must be unequivocally and inexorably true if an explanation is true” Bennett, “Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective,” 706.
357 In fact, smoking gun evidence is also difficult to find. Goertz and Mahoney thus suggest “The typical evidence collected is more like shell casings than a smoking gun: its presence suggests a smoking gun, but the smoking gun itself is not itself observe” Goertz and Mahoney, A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences, 96.
1. **Hoop tests** involve CPOs that are expected to be certain but not unique and thus establish necessary conditions. The hypothesis must “jump through the hoop” to remain under consideration. Failing the test therefore disqualifies the hypothesis, while passing the test does not confirm it. A CPO that passes a hoop test is therefore necessary but not sufficient for the validity of the hypothesis.

2. **Smoking gun tests** involve CPOs that are expected to be unique but not certain and thus establish sufficient conditions. In contrast to hoop tests, the hypothesis is not falsified if it fails a smoking gun test. However, passing the test serves as positive evidence in support of the hypothesis. A CPO that passes a smoking gun test is therefore sufficient but not necessary for the validity of the hypothesis.

3. **Straw in the wind tests** involve CPOs that are expected to be neither unique nor certain and thus establish probabilistic conditions. Failing or passing the test only incrementally decreases or increases confidence in the hypothesis. A CPO used in a straw in the wind test therefore has less probative value than the previous two PT tests as it establishes neither a necessary nor sufficient condition. They thus provide weak or circumstantial evidence. However, if the results of multiple straw in the wind test all point in the same direction, this can lend strong support or cast strong doubt on the hypothesis.

4. **Doubly decisive tests** involve CPOs that are expected to be both unique and certain and thus establish conditions that are both necessary and sufficient. Failing the test falsifies the hypothesis, while passing the test confirms it. A CPO that passes a doubly decisive test is therefore both necessary and sufficient for the validity of the hypothesis, allowing for the identification of a necessary and sufficient condition.

Box 1. Four process tests in process tracing
3.2.2. Case Reconstruction

One short CCTV footage of a suspect murdering the victim is decisive in confirming a suspect’s guilt. This is Van Evera’s example of a doubly decisive test.\(^{358}\) However, it would be deeply unsatisfactory if the murder case was closed before the detective offers full details of the motives and events that led up to the murder. Likewise, even if the process tests conclusively adjudicate between competing theories, process tracing would be incomplete as we would also want a satisfactory account of the case that includes the relevant substantive case knowledge.

Case reconstruction provides this function. It is the second component of DPT and the complementary procedure to process testing. It is the procedure by which the researcher systematically provides a description of the correct sequence of events that led up to the outcome of interest.

If process testing summarizes the recent developments in process tracing, case reconstruction is a reformulation of the more classical understanding of process tracing as the method of tracing entire processes of a case. The case reconstruction procedure is thus developed in direct response to the concerns noted earlier that the recent trajectory of process tracing methodology is coming at the cost of valuable narrative and substantive knowledge relating to the case being examined.\(^{359}\)

One way to systematically trace entire processes is offered by Waldner, who suggests the use of event-history maps represented by the top-most level of Figure


\(^{359}\) Tannenwald, “Process Tracing and Security Studies”; Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference.”
While a causal graph represents the abstract causal model of a theory, the event-history map represents the unit-level causal effects, the instantiation of the general relation in the specific case. Each causal variable or processual step of the causal graph is therefore represented as a specific event on the event-history map and the researcher connects each node of the event-history map to provide a seamless narrative of the case. As Waldner argues, tracing processes is not based on the causal graph but the event-history map, the process “constituted by the events that instantiate the [causal] graph, in all their contextual specificity.”

Building on Waldner’s framework, I suggest, however, that the process should be traced as a reconstructive procedure - a revision or correction to the narrative of events predicted by competing causal graphs and corresponding event-history maps.

In the process testing component of process tracing, the results may confirm the validity of one intensive process while disconfirming others. However, a variety of other outcomes are also possible that Waldner’s framework provides limited guidance for: different nodes of each causal graph may be valid; all causal graphs may be simultaneously valid due to conjunction of causes and processes; and at certain nodes, all theorized causal graphs may be incorrect and the researcher may find in its place an unanticipated step, move, motive or cause to have operated. Since each causal graph has an associated event-history map, the correct or true process that is eventually uncovered is actually an amalgamation of the correct, incorrect and unanticipated nodes of all the event-history maps.

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361 Waldner’s causal graph however has a more specific construction. Understood as acyclic graphs Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference.”
362 Ibid., 247.
In contrast to the classical approach of providing a seamless chronological recounting of the correct case narrative, I therefore suggest that the researcher should provide a revised narrative. This is an account that explicitly incorporates the results of the process tests and reports which or which part of the predicted event-history map is correct. Therefore, while case reconstruction does resemble the classical approach to process tracing, it differs in that it explicitly builds on the process test results, incorporating both the positive and negative results of PT tests. Case reconstruction therefore provides substantive case knowledge in the form of a theoretically-guided reconstructed narrative.

The reconstructive approach to tracing processes better connects the account of the case with the theory and avoids common pitfalls associated with the classical process tracing approach. First, case reconstruction avoids a hegemonic narrative of a case by laying bare multiple possible event-histories. Writing up a case study has often taken the form of one seamless narrative. This makes it difficult to ascertain at which points competing explanations are valid and can easily lead to biasing one theory over another. By discussing the actual empirics in light of the multiple possible event-histories, a reconstructive framework forces the researcher to pay due attention to reporting events that may undermine the preferred narrative as well as events that should but did not occur.

The intuition here is not unlike counterfactual reasoning employed in case studies, where alternative un-instantiated outcomes or event histories are described as “mental experiment” James D. Fearon, “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science,” World Politics 43, no. 2 (1991): 169–95; George and Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences; Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, eds., Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 167–170. The difference with case reconstruction is that the researcher should also report negative results, the processes or events that the theories failed to anticipate but the researcher finds to be true when conducting the case study. In fact, process tracing is based on counterfactual [check citation].
Second, case reconstruction also avoids “just-so” narratives where negative results are explained away in an ad hoc manner. Unlike null findings in statistical analysis where the interpretation is not always straightforward, negative results in process tracing often speak for themselves. They contain essential information for the correct narrative of the case as well as valuable substantive case knowledge. For example, when uncovering the motive of a murderer, a detective’s hypotheses may be wrong. However, the “fact” that the detective finds that serves to falsify the hypothesis, is best incorporated in the final case report. The easy mistake to make here with classical process tracing approaches, however, is that disconfirming facts may be incorporated in the narrative with ad hoc modifications to the theory or obfuscated by the narrative entirely. By incorporating but flagging negative findings, the researcher can avoid these mistakes thus providing grounds to properly evaluate the validity of the theory and also better capitalize on these instances for inductive theory building purposes later in the analysis.

Process tracing should differ to historical narrative because it “interlaces narrative with the language of theory” to provide an “analytical explanation” rather than the simple description of events. Most recently, Falleti defined process tracing as “the temporal and causal analysis of the sequences of events that constitute the process of interest. [Where] Such process must be clearly conceptualized, both theoretically and operationally, with reference to previous theories.”

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364 In Sherlock Holmes’ *Silver Blaze*, the initial hypothesis was that the murder was financially motivated. Sherlock Holmes, however, finds evidence of a secret love affair that falsifies the hypothesis. Here, the final case report would be incomplete if we only noted that the hypothesis was falsified.
366 Although in the classic formulation, one of the variants of process tracing involves simple description chronologically George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.
process tracing should be “guided by theory to identify the relevant events that constitute the sequence or process of interest,” balancing how to “illustrate, generate and (when used in combination with the comparative method) test theory.”

While these are all good ideas, it is still difficult to know how to apply process tracing techniques and achieve various research design goals. The DPT framework takes many of the good advice and ideas of process tracing in recent years and operationalizes into a workable framework that systematizes how theory, theory tests, case information and narrative can be interlaced to provide a better balance of valid explanation and substantive narrative.

3.3. DPT in practice

![Figure 6. Application of the DPT](image)

In practice, DPT method is a three-part process. In step 1, the researcher must clarify the causal graph to be tested for the given case. Falleti suggest that the researcher must have

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369 Ibid., 458, parenthesis original.
“profound knowledge of the competing theories,” “deep familiarity with the analyzed cases,” and that “the researcher must tap into her sociological and political imagination in order to specify the significant steps or events of the process of interest, identify relevant theories, derive intervening variables and infer causal mechanisms.”

Since these prerequisites are difficult to meet for many researchers, one way to specify intensive processes as a causal graph without deep knowledge of the case is to inductively derive a generalized sequence of events from the preliminary examination of the “readily available” case knowledge, such as those used to delineate the viable set of prototypical cases.

In my research, clarifying a testable sequence of institutional strategic competition between the U.S. and China, involved looking at media reports and analyses regarding to the two FTAs in question, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). While it remained to be tested whether U.S. and Chinese governments viewed themselves to be in strategic competition with each other with TPP and RCEP being their respective FTA strategies, the preliminary case information that included easily accessible information on the start dates of these FTAs allowed me to conceptualize a potential strategic sequence. The TPP was theorized to be initiated as U.S.’s institutional strategy against China around 2006-2010, the RCEP as the competitive response by China around 2011-2012, and, finally, the TPP and RCEP was treated to be at the height of competition over regional rules of trade once the TPP was ratified at the end of 2015. In this way, absent deep case knowledge, I was

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370 Ibid., 461.
371 Examination of “readily available case knowledge” is the preliminary review of scholarly literature, media reports, policy papers and/or conducting preliminary interviews where appropriate.
able to construct a testable causal graph of interactional intensive processes between the U.S. and China.

In step 2, the researcher carries out process testing based on the specified causal graphs. Process testing is the first component of dual process tracing and involves a series of PT tests in conjunction with corresponding causal process observations (CPOs). Process testing is the deductive theory testing component of DPT where each PT test provides a test for specific points or components of the specified causal graphs to check its validity. Process testing is – and must be – carried out based on a different set of sources than those that informed the construction of the causal graph in the first step of DPT.

In my research, for example, in order to test whether the U.S. truly viewed itself to be in competition with China in the form of TPP vs. RCEP, I gathered several sources of evidence to test the final node of the causal graph where U.S.-China competition was deemed to be at its height from media reports. Each test formed a “straw-in-the-wind” test where passing or failing the test contributed incrementally to the overall conclusion. The “conventional understanding” of the case was first tested in the form of analyzing the top 11 web contents from Google searching “TPP” “RCEP” and “TPP RCEP” for a week in October 2016.\textsuperscript{372} Then, 31 primary sources released by the Obama and senior U.S. officials in the Obama administration between January 2015 and November 2016 was collected and analyzed, with roughly one statement or official document released for

\textsuperscript{372} All searches were conducted for a week between 23rd and 30th of October 2016, where the search hits remained stable despite some changes in the order of their presentation. From the first page of returned hits, I dropped irrelevant pages (e.g. Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist, for RCEP), government and advocacy group websites as well as a handful of articles pertaining mainly to domestic politics, such as “45 times Clinton pushed the trade bill she now opposes” from CNN. Of the total of 31 Google hits on the three key words, a total of 11 web pages were selected for examination, of which one was an overlap (the RCEP Wikipedia page came up for both “RCEP” and “TPP RCEP”). For the full list of search results and the selection, see Appendix II (ii)
every month.\textsuperscript{373} Finally, several semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and former U.S. officials. I found that evidence from common knowledge and official statements all “blew in the same direction,” confirming that U.S. and China were in competition with TPP and RCEP. However, I found that all interview results strongly blew in the opposite direction. Judging that the latter set of CPOs have higher probative value in inferring true perceptions and responses by the U.S. government than the former, I was able to conclude that the theorized intensive process was false for the final node of the causal graph.

In step 3, the researcher provides \textit{case reconstruction}. Case reconstruction is the second component of DPT, which building off the process testing results, systematically provides a description of the correct sequence of events that led up to the outcome of interest. This involves specifying the event-history maps that correspond to the causal graphs. Then, based on the process testing results, case reconstruction involves providing a revision or correction of the narrative of events predicted by the competing event-history maps.

Case reconstruction, in my research, involved providing a narrative of when and where competition, intentional or not, operated or did not operate as a cause behind the change in regional institutions for the given case. In light of deeply examining specifically temporal junctures that coincided with my causal graph and adjudicating which part of the intensive process was valid or false, I was then able to “reconstruct” the

\textsuperscript{373} The sources were collected by the author over time through various means; by searching statements made by U.S. officials on U.S. government websites, searching first-hand reports of released statements and comments made by officials by reliable media outlets, re-tracing primary sources that were cited but only dealt with in a cursory fashion in secondary material, and, for some, attending the delivered public talks in person. The overall inferences that are made from the sources are therefore subject to selection bias. The full reference for the sources and associated links are reported in Appendix II (iii)
narrative based on what I had found to be true. This meant, I could provide a revisionist narrative of the final stages of the so-called U.S.-China competition. Instead of U.S. and China both perceiving each other to be in competition, U.S. popular narrative and official statements fed off each other to construct a narrative of U.S.-China competition. Behind closed doors, the narrative was used as primarily a framing strategy by the Obama administration to muster domestic support for passing the TPP, which in turn, reinforced China’s perception that U.S. was using TPP as an FTA strategy against China.

4. Conclusion

Many important questions in IR are motivated by normative concerns. As IR scholars, our job is then to systematize these concerns into competing theories, scientifically test the validity of these claims, and produce concrete empirical results off of which we can better understand international phenomena, critically engage in public discourse and perhaps even contribute to finding solutions for them. As Keohane argues, in IR, “Our normative purposes infuse our positive analysis.”

When many of the phenomena involve streams of complex interactions and processes, the standard formulation of research questions “under what conditions does $X$ cause $Y$ through mechanism $M$?” fails to capture the entirety of pressing questions in IR. If deemed important, the researcher should also have the choice and tools to legitimately ask and scientifically pursue questions regarding international processes sui generis.

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This article provides the first steps to achieve this. From discussions on causation dominated by covariation and mechanistic models, I parsed out the concept of intensive processes for which the initial trigger conditions or eventual outcomes are ontologically independent or analytical less interesting. In order to study intensive processes, the article then developed two different case study techniques that can be used together: a case selection method for selecting prototypical cases and the dual process tracing (DPT) method, a within-case examination technique. These two techniques further balance two research goals of (1) making within-case inferences and (2) contributing substantive knowledge about the case or the phenomena in which the case is embedded.

The prototypical case selection method allows researchers to select cases for which the researcher has limited knowledge of the universe of cases, maximizing the chances of finding intensive processes to examine and the theoretical and substantive returns for examining the case closely. The DPT method contributes more broadly to the process tracing literature by systematizing two strands of process tracing approaches. Rather than the structure of common case study narratives that take the form of “U.S. is competing with China, as President Trump said in his speech X”, where X is a quote and y is a citation, the DPT separates the exercise of making inferences from evidence with the provision of a substantive narrative. Process testing redirects the researcher to first focus her attention on the nature of Xs, the CPOs, such that the analytical work is done by testing a variety of CPOs to bear on the causal or temporal claim, discussing the probative value of the Xs, and estimating the confidence the researcher has with the claim she is making. The next step of case reconstruction, then, ensures that the researcher returns to complete the provision of a full and rich case narrative to illuminate what
actually happened for the given intensive process. Table 1 below summarizes the type and objective of the two proposed methods to study intensive processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of case study technique</th>
<th>(1) Case Selection</th>
<th>(2) Within-case examination</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Prototypical Case selection</td>
<td>Within-case inference</td>
<td>Methodological criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual process tracing (DPT)</td>
<td>Substantive contribution</td>
<td>Theoretical and Substantive criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Within-case inference</td>
<td>Methodological criteria</td>
<td>Process Testing</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Substantive contribution</td>
<td>Theoretical and Substantive criteria</td>
<td>Case Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1: Type and objectives of proposed methods

There are two main limitations to the proposed case study techniques. First, there is an issue of generalizability and external validity. There is a well-understood trade-off between internal and external validity from making within or cross-case inferences. Since the operation of causal mechanisms and processes can vary by context, without providing a test for causal homogeneity between cases or procedures to ensure “exchangeability” between cases, within-case inferences and process tracing results by themselves cannot say anything about the degree to which mechanisms and processes

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376 As Seawright points out, large-n cross-case analysis focuses on measuring causal effect, while small-n within-case analysis is focused on identifying a causal mechanism Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*.
380 The justification of treating cases as “exchangeable” is achieved through random sampling of cases, which is not done here where prototypical case selection is a non-random sampling technique.
are portable across different conditions and contexts.\textsuperscript{381} It is thus important to be clear up front that the case study method introduced here is immediately concerned with making within-case inferences and ensuring internal validity. The lack of generalizability is also the natural cost paid for pursuing the second objective, here, which is to provide the fullest account of the cases selected for intensive examination.

The element where the case study on intensive processes contributes to the generalizable knowledge is in the theory-centric design of the prototypical case selection technique and DPT. The theory is not only devised to explain a single case, but the prototypical case and the case reconstruction component builds in the process of inductively updating our initial theory of intensive processes. Although a single or small-n prototypical case study does not directly engage in the empirical task for testing and uncovering the intensive processes at the population level, it contributes theoretically to this task and informs the researcher about possible characteristics to look for when doing cross-case examination. It is therefore very important that a prototypical case study include an inductive theory-updating component after the process tests and case reconstruction is completed. If the purpose of the theory and the case reconstruction was purely idiographic,\textsuperscript{382} there will be little need to update the theory after it has been tested.


\textsuperscript{382} The distinction in case study function is usually seen as \textit{nomothetic} or \textit{idiographic}. \textit{Nomothetic} case studies seek to test a general theory on a select number of representative cases Gerring, “Single-Outcome Studies: A Methodological Primer”; Levy, “Case Studies: Types, Designs and Logics of Inference.”. The primary purpose is thus to shed light on the general category of phenomena, i.e. the population of cases Gerring, “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?”; Gerring, \textit{Case Study Research: Principles and Practices}; Seawright and Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.”. The nomothetic case study takes a case as “an instance of a theoretical class of events” Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices”; George and Bennett, \textit{Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences}; Gerring, “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?”; Gerring, \textit{Case Study Research: Principles and Practices}. The question of “what is this a case of?” becomes the central starting point for case study design
While the generalizability of results from a prototypical case study is very limited, the
generalizability of the theory is still an open-ended question. The theory arrived at the end
of the prototypical case study is ready to be tested and provides the necessary first step in setting up cross-case research or mixed-method designs that may come afterwards.

Second, many of the methodological procedures rely on the researcher’s subjective assessments. For the prototypical case selection strategy, the suggested procedures require the researcher to assign values on each of the three prototypical case criteria for a given case. However, assessments of the case’s values may differ between researchers for a variety of reasons including different prior knowledge and familiarity of cases and related theories as well as the boundaries of what constitutes “readily available” case knowledge on which the researcher carries out the preliminary examination. The exact ‘casing’ of each viable prototypical case can also be challenged.\textsuperscript{383} In other words, the combination and sequence of events that constitute a

“case” for further examination using DPT may be different for different researchers. For example, in my research, there may be more or less regional institutions that should be cased together; while certain institutions should be dropped altogether in certain cases, in others they may be better considered across multiple cases.

The difficulty of arriving at objective assessments and assumptions is also one of the central concerns of process testing that is based formally or informally on Bayesian logic. As discussed further in the Appendix I (ii), whether a process test for a piece of within-case evidence constitutes a hoop test or a straw-in-the-wind test is dependent on the PT assumptions, the priors that the researcher assigns to the likelihood that a piece of evidence adjudicates between two competing hypotheses. Humphreys and Jacobs therefore treat the four PT tests as “special cases” in a “probative-value space” where certainty and uniqueness of clues are actually on a continuum, with the probative value of a specific piece of evidence being determined by the absolute and relative probability of that the evidence is found in cases where the theory is true and false. As process tracing methodologists point out, however, in practice, it is difficult to determine what the correct assumptions are and what type of PT test to carry out. Moreover, since the PT assumptions rely on familiarity or even expert knowledge of the case, it is also

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386 For the “probative-value space” see Figure 1 in Ibid., 659..
388 This is analogous to the problem of assigning numerical value to Bennett's Bayesian priors Bennett, “Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective.”. It may be the case that many hypotheses may uniqueness and certainty and therefore become straw in the wind tests with limited inferential value Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference,” 244..
difficult for the research community to cross-check the validity of the chosen PT assumptions.\textsuperscript{389,390}

Since issues surrounding the assigning of priors in process tracing methods has been discussed more comprehensively, particularly in the formal context by Humphreys and Jacobs,\textsuperscript{391} we can build on these insights to inform good practices for prototypical case selection. The prototypical case selection technique adopts what Humphreys and Jacobs refers to as “subjective Bayes perspective” and takes the authors’ advice on grounding priors “on systematic measure of collective beliefs, drawn for instance from a survey of existing findings or of experts in the relevant field.”\textsuperscript{392,393} The assessments of a case’s likelihood to exhibit intensive processes as well as its theoretical and substantive importance are thus grounded in the preliminary examination of “readily available” information about the phenomena of interest including academic literature, think tank and media reports as well as unstructured preliminary interviews where appropriate. The subjective priors in the prototypical cases thus reflect the researcher’s assessment of what we can more accurately call the sociological priors about likelihood, as well as the theoretical and substantive importance as understood in the media, literature and by experts.

The point here is not to select the correct prototypical cases or achieve the correct ‘casing’ of sequential events from the onset, but to arrive at reasonable starting

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\textsuperscript{389} Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices.”
\textsuperscript{390} Gerring, for example, thus suggests the possibility of a “crowd-based approach” to case study research, where a panel of experts are surveyed randomly on each point of judgment and then cumulated for an overall inference Gerring, “Qualitative Methods,” 14.
\textsuperscript{391} Humphreys and Jacobs, “Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach,” 656–658.
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid., 672, emphasis original.
benchmarks that many researchers, even without expert case knowledge, can achieve through readily accessible knowledge on the cases. Afterwards, the researcher can use process tracing to systematically test the case and challenge the boundaries of the original ‘casing,’ updating our subjective sociological priors if need be. That is, contribute to our collective understanding about the phenomena both substantively and theoretically.

For this to work, the researcher must report and clearly demarcate the inductive component of the project that informs the preliminary expectations and the theory-testing component of the project that challenges and updates this. This not only includes expectations of intensive processes operating within the cases, but also the boundaries of the cases themselves.

Process tracing methodologists argue that the foundations for best practices in process tracing starts with being as explicit and transparent as possible, emphasizing the "conditional nature of inference, with conclusions reported as conditional on a clearly specified set of priors,"394,395 In other words, being clear and upfront about the PT assumptions.396 The same applies for prototypical case selection where the researcher should be as explicit and transparent as possible about the research procedures and report the scope of sources used for preliminary analysis as well as the logic behind the final selection of cases from the viable set of prototypical cases.397

394 Humphreys and Jacobs, “Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach,” 671, emphasis original.
395 Humphreys and Jacobs suggest as good practice that researchers should also illustrate the sensitivity of the inferences depending on different values on the priors Ibid., 672.
396 Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation,” 217.
397 Bennett and Checkel similarly remind us that transparency should be valued over the strength of the analytical conclusion: “When the evidence does not allow high levels of confidence in supporting some hypotheses and discounting others, it is important to acknowledge the level of uncertainty that remains. Some may worry that such transparency will undercut their argument. However, the opposite is in fact the case. The explanation – its veracity and the soundness of its causal inferences – will only be enhanced. Indeed, the intellectual honesty and rigor of this approach is vastly better than the so-called “gladiator style
While the prototypical case selection procedures are not water tight, it provides the most developed criteria for selecting cases for making within-case inferences and the only criteria for testing theories that model intensive processes. It provides reasonable guidelines where they do not exist, and most importantly, sets benchmarks to enhance transparency for case selection procedures. The added transparency should invite other researchers to identify specific points for improvement such as whether a case is as theoretically prominent as the researcher assesses or whether there is a more useful criterion altogether. The prototypical case selection strategy should thus offer a reasonable starting point for selecting cases for examining processes and interactions within them, while DPT offers a more systematized method of process tracing to test and uncover these intensive processes in IR.

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Unintended Institutional Competition?

The Misunderstood U.S.-China Strategic Rivalry in “TPP vs. RCEP”

After the collapse of the Doha Rounds and the stalling of the WTO multilateral liberalization process in the mid-2000s, states moved from politicking for favorable trade rules within the multilateral framework to competing with different FTA frameworks. The current liberal trade order is thus characterized by the parallel development of different regional and mega-regional liberalization frameworks including the TPP, TTIP, RCEP and most recently JEEPA. Different coalitions of states are pushing different FTA frameworks in order to maximize their institutional power in the post-Doha Round world and lock-in favorable trade laws that allow their domestic firms and businesses to flourish. States are thus engaging in strategic competition over defining regional and mega-regional trade order in what has been variously labeled “competitive multilateralism” and “competitive regionalism.”

At the core of the current understanding of competitive regionalism, and institutional competition more broadly, is a popular narrative that one of the key battlegrounds for U.S.-China rivalry is over East Asia’s regional trade order: the U.S with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and China with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).  

399 “Mega-FTAs” or “mega-regional FTAs” contrasts to “bilateral” FTAs between two countries, “multilateral” FTAs referring to global level trade agreements under the WTO framework, “plurilateral” FTAs that consist of a handful of countries. Technically “mega-FTAs” are different to “regional FTAs” in that the latter defines membership by geographic scope, while the former can be pan-regional. Recently mega-FTAs have come to describe TPP, RCEP in the Asia-Pacific and TTIP for U.S-EU, such that mega-FTAs will be used synonymously with regional FTAs.
401 The term “competitive regionalism” has been used earlier by academics to describe a slightly different mechanism of FTA diffusion, Mireya Solis, Barbara Stallings, and Saori N. Katada, eds., Competitive Regionalism: FTA Diffusion in the Pacific Rim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). More recently, it has been used to refer to a broader set of phenomena where states compete over regional institutions with Min Ye varying adopting the label “competing cooperation,” “contesting regionalism” as well as “competitive regionalism” and “competitive cooperation.” See Min Ye, “China and Competing Cooperation in Asia-Pacific: TPP, RCEP, and the New Silk Road,” Asian Security 11, no. 3 (December 2015): 206–24., Min Ye, “Reconciling Alternative Scenarios,” The Asan Forum 4, no. 2 (April 29, 2016).
(RCEP). Even after the collapse of the original TPP-12 following Trump’s withdrawal from TPP in January 2017, the discourse surrounding East Asia’s liberalization process is still dominated by the narrative of institutional competition between the U.S. and China.

The New York Times, for example, writes that the TPP “was conceived as a vital move in the increasingly tense chess match between China and the United States for economic and military influence in the fastest-growing and most strategically uncertain part of the world… And its defeat is an unalloyed triumph for China.”

The conventional understanding of the TPP vs. RCEP case is that the U.S.-led TPP first emerged in 2009 as the economic pillar of Obama’s “pivot to Asia” and as a buttress against China’s rising influence in the region. China then responded in kind by pushing for an alternative regional FTA, the RCEP in 2012. With TPP’s earlier conclusion in 2015, the strategic competition over East Asia’s trade order was in favor of the U.S. However, with Trump’s withdrawal from the TPP early 2017, China is in the lead with the RCEP scheduled to be completed at the end of 2017.

At the most basic level, institutional competition is therefore commonly understood as the interlocking strategic interaction between states with their respective FTAs. One

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402 Referring to the original format that included 12 members: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the US and Vietnam.


responding to another in a strategic game to define the regional rules of trade. But was TPP and RCEP actually a function of U.S.-China rivalry? And more generally, how do states strategically compete over regional or mega-regional trade order?

Despite the political salience of competitive institutionalism, TPP, RCEP, and Sino-American relations more broadly, our understanding of institutional competition and the case of East Asia is still theoretically underdeveloped and empirically scattered. Public discourse and media coverage has been quick to adopt U.S.-China rivalry as the key narrative covering the evolution of TPP and RCEP. However, the narrative rarely discloses any supporting evidence, acting more as an untested assertion.

Country-experts have identified that regional FTAs play a central role in U.S. regional foreign policy as bolstering “regional architecture” and a “rule based order” and in China’s foreign policy as part of its “periphery diplomacy” (zhoubian waijiao) and the construction of the “community of common destiny” (zhoubian mingyun gongtongti). However, there is no systemic examination of how the regional FTA policies of the two most significant countries have interacted.

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Regional experts in the field of East Asian IR\(^4\) and the think tank community\(^5\) have been describing the phenomenon of institutional competition and competitive regionalism. Although providing a variety of different terms for the phenomenon from “rival regionalisms,” to “competitive regionalism” and “competitive cooperation,” the terms are largely atheoretical and loosely coupled with descriptive empirics about the development of competing FTA frameworks. Without a specified theory or a well-defined concept of competitive regionalism, it is unclear what exactly we are looking at, how confident we can be that the case narrative supports the notion that there is institutional competition in East Asia, and, finally, how we might generalize the findings beyond the case of East Asian U.S.-China case to understand the broader phenomenon of competitive institutionalism.

The state of IR theory also lags behind the increasing salience of institutional competition in world politics. The paradigmatic debates in the early 90s between realism and liberalism continue to structure and constrain our theoretical understanding that either international institutions constrain power and competition, or power politics makes international institutions meaningless. The nuanced theoretical middle ground where power-driven states compete with each other with and over power-constraining international institutions has thus been barely developed and tested.\(^6\) A handful of important exceptions


have started to emerge with regime complexity theory, institutional balancing theory, and contested multilateralism. However, these theories provide limited guidance in understanding how states use international institutions against each other.

This article provides the first theory-driven empirical investigation of U.S.-China competition over East Asia’s trade order. It uses TPP and RCEP as a prototypical case of the emerging phenomena of competitive institutionalism with two specific aims: first, it empirically tests the conventional understanding that the U.S. and Chinese governments were engaging in competitive regionalism using TPP and RCEP. Second, it capitalizes on the empirical tests and any falsifying evidence to theory-build, updating our general understanding about the nature of strategic interaction in competitive institutionalism. The article thus contributes both empirically to the state of the empirical case knowledge of East Asian regionalism and U.S.-China relations, and theoretically by providing an important update to our general understanding of how institutional competition might operate.

I find that the conventional understanding of institutional competition in the TPP vs. RCEP case is wrong at crucial points in the development of the two FTAs. I find that the TPP was never conceived by the U.S. as an institutional strategy against China, the RCEP was not

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416 Morse and Keohane, “Contested Multilateralism.”

China’s response to the TPP, and the conventional understanding of U.S.-China competition as “TPP vs. RCEP” was in large part the product of the Obama administration’s framing strategy to mobilize domestic support for the TPP.

Importantly, I find that despite the relatively benign intentions behind the initial construction of the TPP, problems of misperception, uncertainty, and poor signaling of intentions triggered competition over FTAs between the U.S. and China. At the heart of the TPP vs. RCEP case thus lies the difficulty of distinguishing between intentions, justifications and political rhetoric behind regional FTA building by U.S. and China, which together served to lock both countries into institutional competition irrespective of their original intentions.

Analogous to how various political pathologies generate power competition between states in defensive realism, I find that similar political pathologies also operate to generate competition over international institutions where none was perhaps intended. In light of the empirics, I therefore update our conventional understanding of institutional competition with a model of unintended institutional competition.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: first, from stylized accounts of institutional competition in the TPP vs. RCEP case, I clarify competitive institutionalism as a simple model of strategic interaction between two states. I then describe the method by which the model can be tested, introducing the prototypical case selection and dual process tracing (DPT) methods, two case study techniques developed specifically to examine phenomena that are processual or interactional like institutional competition. Second, I test the theory of institutional competition and report the findings in three empirical sub-sections that draw on a comprehensive set of primary and secondary Chinese and English sources. Third, building on the test results, I first provide a revised narrative of the TPP vs. RCEP case, and then update the theory of institutional competition as a defensive realist model of unintended institutional
competition. I conclude by discussing the policy implications that unintended institutional competition dynamics have for U.S.-China relations and East Asia’s regional architecture.

1. THEORY and METHOD

1.1. A Theory of Competitive Institutionalism

The stylized narrative of competitive regionalism in East Asia is that the U.S. created TPP as a check on China’s rising influence in the region, then, threatened by U.S. gaining greater influence over East Asia’s future trade laws with the launch of the TPP, China responded in kind with the RCEP. Thereafter, the push to conclude TPP and RCEP was a function of U.S.-China competition.

In its general form, institutional competition can be thought of as a process of strategic interaction between two states competing to define the regional rules of trade. States strive for greater relative institutional power over defining the process and outcome of regionalism and the competition for institutional power manifests as an interlocking strategic sequence. One states’ strategy of creating a regional FTA group to define the regional rules of trade is followed by another state’s strategic response in the shape of an alternative regional FTA group. In this manner, two competing FTA frameworks come to define the institutional landscape of regional trade like two military alliances pitted against each other on the battleground to dominate the theater of war.

There are three assumptions made in this basic model of competitive institutionalism. First, states care about relative institutional power. Institutional power here is defined as the ability to set the rules, agendas, norms and customs of international institutions to get other
states to do what they would otherwise not do." Institutional power is therefore non-coercive in form and a combination of the “second” and “third” faces of power associated with the definitions put forward by Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes respectively. Institutional power is thus distinct from IR’s most common conceptions of power, “hard power” or “coercive power.” The domain of institutional power exclusively concerns international institutions and regimes, and in our case regional FTAs. It is thus also distinct from soft power, another non-coercive form of power, which has a much wider domain that affects the “hearts and minds” of citizens in other states. Finally, states in competition with each other, care about the relative amount of institutional power they possess. In other words, relative to their competitor, a state wants greater ability and influence over how the international or regional trade rules are set.

Second, a state constructs its own regional FTA as an institutional strategy to increase their institutional power. By constructing and leading a new institutional grouping of the state’s choosing, the state maximizes its ability to influence the regional trade rules and norms to be institutionalized, thus allowing the state to lock-in the most favorable trade arrangement for its domestic businesses. This idea is similar to Morse and Keohane’s “competitive regime creation” where a state “may create a new multilateral forum with

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420 Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View, 2nd ed. (MacMillan, 2005).
421 Second face of power is agenda-setting power, the ability to influence the decision-making agenda and process by influencing the range of choices from which decisions are made. Third face of power is the ability to shape what people want and believe, such as through the spread of norms and the creation of interests and identities. A can get B to do something B would not otherwise do by affecting B’s preferences, wants, or thoughts. For an overview of the different faces of power refer to Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, David G. Victor, and Yonatan Lupu, “Political Science Research on International Law: The State of the Field,” American Journal of International Law 106, no. 1 (2012): 47–97; David A. Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” in Handbook of International Relations, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons, 2nd ed. (Sage Publications, 2013).
422 Nye for example suggests that “[w]hether a particular asset is an attractive soft power resource can be measured through polls or focus groups,” Joseph Jr. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 616 (2008): 95.
different rules and practices that more closely align with its interests.”\textsuperscript{423} However, it differs in that the grouping is not necessarily intended “to affect the rules or mission of existing institutions” by creating “additional bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the status quo institution.”\textsuperscript{424} In other words, creating a regional FTA grouping is to set advantageous trade rules that other states will have to abide by, and not necessarily to affect the existing WTO multilateral process. We can additionally think that when constructing a new group, excluding the competitor state from this grouping is an attractive institutional design feature. By first surrounding itself with friends and allies that have similar preference structures and identities,\textsuperscript{425} the state maximizes its chances that the negotiation process does not break down and a trade agreement is actually reached. Moreover, it heightens the chances that the contents of the agreement are in closer alignment with the state’s national interests and its vision of a regional trade order. By excluding the competitor from the trade negotiations, the state denies it any chance to voice its preferences, affect the contents of the agreement and ultimately benefit from the agreement.

Third, there is strategic interdependence between two competitive states. This means that the competitor state’s previous actions and expectations of its future responses figure in the state’s calculus when constructing its regional FTA grouping. Therefore, the institutional strategies between two states are interlocking because they are competitive responses to each other. At each turn, a state is thus conscious that it is making relative institutional power gains vis-à-vis a competitor state.\textsuperscript{426}

Institutional competition or competitive regionalism can thus be understood as analogous to Morse and Keohane’s understanding of “competitive multilateralism” in that

\textsuperscript{423} Morse and Keohane, “Contested Multilateralism,” 398.
\textsuperscript{424} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{425} Identities, in the social constructivist sense of the term that they share similar norms, values, and amity-enmity relations with other states.
\textsuperscript{426} Throughout this article, unless stated otherwise, “strategic” thus refers to the nature of interaction and use of international institutions and not the broader meaning referring to military dimension of foreign policy.
institutional competition describes both situation and strategies.\textsuperscript{427} It describes both the situation whereby states are competing over regionalism and also the specific state strategies of constructing their own regional FTAs against one another.

For the purposes of research design, I treat the phenomenon of competitive institutionalism as an “intensive process” – streams of processual phenomena for which the conditions and eventual outputs are ontologically distinct or of lesser analytical interest.\textsuperscript{428} Falleti defines intensive process as that which “mediate[s] between a putative cause and the outcome of interest but do not include the triggering cause or the outcome.”\textsuperscript{429} Thus, when analyzing intensive processes, the researcher “does not include the analysis of the cause, other than considering it as an initial trigger” and looks to “focus on the sequencing of events.”\textsuperscript{430} Instead of understanding competitive institutionalism in traditional covariational or mechanistic terms and modeling the phenomenon as “X causes Y through mechanism M,” understanding competitive institutionalism as an intensive process allows us to treat the processes of competitive interaction as the central object of our theory, method, and empirical investigation.

1.2. Methodology

The study adopts the prototypical case selection and the dual process tracing (DPT) method. The two case study techniques are developed specifically to examine intensive processes.\textsuperscript{431} They deal with the methodological questions of how to select cases for examining intensive

\textsuperscript{427} Morse and Keohane, “Contested Multilateralism.”
\textsuperscript{430} Ibid., 450.
processes and how to conduct within-case analysis for the selected cases in order to test and update our theories of intensive processes.

1.2.1. **Prototypical Case Selection**

Prototypical cases are cases whose examination would have the most utility when the population of cases is unknown or difficult to know *ex ante*. The prototypical case selection method allows the researcher to select cases that provide the most utility as a first test case or set of test cases of a broader phenomenon we have limited knowledge on, whether they are difficult to identify or relatively new.432 The prototypical case selection technique is unique in offering a systematic way to select cases to study intensive processes that, by definition, do not have X and Y values that form the basis for most case selection techniques.433 Since the universe of cases is generally difficult to determine beforehand for intensive processes, such as competitive institutionalism, the study employs the prototypical case selection method.

The prototypical case selection strategy is a nonrandom selection technique based on the researcher’s assessment of a case’s value on three criteria:434 the likelihood that the case exhibits the causal relationship, mechanism, or an intensive process of interest; the theoretical prominence of the case; and, the case’s substantive importance.

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432 Ibid., 17.
In this study, the phenomenon of interest is institutional competition and the TPP-RCEP case of U.S.-China competition was selected as a prototypical case of this phenomenon. From a potential of more than 70 potential cases of institutional competition between U.S. and China, five cases were initially chosen as viable prototypical cases. From this viable set, the case of TPP-RCEP was assessed as having the most utility for a prototypical case study.435

The TPP-RCEP case was therefore assessed as satisfying all three criteria for a prototypical case: first, the case is heavily covered with an explicit narrative of Sino-American competition by all major Western media outlets including the Financial Times, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the Economist. Second, the case contributes greatly to the popular narrative that there is Sino-American competition over East Asian regional order and is central to the notion that there was institutional competition. Third, the case is also substantively important: a null result would serve to debunk the narrative of competition in popular discourse and a positive result would systematically nuance our hunches about the phenomena.

The TPP-RCEP case thus offers the best chance that some form of institutional competition is actually operating for us to study. Moreover, the case offers the most significant opportunities to both revise our understanding of the case if the evidence is contrary to our expectations and also to inductively develop and sharpen a theory of institutional competition.

1.2.2. Dual Process Tracing (DPT)

The study carries out dual process tracing (DPT) on the selected TPP vs. RCEP case. DPT is ideal for this study as it provides a means for testing a theory of intensive processes and also builds in procedures to systematically update our theory of institutional competition and our substantive knowledge of the case. The DPT method is thus composed of two procedures.

The first is *process testing*, the theory-testing component. The observable implications of the theorized intensive process, and in our case the competitive interaction over regional FTAs, are tested using a variety of within-case evidence or causal process observations (CPO). In a single process test, the validity of a single component of the theorized intensive process is tested with corresponding CPOs to see, for example, whether the action or reaction occurred in the manner theorized. The whole collection of process tests together tests whether the overall sequence of interactions occurred in the expected manner. While there are a variety of process tests, the process tests in this study are designed as hoop tests, meaning we must find the corresponding CPO for the theory to remain valid, if not, we have strong grounds to reject the theory.

The second component of DPT is *case reconstruction*. Here, given the process testing procedures, the researcher updates our empirical understanding of the case and our and theoretical understanding of the broader class of phenomenon. First, the researcher provides a

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436 CPOs refer to a piece of within-case evidence that is deemed to have probative value with regards to the underlying casual relation, intensive process, temporal sequence, or any of its component parts. The label was first given by Collier, Brady and Seawright to differentiate more generally between within-case evidence as a basis for causal inference in qualitative analysis and observations that populate a data set in quantitative analysis, termed data set observations or DSOs. Here, the authors define as “an insight or piece of data that provides information about context or mechanism” contrasted with data-set observation (DTO) “observation in the sense of a row in a rectangular data set” Henry E. Brady, David Collier, and Jason Seawright, “Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology,” in *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 1st edition (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 252–53.


438 More accurately a single hoop-test is composed of a number of straw-in-the-wind tests. A CPO passing or failing a straw-in-the-wind test neither strongly validates or falsifies the underlying theoretical step, but incrementally adds to or detracts from our confidence in the theory. The collection of straw-in-the-wind tests are used as a hoop test to test a single theoretical component of the intensive process.
revised narrative of the case given the process test results. With the aid of event-history maps that correspond one-to-one with the casual graph of the intensive process at the case event level, the researcher narrates what was expected to happen according to the theory, but in reality, did or did not happen, or happened in a modified way given her understanding of the process test results. Second, the researcher goes back up the ladder of abstraction and generalizes the revised case narrative into a causal graph, thereby providing an updated theory given the case empirics of the process tests and the revised narrative.

Since the current status of our theoretical and empirical understanding of institutional competition is relatively underdeveloped, the prototypical case study here is carried out by using a theory induced from readily available case evidence, re-testing the theory with more rigorous empirical standards using a different set of quantitative or qualitative data, and then using the process test results to update our empirical understanding of the case and our theoretical understanding of competitive institutionalism. For this purpose, a theory of institutional competition was thus first induced from the stylized narrative of the TPP vs. RCEP case based on basic case information in the previous sub-section.

1.3. Research Design & Operationalization

The theory of competitive institutionalism is operationalized here into a set of observable implications within the case. The observable implications act as a series of hoop tests for which we must find evidence within the case for the theory to remain valid. That is, for the simplified model of institutional competition undergirding the dominant narrative to remain

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439 "While a causal graph represents the abstract causal model of a theory, the event-history map represents the unit-level causal effects, the instantiation of the general relation in the specific case" Cho, “Intensive Processes in IR: A Case Selection and Process Tracing Technique,” 40. Also see for an in-depth discussion on event-history maps and process tracing, see David Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference,” Security Studies 24, no. 2 (2015): 239–50.

true. Due to the U.S. and China having very different types of empirical footprints as
strategic actors, the evidence that I draw for the hoop tests encompasses a wide range of
sources from western and Chinese media reports, government statements, speeches,
secondary academic literature as well as a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with
Chinese and U.S. foreign policy experts and policy makers.

If TPP and RCEP was a function of institutional competition between U.S. and China in
the manner theorized from the stylized account, we should be able to observe evidence of
three general observable implications of the theory. If we do not observe the evidence, we
have strong grounds to reject the validity of the certain theorized step in the intensive process
of institutional competition. The three hoop tests are as follows:

(1) **U.S.’s original intentions**: if the theory is to remain valid, we should find evidence
that U.S.’s original calculus for constructing the TPP was as a strategic response to
China’s increasing economic clout and institutional power over East Asia’s trade
architecture.

(2) **China’s perception & response**: if the theory is to remain valid, we should find
evidence that China perceived the intentions of TPP’s construction as (1) above, and
China’s strategic response to U.S.’s TPP and a bid for increasing its institutional
power was in the form of the RCEP.

(3) **U.S.-China competition**: if the theory is to remain valid, we should find evidence that
after the regional FTA landscape is defined by TPP and RCEP, both U.S. and China
understood that they were in strategic competition with each other with their
respective regional FTAs.

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441 I refer to these as **general** observable implications of the theory, because these can be further broken down into a number of different hoop test
Figure 7. Timeline of TPP and RCEP and Analytical Time Frames

Figure 7 above illustrates the timeline for the developments of the TPP and RCEP, with the timeline of the TPP noted above the line and the RCEP noted below the line. The timeline was constructed using readily available case material, which was omitted later for the empirical analysis as to avoid the problem of “testing the theory on the same data.” The constructed timeline was then paired with the three hoop tests of the theory giving us three analytical time frames within which I gather the relevant CPOs and carry out process testing.\footnote{An alternative method would be to simply observe perceptions and actions of U.S. and China for the whole period 2006-2016. However, without specific hoop tests driving the search for evidence and also given the practical limitations of this article, this method would likely produce a wider and seamless narrative at the cost of in-depth empirical interrogation of certain causal turning points as identified here with theoretically-backed analytical time frame.}

(1) \textit{U.S. Original Intentions 2006-2010}: the initiation of TPP in 2006 to Obama administration’s official declaration of joining the TPP in 2009. The framework assumes that from the time of the negotiations starting in March 2010, the U.S. is implementing its original intentions, and thus the analytical time frame goes up until
the end of 2009. We can supplement our analysis by exploring additional evidence in 2010 where appropriate.

(2) *China’s perception & response 2006-2013*: China’s perception of TPP involves the time period equal to that considered relevant for “U.S. Original Intentions” (2006-2009) as well as the years in the lead up to the launch of RCEP at the end of 2012. China’s response can also be examined within the same analytical time frame 2006-2012. Again, we can supplement our analysis by exploring additional evidence in 2013 where appropriate.

(3) *U.S.-China competition 2015-2016*: by 2012, both TPP and RCEP have emerged. However, TPP’s conclusion in 2015 is likely to act as an exogenous shock in the strategic interaction between U.S. and China where both states will be pushed to express their understanding of the FTA landscape of the region. 2015 is likely to mark the height of the competition giving us a window into examining both states’ perception of each other’s institutional strategy as well the understanding of their own. The analytical time frame goes up to end of 2016, since the TPP collapses shortly after in January 2017.

The remaining sections of the article are organized by the structure of the dual process tracing method. First, I carry out process testing in the three analytical time frames in order (1) through (3). The process testing section thus tests the general observable implications with a collection of more specific observable implications to verify whether certain steps in the competitive interaction between U.S. and China occurred in the manner theorized. In other words, each specific observable implication acts as a straw-in-the-wind test and collectively performs a hoop test function for whether the specific strategic move, response, or competitive relation occurred according to our expectations. Second, I implement the case
reconstruction component of the DPT, where I provide a revised case narrative and inductively update the theory of competitive institutionalism in light of the process testing results.

2. PROCESS TESTING

2.1. U.S. Original Intentions: Was TPP U.S.’s Anti-China Strategy?

The first analytical time frame 2006-2010 covers three years of the Bush administration and up to two years of the Obama administration. To uncover U.S.’s original intentions behind the TPP, we thus need to understand first what the intentions were during the Bush administration and to what extent these intentions continued or changed in the Obama administration. Unpacking the hoop test of whether TPP was a U.S. anti-China strategy, there are six more specific process tests; four for the Bush administration and two for the Obama administration.

For the Bush administration: (1) was TPP U.S.’s competitive institutional strategy? (2) Was TPP motivated by a calculus based on institutional strategic competition? (3) To what extent was China part of this calculation? And, finally (4) Was China’s exclusion from the TPP intentional? For the Obama administration: (5) was there continuity in the original intentions from the Bush administration to the Obama administration? And (6) were there contrasting intentions behind TPP for the different political actors in Obama’s economic policymaking team?

I find that despite the common understanding that TPP is a FTA strategy against China, there is strong evidence that the TPP was not originally designed as a China strategy during the Bush administration and, moreover, bureaucratic inertia meant that this “benign”
intention continued through to the Obama administration. Also, I find that although the institutional strategic competition was always a part of U.S.’ calculations, this was one among many shifting reasons for pursuing the TPP and, finally, that the specific emphasis on institutional strategic competition with China was a post-hoc justification that most likely arose after the TPP negotiations were launched and in full swing.

2.1.1. Bush’s last-minute opportunity: 2006-2008

i. Was TPP U.S.’s competitive institutional strategy?

No. The TPP originated from the Pacific Three Closer Economic Partnership or the P3 CEP, a trade agreement designed in the early 2000s by three APEC countries – Singapore, New Zealand and Chile. With the goal of pursuing a regional Asian-Pacific FTA under the APEC framework, New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark originally pursued the Trans-Pacific CEP as a five country framework, which would also include Australia and the U.S. Interested in developing a mechanism to advance a trade agreement among “like-minded” countries, the five countries had in fact been conducting informal discussions following the breakdown of the APEC’s Early Voluntary Sectoral Liberalization.

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However, despite U.S. Secretary of Commerce Norman Mineta expressing the possibility of joining a non-comprehensive “P-5” agreement limited to air services in 2000,\textsuperscript{446} when the idea of a five country FTA was formally pursued in the lead up to the 2002 APEC Leaders Summit in Mexico, the U.S. decided not to join the P3. Instead, the U.S. and Australia pursued a bilateral trade agreement with each other, concluding the negotiations for the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) by 2004.\textsuperscript{447}

The remaining three countries forged ahead with the trade agreement. Just before the final round of negotiations in April 2005, Brunei Darussalam, which observed the P3 negotiations from the second round, asked to join the P3 as a founding member.\textsuperscript{448} Two months later on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} June 2005, Ministers of Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore thus announced the conclusion of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPSEP) or the P4. The P4 was still understood as the building block for a wider regional FTA. At the APEC Ministers meeting in Jeju, Korea,\textsuperscript{449} the Ministers of the four states thus issued a joint-statement that the P4 is based on the “shared vision…to create a trade agreement, which would have the potential to grow into a larger strategic agreement for trade liberalization within the Asia-Pacific region.”\textsuperscript{450} Though the P4 trade agreement was a high quality, comprehensive agreement, the P4 received little attention due to the limited collective economic clout of the four member states.\textsuperscript{451}


\textsuperscript{447}Capling and Ravenhill, “The Trans-Pacific Partnership: An Australian Perspective.”


\textsuperscript{450}“Joint Press Statement from Brunei Darussalam, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore Ministers on Conclusion of Agreement” Press Release, Singapore’s Ministry of Trade and Industry, June 1, 2005

\textsuperscript{451}Deborah Elms, “The Origins and Evolution of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Negotiations,” Asian Survey 56, no. 6 (December 16, 2016): 1018.
When the P4 agreement came into force in 2006,¹⁴ the P4 states were unable to come to a conclusion on the two chapters regarding financial services and investment. Agreeing to complete the negotiations within two years, New Zealand and Singapore wasted no time trying to re-invite the U.S. back into the P4 in 2006. New Zealand’s Foreign Minister Phil Goff was the first to contact the U.S. through the Office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) official Barbara Weisel, pitching the idea of a high standard trade agreement that included trade in services.⁴⁵³ After exploratory consultations about service and investment during 2007,⁴⁵⁴ the USTR announced in February 4⁰ 2008 that it would participate in investment and financial services negotiations with the P4 countries as a possible prelude to joining the P4 agreement.⁴⁵⁵ After three rounds of negotiations, the U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab finally announced U.S. intentions to formally join the P4 nations in September 22⁰ of 2008.⁴⁵⁶

While TPP is often characterized as Obama’s legacy policy against China, the TPP was thus originally a Bush administration policy. More accurately, the TPP is Singapore and New Zealand’s joint effort to build a high standard trade agreement at the core of APEC, first as the P3 CEP and then by expanding the P4 trade group to include the U.S among other states in the region.⁴⁵⁷

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¹⁵ Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016
¹⁶ pp.2, “Testimony of Susan C. Schwab, Former U.S. Trade Representative and Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland on “The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement: Challenges and Potential” Before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and the Subcommittee on Asia Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, May 17 2012
¹⁹ This finding accords with Richard Feinberg’s broader assessment of U.S. FTA strategies during the Bush administration: “[I]t is generally assumed that the US is the initiator and driver of most international trade negotiations... [however] most of these FTAs have been initiated not by the United States but rather by the smaller trading partners. The US has entered into FTA discussions on an ad hoc basis, generally in response to
ii. Was TPP motivated by institutional strategic competition?

Yes, in part. When the joining of the TPP was announced in September 22\textsuperscript{nd} of 2008, an interrelated set of reasons were put forward by the USTR. Joining the TPP would strengthen U.S. competitiveness in an economically important region by strengthening economic ties in the Trans-pacific region and creating a “high-standard agreement” among “like-minded” countries. Moreover, the membership of the trade group would expand and serve as a “vehicle for advancing trade and investment liberalization and integration across the Trans-Pacific region and perhaps beyond.” The TPP was therefore further justified as a step towards the successful conclusion of the WTO Doha negotiations and a reinforcement of “APEC’s goal of promoting regional economic integration,” serving as “a potential way to build towards the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific” (FTAAP).\textsuperscript{458}

While the TPP would increase U.S. competitiveness in the Asia-Pacific, the P4 was an attractive option because it would provide new momentum to the trade liberalization process stymied in the WTO Doha rounds and APEC’s FTAAP – U.S.’s primary trade liberalization policies until then. The U.S. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus thus welcomed the announcement for a regional trade agreement as a possible building block for a larger regional trade agreement. New Zealand’s Foreign Minister Goff welcomed U.S. membership as giving the needed “critical mass” to the P4, providing “momentum to move

forward” when other international trade negotiations were not. Chilean Foreign Affairs Minister Alejandro Foxley more specifically welcomed U.S. membership as a way to promote APEC’s FTAAP and rejuvenate the Doha rounds: “We think there is still time to finish the [Doha] round, and if it doesn't happen, there will be a group of countries that will do the second best… The P4 will probably turn into an FTAAP in the Asia-Pacific, which we think is a very important thing to do, and maybe after that we can do something like Doha with more ambition than we had in Geneva last July.”

Less conspicuously, however, an institutional competition logic was also used to justify the joining of the TPP. In the same month of the announcement, the USTR released a Fact Sheet that with the TPP, “We [the U.S.] also can respond to the proliferation of preferential trade agreements in the Trans-Pacific region, which will increasingly hurt U.S. manufacturers, agricultural producers, services providers and workers.” The logic of institutional competition was elaborated further in Susan Schwab’s letter to Congress, Speaker Nancy Pelosi. In the notification letter, Schwab provides a lengthy description about the institutional strategic landscape in the Asia-Pacific and the need for the U.S. to strategically respond with the TPP:

“While the United States has concluded FTAs with six APEC Members, other countries are moving quickly to negotiate bilateral and regional trade agreements with countries in the Asia-Pacific region that provide their own businesses and farmers preferential access… As these preferential trade agreements, which do not include the United States, are fully implemented over coming years, they are likely to disadvantage increasingly U.S. commercial interests, including manufacturers, farmers, service suppliers, and other businesses…

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By concluding an FTA with the TPP countries, *the United States will seek to offset the trade preferences other countries have obtained* for their businesses, farmers, and workers through their own agreements…

An FTA with the TPP countries also could promote economic integration within the Asia-Pacific region. *Our objective is to establish a high-standard agreement for advancing economic integration in the Asia-Pacific that will be stronger than other regional initiatives that do not include the United States.*

As Susan Schwab later clarifies her original thinking in a 2012 Congressional testimony:

“*W*e were concerned about a growing network of Asia-Pacific bilateral/regional agreements that would exclude the U.S. At the same time, progress had stalled in the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations. We thought then, and I still believe, that the TPP represented an opportunity to open markets and maintain access for U.S. trade and investment interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The TPP will create WTO-plus precedents for future bilateral, plurilateral, and multilateral negotiations, and lay the groundwork for a potential Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP).”

In an interview, Susan Schwab clarified that the original reasons for the U.S. deciding to join the P4 in 2006 can be thought of as two-fold: “offensive” and “defensive.” The offensive reason was the failure of U.S.’s existing trade strategy and the need to find an alternative. First, there was growing frustration with the WTO framework as little progress was made since 1994. As to the Doha round negotiations, Schwab recollected, “we all knew that it was going to fail.” Second, U.S.’s alternative trade liberalization strategy working through the regional forum APEC was also failing to make tangible progress. In a public talk delivered in November 2009, Susan Schwab describes that as “discussion of a potential FTAAP moved through various APEC meetings, it became fairly clear that there was a level of discomfort.

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461 Emphasis added, “Susan Schwab notification letter to Congress,” September 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2008
462 Italics added, pp.2, “Testimony of Susan C. Schwab, Former U.S. Trade Representative and Professor, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland on “The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement: Challenges and Potential” Before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and the Subcommittee on Asia Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, May 17 2012
463 Her own conceptualizations of the reasons were “offensive” and “defensive” reasons.
among various APEC members about this prospect.\textsuperscript{464} In the interview, Schwab clarified the comment that, at the time, “no one wanted to move ahead with FTAAP.” The TPP pitched as a high standard agreement among “like minded” countries therefore appealed to USTR as an alternative trade strategy and a way to “drag WTO forward in global trade liberalization."\textsuperscript{465}

The defensive reason was the need to respond to the rapidly shifting Asia-Pacific trade architecture that increasingly excluded the U.S., undermined U.S. institutional power over the regional trade rules, and ultimately began to manifest as a tangible loss in U.S. trade competitiveness. With the East Asian states moving forward with ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+6-based FTAs, there was real concern that the U.S. would be “locked out.”\textsuperscript{466} While Susan Schwab hinted that there was relatively more concern for the China-led ASEAN+3 than the Japan-led ASEAN+6 FTA framework, Schwab expressed USTR’s bottom-line calculus regarding the threat of institutional competition in the region: “If you are the US, it doesn’t matter who it is, ally or adversary, … [they are always assumed to be] efficient, effective, and smart.” She continued to explain, “As long as the only trade blocs in East Asia were the ones where US was locked out, the U.S. was insecure.”\textsuperscript{467}

Given the offensive push to find an alternative trade strategy, the USTR would ideally have created a regional FTA starting with a “blank sheet.” However, the U.S. was “worried that others would quickly make concentric circles” that excluded the U.S. Moreover, the institutional membership options were further limited with Bush’s Burma policy that made any ASEAN-based FTA strategy impossible. In light of these constraints, building U.S.’ own concentric circles around a core of the P4 nations was seen as the most practical defensive

\textsuperscript{464} Susan Schwab, “U.S. trade policy and trade policy vis-à-vis Asia” Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUScast, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nk6G-XYVR2l (accessed: January 26, 2016)
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{466} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid.
institutional response.\textsuperscript{468} With the TPP embedded in the APEC process and having a relatively low political profile, the TPP also had the added benefit of not signaling any U.S. loss of confidence in the WTO and APEC-led processes.\textsuperscript{469}

In short, the offensive reason pushed the U.S. to search for an alternative institutional trade strategy and the defensive reason forced the USTR’s hand to pursue a policy of building on core trade partners to expand in concentric circles, an opportunity that was afforded due to New Zealand and Singapore’s initiative. As Susan Schwab concluded, there was “affirmative and defensive motivations,” the decision to join the TPP was not based on one factor but was a result of “a convergence of events.”\textsuperscript{470}

iii. To what extent was China part of the original calculation behind TPP

Not at all. When asked whether the rise of China was one of the “convergence of events” behind USTR’s decision to join the TPP, USTR Susan Schwab repeatedly stated that TPP was not a “China containment” strategy. She emphasized that the decision to join the TPP predated the “Great Recession”\textsuperscript{471} when the sense of a “China threat” was more prevalent in the U.S and spelled out clearly that “TPP was not a China play.” When I brought to her attention the contrasting justification put forward by the late Obama administration and further pressed whether the TPP was originally thought of as a response to China trying to set the regional rules of trade with RCEP, she confirmed once more: “With certainty, it [TPP]
was not thought of in that way.”¹⁴⁷² The common assessment that “Mr. Bush, too, saw the pact as a bulwark against China’s rising strategic ambitions,”¹⁴⁷³ is therefore false.

iv. Was China’s exclusion from the TPP intentional?

No. One of the later defining features of the TPP is the exclusion of China – the “anyone but China club.”¹⁴⁷⁴ However, an examination of the thought-process behind TPPs membership composition indicates that China’s exclusion was not an intentional design feature pursued by the U.S. to undermine China. After New Zealand and Singapore was successful getting the U.S. to join the P4 or the TPP, Australia quickly expressed interest in joining the TPP as it calculated that it was best “not to be left out” from the decision making process.¹⁴⁷⁵ By the 2008, the P4 nations and the U.S. had already invited Australia, Peru, Vietnam, Malaysia and Japan to discuss the expansion of TPP on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.¹⁴⁷⁶ Although Mexico and Canada were not invited to these meetings, the two countries were “assumed to be joining later” as the U.S. had been discussing their membership through bilateral channels since New Zealand and Singapore originally approached the U.S. in 2006.

The additional member states that came to compose the final twelve-member TPP in 2015

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¹⁴⁷² To the question of whether she foresaw the current competition of TPP and RCEP, she answered clearly, “No, didn’t see it,” Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.
¹⁴⁷⁴ “It won't be easy to build an ‘anyone but China’ club: The unstated aim of the TPP is a deal to bar the second-largest economy” the Financial Times, May 22, 2013, https://www.ft.com/content/08cf74f6-c216-11e2-8992-00144feab7de (accessed: October 31, 2016)
¹⁴⁷⁶ Timeline not exactly clear either, either the 63rd session of the General Assembly (started in 16 September 2008) or the 62nd session (started in September 2007)
were therefore more-or-less decided by early 2008 as the U.S. moved to officially announce the joining of the P4.\footnote{Susan Schwab recalls from the sideline meetings that Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Peru were “excited,” Vietnam a “bit nervous,” the Malaysians expressing reservations, and as for the Japanese, “we knew [it] would take forever” and they would not be ready during the Bush administration. As was expected from the 2008 exchanges and reactions, Australia, Peru and Vietnam joined soon after the U.S. in December of the same year (2008), while the Malaysians (2010) and Japanese (2013) took longer to join. TPP-8: Australia, Peru, and Vietnam – 2008 Dec, TPP-9: Malaysia – 2010, TPP-11: Mexico, Canada – 2012, TPP-12: Japan – 2013 “US Requests Koreas joining of regional FTA” The Dong-A Ilbo, December 18, 2010, http://english.donga.com/List/3/all/26/266502/1 (accessed: January 2, 2017)}

While the TPP membership is in principle open to all APEC countries, the original vision of TPP’s final membership is thus more accurately a group of U.S.’s allies and friends, a US-centered friend-based trade group. Canada and Mexico are linked with U.S. through NAFTA and could be counted on joining later, U.S.’s traditional allies in Northeast Asia, Japan and South Korea, were also expected to join at some later point. Of the total of eleven bilateral FTAs the U.S. had at the time of considering the TPP, five of them – and six states – became the main institutional girds of the final TPP architecture: Australia (AUSFTA) 2005, Chile (US-Chile) 2004, Canada (NAFTA) 1994, Mexico (NAFTA) 1994, Peru (PTPA) 2007 and Singapore (USSFTA) 2004. Although South Korea was not part of the original discussions, once South Korea had concluded the KORUS FTA, it was also invited to join the TPP in 2010.\footnote{While they become the central fabric of TPP, additional countries that the U.S. could pursue FTAs with are included. These are Brunei, Malaysia, New Zealand, Vietnam, and Japan.}

In the lead up to the September 2008 when the USTR officially announced U.S. intentions to join the P4, the immediate priority, however, was the practical consideration of securing enough states to gain initial momentum behind the trade group. In light of the breakdown of the WTO processes and the APEC-led FTAAP, TPP was seen as the group of “like-minded” states most willing to institutionalize a “high standard” trade agreement – a kind of U.S.-centered “coalition of the willing” in trade liberalization. However, while the USTR understood that the core of TPP would need to be driven by Asian partners, it
support in Japan would take time due to long-held protections of sensitive agricultural sectors.\textsuperscript{480}

Having confidence that friend states would join at a later point, the most urgent issue was to consolidate a reasonably sized group of states that could give the “vehicle” of TPP the “critical mass” to move forward and consolidate the inner core circle of what would become expanding “concentric circles” of trade liberalization in the Asia-Pacific. The U.S. were therefore “not in a hurry leading up to” the announcement of 2008 September to get every friend and ally on board.\textsuperscript{481} In a second letter to the House of Representatives on December 30, 2016 that announced the expansion of the TPP membership from five countries (P4 and the U.S.) to eight (Australia, Peru and Vietnam), Susan Schwab thus writes: “An eight-member TPP will create a critical mass of countries to advance economic integration within the Asia-Pacific region under a higher-standard agreement than other existing regional economic.”\textsuperscript{482} In an interview later, she expressed that “[We were] comfortable at that point with 7~8 states.”\textsuperscript{483}

Chinese membership did not fit U.S.’s criteria as a friend, ally or a practical partner for building the core of the coalition of the willing on trade liberalization. The APEC-led FTAAP process that the U.S. and its coalition of the willing had moved away from was partially premised on the common frustration these states experienced from the slow negotiations with countries like China and India.\textsuperscript{484} Chinese membership to TPP simply never crossed the mind of the U.S. policymakers at the time when the USTR had the urgent task of putting together the initial guest list to get the TPP party started. When asked whether China’s

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\textsuperscript{480} Nonetheless Japan was party to the original behind the scene discussions and later Obama’s announcement in 2009 was also made in Tokyo.

\textsuperscript{481} Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.

\textsuperscript{482} Emphasis added, “Susan Schwab notification letter to Congress,” December 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2008.

\textsuperscript{483} Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.

membership to TPP was originally considered during the lead up to 2008, Susan Schwab responded without hesitation – “never.” Thus, if there was any calculation surrounding China’s membership on TPP, it was more that inviting China was simply not regarded as a reasonable place to start building the core for the concentric circle approach rather than a strategically intentional decision to deny China’s institutional power in the region.

2.1.2. Obama’s slow re-adoption of the TPP: 2009-2010

A few months after Susan Schwab submitted her final letter of notification to Congress regarding TPP, Barack Obama was inaugurated as 44th President of the United States. However, during Obama’s first year in office, the new administration was slow to articulate a concrete U.S. trade policy and was sluggish to decide on what to do with the set of unpopular bilateral FTAs it inherited from the Bush administration as well as the politically low-key TPP-8. The year 2009 was characterized on the one hand by domestic institutional inertia from certain Congressional caucuses and committees, leading business groups and the Office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) pushing for the TPP and, on the other hand, indecision by the White House to formally announce its continued commitment due to a variety of factors: lack of a senior trade team being in place, absence of a well-developed East Asian strategy, general opposition to trade agreements by the Democratic Party, as well as a crowded domestic and East Asia foreign policy agenda for the new administration. It took until the end of the first year, in mid-November, for Obama to officially announce that TPP would be a part of U.S. trade policy and Obama’s greater East Asia strategy with the first

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485 Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016
round of TPP negotiations scheduled for March the following year.\footnote{Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall," \textit{The White House, Office of the Press Secretary}, November 14\textsuperscript{th} 2009 \url{https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-suntory-hall} (accessed: December 21, 2016)} The original U.S. intentions behind pursuing the TPP in 2009 is thus a form of “intentions inertia” continuing from the Bush administration through the USTR.


v. \textit{Was there continuity in the original intentions from the Bush administration to the Obama administration?}

Yes. As early as February 12\textsuperscript{th} 2009, less than a month after Obama’s inauguration, the House members led by Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) Chair of the New Democrat Coalition (NDC), Obama’s own Congressional caucus, and ranking member Kevin Brady (R-TX) of the influential Ways and Means trade subcommittee sent a letter to president Obama urging him to adopt the TPP and join the first set of TPP negotiations scheduled for March 30\textsuperscript{th} in Singapore.\footnote{“U.S. Delays TPP Talks To Allow Obama Cabinet Members To Take Office,” \textit{Inside U.S. Trade}, February 24\textsuperscript{th} 2009 \url{https://insidetrade.com/daily-news/us-delays-tpp-talks-allow-obama-cabinet-members-take-office} (accessed: December 27, 2016)} However, on February 24\textsuperscript{th}, the Obama administration announced that it would delay the TPP negotiations indefinitely.\footnote{“New Democrats Pledge To Work With Obama On Trade Policy” \textit{Inside US Trade}, March 13\textsuperscript{th} 2009, \url{https://insidetrade.com/inside-us-trade/new-democrats-pledge-work-obama-trade-policy} (accessed: December 27, 2016)} To add to the growing skepticism that Obama may not pick up the TPP, Obama’s Trade Policy Agenda released in March discussed the timelines for the Bush-era bilateral FTAs but did not once mention the TPP.\footnote{“New Democrat Coalition urge Obama to push TPP by March,” \textit{Inside U.S. Trade}, February 12\textsuperscript{th} 2009, \url{https://insidetrade.com/daily-news/house-members-set-urge-us-engagement-trans-pacific-trade-talks} (accessed: December 28, 2016)}

For the Confirmation Hearings for Ron Kirk as U.S. Trade Representative on (March 18\textsuperscript{th}) and Demetrios Marantis as Deputy USTR (May 6\textsuperscript{th}), the Senate Finance Committee also
urged both of Obama’s USTR nominees to support the TPP. Thereafter, the Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Member Charles Grassley (R-IA) also continued to press President Obama to move forward on the TPP as late as October 22nd of 2009, arguing that the trade agreement will deepen America’s economic and strategic relationship with the vital Asia-Pacific region.

Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Danny Sepulveda explained that the reasons for Obama’s delay was because the USTR leadership team was not fully in place to make the decisions and that the Obama administration wanted to first define a comprehensive strategy for East Asia before deciding to commit to the TPP. In his first speech on record as USTR at the Global Innovation Forum at Howard University, Ron Kirk similarly explained that “We are taking a little bit of time to study all of those [initiatives],” emphasizing that the new administration wanted to “comprehensively look at everything and not do it [TPP] tactically.”

However, even when the USTR leadership was in place, leaders and officials from key TPP partner states such as Singapore and Australia received no official indication as to when the U.S. would complete its review of joining the TPP. In various meetings with U.S.

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officials, Singaporean Trade Minister Lim Hng Kiang repeatedly heard from the officials that “the agenda for the administration is crowded with health care reform, climate change, and energy policy, and that the administration is looking to see how trade fits into that crowded agenda.” Moreover, as late as mid-October of 2009, Australian Trade Minister Simon Crean discussed TPP with USTR Ron Kirk and found that although the administration recognized the value of participating in TPP talks, “dynamics of political circumstances here [in the U.S.],” and health care reform in particular, were delaying a final decision on TPP.

While waiting for the White House to make the final decision, a closer look reveals that the USTR was particularly perseverant in continuing the necessary processes for joining the TPP. Only three days after Obama’s inauguration on the 23rd of January, the USTR scheduled an interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) public hearing and sought public comments on the TPP by the same date, March 3rd 2009. The USTR was sticking to the original timeline for joining TPP negotiations based on former USTR Susan Schwab’s last notification to Congress on December 30th 2008, the 90-day Congressional approval period required before the U.S. can formally enter trade negotiations, and the first scheduled TPP negotiations in Singapore at the end of March.
Although the Obama administration was quick to formally suspend any action on the TPP in mid-February, the TPSC hearing on TPP went ahead as scheduled and as early as April, USTR Ron Kirk was reported to have moved away from the official tone of noncommittal to speaking favorably of joining the TPP in a meeting with the NDC. In fact, after delivering a speech at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in May, Kirk also told reporters “At a minimum, we would pick that [TPP] up… [as a] sort of baseline for what we would like to do in the region.” Although the USTR had to officially denounce Kirk’s claims and the White House declined to provide further comments on the matter, observers at the time interpreted Kirk’s statement as revealing true intentions of the Obama administration.

More tellingly, reports emerged as late as a month before Obama’s announcement of joining the TPP negotiations in November that the new Obama administration was divided on the issue of TPP. While the USTR was in favor of the TPP, the White House was reportedly expressing reservations, preferring a more ambitious trading group that would include major economies like Japan. It was further reported that despite these divisions, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Barbara Weisel had been attending private meetings with officials from TPP member countries for several months. Barbara Weisel is the same USTR official who acted as the first point of contact when the P4 partners reached out to the U.S. in 2006, who then later becomes the lead U.S. negotiator for TPP. While unable to provide guidance as

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to whether there was mandate to move forward with TPP talks, the informal meetings that Weisel led was laying the groundwork for a full-fledged U.S.’ engagement with the TPP.\footnote{504} When President Obama finally announced his intentions to engage with TPP, the long-awaited commitment came only as a sentence: “The United States will also be engaging with the Trans-Pacific Partnership countries with the goal of shaping a regional agreement.”\footnote{505} The TPP was mentioned along with KORUS FTA as Obama’s policy to, first, achieve the administration’s first priority of strengthening U.S. economic recovery and pursuing balanced and sustainable growth and, second, as the regional component of Obama’s broader efforts to strengthen the international economic architecture with G20 and the WTO Doha Rounds. These two policy goals were in hand embedded in the much larger message that the Obama administration seeks greater engagement in East Asia through strengthening bilateral relations East Asia’s regional organizations, what two years later gets labeled as Obama’s “Asia pivot” or “rebalance” policy.\footnote{506}

While there is not a great deal of information in Obama’s announcement regarding intentions to join TPP except that it fits with the administrations broader effort to strengthen U.S. economic recovery and increase engagement with the region, a closer examination of Obama’s speech at Suntory Hall, Tokyo, moreover reveals that despite being a critical moment for TPP observers, the speech was significant for Obama’s Asia team in the White House for an altogether different reason. NSC Asia Director Jeff Bader recounts that Obama’s primarily goal with the speech was to reaffirm the central importance of the U.S.-
Japan bilateral alliance at a time when the newly elected DPJ Prime Minister Hatoyama was causing a potential rift; announcing a Japanese foreign policy “less dependent” on the U.S., pursuing a U.S.-excluded East Asia Community and miring the plans to relocate U.S. military bases in Okinawa. As Bader explains, “These were the central themes of his public speech and his comments at the joint press conference with Hatoyama.” Given also that TPP was announced in Japan, which was not party to the TPP-8, just before the APEC leaders’ meeting in Singapore later in the same day is also a telling signal that U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance was regarded as the most important component of Obama’s regional strategy and signaling the joining of TPP was likely a lesser priority.

For the rest of 2009, there are no other announcements and speeches regarding the TPP that come directly from the White House. However, the USTR releases a number of statements, fact sheets, and also a letter of notification to Congress that re-initiates the 90-day Congressional review process and re-sets the first round of TPP negotiations on March of 2010. Here, much of the original intentions of the Bush administration under USTR Susan Schwab can be seen as continuing through the USTR with some analysts speculating at the time that the “Bush Agreement may serve as a basis for the current administration…because those original objectives were developed by career officials still in place at USTR.” In fact, the institutional continuity of USTR and the resultant intentions inertia is evident from the USTR’s almost identical use of wordings and justifications for TPP as those originally put forward by Susan Schwab and her team in 2008.

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In the letter of notification to the Congress on December 14th, Ron Kirk similarly first writes of the economic importance of the Asia-Pacific region and for U.S. trade, and then in an almost identical fashion explains that TPP is envisioned as an expanding group of “like-minded” countries promoting a high-standard trade agreement:

“These [eight] countries form an initial group of “like-minded” countries that share a commitment to concluding a high-standard trade agreement. U.S. participation in the TPP Agreement is predicated on the shared objective of expanding this initial group to additional countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region.”

Following the format of Schwab’s letter, Ron Kirk then devotes substantial amount of space describing the institutional strategic landscape in East Asia that is increasingly excluding the U.S. and the need for the U.S. to respond with the TPP:

“Yet even as our exports have grown, we have seen a proliferation of trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific region to which the United States is not a party. While the United States has concluded some agreements, there are now 175 preferential trade agreements in force that include Asia-Pacific countries, with another 20 awaiting implementation and more than 50 others under negotiation. These agreements, as well as other economic developments, have led to a significant decline in the U.S. share of key Asia-Pacific markets over the past decade. A declining U.S. market share in the Asia-Pacific region means fewer export-created American jobs. Through the TPP Agreement, we intend to reverse this trend and enhance U.S. competitiveness and our share of job-creating economic opportunities in the region.”

510 Compare with what Susan Schwab writes in December 2008: “The United States will benefit from inclusion of these additional countries in the TPP negotiations. Their participation will further buttress the core of “like-minded” countries needed to develop and maintain a high standard agreement and demonstrates the growing interest of countries in the region of using this agreement as a vehicle for advancing trade and investment liberalization and integration across the Trans-Pacific region and perhaps beyond.” Emphasis added, in “Susan Schwab notification letter to Congress,” December 30th, 2008


512 Susan Schwab writes: “While the United States has concluded FTAs with six APEC Members, other countries are moving quickly to negotiate bilateral and regional trade agreements with countries in the Asia-Pacific region that provide their own businesses and farmers preferential access. In 1980, there were 22 trade agreements in force involving APEC Members. Today, there are 152 agreements in force; 21 are completed and awaiting implementation; 72 are being negotiated; and 81 are in an exploratory phase. As these preferential trade agreements, which do not include the United States, are fully implemented over coming years, they are likely to disadvantage increasingly U.S. commercial interests, including manufacturers, farmers, service suppliers, and other businesses...By concluding an FTA with the TPP countries, the United States will seek to
Beyond Kirk’s letter of notification to Congress, the two fact sheets on TPP released by USTR in November and December of 2009 also follow the same format of outlining the benefits of pursuing an Asia-Pacific trade agreement and then conclude by explaining the institutional strategic landscape in the region. The fact sheets describe that U.S.’s “share of trade in the region has declined by three percent in favor of U.S. competitors” and also attribute this to the recent development of trade architecture that excludes the U.S.:

“Asia-Pacific countries have negotiated bilateral trade agreements and regional agreements, including ASEAN + 3 (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, and Burma plus China, Japan, and Korea) and ASEAN + 6 (ASEAN plus China, Japan, Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand). A 2001 study by Robert Scollay forecasts that America could lose as much as $25 billion in exports annually solely from the static discriminatory effects of an East Asia Free Trade Area excluding the United States.”

The institutional competition logic and the fear of declining U.S. institutional power in the region can also be observed in the USTR prior to Obama’s official announcement. For example, as one of the key focuses of Assistant USTR Wendy Cutler’s testament in October 2009 before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs’ Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, Cutler argues that “As the developments in regional economic architecture in the Asia-Pacific is moving towards the creation of Asia-only offsets the trade preferences other countries have obtained for their businesses farmers, and workers through their own agreements” Emphasis added. In “Susan Schwab notification letter to Congress,” December 30th, 2008.


grouping, the United States will increasingly be left out of key decisions. Further, the continued proliferation of free trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific, there are already over 150 agreements in place with about another 70 being negotiated, have gone on without the United States.”

In the written statement Cutler submitted for the hearing, this concern is expressed much more comprehensively, identifying “several Asia-only organizations” by name such as ASEAN+3 and the ASEAN+6, adding that the “concern is that these Asia-centric organizations will decrease the ability of the United States to participate fully in the evolving economic architecture of the region… we are being largely left out of this growing trend.”

It is also worth noting that New Zealand and Singapore, the key two P4 nations that convinced the U.S. to originally join TPP in 2006, also consistently met with U.S. officials in 2009 and emphasized the need for U.S.’s TPP engagement based on the logic of institutional competition. In the lead up to the meeting between New Zealand Trade Minister Groser and Ron Kirk in May, Groser said he “will emphasize to U.S. officials that the U.S. cannot afford to be left out of increasing Asia-Pacific integration.” Singapore’s Trade Minister Lim similarly explained in June that if the TPP talks stalled, “by the time of the ASEAN leaders meeting in August, or if not by the end of the year, decisions will have to be made” as to whether regional integration will go forward with ASEAN plus initiatives that exclude the U.S. Lim added, “I explained to USTR that when the U.S. indicated its intentions to join the

517 ASEAN+3: ASEAN plus China, Japan, and Korea, ASEAN+6: ASEAN +3 plus Australia, India, and New Zealand.
TPP last year, it caused a new strategic dynamic within APEC ...[and] caused all the other bigger economies in APEC to rethink their position of how they want to approach the FTAAP.\footnote{520}

While USTR’s intentions inertia is further evident in later announcements by TPP, there are also some subtle differences since TPP under Bush. Take for example Deputy USTR Demetrios Marantis’ well-articulated position on TPP only a month later in January 2010.\footnote{521} Here, he explains that there are two domestic and two international factors that “demand unprecedented action” for the U.S. to join the TPP. The two international factors are that, first, trade with Asia-Pacific has been growing but, second, “despite these export successes, America faces the daunting prospect of getting locked out of the Asia-Pacific.”

Echoing the TPP factsheets released just months before, Marantis thus warns that “Already, the United States’ share of trade with the Asia-Pacific has fallen, and a recent study forecasts that America could lose as much as $25 billion in annual exports just from the discriminatory effects of an East Asia Free Trade Area that excludes the United States. Exclusion from economic opportunities already is becoming evident. Such exclusion will cost American jobs.” However, in contrast to Schwab’s “offensive” reasons for TPP promoting APEC-led FTAAP and rejuvenating the stalled WTO Doha rounds, the focus under Obama has shifted to a set of domestic “offensive” reasons of promoting U.S. economic recovery in light of the

2008 economic recession and the need to overcome negative public opinion towards trade,\textsuperscript{522} the set of priorities also articulated by Obama at Suntory Hall, Tokyo.\textsuperscript{523} 

During the rest of Obama’s first term, TPP does continue to be seen as a way to achieve an APEC-led FTAAP or is at least discussed in the APEC context. For example, while Kirk excludes any mention of APEC and FTAAP in his notification letter to Congress, in an interview in December 2009, he uses Schwab’s logic arguing that “If we get this [TPP] right, this can be the \textit{vehicle} for other APEC economies [to] buy into as we work towards that goal [of FTAAP]… We actually think [the TPP] might help bring Doha to a close.”\textsuperscript{524,525} 

Furthermore, since the U.S. being the host nation of APEC in 2011 was regarded by U.S. officials and leaders as an important opportunity to comprehensively develop and articulate U.S.’ East Asia policy,\textsuperscript{526} the TPP and APEC were often discussed together.\textsuperscript{527} However, starting from the omission from Kirk’s December letter, we observe over time that TPP is slowly decoupled from APEC and increasingly regarded as a stand-alone trade policy with

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{523}“Remarks by President Barack Obama at Suntory Hall” \textit{The White House, Office of the Press Secretary,} November 14\textsuperscript{th} 2009 \url{https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/remarks-president-barack-obama-suntory-hall} (accessed: December 21, 2016)
\item \textsuperscript{525}“We are particularly interested in this high-standard agreement potentially serving as a vehicle for advancing trade and investment liberalization and integration across the Trans-Pacific region and perhaps beyond. Ultimately, the objective is to expand the membership of the Agreement to other nations that share our vision of free and fair trade.” In “Susan Schwab notification letter to Congress,” December 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2008.
\item \textsuperscript{527}“U.S. Examining How APEC Work Could Inform TPP Negotiations” \textit{Inside U.S. Trade,} March 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2010 \url{https://insidetrade.com/inside-us-trade/us-examining-how-apec-work-could-inform-tpp-negotiations} (accessed: January 25, 2017), “USTR Kirk at Chamber of Commerce on Asia-Pacific Trade and Jobs” United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington, D.C., October 26, 2011\url{http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/10/20111027150142su0.7417828.html#axzz4TWtvUa00} (accessed: December 21, 2016), also see: “…this paper seeks to focus its attention on how APEC and TPP could be mutually useful in achieving their own objectives. For instance, APEC is important for TPP as incubator of ideas that could be taken into account in the present negotiations. In the same way, TPP is relevant for APEC as one of many avenues to strengthen regional economic integration across the APEC region.” pp.iii.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the eventual goal of achieving a general “free trade area of the Asia-Pacific” Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (November 2011): 62., a goal no longer confined to the APEC framework of FTAAP. Distancing from the WTO also may have seemed to mollify trade skeptics consisting of the majority of the Democratic Party.

A final notable difference is that the overall military strategic benefits of TPP emphasized in Schwab’s letter is omitted in Ron Kirk’s letter and subsequent USTR documents published in 2009. Although the omission was quickly picked up and criticized by the Peterson Institute’s letter submitted to the USTR in support of the TPP, this formulation is odd in light of how later justifications for TPP by the Obama’s second term were heavily couched in security and strategic terms.

**vi. Were there contrasting intentions behind TPP for the different political actors in Obama’s economic policymaking team?**

Yes, but beyond the USTR this was likely underdeveloped. The USTR’s position is both well-articulated and exhibits a relatively consistent set of reasons for pursuing the TPP that can be traced back to the original formulation under Bush. In January 2010, the USTR announced that it was just beginning the process of developing specific objectives for the TPP negotiations starting in two months. House aides also suggested that USTR is at the “very beginning” of developing its approach in consultation with the Congress. With the USTR

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mandated to be the primary interagency office for handling U.S. trade policy, it is likely that USTR’s intentions were most comprehensively developed in contrast to other government agencies and actors in the new Obama administration.\(^{530}\)

As early as December of 2008 when Hillary Clinton approached Kurt Campbell for the job of Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Clinton discussed her interest in developing a comprehensive Asia strategy as the next Secretary of State expressing that the U.S. “need[s] to more effectively integrate trade and commercial advocacy into a larger framework.”\(^{531}\) While Kurt Campbell, who then becomes one of the key architects of the “Asia pivot,” later refers to the TPP as “the true sine qua non of the Pivot” whose “importance is difficult to overstate,”\(^{532}\) there is little evidence both in Kurt Campbell’s book *The Pivot* or Hillary Clinton’s memoirs *Hard Choices*\(^{533}\) that by the end of 2009, the State Department had well-developed motivations for pursuing the TPP beyond that it fit into the State Department’s goal of conceptualizing an East Asia strategy in a multi-faceted manner.\(^{534}\)

In January 2010, Secretary of State Clinton explains that in addition to strengthening bilateral alliances U.S.’ East Asia policy should emphasize “regional institutions and efforts should work to advance our clear and increasingly shared objectives.” It is thus in the context of strengthening “regional architecture” that TPP is mentioned, but only after emphasizing


\(^{531}\) Ibid., 266.

\(^{532}\) Ibid., 266.


\(^{534}\) Kurt Campbell’s discussion and language of TPP as the “battleground” with China’s RCEP for defining the principles of trade in East Asia and the rules of the road for the global economy in the 21st century Campbell, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (New York: Twelve, 2016), xxi.
the centrality of APEC as the key East Asian economic institution. Tellingly, a factsheet released by the State Department summarizes Clinton’s speech with key points of U.S. engagement and leadership in Asia-Pacific for the year of 2009 but actually fails to mention TPP as one of the achievements of 2009. Even in Clinton’s famous *Foreign Policy* article a couple of years later in November 2011, which popularized Obama’s East Asia policy as the Asia “pivot,” the TPP is mentioned long after first emphasizing bilateral alliances and partnerships and other regional institutions from ASEAN, ARF, EAS to the APEC. Here, similar to Obama’s Suntory Hall speech in 2009, TPP is described along with KORUS FTA as elevating economic statecraft in U.S. foreign policy, a device to show greater commitment to regional partners, and “platform for broader regional interaction and eventually a free trade area of the Asia-Pacific.”

Beyond the USTR, which is itself part of the Executive Office of the President, it is difficult to accurately gauge White House’s thinking in the lead up to Obama’s commitment to the TPP in November 2009. The available evidence suggests that similar to the State Department, a well-formed judgment had not been made with regards to the TPP. With key NSC members such as Deputy National Security Advisor Tom Donilon and NSC Asia Director Jeff Bader, a policy shift aimed at re-emphasizing East Asia was already well underway before Clinton’s *Foreign Policy* article and even before the confirmation of

538 Ibid., 86.
Assistant Secretary of State to Asia Pacific, Kurt Campbell in June 2009. In contrast to the State Department’s approach to embed a China policy within a broader policy resting on calculations of the regional dynamics that at least theoretically opened up policy space to re-adopt the TPP, the NSC primarily viewed the region as a series of bilateral opportunities and challenges. As Kurt Campbell recalls, the NSC’s East Asia diplomacy resembled a “pinwheel” approach that sought “to get China right and the rest of the region can be dealt with by the other branches of government.”

As the Chief Asia strategist during Obama’s campaign and the senior director of East Asian Affairs at the NSC, Jeff Bader’s recollection of the priorities of the NSC Asia team in fact very much comports with Kurt Campbell’s characterization. Bader lays out ten main strategic principles of Obama’s Asia policy during his tenure from 2009 to 2011, which largely focus on stabilizing the relationship with China. Among some of the non-China focused principles, a few of them, such as strengthening U.S. domestic economic recovery and fuller engagement with regional multilateral institutions align with the reasons for pursuing the TPP put forward by USTR and also the State Department. However, Bader discusses TPP very sparsely in his memoir, and when he does, it is discussed primarily as one of the policies that enhanced U.S. engagement with Southeast Asian countries. Even in this limited context, Bader spends much more time emphasizing Obama’s decision to join the East Asia Summit (EAS) rather than the TPP.

Furthermore, in Bader’s recollection of 2009, the NSC Asia team was fully occupied with a series of bilateral challenges with no mention of the deliberations leading up to the

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541 A position he held from January 2009 to April 2011, succeeded by Danny Russel.
543 Ibid., 97.
544 A formulation similar to that in Clinton’s memoirs that only discusses TPP in the context of the trade agreement tying Vietnam closer with the U.S. Clinton, Hard Choices, 69–70.
545 Bader, Obama and China’s Rise: An Insider’s Account of America’s Asia Strategy, 14, 96, 144.
546 This could partially be explained by the fact that TPP negotiations were sensitive and still under way at the time of Bader’s writing, and was therefore consciously underplayed.
TPP announcement: February was marked by an early coordinated trip to Asia by Secretary Clinton as an early effort to “firm up our relationships with the key players” Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and China; the upgrading of the strategic economic dialogue to the Strategic & Economic Dialogue (S&ED) was achieved by April aiming to strengthen U.S.-China relations; a good half of 2009 from March to August was spent dealing with North Korea’s Taepodong-2 missile tests and the kidnapping of U.S. journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee; from late August the NSC was further challenged with the potential threats that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama’s landslide victory may undermine the U.S.-Japan alliance and the overall integrity of an East Asia policy; in October the NSC was dealing with worsened U.S.-China tensions surrounding the Dalai Lama’s visit to U.S.; and November was Obama’s historic first trip to Asia that was designed to secure existing bilateral relations with Japan, Singapore, and South Korea while stabilizing a set of mutual expectations with China’s Hu Jintao; in December 16-18, the efforts to first “get China right” arguably came to fruition at the Copenhagen Climate conference where Obama achieved important concessions from Hu Jintao at the last minute.

Bader concludes his memoirs that against the common claim that there needs to be a coherent strategy, “In the real world, presidents and nations have no choice but to react to developments as they occur.” Concurring with the sentiment of his colleague’s exasperated comment that “In reality, there’s no such thing as strategy. There are just a series of tactical decisions,” Bader explains that “The daily work of the U.S. government’s national security apparatus consists for the most part of making these tactical decisions. Insofar as a strategic vision is needed for many decisions, it is often not so much a fully developed, nuanced, and specific strategic plan but rather a thorough grounding in U.S. national interests.”

548 Ibid., 9–68.
549 Ibid., 141.
In light of Bader’s recollection of events in 2009, his view of the role of NSC, and the set of priorities he laid out for the NSC team, it is likely that not only was the Obama administration’s agenda crowded by domestic issues from health care reform, climate change, and energy policy in 2009, but Obama’s Asia policy agenda in the White House was also crowded with the various challenges and opportunities presented by U.S.’ bilateral relations in the region. It is therefore likely that Obama’s White House had limited bandwidth to fully develop its position on the TPP in the first year it committed to the TPP. In fact, it was reported that even by the middle of 2009 when Ron Kirk informally expressed his commitment to the TPP that the issue had not yet risen to the level of a National Economic Council decision, whose sign off would be required before Obama would decide on the issue.\textsuperscript{550} As Bader and others note, it was really only “by 2010, the Obama administration begun to move away from a purely rhetorical commitment to trade toward a more activist policy.”\textsuperscript{551,552}

Perhaps the largest factor that has the potential to counter the current assessment that U.S. original intentions towards TPP in 2009 was largely a function of USTR’s intentions inertia from the Bush administration and the limited formulation of intentions by other actors by then surrounds the unknown thinking behind the National Economic Council and, specifically, the role of Michael Froman, then deputy national security adviser for international economic affairs and later Ron Kirk’s successor as United States Trade Representative in 2013.\textsuperscript{553} Michael Froman who later completes the TPP negotiations in 2015


\textsuperscript{551} Bader, Obama and China’s Rise: An Insider’s Account of America’s Asia Strategy, 97.


and argues vociferously for its economic and strategic benefits in Obama’s second term has been attributed as the key individual that pushed for an aggressive trade agenda within the White House. Deputy National Security Advisor Tom Donilon has referred to Froman as “the intellectual author of the approach” of forging tighter economic ties in East Asia, in part to check a rising China, adding, “He saw the strategic implications.” Furthermore Michael Froman claims “longer-lasting ties to the President than anybody else in the administration—back to Harvard Law, where the two worked on the law review,” suggesting that his views on the TPP may have played a disproportionately large role in Obama’s decision to join in 2009. As one former senior USTR official also stated in an interview regarding U.S. trade policy during Obama’s first term, “Froman was doing all the work, not Ron [Kirk].” However, a media report also suggests that it was from “A trip to Korea with Obama in fall 2010 [that] kicked off a running discussion with the President” about strategically motivated trade deals. If this account is accurate, it would still date the start of substantive discussions about strategically motivated, specifically China-motivated, economic statecraft between Froman and Obama to November of 2010. This is a whole year after the TPP was adopted and negotiations were launched, meaning the “anti-China strategy” angle to the TPP would have been an afterthought, a post-hoc justification.

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557 Interview with former senior USTR official, January 2016


2.2. China’s Perception & Response:

The second analytical frame 2006-2013 examines whether China engaged in institutional competition with the U.S. and TPP with the RCEP. To this end, this section initially has two process tests (1) did China perceive U.S.’s TPP as a threat to China’s institutional power? And (2) was RCEP China’s competitive institutional strategy?

I find that China barely registered the existence of TPP until after the TPP negotiations were well underway, with serious examination of the TPP starting only around 2011. Although the U.S. joined and promoted the TPP for multiple reasons, none of which were to intentionally undermine or exclude China, analysis shows that perceiving the TPP as part of the Obama’s “Asia Pivot,” the TPP was understood by China as a threat to the regional integration process and to China’s position within it. I also found that many Chinese experts considered RCEP primarily ASEAN’s competitive institutional strategy and not China’s. The section thus follows up with a question of what was China’s institutional strategy? I find that China had in fact developed a portfolio of responses to the TPP beyond the RCEP, including the China-Japan-Korea FTA (CJK FTA), Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP), and the One Belt, One Road initiative. Therefore, despite the absence of strategic intentions to undermine China, U.S.’s TPP triggered an institutional strategic response from China and the RCEP was one among many of these responses.

2.2.1. Did China perceive TPP as a threat to China’s institutional power?

Yes, but not until later in 2011. An examination of several Chinese primary and secondary sources show that the initial developments of the TPP were on the whole overlooked and it
was not until around 2010 that early perceptions of TPP starting forming with serious
attention being paid to TPP only around 2011.

i. Initial Perception

Figure 8 below illustrates the percentage of TPP-related statements, posts, reports and
articles per year for three different Chinese sources: The Chinese central government
website, the state-controlled media outlet People Daily and a selection of Chinese
academic and think tank journals known to have direct institutional links to the Chinese
government. For the Chinese government website and the People Daily, there is nothing

560 The search was conducted on four translations of the TPP, after which the overlapping articles were
subtracted to give the final number of articles. The four search words are: (1) 跨太平洋战略经济伙伴关系协定/ 跨太平洋战略经济伙伴关系协定, (2) 跨太平洋伙伴关系协定, (2a)
跨太平洋经济伙伴关系协定, (2b) 跨太平洋伙伴关系贸易协定, (3) 跨太平洋伙伴关系协定 / 跨太平洋伙伴关系/泛太平洋战略经济伙伴关系协定谈判, (4) TPP. The first translations better translates to
the Trans-Pacific Strategic and Economic Partnership (TPSEP), the trade agreement that TPP grew out of and
better known as the P4 agreement between Brunei, Chile, Singapore and New Zealand.
561 The search was conducted on April 25, 2017 on the Chinese Central Government website,
https://www.gov.cn/ The website publishes leaders’ speeches and transcripts, relevant statements and reports
from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce, as well as republishing news articles and
opinion columns, with the majority of the news sources coming from Xinhua News Agency.
562 Stockmann finds that media experts in China believe that official state-controlled newspapers are
“representing the government’s opinion” and thus provide us with an alternative source by which we can infer
Chinese elite perceptions of TPP. Among 46 media outlets that compose the structure of the Beijing newspaper
market, media experts in China ranked the People Daily (Renmin Ribao) as the most “official” and “closed”
newspaper, and thus a source that most closely reflects the Party’s position. Daniela Stockmann, “Who Believes
272, 274, 275, 289. The People Daily is self-described as a “political machine paper” (jiguanbao 机关报) for
the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee, where the Central Committee’s Disciplinary Commission
ensures that the People Daily reflects the party line by having a permanent inspection unit within the news
563 The search was conducted on April 2, 2017 on the People Daily printed edition online dataset between 1946-
2017. Renmin Ribao Tuwen Shujuku http://58.68.146.102/rmb/20170401/1?code=2u. The search was
conducted using the same four variations of words used in China for the TPP (see fn above). The total number of
articles was 256, which includes three articles that were re-printed (one article each in 2015, 2016, 2017). The
total number of unique TPP-related articles is thus 253.
564 There are five journals and publications whose researchers have fixed channels of reporting to government
organs and thus have some inferential value for understanding Chinese elite perception. These are: (1) China
Institute of International Studies (CIIS) (Zhongguoguojiwenti Yanjiuyuan) produces the International Studies
journal (Guojiwentiyanjiu) and reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). International Studies is
perhaps best known and analyzed widely as a reflecting MFA’s views, (2) The China Institute of Contemporary
International Relations (CICIR) (Zhongguo Xindai Guojiguanxi Yanjiuyuan) that publishes Contemporary
International Relations (Xindai Guojiguanxi) has a similar institutional path of report to CIIS, whereby CICIR
published on the TPP between 2006 and 2009. Only two and five articles were published respectively by the end of 2010, making up only 1~2% of the total TPP-related content to date.\textsuperscript{566} For the academic and think tank journals with institutional channels to the government, there are no TPP-related publications until 2011, a one-year delay compared to the other two sources that we could attribute to the lag in the research and journal publication process.\textsuperscript{567}

To corroborate these results, an additional search was conducted on a much wider platform of online content \textit{People Network (Renmin Wang)}.\textsuperscript{568} From the total of an estimated 6,000~15,000\textsuperscript{569} TPP-related articles on the \textit{People Network} to date, there are no articles

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\item reports to its administration patron, the Ministry of State Security, (3) The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (\textit{Zhongguo Shehuikexueyuan}) is affiliated with the State Council and supervised by the CPC Propaganda Department, where the “material for internal reports is centrally collected by the General Office and then compiled and distributed to decision-makers.” Two research departments CASS National Institute of International Strategy (CASS-NISH) and CASS Institute for World Economy and Politics (CASS IWEP) separately publish \textit{Contemporary Asia} (\textit{Dangdai Yatai}) and \textit{Global Economy and Politics} (\textit{Shijiejingjiyuzengzhi}) that offer us insights into Chinese perception of issues pertaining to East Asia and International Relations more broadly. (5) Finally, there is the Institute for International Strategic Studies (IISS) (\textit{Guojizhanliyeyanjiuyuan}) of the Party School of the Central Committee of China (CCPS) (\textit{Zhonggong zhongyangtangxiao}) that is affiliated with the CPC Central Committee. While IISS has fixed report channels and is alone in Abb’s estimate that the internal reports have “high” importance, \textit{New Strategies Studies} (\textit{Xinzhanliyeyanjiu}) only started publishing in 2014 and is, moreover, not accessible through public academic search portals such as CNKI. The IISS website’s section on “Research results” (\textit{Yanjiu chenguo}) makes publications publically available, but similarly has only started uploading articles in 2014. See Tomonori Sasaki, “China Eyes the Japanese Military: China’s Threat Perception of Japan since the 1980s,” \textit{The China Quarterly}, no. 203 (2010): 560~80; Pascal Abb, “China’s Foreign Policy Think Tanks: Institutional Evolution and Changing Roles,” \textit{Journal of Contemporary China} 24, no. 93 (May 4, 2015): 531–53.
\item 2 TPP-related articles make up 0.88% of the total of 227 TPP-related posts on the central government website, and 5 reports make up 1.97% of the total 253 TPP-related reports to date on \textit{People Daily}.
\item One article was identified as being published in the \textit{Global Economy and Politics} in 2007. However, searching the contents of the specific article revealed there was no mention of the TPP in any of its variant forms. This article was therefore dropped from the analysis. Sheng Bin, “The Political Economy of an Asia Pacific Free Trade Area (FTAAP): A Chinese Perspective,” \textit{Global Economy and Politics}, 2007 (3)
\item The \textit{People Network} is a web-based news hub built around \textit{People Daily} to include other newspapers such as the \textit{International Financial News} (\textit{Guojijinrongbao}), “news groups” (\textit{wangguan}) such as the \textit{Chinese Communist Party News} (\textit{Zhongguo gongchandang xinwenwang}) and \textit{National People’s Congress News} (\textit{Renda xinwenwang}), as well as weekly papers, magazines and social media platforms including forums and blogs. \textit{Renmin Wang} \texttt{http://www.people.com.cn/} (last accessed: April 9, 2017)
\item Due to the much higher number of positive search hits the total number of unique, non-overlapping articles was not determined for practical reasons. For example, there are fifty times as many articles for “TPP” (10,669 positive results compared to 221 in the search limited to \textit{People Daily}) and 28 times as many articles for “\textit{Kuataipingyang huobanguanxi xieding}” (2,544 positive results compared to 91 in the search limited to...
published up until 2009. Only one article was in fact published in December 2009. However, this is a long, technical daily analysis on foreign exchange rates, part of a series that was discontinued by 2010. Moreover, the TPP was only mentioned as part of Japanese foreign policy. These search results together suggest that China’s perception of TPP had hardly formed even after the TPP negotiations commenced in March 2010. The percentage of TPP-related posts between 2006-2016 are illustrated below in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Percentage of TPP-related posts published per year between 2006-2016, comparison between three outlets: (1) Chinese government website (gov.cn), (2) People Daily (3) Select think tank and academic journals (journals)

People Daily). However, the total number of TPP-related articles on the People Network is estimated as ranging from 6,265-15,072. The high estimate is based on adding all positive results together and assuming no overlap in articles. The low estimate is based on subtracting all results from the highest number, assuming that all articles are overlaps.


571 These also provide a comprehensive reaffirmation of Min Ye’s first-cut analysis of secondary Chinese academic sources on the CNKI database where she found that no academic articles had been published on the TPP between 2005 and 2009. Ye, “China and Competing Cooperation in Asia-Pacific: TPP, RCEP, and the New Silk Road,” 213.
Examining what limited coverage there is of the TPP in these initial years further confirms that China did not register TPP as U.S.’s competitive institutional strategy or as a potential threat to China’s institutional power. In China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) annual white papers, *China Diplomacy (Zhongguo Waijiao)*, there is no mention of TPP up until 2009. Here, the TPP is first mentioned as part of the Obama administration’s “proactive participation in designing East Asia’s multilateral mechanisms” and U.S.’ “new age of cooperation with East Asian countries.” However, the TPP is listed at the end of a string of examples without being expanded on, and most notably, the TPP is not mentioned again in the section dedicated to analyzing the important trends in East Asia and the state of East Asian cooperation.

More insightful is the coverage of U.S. foreign policy and TPP in the more fine-grained analysis offered in the annual *Bluebooks* published by MFA’s think tank, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS). Unlike *China Diplomacy*, the *Bluebook* does not mention the TPP in 2009, highlighting once again that China saw little significance in the trade agreement or even as part of analyzing U.S.’s new foreign policy direction under Obama.

What is more, the *Bluebook* illustrates that in 2009, China had on the whole underestimated the extent to which Obama and his foreign policy team were prioritizing East Asia and the possibility that the U.S. would counter China’s influence in the region. For example, the *Bluebook* mischaracterizes Obama’s shift in foreign policy away from the Middle East to Asia as “Attending simultaneously to two oceans, pay equal attention to

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572 *China Diplomacy* is a 460-paged book that summarizes the main international and regional trends and reviews Chinese foreign policy activities for the past one year. It is published by MFA’s Department of Strategy and Planning (*Zhanlìe Guihua Si*) each year.
574 Ibid., 13–14.
575 Ibid., 28–29.
Europe and Asia” (Liangyangjiangu, Ouyabingzhong), a form of “Pivot to both Europe and Asia” that actually prioritized the Transatlantic alliance as the “backbone of America’s global strategy.” Furthermore, the Bluebook evaluates more broadly that Obama’s move away from Bush’s unilateralism towards multilateralism and international institutions was a practical readjustment to U.S.’s relative position of weakness. Thought to be brought about by the Bush administration’s two costly wars in the Middle East and the 2008/2009 Financial Crisis, the report thus concludes that “at a time of a decline in U.S. power, issues [other than economic financial] such as anti-terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation, and guarding against rising powers has become less urgent.”

Interestingly, the Bluebook actually mentions the TPP the year before in 2008, the final year of the Bush administration. Here, the Bluebook vividly describes institutional competition taking place in East Asia with the U.S.’s intervention into ASEAN+3 and the East Asia Summit having the effect of “poisoning the atmosphere of regional cooperation.” However, the TPP is not mentioned once in this context of competitive regionalism. Rather, the TPP is somewhat accurately covered in a separate context as an example of the growing regional trend towards regionalism in response to the failing WTO Doha Rounds.

577 “两洋兼顾，欧亚并重”，Ibid.
578 Ibid.
579 Ibid., 14, emphasis added.
580 Ibid., 138–39.
581 Ibid., 134.
ii. **Delayed Initial Perception**

Interviews with current Chinese diplomats and policy experts in Beijing suggest that the TPP became a salient issue in the Chinese foreign policy community around 2011-2012. The timing comports with the trends we observed in Figure 8, where there are virtually no TPP-related contents until 2011, after which the percentage of TPP contents experiences a steep growth.

When asked how China initially perceived the TPP, many stated that Obama’s “Asia Pivot” or “Rebalance” strategy was what spiked China’s interest in the TPP and also colored China’s perception of it. One professor at Peking University described that the TPP was thus “geo-politicized with the Rebalance.” Another Peking University professor recalled, “we did not initially understand what it [TPP] meant... and understood it only in terms of power politics and strategy.” An American foreign policy expert in a government-affiliated think tank further elaborated on China’s delayed initial perception:

“We worried a lot about TPP... because we, then, initially understood it as part of the Rebalance, which we understood as a containment strategy of China. The mainstream in China was that U.S. is returning to East Asia to contain China, both government officials and analysts thought this...TPP was therefore considered part of U.S. effort to contain China.”

Recalling how China overlooked the strategic significance of the Bush administration joining the original TPP arrangement, the P4, in 2008, one U.S. foreign policy expert advising the Chinese State Council went as far as to commend the strategic thinking he assumed was behind constructing U.S. competitive institutional strategy with the low-profile P4: “I

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582 Interviews conducted in Beijing during 2016.
583 Interview with Peking University Professor, March 2016.
584 Interview with Peking University Professor, October 2014.
585 Interview with think tank expert, April 2016.
remember reading about the U.S. joining P4 and really thought nothing of it at the time. If I had the chance to speak to who came up with the idea, I would want to tell them it was a very clever strategy!"\textsuperscript{586}

The perception that TPP was a U.S. strategy against China was not only widespread among experts and officials, but this also came to dominate the perception of China’s public. For example, on Baidu, the most widely used online search engine in China, the most popular answer to the question “What is the meaning of U.S. TPP strategy?” is that TPP is U.S.'s “comprehensive intervention (quanmian jieru) in the Asia Pacific regional economic integration process” and a way to “dilute (xishi)” China's regional influence, as well as “prevent (ezhi) the formation of a single East Asian market and protect U.S. national interests.”\textsuperscript{587}

The formation of China’s delayed initial perception of TPP therefore coincides with the unveiling of the “Asia Pivot.” Although 4 rounds of TPP negotiations were already completed before the start of 2011 and the “Pivot” was set in motion from the moment Obama’s Asia team was being put together,\textsuperscript{588} the year 2011 marked the most coordinated and concerted effort by the Obama administration to externally articulate its East Asia policy, which in hand, intentionally or not, caught China’s full attention. 2011 was the year Secretary of State Clinton wrote the famous article “America’s Pacific Century” in Foreign Policy that popularized Obama’s East Asia policy as the “pivot,”\textsuperscript{589} and is also the year where Obama

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Interview with American foreign policy expert, Beijing, April 2016.
\item “美国 TPP 战略是什么意思?”, Baidu Zhidao, November 21st, 2012. https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/499553429.html?fr=iks&word=TPP+%C3%C0%B9%FA%B4%AB%C2%D4+%B0%D9%B6%C8%D6%AA%B5%C0&ie=gbk (accessed: November, 2015)
\item Bader, Obama and China’s Rise: An Insider’s Account of America’s Asia Strategy.
\item Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” 56–63.
\end{enumerate}
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declared, “The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay,” prompting western media to evaluate that the U.S. was “sending an unmistakable message to Beijing.”

Since the first year Obama was in office in 2009, various senior officials from the USTR to the State Department had, in fact, set the year 2011 as a critical year as APEC host nation to clearly articulate U.S. East Asian foreign policy, with legislations being passed as early as May 2009 to the Obama administration for the role. As USTR Ron Kirk explains in the lead up to 2011:

“[W]e plan to leverage this unique opportunity to demonstrate America’s commitment to playing a stronger and more constructive role in the Asia-Pacific region, including on crucial trade and investment topics… We are planning for APEC 2011 to be significant both in symbol and substance. Our planning comes at a time when the President is eager to seize this unique opportunity to articulate a Trans-Pacific agenda for shared peace and prosperity. APEC 2011 has the potential to be watershed moment

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in U.S. economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific, so we are going to be both bold and ambitious when we host. We are also pursuing a new formal trade agreement with the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, through which we hope to build what will become the largest, most dynamic trade collaboration of our time.”

The year 2011 as APEC host nation was therefore important for both articulating U.S.’s East Asia policy in general, but also for showcasing the TPP. The Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), for example, advised the USTR to complete the TPP negotiations by the APEC Summit in November. While U.S. trade officials suggested that a complete TPP agreement might be difficult to achieve, they accepted the broader mandate to produce concrete “deliverables” for the TPP by the APEC summit in November, which was “reaching the broad outlines of … [the TPP] agreement.”

As far as the evidence suggests, the 19th APEC Summit in Honolulu held on 12th-13th of November unfolded as U.S. had intended or perhaps with greater success, especially with respect to the TPP. Just one day before the summit, Japanese PM Yoshihiko Noda publically

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595 “The US objective should be to reach agreement on a TPP including at least a dozen Asia Pacific countries, including Japan and Korea and at least one major ASEAN country [this would seem to be Malaysia] as well as the eight that are currently committed to the initiative, by the time of the APEC Summit to be hosted by the United States in President Obama’s home town of Honolulu in late 2011” C. Fred Bergsten and Jeffrey J. Schott “Submission to the USTR in Support of a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement,” Peterson Institute for International Economics, Paper submitted to the United States Trade Representative on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, January 25, 2010, [https://piie.com/commentary/speeches-papers/submission-ustr-support-trans-pacific-partnership-agreement](https://piie.com/commentary/speeches-papers/submission-ustr-support-trans-pacific-partnership-agreement) (accessed: December 21, 2016)
announced that Japan would enter consultations with the TPP-9 countries, stopping short of unequivocally joining the TPP.\footnote{“Press Conference by Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda” November 11, 2011, Database of Japanese Politics and International Relations, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo, http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjn/documents/texts/PI/20111111.O1E.html (accessed: January 18, 2017)} USTR Ron Kirk welcomed the announcement on behalf of the U.S.,\footnote{“Statement by U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk on Japan's Announcement Regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership” USTR November 11th 2011, https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2011/november/statement-us-trade-representative-ron-kirk-japans (accessed: January 18, 2017)} and thus Noda’s announcement marked the end of a long drawn out effort by the U.S. to get Japan to publically announce its support for the TPP since 2009.\footnote{“Following his speech, Kirk said that he would like to see Japan, Malaysia and Korea join the TPP and that the U.S. has extended an invitation to them to do so. He said as a long-term goal over the next five to 10 years, the TPP could evolve into the Free Trade Agreement of the Asia Pacific. "If we get this right, this can be the vehicle for other APEC economies [to] buy into as we work towards that goal," he said.” “Levin: TPP Could Serve To Alter Existing FTAs on Environment, Investment” Daily News, December 15th 2009, https://insidetrade.com/daily-news/levin-tpp-could-serve-alter-existing-ftas-environment-investment (accessed: January 15, 2017), “U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk told Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Masayuki Naoshima on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings in Singapore that the U.S. is interested in Japan joining the TPP agreement, according to sources. Naoshima gave no indication in the Nov. 11 meeting with Kirk whether Japan is interested in doing so, source said.” “USTR Likely To Negotiate TPP, Then Seek Expansion To Other Countries,” Inside US Trade, November 20th, 2010, https://insidetrade.com/inside-us-trade/us-trade-iipdigital/usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/11/2011111321000su1.334125e-02.html#axzz4W885SeTQ (accessed: January 18, 2017), “Canada's Renewed Interest In Joining TPP Seen As Response To Japan” Inside U.S. Trade, November 18th 2011, https://insidetrade.com/inside-us-trade/canadas-renewed-interest-joining-tpp-seen-response-japan (accessed: January 18, 2017)} Shortly after, in what was seen as a response to Japan’s announcement, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper unexpectedly announced Canada’s formal intentions to join the TPP talks,\footnote{“Canada set to enter Asian trade talks” CBC News, November 14, 2011 http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/politics/story/1.1050797 (accessed: January 18, 2017), “Summary of Obama’s Meeting with Prime Minister Harper of Canada” The White House Office of Press Secretary, November 13th 2011, http://ipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/11/2011111321000su1.334125e-02.html#axzz4W885SeTQ (accessed: January 18, 2017), “Canada's Renewed Interest In Joining TPP Seen As Response To Japan” Inside U.S. Trade, November 18th 2011, https://insidetrade.com/inside-us-trade/canadas-renewed-interest-joining-tpp-seen-response-japan (accessed: January 18, 2017)} with Mexico following suit.\footnote{“Mexico Expects TPP Countries To Consider New Entrants At March Round,” Daily News, December 16, 2011, https://insidetrade.com/daily-news/mexico-expects-tpp-countries-consider-new-entrants-march-round (accessed: January 18, 2017)} For all three countries, one of the strongest motivations to join the TPP was so that they could shape the terms of TPP to their benefit, rather than having to accept a full liberalization package they had no say in if they joined after TPP was concluded.\footnote{“Mexico wants to join the TPP talks during the negotiation process in order to be able to shape a final deal, as opposed to acceding to a completed TPP agreement, according to Ferrari. “We don't know what is going to happen with Canada and Japan, but when we raised our hand, we were thinking that the most important part is to participate in designing the rules of the TPP, not just enter into the TPP,” he said “Mexico Expects TPP Countries To Consider New Entrants At March Round,” Daily News, December 16, 2011,}
At the actual meetings themselves, former USTR Susan Schwab recalls that there was a “tangible air of excitement.”605 The Honolulu APEC Summit was “quite different” to the 2008 sideline meetings of the UN General Assembly where her efforts to secure an initial set of states for TPP were met with mixed responses.606 Schwab recalled that it was clear that certain countries were part of the TPP and certain countries were not, and that “TPP was now the cool thing to be doing. The inside-outside dynamic was clear.”607 With TPP gaining political salience and genuine excitement felt among officials included in the TPP “cool” club,608 it is unsurprising that one of the first pieces of fine-grain evidence of China’s discomfort towards the TPP comes from APEC Honolulu 2011 where it is reported that “a Chinese official complained that they didn’t receive any invitation.”609,610

Despite the unveiling of the pivot and APEC Honolulu, in particular, igniting great discomfort for the Chinese in 2011, the examination of the TPP-related contents on the Chinese government website from 2010 to 2013 reveals that China’s negative perception

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605 She further clarified that by “tangible air of excitement... I’m talking about human emotions.” Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.

606 Schwab recalls that while Peru, Australia, New Zealand and Chile were excited, but Vietnam was a “bit nervous,” Malaysians not entirely positive, and the Japanese signaled it would take a long time to join. Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.

607 Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.

608 Interview with former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, January 2016.


towards the TPP was initially muted and in its place China officially maintained a positive stance towards the TPP.\(^{611}\)

While the Chinese central government website collates a variety of sources from official statements and documents to media reports and analyses, all positive views and expressions of the TPP come from direct statements from government officials.\(^{612,613}\) Moreover, of the total 20 posts exhibiting positive perceptions of the TPP, 16 are statements in response to direct questions about China’s understanding of the TPP and 14\(^{614}\) of these statements across 2010 and 2013 express that “China maintains an open (kaifang) attitude”\(^{615}\) towards the TPP. At different times, the statement additionally includes that China also has a “supportive” (zhichi),\(^{616}\) “welcoming” (huanying),\(^{617}\) and “embracing” (baorong)\(^{618}\) attitude toward the TPP, reinforcing the interpretation that an “open” attitude is in fact a positive and not a neutral expression of China’s perception of the TPP.\(^{619}\)

The position of “openness” functions as China’s official position towards the TPP. It is most conspicuously expressed in a 2011 Xinhua article, which building on an interview with Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin is titled “China maintains open attitude towards

\(^{611}\) The search was conducted on April 25, 2017 on the Chinese Central Government website, http://www.gov.cn/

\(^{612}\) Contents are evaluated as positive if they portray the TPP as non-threatening; understood in non-competitive, non-strategic and non-power political terms; evaluated as positive for the region; China welcomes

\(^{613}\) Moreover, of the total of 29 official positions expressed, with the exception of one negative post and seven neutral posts, the rest are positive (see Appendix II Table 1)

\(^{614}\) Appendix II Table 2: post numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20.

\(^{615}\) Variously expressed as China’s position (lichang), attitude (taidu), opinion (kanfa), mentality (xintai). With attitude (taidu) having the most common usage.


\(^{619}\) Two other types of positive content include how China sees (1) multiple regional FTA arrangements as a legitimate and an agreed upon reality,\(^{619}\) as well as how (2) TPP and RCEP are complementary. While the official position of maintaining an “open attitude” towards TPP are seen throughout the four years under analysis, these latter two types of positive statements tend to be more prevalent in 2013. See Appendix II, Table 2, post no. 18, 19 & Chen Deming’s press conference.
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The official position is seen as adopted by the highest leadership including Premier Li Keqiang and President Xi Jinping in 2013, as well as repeated several times across different governmental departments, even to the point of frustration by the MFA and MOFCOM spokespersons.

What is more, the Chinese official statement is used as the unchanging response to varying questions about China’s view of TPP during the TPP’s various developments between 2010-2013: Obama’s active promotion of TPP in the lead up to APEC Honolulu in November 2011 (no.4), Japan expressing interest in joining the TPP in 2011 (no.5), the release of a U.S.-Japan joint statement regarding the TPP in 2013 (no.10), Japan’s official announcement of joining the TPP (no.12) and South Korea agreeing to join the TPP (no.16).

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624 For example, MOFCOM spokesperson states: “We have expressed our position [towards the TPP] many times, currently there is no new formulation or change in attitude. Towards various FTAs and regional trade cooperation, we overall maintain an open attitude, there has been no change to this attitude, thank you.”
625 In general, I find that, with time, a wider variety of Chinese government actors express a positive understanding of the TPP. The initial position is expressed almost entirely by the MFA spokespersons in the context of regular press conferences where journalists ask for clarification on China’s position regarding the TPP. However, in the later years, Ministers from MFA and MOFCOM express China’s position in press conferences, statements and documents, and eventually, the same positive perception reinforced in prepared speeches and press conferences with the highest leadership: Premier Li Keqiang and Chairman Xi Jinping (see Appendix II Table 2)
626 The numbers in parenthesis refer to the content number from Appendix II, Table 2. These are all events where domestic or foreign journalists directly asked MFA or MOFCOM spokesperson to explain China’s perception regarding them. The one exception to this is the responses to the news that China was reportedly welcomed to join the TPP by U.S. Department of Commerce Under Secretary Francisco J. Sánchez, in May 2013. However, even in this case, the immediate responses were neutral and soon returned to positive statements. “商务部发言人回应中欧光伏争端等经贸热点,” 2013.5.30, http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2013-05/30/content_2415254.htm (May 8, 2017)
In contrast to what was found in the interviews as well as the broader understanding that China initially perceived TPP as a threat that peaked with Japan’s joining of the TPP in 2013,\textsuperscript{627} there are no negative contents regarding the TPP in the initial years with almost all negative contents being concentrated in the year 2013.\textsuperscript{628}

As Figure 9 above illustrates, in the increasing coverage of the TPP on the central government website – from 2 in 2010, 9 each for 2011 and 2012, and 31 in 2013 – positive and official contents on TPP are expressed more frequently with time, but with a decreasing share of total posts. With the exception of two posts, all the negative contents on TPP are concentrated in 2013, balancing out the share of positive posts for that year.\textsuperscript{629,630}


\textsuperscript{628} Contents are evaluated as negative if they portray the TPP as threatening and a challenge to China; understood in competitive, strategic and power political terms; evaluated as negative for China and the region; something that China does not welcome.

\textsuperscript{629} Moreover, in contrast to positive posts, which were all official statements, almost all of the sources of negative posts come from the \textit{Xinhua} news agency (see Appendix II Table 3)

\textsuperscript{630} A neutral post has contents that are evaluated as neither describing TPP as a threat nor something that China welcomes. Neutral posts dominate for one year in 2012, which could be interpreted as a year whereby any well-articulated official position towards the TPP was curtailed during the CCP leadership transition. Neutral posts also take up a third of the posts in 2013, but mainly as a cool and perhaps hesitant response to reports that the U.S. had invited China to the TPP. All neutral posts are listed in Appendix II (i).
Analyzing the contents of the negative posts, we see that in 2013 China clearly perceives intense institutional competition unfolding in East Asia, the U.S. and TPP being the main institutional strategic challenge, and the need for China to respond accordingly. The contents range from official documents, reports and analyses with the analyses most clearly articulating the logic of institutional competition. In one analysis, the article explains that “in the sandpit of intense tussle over the rule-deciding power (guize zhedingquan) over the 21st century international trade rules, the great challenge China faces is the danger of being sidelined. The greatest pressure comes from the U.S… who will make the rules? Who will control the future?”631 In another analysis sub-titled “Analyzing the State of the Great Game and China’s Economic Diplomacy,”632 the article evaluates that “currently, the intentions by the U.S. and other countries to lead the reconstruction of the rules of international trade and investment is clear with the efforts to push for TPP, TTIP and other regional FTAs.” In yet another analysis that provides an outlook on Chinese economic diplomacy for the next year, 2014, the article makes the argument that “the main goal of China will be to proactively participate in the reform of international economic governance and continue to increase China’s rule-deciding power (guize zhedingquan) and voice.”633

Sources used to support the negative perception of the TPP are also based on a wide variety of Chinese actors ranging from various experts from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS),634 Ministry of Finance’s Chinese Academy of Fiscal Sciences,635 to Peking
University professor Wang Yong who is quoted as stating that “it is clear and easy to see that America’s TPP strategy is directed against China.”\(^6\)

The sources also include government officials from Secretary-general of the Boao Forum and former Chinese ambassador Zhou Wenzhong stating “that U.S.’ Asia pivot strategy as well as the TPP negotiations attacked *(chongji)* the Asian regional economic integration process”\(^6\) to State Council’s Vice Premier Wang Yangzeng who is quoted at length that:

“[T]he competition over rules and norms are the highest level of competition, [such that] with an attitude of greater pro-action, confidence, and responsibility, China should participate in the formulation of international rules and reform of the international system, participate in global governance issues, strengthen our voice in the formulation of international economic rules and norms, and promote the development of an international economic order that is more fair and rational.”\(^6\)

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636 “中国经济全球思辨述评之五：中国外贸格局进与退?” 2013.5.6, [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2013-05/06/content_2396428.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2013-05/06/content_2396428.htm) (May 7, 2017). The analysis is also useful in gleaning that Chinese perception towards TPP was not homogeneous but composed of “worriers” and “supporters”; the former arguing that China should “set up a separate kitchen *(另起炉灶)*” and hold fast to existing institutions such as ASEAN+3 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to promote an alternative trade architecture; the latter arguing that TPP will act as a positive external pressure and spur domestic development like China’s experience with the WTO. The article concludes by supporting both viewpoints, arguing that China “should change outside pressure to internal strength and become an important participant in the global trade’s new phase of reconstruction.”\(^6\) Given its reposting on the central government website, we can infer that the article’s view that TPP is a challenge for TPP and that China should both strive for domestic reform and find ways to strengthen its institutional power is endorsed by the Party leadership.


Finally, in an important document that applies the highest-level policy guidelines formulated and published from 18th Party Congress 3rd Plenum “中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定” (referred to as Jueding in brief) to Chinese economic diplomacy, the new Minister of Commerce Gao Hucheng also writes about regional institutional competition and the need for China to respond.\textsuperscript{639} Elaborating on the Jueding that China should “speed up the participation in and nurturing the ability of China to lead the new trend of competing for international economic cooperation,” Gao describes that “there are fundamental adjustments to the global economic structure and the competition over rules, market, technology, resources, are getting fiercer by the day.” He points out that, “in particular (tebieshi),” U.S. and Europe with TPP and TTIP have had a deep and lasting impact on the international economic environment, such that “developed countries are defining a new international trade and investment rules… and occupying the highpoint of international competition over the future rules.” In the face of these institutional competition pressures from U.S. and TPP, Gao argues that China should act strategically to increase its institutional power by “comprehensively participate in the important international cooperation negotiations, and seize an advantageous and decisive position (qiangzhan xianji) in the formulation of the new rules of goods trade, service trade and investment.”

In contrast to the clearly formed perception of an institutional competitive threat from U.S. and TPP in 2013, in the only negative post in 2011,\textsuperscript{640} we see that China sees Japan as the primary institutional strategic competitor and the “10+6” Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) as the institutional strategic challenge. Published before the

\textsuperscript{639} “商务部部长高虎城：全面提升开放型经济水平,” 2013. 12.16 \url{http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-05/12/content_2135720.htm} (May 6, 2017)

APEC Honolulu Summit in November, we can infer that up until mid-2011 when the *People Daily* article was published, China saw East Asia’s competitive institutional landscape as being defined by the “+3” East Asia FTA (EAFTA) that China supported and the “+6” CEPA that Japan supported, and quoting Reuters, argues is an FTA framework “to constrain China’s asymmetric influence over ASEAN.” While TPP is mentioned as the “much larger proposal on the table” such that there are “different cooperative mechanisms developing in parallel, and objectively there is competition (keguanshang yeyou jingzheng),” the U.S. is not identified after this point as the strategic competitor.

While the contents on the central government website might suggest that China had not formed a perception of threat from TPP until 2013, evidence beyond the interviews suggest that negative perceptions were simply suppressed. The *China Diplomacy* white papers gives us primary source evidence that China had in fact started to perceive an institutional threat in 2011 and this had in fact peaked in 2012 and subsided thereafter.

The 2010 white paper exhibits continuity from previous editions. For Asia, it makes a positive assessment of regional cooperation as “developing and flourishing” with various

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642 As to the lack of contents in year 2012, this could be understood as “missing data” where any detailed articulation of China’s foreign policy position towards the TPP may have been intentionally curtailed during the CCP leadership transition from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. While neutral posts dominate 2012, a majority of these posts relate to the 4th U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue. This signals the establishing of an important base line in Chinese foreign policy amidst a time of change in leadership. That is, given China regards major power relations (daguo guanxi) as the most important determining factor of international trends and the U.S. as the most important country in this category of international relationships, arriving at the “common understanding” (gongshi) of “constructing a mutually respecting, mutually beneficial and win-win U.S.-China cooperative partnership relationship” stabilizes the most important parameters of Chinese foreign policy moving forward. In similar vein, after two years of unilaterally explaining China’s reaction and attitude to the TPP, reaching the first joint-statement with the U.S. that includes an agreement to share information on the TPP minimally signals coordination on the trajectory of the TPP. More maximally, the agreement on TPP and the related reports can be interpreted as a product of a concerned China raising the topic of coordination with regards to TPP. For example, a year later after the 5th U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), CASS Director of Global Economics and Politics Research Center Zhang Yuyan argues that an S&ED joint-statement for U.S. and China to enhance bilateral macroeconomic coordination is actually America’s response to “China’s concern for the America-led TPP.” “落实共识的重要一步——专家解析中美战略与经济对话,” 2013.7.2, [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2013-07/12/content_2446500.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2013-07/12/content_2446500.htm) (May 8, 2017)
mechanisms mutually reinforcing each other and promoting a positive phase in regional integration. While the white paper notes that the U.S. is “proactively promoting TPP” to “open Asia-Pacific markets with FTAs,” no further examination is given.

For 2011, however, the white paper selects East Asian regional dynamics as one of the five main international trends of year 2011 that make up the opening two pages of the “overview (gaishu),” highlighting the increased salience of regional politics in the perception of Chinese foreign policy establishment. The white paper makes the assessment that “the competition of each state’s intervention and investment increased” in the region. As for the nature of regional cooperation, in addition to the flourishing nature of cooperation it identified in the year before, the white paper adds “each major power in the region is flowing together and co-existing, competition for intervention and investment in the region has increased, a new change in regional structure is brewing and the relationship between regional countries is facing fundamental adjustment.”

What is notable is the singling out of U.S. involvement in the region as one of five main points characterizing the politics of the region in 2011. In the focus on U.S. involvement in the region, in addition to providing a similar list of U.S. involvement in the region as it did in 2010 that includes “proactively promoting the TPP,” the 2011 white paper additionally states that “the U.S. has made a noisy entry into (gaodiao jieru) the affairs of the Asia Pacific.” The white paper later expands on this by describing that the U.S. has “increased its intervention (touru) to the Asia Pacific region” adding that “Importantly, the U.S. declared

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644 Ibid., 13.
646 Ibid., 2.
647 Ibid., 3.
its Asia Pacific policy, clearly putting forward the construction of ‘America’s Asia-Pacific Century.’”\textsuperscript{648}

In another departure from previous and subsequent editions, the 2011 white paper devotes a section to analyzing U.S. foreign policy in Asia Pacific in the “commentary on special topic” (\textit{zhuanti pingshu}) section, in the topic titled “America speeds up adjustment of Asia-Pacific strategy.” Here the white paper describes an accurate perception of the U.S. pivot to Asia strategy in all its details with the exception of apart actually using the label “pivot” or “rebalance,”\textsuperscript{649} The white paper notes that “the center of America’s global strategy has turned East, rapidly adjusting its Asia Pacific strategy, promoting “forward deployed” diplomacy, and raising the attention of regional countries and international society.”\textsuperscript{650}

The report quotes Obama for the first time, that U.S. president Barak Obama emphasized U.S. as a “Asia Pacific power, America’s future strategic focus is the Asia Pacific region” adding that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton published “America’s Asia Pacific Century,” the \textit{Foreign Policy} article that also came to popularize the term “Rebalance” in the U.S.\textsuperscript{651} Here, The TPP is discussed under U.S.’s effort to construct a “regional economic competitive order,” as a separate category from “regional multilateral mechanisms,” and in contrast to the normal report style that lacks details, the report notes that the U.S. congress has approved KORUS FTA, and in the November “19\textsuperscript{th} APEC leaders’ informal meeting, president Obama announced that U.S. and 8 other countries have agreed on the guiding principles of the TPP.”\textsuperscript{652}

If the 2011 white paper was unique in hinting discomfort about the competition in the region that came with U.S.’s “noisy entry” into Asia-Pacific affairs, the 2012 white paper is unparalleled in expressing a pessimistic perception of a competitive logic dominating

\textsuperscript{648} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{649} Which it later comes to use as \textit{Chongfan Yazhou} or \textit{Zaipingheng Zhanliüe}.
\textsuperscript{650} China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Zhongguo Waijiao 2012 Nianban,” 15.
\textsuperscript{651} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{652} Ibid.
international and regional politics. The report opens with an overall assessment sentence that exhibits greater concern: “The international trends of 2012 has stability and turbulence interlaced… international cooperation and friction co-existing,” and expands on this as the first of five main points that mark 2012. Titled “major country relations make a new round of adjustments, interacting, and pushing forward,” the report describes the strategic competition for rules and order for power. As states tussle for power beyond simple material power, the most important trend for China in 2012 can be seen as the intensification of institutional competition:

“Each major country has started a new round of competition over higher level comprehensive national power, firmly grasping and adjusting their own development strategy, diplomatic strategy and national security strategy, proactively expanding space for development, and increasing their own position of power. Between the major powers is mutual cooperation and competition, the strategic game (zhanlüe boyi) around international rules and order (guojiguize yu zhixu) has deepened between major western countries and new market states.”

Observing trends in East Asia, the report departs from previous editions in writing that one of the main trends is that major powers have “greatly expanded” (jiada touru) their intervention (touru) in the region. It then explains that the “U.S. continues to push for Asia Pacific strategy of “rebalance” (zaipingheng),” and selects the “push for TPP” as one of the examples.

Describing U.S. foreign policy in 2012, the language continues in a similar tone of concern. The U.S. “continues to greatly increase its input towards the Asia-Pacific region, intensifying the promotion of its Asia Pacific strategy of “rebalance.” As well as using

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654 Ibid., 1, emphasis added.
655 Ibid., 3.
656 Ibid., 10.
being the first year to correctly use the label “rebalance,” the section also correctly describes U.S. emphasis on commitment and capacity of the “Return to Asia Pacific” (chongfan yatai), and further notes that U.S. emphasized “putting the economy at center” and “noisily put forward (gaodiao dachu) “Asia-Pacific strategy participation plan” (Yatai zhanliie canyu jihua), continues to push the “Trans-Pacific Partnership.” Thus we can see China firmly situating TPP within the “rebalance” or “pivot” strategy, as well as the great power dynamics in the region, and as a concrete example of the strategic game for institutional power.

Finally, in the 2013 white paper, we actually see the language normalizing back to a balanced, if not positive, perception of international and regional trends. The report thus opens with a fairly neutral assessment that “from development modes to regional trade arrangements, international governance system to geopolitical patterns, there have been deep adjustments,” noting some traditional themes of pre-2011 including global economic recovery and trends towards multipolarity. The analysis of the region also returns to the judgment that the region is “overall stable” and that “peace and development is the main trend is the region.”

As for regional cooperation, the report also has a positive description that “Asia-Pacific cooperation is deepening by the day. Regional economic integration system is perfected by the day... Asia has already become the region with the liveliest trade cooperation in the world.” The analysis of U.S. foreign policy also seems to move away from the alarmist tones of 2011 and 2012 and reconnect with themes and concepts pre-2011.

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657 As opposed to other labels such as “forward deployed diplomacy” and “smart power” strategy used in the previous years.
660 Ibid., 2.
661 Ibid., 3.
662 Ibid.
describing U.S. foreign policy with pursuing world of “many partners,” “smart power” diplomacy, as well as continuing to characterize U.S. foreign policy as “rebalance,” and “return” to Asia-pacific. Here, in 2013, we see TPP as additionally being described as “American-led model of regional trade architecture” (suazo meiguozhudaode diqumaoyitixi) and evaluated as “achieving important advancements.”

2.2.2. Was RCEP China’s competitive institutional strategy?

No. In the final years of the U.S.-led TPP, the RCEP was described by the Obama administration as “China-led,” “China’s own trade initiative” and China’s efforts to “set the rules in Asia.” In an interview with a Chinese foreign policy expert and former National Security Council member on the China desk for the Bush administration, when asked whether RCEP was a Chinese institutional strategy against the TPP, he also responded without hesitation “yes, of course.” In contrast to this widespread understanding that RCEP was China's institutional strategic response to TPP, I found little corroborating evidence from interviews conducted with Chinese and ASEAN experts.

One Peking University IPE professor who claimed frequent contact with senior officials in the Chinese Ministry of Commerce stated clearly that RCEP was not a Chinese

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663 Ibid., 8–9.
664 Over the years, we are able to see that TPP is described as one of many policies promoted in the region to being a pivotal part of U.S.’s regional strategy. The TPP has been varyingly mentioned in China Diplomacy as part of U.S.’ “new age of cooperation with East Asian countries” (2009); something “U.S. is actively promoting” (2010); a strategy for “U.S. to open markets in the Asia-Pacific” (2011); “U.S. promoting TPP as part of the rebalance” (2012); TPP being a “U.S.-led model of regional trade architecture” (2013)
strategy, “you tell me, which department in the Chinese government is promoting RCEP? None. There is no office that deals with the RCEP.” He continued to explain that the Free Trade Agreement of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP), on the other hand, was a concrete Chinese FTA policy promoted by the APEC office in the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. Further suggesting that the preference for FTAAP was shared at the highest level of leadership, he asked back, “why do you think there was no mention of RCEP, but Xi Jinping promoted FTAAP at APEC Beijing?”

In fact, just in the way U.S.’s APEC host year was taken to be an important opportunity for Obama and his East Asia policy team, as the first international summit since Xi Jinping assumed power, China was also eager to showcase China’s regional leadership and vision as host nation of APEC in 2014. At the APEC CEO’s meeting, Xi Jinping spoke of the “Asia-Pacific Dream,” extending his domestic slogan of the “China Dream” to a regional policy in what some commentators saw as a response to U.S.’ pivot to Asia. Xi unpacked the “Asia-Pacific Dream” with a variety of concrete regional

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667 Interview with Peking University Professor, March 2016.
cooperation initiatives,671 with Xi’s choice of regional FTA strategy being the Free Trade Agreement of East Asia Pacific (FTAAP),672 an initiative originally promoted by Bush at APEC Hanoi Summit in 2006.673 Just after the APEC Beijing Summit where FTAAP was adopted in the leaders’ statement,674,675 in an interview with one of the attendees Zhang Yunling, Director of CASS and “The influential government scholar Zhang Yunling, often credited for being the government advisor who masterminded China’s reassurance strategy toward ASEAN,”676 Zhang makes clear that China disagrees with the U.S. that “TPP could be the sole model” of East Asian regional integration and believes China’s initiative of FTAAP is a superior alternative.677 While Xi Jinping personally promoted the FTAAP at APEC Beijing, the RCEP was not mentioned in any of his speeches.678

671 “They include the US$40 billion (SS$51.6 billion) Silk Road Infrastructure Fund and the US$100 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB),” “Apec summit shows China wants bigger regional role,” The Strait Times, November 17, 2014, http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/apec-summit-shows-china-wants-bigger-regional-role (last accessed: July 14, 2017)


676 Christensen, The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power, 194.


678 “President Xi Jinping delivers keynote speech at opening ceremony of APEC CEO Summit.” China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), November 10, 2014, http://overseas.ccpit.org/Contents/Channel_1620/2014/1110/428024/content_428024.htm (last accessed: July 14, 2017), “Closing Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting At the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
In an interview, a Chinese expert on ASEAN also denied that RCEP was China’s competitive institutional strategy, stating without hesitation that RCEP is “definitely not Chinese.” He explained that RCEP is actually ASEAN’s effort to reclaim the leading position it had in the region’s integration process during the late 90s and early 2000s. He thus argued that, if anything, RCEP is ASEAN's response to the U.S. and TPP and not China's. The China Expert and Eminent Person of ASEAN Regional Forum and Council member of China People's Institute of Foreign Affairs further argued that “We [China] need something better than ASEAN if we are not to continue being something like a victim [of institutional competition],” explaining that the consistent and periodic announcements made by Chinese leaders supporting the rapid conclusion of RCEP in the wake of each TPP announcement is only a “face saving” effort: “If China did not support RCEP, China will lose face. The other 15 countries will be very unhappy with China.”

In an interview with the Senior Director of ASEAN Economic Community at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, the notion that RCEP was a Chinese competitive institutional strategy against TPP was also strongly rejected. He explained that not only was the RCEP promoted by Indonesia, it was a “natural evolution” of ASEAN's FTA policy and a solution to the “spaghetti bowl syndrome” of crosscutting and contradictory FTAs in the region. While acknowledging the possibility that TPP may have played a part in the calculus behind RCEP as all FTAs have some competitive element between them, he argued that the key motivation behind RCEP was to combine the six “+1” FTAs that ASEAN has with its trading partners and create one harmonized regional FTA under the ASEAN framework. The Director strongly rejected the characterization that RCEP was a China-led response to TPP commenting that “for parties outside the RCEP, it is easy to focus on the largest economy,

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People’s Republic of China, November 11, 2014,
679 Interview with China ASEAN expert (also China Expert and Eminent Person of ASEAN Regional Forum and Council member of China People's Institute of Foreign Affairs), April 2016
China, and think that it is China-led. But RCEP is an ASEAN-led initiative. I have never seen that [fact] change.\footnote{680}

In the only interview that suggested otherwise, a Chinese think-tank expert in Beijing acknowledged that RCEP was China’s strategy against TPP. While he could not comment on which government department was promoting RCEP, after hearing the notion that a senior Peking University professor argued that FTAAP was China’s FTA strategy, he simply commented that “There must be a coordination problem [in the government].”\footnote{681}

2.2.3. What was China’s FTA strategy?

An examination of Chinese primary sources shows RCEP became incorporated as part of China’s portfolio of institutional responses, although most likely not as its most preferred strategy. China’s FTA strategy evolved in response to the changing assessment of the strategic institutional landscape, which included what Zhang Yunling recalled as the “big surprise” of TPP’s sudden significance,\footnote{682} as well the institutional moves made by Japan and ASEAN with respect to the TPP.

In the first couple of years 2010-2011 when China’s threat perception of TPP started to develop, China was preoccupied with pursuing the East Asia FTA (EAFTA), a regional FTA framework initiated under the ASEAN+3 (APT) framework in 2001 and again proposed by China in 2009 to be incorporated into the APT chairman’s statement.\footnote{683} During 2010 and

\footnote{680} Interview with Senior Director of ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Secretariat, September 2016.

\footnote{681} Interview with Chinese Think Tank expert, April 2016.

\footnote{682} “TPP is really at the beginning a big surprise,” he said in answer to my question at a breakfast session hosted by SaKong, a former South Korean finance minister. “We realize TPP is a fact. China cannot stop it.”


\footnote{684} The initiative for East Asian FTA first came from 2001’s Vision group, that by 2004 leaders of APT were exploring the feasibility of, later 2006 led to the conclusion that it was feasible and that leaders should start the process of negotiations as soon as possible. In 2009, at the APT leaders' meeting, China suggested the
much of 2011, China actually perceived the greatest institutional strategic competitor as Japan and its “+6” arrangement, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).\(^{684}\) China was also more broadly dissatisfied with ASEAN dominating previous regional integration efforts and frameworks.\(^{685}\) As Qin and Wei thus note, EAFTA promoted under the APT framework was a bid for China to increase its institutional power in response to its dissatisfaction with ASEAN frameworks.\(^{686}\) The institutional power competition was therefore primarily seen by China as one between Japan’s CEPA and China’s EAFTA, but over the leadership mantle that had been occupied by ASEAN.

China’s understanding of Japan and ASEAN as the primary institutional strategic competitors had formed by at least 2008 and continued to dominate in 2010. Spilling over into mid-2011, this assessment most likely delayed China’s timely adjustment of institutional threat perception towards the TPP despite the TPP having been part of U.S.’s trade strategy since 2008.

The 2008 bluebook published by MFA’s CIIS discusses the challenges to China’s preferred ASEAN+3 framework and evaluates that “Japan wants to jump out of 10+3… fighting for leadership, and striving for “10+6” Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.”\(^{687}\) It also explains that there is still common ground with Japan against ASEAN leadership in the form of China-Japan-Korea (CKJ) trilateral cooperation. The bluebook thus

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\(^{684}\) Reuters has reported that Japan supports 10+6 as a way to constrain China’s great influence imbalance over ASEAN.” 中日联合提案受欢迎 东亚自贸区建设有望提速, http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2011-08/15/content_1925484.htm (April 4, 2017)

\(^{685}\) “ASEAN has made a series of “+1” motivated by self-interest, maximize its strengths, and partly to rely less on China. However, this has fed into the “Spaghetti bowl syndrome” of overlapping rules in East Asia.” 中日联合提案受欢迎 东亚自贸区建设有望提速, http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2011-08/15/content_1925484.htm (April 4, 2017)


also explains that “the institutionalization of a separate China-Japan-Korea (CJK) leader’s meeting” was promoted “under the circumstances that ASEAN's influence is declining in the region,”688 criticizing that ASEAN-led models pose a problem of the “small horse pulling the big cart.”689 Registering that ASEAN is also opposed to CJK leadership replacing ASEAN,690 the bluebook makes the evaluation that the institutional competition with Japan and ASEAN pose as the main “bottlenecks to regional cooperation.”

The 2009 bluebook shows that China’s perception of institutional competition in the region continued from 2008. The bluebook identifies that Japan wants an FTA with an expanded membership beyond the “+3,” to include the U.S. and other major countries, which the bluebook dismisses as “unrealistic and impractical.”691 The argument put forward is that the +3 framework should be “the main medium (zaiti)”692 and “East Asian regional cooperation’s main force and platform.”693 More specifically, that China has “the hope that 10+3 will represent East Asian integration, and become the global economy’s third firm foundation (Shijie jingjide disanji dianding jichu) after North America and Europe.”694 In other words, that EAFTA becomes East Asia’s primary trade architecture, one comparable to NAFTA and the EU.

China’s FTA strategies in 2010 can thus be understood in this context where China’s previous perception of institutional competition with Japan, and to an extent ASEAN, continues to dominate China’s calculus. In the China Diplomacy white paper for year 2010, the only China-promoted FTA mentioned by name is thus the China-ASEAN FTA (CAFTA)695 and the EAFTA.696,697

688 Ibid., 136.
689 Ibid., 137.
690 Ibid., 138.
692 Ibid.
693 Ibid., 143.
694 Ibid., 146.
In 2011, we see evidence that China’s preference for promoting EAFTA continues. The *China Diplomacy* 2011 reports that China has “achieved notable achievements for the development of regional cooperation” and gives the example of the “new stage in [China-Japan-Korea (CJK)] trilateral cooperation.” This encompasses the completion of research on the CJK FTA, as well as the joint proposal by China and Japan in April for the promotion of EAFTA and CEPA. In 2011, China is therefore establishing the groundwork for a CJK FTA in addition to the initially puzzling joint-promotion of EAFTA with Japan’s competitive proposal of CEPA.

An analysis on the central government website discusses the joint proposal and makes clear that while China is promoting EAFTA, it actually perceives Japan’s CEPA as the threat. The *People Daily* analysis argues that East Asian states should be “treating 10+3 as core to create a regional FTA,” and dismisses Japan’s +6 CEPA framework as more costly, less feasible, and promoted by Japan in an effort to undermine China’s institutional power. Despite the competition between Japan and China, coming to a joint proposal at the various ASEAN+ summits in April of 2010 can be understood as the minimum common ground shared by the two countries against ASEAN leadership.

In November of 2011, two events occur that provide a critical juncture that alters China’s assessment of the institutional strategic landscape and forces China to adjust its FTA

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696 “Wen Jiabao urged the promotion of EAFTA” at the APT leaders’ meeting, in Ibid., 51.
697 The first TPP-related post on the Chinese government website that mentions TPP at the end of 2011 can also be understood in this context. At the Yokohama APEC informal leaders’ meeting, China and all other APEC members formally acknowledge that ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6 and the Trans-Pacific Partnership are the main paths to achieve regional integration. 中国代表称 APEC 成员应在后危机时代继续携手合作, 2010.11.10, [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2010-11/10/content_1741848.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2010-11/10/content_1741848.htm) (April 4, 2017). The Yokohama declaration itself reads: We will take concrete steps toward realization of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), which is a major instrument to further APEC’s regional economic integration agenda. An FTAAP should be pursued as a comprehensive free trade agreement by developing and building on ongoing regional undertakings, such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, among others. 2010 Leaders Declaration”, Yokohama, Japan 13th November 2010, [http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2010/2010_aelm.aspx](http://www.apec.org/Meeting-Papers/Leaders-Declarations/2010/2010_aelm.aspx) (May 12, 2017)
699 Ibid., 27.
strategy. First, is the 12th APEC Leaders’ Meeting at Honolulu on November 12th, 2011. As explored earlier, the Obama administration had been planning since the first year in office to utilize U.S.’s host year of APEC to develop and deliver a coherent and comprehensive message about U.S.’s East Asia strategy and, more specifically, to unveil the TPP as a key component of it. Together with Noda’s announcement that Japan would enter into consultations with the TPP states, APEC Honolulu Summit was successful in making the Chinese delegate feel uncomfortable. With the clear shift in the institutional landscape, this would have served as an important turn of events that confirmed China’s growing concern for the TPP and the need to respond.

The second event comes just days after the Honolulu Summit at the 19th ASEAN Summit, Bali on November 14th-19th where ASEAN leaders noted the document titled “ASEAN Framework for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.” Earlier in the year, in the People Daily analysis on the EAFTA CEPA joint-proposal, the article noted that an “ASEAN Secretariat Single Market officer leaked that ASEAN has four working groups that are considering the possibility of either the 10+3 or the 10+6 framework and will make a specific recommendation by November” of 2011. Come November, ASEAN

703 In the “Chair’s Statement of the 19th ASEAN Summit Bali, 17 November 2011” we see that it notes “We agreed, adopted and noted other landmark and significant outcome documents under the three pillars of ASEAN Community as follows:” and includes RCEP “ASEAN Framework for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership” as the second of seven documents. “Chair’s Statement of the 19th ASEAN Summit Bali, 17 November 2011,” http://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/archive/documents/19th%20summit/CS.pdf (June 15, 2017). We also see RCEP being noted by the U.S. in 2012 November 20th in 4th ASEAN-US leaders meeting joint-statement, “10. We noted the official launch of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations as part of ASEAN’s efforts towards deepening regional economic integration. We also noted the development of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as a high-standard agreement, which will boost trade and investment and promote regional economic integration throughout the Asia Pacific region and beyond.” “Joint Statement of the 4th ASEAN-U.S. Leaders’ Meeting,” Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 19 November 2012, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/20/joint-statement-4th-asean-us-leaders-meeting (June 15, 2017)
leaders opted for the “+6” framework under a different name, RCEP, in effect allowing ASEAN to re-take the leading role in the region’s integration process in the face of a U.S.’ TPP, China’s EAFTA and Japan’s CEPA. A leading ASEAN expert in Indonesia explained ASEAN’s strategic intentions that “it is the fear of small and medium powers that they will be excluded from the major power dynamics,” adding that “this [institution-building] is the only instrument [for ASEAN] to engage with major powers.”

Facing a different institutional strategic landscape by the end of 2011 with ASEAN and Japan’s institutional moves towards RCEP and TPP respectively, in 2012, we see China adjusting its institutional strategy from EAFTA to a portfolio of institutional strategies. The China Diplomacy white paper for 2012 assesses that China “safeguarded the healthy developmental momentum of regional cooperation,” and provides a long list of institutional initiatives for year 2012. In terms of regional FTAs, the white paper notes the CJK FTA initiated in May at the 5th Trilateral Summit Meeting and the RCEP was agreed at the ASEAN+3 Finance Ministers’ Meeting (FMM) in August and then fully adopted by Wen Jiabao in November at the 7th East Asia Summit.

We can observe a similar shift in strategy on the Chinese central government website. In February of 2012, an exclusive interview with former Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama is posted on the Chinese government website in support of the CJK FTA framework over the TPP. The article argues that “in contrast to the TPP… creating an East Asian community will

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705 Interview with Professor Aleksus Jemadu, Dean of Faculty Social and Political Sciences at the Universitas Pelita Harapan, Jakarta, September 2016.
708 The signing of the CJK investment treaty; the initiation of CJK FTA and RCEP negotiations; the development of the Asian bond market initiative; the official operation of 10+3 macroeconomic research office (AMRO). Interestingly, the Maritime Silk Road initiative is mentioned, but not expanded on with any detail or together with the Economic Belt and One Belt, One Road initiative that it becomes later associated with.
bring more realistic benefits to Japan,” and quotes Hatoyama that the Japanese government should thus “prioritize the development of EAC, and treat Japan-China-Korea as the center for advancing cooperation and development.”

Nine months later, in November of 2012, in the only official statement on the government website regarding TPP, we see that in addition to the CJK framework China publically supports the ASEAN-led RCEP framework. In response to an interview question by a Japanese journalist about the progress of the CJK FTA, MOFCOM Minister Chen Deming instead takes the opportunity to first provide a comprehensive introduction of the RCEP. In this interview, Chen Deming exhibits how China does not have strong preference over any one of the initiatives as he explains that there are multiple routes to regional integration and the outcome depends on which of them concludes faster.

With ASEAN’s adoption of RCEP and Japan’s move toward the TPP, China’s initial FTA preference for the EAFTA was effectively hollowed out by the end of November of 2011. The adjustment in strategy to promote the CJK framework in 2012 can be seen as an attempt to secure the trilateral core of China, Japan and Korea from the EAFTA idea once the ASEAN component had been cut out into the RCEP. Moreover, the decision to support RCEP can also be seen as a suboptimal outcome for China, where in the face of a TPP threat made larger by Japan’s announcement to effectively join, China would have felt compelled to coalesce with ASEAN with no invitation on the horizon from TPP member states. In other words, with China’s bid for regional institutional leadership obliterated with the EAFTA ship sunk in such a short space of time, the adjustment to salvage the CJK core of EAFTA and jumping back on board an ASEAN-led initiative RCEP would have felt dissatisfactory for China.

712 “鸠山由纪夫表示：日中两国人民应构筑信任关系,” 2012.2.2., http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-02/02/content_2057058.htm (May 6, 2017)
Looking at the Chinese primary sources, we see little evidence of this dissatisfaction on the surface, as China continues to list CJK and RCEP as part of China’s portfolio of institutional strategies.\textsuperscript{714,715} However, we can infer China’s discontent from several developments occurring at the end of 2012 and 2013.

First, the political momentum behind CJK was lost as Shinzo Abe came to power at the end of 2012 and brought about a freeze in the Sino-Japanese relationship with the hitherto lauded trilateral summits halted until 2015.\textsuperscript{716,717} Japan’s final announcement to join TPP in early 2013 would have also served as the final blow to the possibility that CJK would be an effective FTA strategy and EAFTA still a possible outcome.\textsuperscript{718}

Second, in 2013, in support of the argument that China’s support for RCEP is perhaps only a “face-saving” effort,\textsuperscript{719} I find that when the opportunity arises for China to explain its ASEAN policy, China is keen on highlighting its own initiatives, at best, only mentioning in passing that China is also ready to promote the RCEP. In Xi Jinping’s speech at Indonesia where he importantly discusses a number of initiatives to develop China-ASEAN relations,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item For example, when statements concerning the multiple tracks to regional FTA frameworks are given, they typically provide three examples in the order of TPP, RCEP and CJK FTA.
\item Interview with China ASEAN expert (also China Expert and Eminent Person of ASEAN Regional Forum and Council member of China People's Institute of Foreign Affairs), April 20 2016.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
he mentions the “China-ASEAN destined community,” good neighbor treaty, construction of AIIB and the 21st Century Maritime Silk road, and does not mention the RCEP once.\textsuperscript{720} Similarly, at the 16th China-ASEAN leaders’ meeting in October 9-10th, Premier Li Keqiang celebrates 10 years of strategic partnership with ASEAN. In China Diplomacy Li Keqiang is noted to have mentioned a series of regional initiatives, and again, there is no mention of the RCEP.\textsuperscript{721} Curiously, in the full text of Li Keqiang’s speech, however, where Li notes that “we need to start negotiations on an upgraded version of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area” he does mention at the end that “China also stands ready to work with ASEAN to advance negotiations of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) to deepen economic integration of our region.”\textsuperscript{722} Finally, in China Diplomacy for 2013, for the section that summarizes Chinese foreign policy activities with relations to ASEAN, a full year’s worth of activities is described in detail with RCEP is not mentioned once.\textsuperscript{723,724} This is even despite the fact that the first negotiation committee met in May of 2013.\textsuperscript{725}

Third, and relatedly, with 2013 being Xi Jinping’s first year in power, there is concerted and conspicuous effort for China to re-take the strategic initiative in East Asia’s institutional competition. If 2011 was the year where China judged that U.S. “noisily entered


\textsuperscript{721} Ibid., 245–55.


\textsuperscript{723} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{724} The only place RCEP is mentioned in China Diplomacy is after describing the activities of Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, MOFA Minister Wang Yi, and then in a sentence for describing activities at lower level of leadership at the Special Foreign Minister’s meeting where “China-ASEAN exchanged all views about developing bilateral strategic relationship and agreed to increase further the coordination to: prepare well the 16th China-ASEAN EXPO, continue promoting regional economic integration, create CAFTA upgrade, together promote “RCEP” negotiations.” Ibid.

(gaodiao jieru) Asia-Pacific affairs,”726 2013 is the year China responds in kind with its own comprehensive regional strategy and makes further adjustments to its portfolio of institutional strategies.

On top of introducing a variety of new foreign policy bumper stickers such as “diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” (zhongguo tesede waijiao), “China dream” (zhongguomeng) and “New type of great power relations” (xinxing daguo guanxi), the year is notable because under Xi’s leadership, China elevates regional affairs – or “periphery diplomacy” – to the highest policy priority.727 As the white paper notes, China has taken “periphery diplomacy as the priority direction, comprehensively promoting relations with Asian countries, putting good neighborhood policy on a new stage.”728 We thus see the first ever Periphery Diplomacy Work Conference held in October 2013, a workshop where the highest level decision-makers of the CPP “decided on the current future 10 years of Chinese periphery diplomacy strategy’s goals, foundational principles and overall direction...setting forth greater prospects with periphery countries.”729 The official text from the work conference lists a series of high-profile regional institutional initiatives. Here, the “Silk road and economic belt,” “21st Century maritime silk road,” and the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) were mentioned by name. But in contrast, China’s FTA strategy is described in vague terms as “the implementation of free trading area strategy... constructing a new integrated regional economic layout.”730,731

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728 Ibid., 25.
729 Ibid., 24.
We similarly see from the series of annual analyses, evaluations and official documents posted on the Chinese central government website that China is promoting the idea of the One Belt, One Road (OBOR), which includes the “Silk road and economic belt,” “21st Century maritime silk road,” and the Asian Investment and Infrastructure Bank (AIIB), and spends little space mentioning RCEP as part of China’s regional policy. In a summary analysis of East Asian affairs of 2013, an analysis from Xinhua similarly writes about China’s 10 year anniversary with ASEAN that in commemoration “together [with ASEAN] created “community of common destiny” “21st Century Silk Road” and “China-ASEAN 2+7 cooperation framework’,” not mentioning the RCEP once. In other analyses, there is explicit mention of the need to first put great effort into OBOR, and that “MOFCOM will in the near future create FTAs along the line,” and repeats a stock paragraph repeated in several texts on how China continues to push for the “early conclusion of China-Korea, China-Australia FTA, push for CAFTA upgrade and progress on RCEP, as well as continue to push for CJK FTA.”

731 In China Diplomacy whitepaper for year 2013, in the context of “developing periphery country diplomacy,” it only notes “CAFTA upgrade” as an FTA strategy: the Chinese leadership “proposed the construction of the “silk road and economic belt” “21st century maritime silk road,” build the upgrade of CAFTA, construct AIIB and other such grand cooperation initiatives.” China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Zhongguo Waijiao 2014 Nianban,” 24. In the more specific context of “regional economic integration,” the white paper again notes “forward the construction of CAFTA upgrade, east Asian monetary stabilization system, Asian credit system, and Asian investment financing cooperation system and other such grand initiatives,” then notes “putting forward the “silk road economic belt”, 21st century “maritime silk road”… and other such grand important initiatives such as the AIIB,” and finally notes that China promoted “China-Korea, CJK, China-Sri Lanka and other FTAs which saw development, and proactively participates in the developing negotiations of RCEP.” Ibid., 26.

2.3. U.S.-China Competition

The final analytical time frame 2015-2016 is considered to be the height of U.S.-China competition over East Asia’s trade architecture. Just before TPP’s collapse in early 2017, 2015-2016 marks a period where the TPP negotiations were concluded and came into the public’s full attention awaiting domestic ratification. Awaiting its 10th round of negotiations, RCEP was considered to be only steps behind the TPP with its completion scheduled to be within the year. This section examines whether (1) the U.S. and (2) China, understood themselves to be engaged in institutional competition with each other in the form of TPP and RCEP?

I find that while the western media and the U.S. government strongly and consistently portray a strong sense of competition with China with TPP against RCEP, there is evidence that suggests that for Obama and his senior aides, the competitive logic was a government framing strategy to mobilize domestic support for the TPP. For China, I find that, on the one hand, it perceives TPP as less threatening, but on the other hand, that institutional competition is still dominant with Obama’s anti-China rhetoric reinforcing this understanding. Furthermore, I observe that China continues to develop its FTA strategy with the RCEP increasingly playing a smaller role in China’s portfolio of competitive institutional strategies.

2.3.1. Did the U.S. understand itself to be in competition with China as TPP vs. RCEP?

The first thing notable is that a strong narrative exists in the media that TPP and RCEP is driven competition between U.S. and China. In the Financial Times (FT), the TPP is described as the “economic plank of the U.S. “pivot” to Asia aimed at neutralizing the rise of

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735 At the time, scheduled to be at the end of 2015, and then later delayed to end of 2016. And after TPP’s breakdown was once more delayed to end of 2017.
China.” The article makes the observation that Obama’s absence from the East Asia Summit in 2015 would have given Li Keqiang a “big push” “to conclude a regional trade deal that rivals the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership,” quoting experts that there is a “heavy dose of geopolitics” and “an element of rivalry” between TPP and RCEP. After TPP’s conclusion, referring to the TPP as the ‘anyone but China club,’ the FT continues to explain that “in its realpolitik guise was the economic complement to Washington’s military pivot to Asia.” The article again highlights U.S.’ competition with China quoting President Obama that “We can’t let countries like China write the rules of the global economy.” A few months later, the same journalist writes: “If Washington has the TPP, Beijing has the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.”

A similar narrative can be seen across different media outlets. Mentioning the TPP and RCEP by name, the Economist writes that “the struggle to complete trade agreements seems to have become yet another area of strategic competition between America and China as they tussle for regional influence.” In its annual report, the Economist also covers the intense rivalry between U.S. and China about “writing the rules” for the region, observing that “the trend in economics as in diplomacy is towards parallel sets of institutions: the old ones, where America has a leading role; and the new, where it is absent and China dominates.”

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737 “The ‘anyone but China club’ needs a gate crasher: The TPP constrains state economic power in ways that seem almost designed with Beijing in mind” The Financial Times, October 7, 2015, https://www.ft.com/content/62613e6a-6b5a-11e5-aca9-d87542bf8673 (last accessed: October 31, 2016)
738 “China’s most powerful weapon is trade” the Financial Times, November 25, 2015, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/605c3ec4-92c1-11e5-bd82-c1fb87bef7af.html#axzz3utmrvrk7 (last accessed: December 20, 2015)
found in *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, publishing articles titled “It’s geopolitics, stupid: US-led TPP trade pact less about boosting economies than about containing China’s rise” and “Game on: How the US and China are vying for dominance in the battle of the Asia-Pacific trade pacts.”

The understanding that TPP and RCEP are rival FTAs in the competition between U.S. and China was also found to be pervasive, dominating what we can consider the “conventional understanding” of the TPP-RCEP case. I searched three key words – “TPP” “RCEP” and “TPP RCEP”– on Google for a week in October 2016, and selected the top 11 web pages, examining the contents as to whether they portrayed TPP and RCEP as a function of U.S.-China competition, TPP as a U.S. FTA strategy, and the RCEP as China’s.

The results are tabulated below in Table 2, where I find that nearly all articles either reported that TPP-RCEP was a function of U.S.-China competition or at the minimum identified that such arguments are pervasive. For all the posts that identified TPP-RCEP as a function of U.S.-China competition, TPP and RCEP is also described as U.S. and China-led FTA strategies respectively. For the three posts that do not identify U.S.-China competition – *BBC, Washington Post* and *New York Times* – they all, however, point out that one of the

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741 A Hong Kong based media agency acquired by Alibaba in December 2015, whose views were typically critical of China.


744 All searches were conducted for a week between 23rd and 30th of October 2016, where the search hits remained stable despite some changes in the order of their presentation. From the first page of returned hits, I dropped irrelevant pages (e.g. Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist, for RCEP), government and advocacy group websites as well as a handful of articles pertaining mainly to domestic politics, such as “45 times Clinton pushed the trade bill she now opposes” from *CNN*. Of the total of 31 Google hits on the three key words, a total of 11 web pages were selected for examination, of which one was an overlap (the RCEP *Wikipedia* page came up for both “RCEP” and “TPP RCEP”). The full list of search results and the selection is in Appendix II (ii)
defining features of the TPP is the exclusion of China and that TPP is a way for the U.S. to counter Chinese influence in East Asia.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>TPP-RCEP is U.S.-China Competition</th>
<th>TPP is U.S.-led</th>
<th>RCEP is China-led</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TPP “Wikipedia” 2016</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP “BBC” 2016</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP “Washington Post” 2013</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP “New York Times” 2016</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCEP “Wikipedia” 2016</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP RCEP “National Interest” 2015</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP RCEP “ADB/Nikkei” 2016</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP RCEP “Diplomat” 2016</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP RCEP “BBC (video)” 2016</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>TPP RCEP “Post-Western World” 2015</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP RCEP “Asia Foundation” 2015</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Examination of top article from Google search key words “TPP” “RCEP” and “TPP RCEP” (October 2016). Grey box indicates sources that have all “Yes”.

I also find that the understanding that U.S. is competing with China with TPP against RCEP is pervasive across primary sources from individuals directly involved in or play a part in the foreign policy making process of the U.S. government. A total of 31 primary sources were collected between January 2015 and November 2016. Each source was examined for

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746 The sources were collected by the author over time through various means; by searching statements made by U.S. officials on U.S. government websites, searching first-hand reports of released statements and comments made by officials by reliable media outlets, re-tracing primary sources that were cited but only dealt with in a cursory fashion in secondary material, and, for some, attending the delivered public talks in person. The overall inferences that are made from the sources are therefore subject to selection bias. The full reference for the sources and associated links are reported in Appendix II (iii)
evidence for whether the individuals understood TPP and RCEP to be a function of U.S.-China competition.

The results are tabulated below in Table 3. The first column labels the source under simplified label (name of source and number if there is more than one source relating to the individual), where the sources are arranged in chronological order. The year and month of the sources are reported as well as the general type of the source. Finally, the last two columns “U.S.” and “China” tabulate the answers to the two questions: (1) Does the source understand the TPP as a competitive strategy? and (2) Does the source perceive China as competitor and its trade group, RCEP, as a competitive FTA framework to the TPP? The results indicate that U.S. leaders, policymakers and experts also view TPP and China’s RCEP as competitive institutional strategies during 2015-2016.

For the column “U.S.,” “No” indicates positive evidence that TPP is not a competitive strategy, “Yes” indicates evidence that TPP has a competitive strategic logic, a “Yes” shaded gray indicates more specifically that the strategic logic is in the realm of institutional competition, and finally “–” indicates absence of evidence.\footnote{While sometimes conflated in the sources themselves (e.g. USTR) the distinction between a general strategic logic (“Yes”) and an institutional strategic logic (gray box “Yes”) is an important one. The former refers to the broader notion that TPP has strategic value understood in traditional security terms, while the latter refers more specifically to TPP having strategic value in the politics of institution building, and of regional FTAs in particular.}

I find overwhelming support that U.S. leaders, policymakers and experts view TPP as U.S.’ competitive institutional strategy. Of the total of 26 sources that provide evidence of one kind of another, there are 18 sources with positive evidence that U.S. views TPP as a competitive institutional strategy (gray box “Yes”). The remaining six sources provide positive evidence that TPP has broader strategic value (“Yes”), and of these six, three of them additionally provide evidence to the contrary, giving three overall split “Yes / No” results.
Further examination shows that the “Yes /No” split results\textsuperscript{748} and the missing values\textsuperscript{749} do not undermine the overall strong conclusion.

For the column “\textbf{China},” “No” indicates positive evidence that the U.S. does not consider other regional trade groups or more specifically China-led trade groups as competitive to the TPP. “Yes” indicates that the U.S. does generally consider other states and trade groups as competitive to the TPP. A “Yes” shaded in gray indicates instances where the institutional competitor is specifically identified as China. A “Yes” shaded gray with an asterisk indicates instances where China is identified and the competitive trade group is directly identified as RCEP. Finally, “-“ indicates a missing source.

Compared to column “\textbf{U.S.},” there are more missing values for “China,” a total of 11. From the remaining 20 sources, however, I also find overwhelming support that U.S. leaders, policymakers and expert view China and RCEP as strategic competitor and framework. Eight sources directly identify the institutional competitor as “China” (gray box “Yes”) and seven sources additionally identify that China was challenging TPP with the RCEP (gray box “Yes” with asterisk). Three sources indicate generally that “competitors” were setting the rules of

\textsuperscript{748} One of the “Yes / No” results come from U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice who explains that “against this backdrop” of TPP having economic and strategic value for the U.S. in East Asia (“Yes”), the U.S. “welcomes a rising China that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and a responsible player in global affairs” and “We reject reductive reasoning and lazy rhetoric that says conflict between the U.S. and China is inevitable... This isn’t a zero-sum game” (“No”) (Susan Rice). The second is Daniel Russel, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, who explains that “there’s a compelling strategic case for TPP” (“Yes”) but the various types of cooperation pursued under Obama’s Rebalance “Despite what many Chinese officials believe or at least say, this kind of cooperation isn’t directed at China. We do not have a containment strategy” (“No”) (Daniel Russel 5). The negative values of the two sources are thus based on general statements that the U.S.-China bilateral relationship and U.S. alliance-based multilateral cooperation is not zero-sum in nature. Since they are not specific statements about TPP, they therefore do not provide strong grounds for doubting the overall positive straw-in-the-wind test results. The third is, again, Daniel Russel who states that “we have been either happy with, or OK with, or supportive of alternative trade arrangements like RCEP, that we are not members to. But at the same time still focused on TPP” (“No”). Daniel Russel 3 does provide a clearer and stronger statement against the notion that TPP is a competitive institutional strategy. However, this is still one source of the 26 sources that overall point to support the idea that U.S. views TPP as a strategic tool.

\textsuperscript{749} The five missing sources for the column “U.S.” also do not provide grounds for doubting the overall conclusion: two of these are joint statements by TPP member states and thus carry less evidentiary value in terms of gleaning insights into U.S.’s own understanding of TPP (TPP Ministerial Statement, TPP Leaders’ Statement); two are interview reports with a limited range of questions that do not provide the relevant sources (Kirk Wager, John Kerry 2); and one is a report from a Russian media outlet Sputnik reproducing a single quote from Daniel Russel that I could not cross-validate in the original transcript or any other secondary reports on the statement from which the quote was reportedly taken from (Daniel Russel 2).
trade with their own trade groups or that there were other “competing visions” to the TPP (“Yes”). There is only one source, with a positively contrary statement constituting a “No.”750

Combining the results for “U.S.” and “China,” gives us a clearer picture of how U.S. leaders, officials and experts view the TPP. For a piece of positive evidence that TPP is a competitive institutional strategy for the U.S. (gray box “Yes” for “U.S.”), there is always positive evidence identifying that this competition is with China (gray box “Yes” for “China”), with the exception of three sources that only identify the existence of a general “competitor.” Furthermore, of these sources that identify China as the competition, nearly half of them specifically identify RCEP as the competitive institutional arrangement. Conversely, for a source that only identifies TPP as having general military strategic value for the U.S. (“Yes” for “U.S”), the evidence are all missing for “China.” This means that when individuals mention TPP in an institutional competition context, it is always with regards to China and half of the time the RCEP is named specifically. However, when the discussion only focuses on the military strategic value, there is no mention of China and RCEP.

Yet, since the instances where TPP is understood to be a competitive institutional strategy constitute the majority of sources (18 of the 26) and more than double the number of sources that only identify the military strategic dimension of TPP (18 for institutional competition and 8 for only military strategic value), the results for “U.S.” and “China” together suggest that between 2015 and 2016, on the whole, the U.S. understands TPP to be a competitive institutional strategy against China’s RCEP.

A closer look at the distribution of primary source evidence on U.S. perception, however, shows there is variation or inconsistency. First, in Table 3, we see that stronger

750 This is Daniel Russel 3: At Columbia University, Daniel Russel discusses U.S. policy in Asia on November 4th, a month after TPP’s conclusion and a day before the full text is released to the public. He states towards the end of his discussion on TPP that: “diversity of economic partnerships for small countries in Asia is part of the key to maintaining their own autonomy. That’s why we have been either happy with, or OK with, or supportive of alternative trade arrangements like RCEP, that we are not members to. But at the same time still focused on TPP.”
values confirming the idea that there is U.S.-China competition and “TPP vs. RCEP” are concentrated in 2016, where there are more instances where China is identified as the competitor and the RCEP is mentioned by name.\footnote{\textit{i.e. the gray} shaded “Yes” with \textit{asterisk} for “China” are mostly concentrated in 2016} Second, when we rearrange the sources by level of authority, starting from President Obama and then by proximity to the Obama (Appendix II, Table 4) – that is, the White House (USTR, NSC\footnote{The Office of United States Trade Representative and the National Security Council}), Department of State, Department of Defense, and then sources from multiple actors – we see that evidence in support of the understanding that TPP-RCEP is a function of U.S.-China competition is furthermore concentrated in sources closest to Obama and the White House, with most of the contrary evidence coming from the State Department and in 2015 (“No” and \textit{gray} box “No”).

Evidence from President Barack Obama are not only all positive, but have a consistent logic regarding TPP – “America should write the rules of trade in East Asia, and not China. If the U.S. does not write these rules with TPP, then China will.” Obama’s earlier statements about TPP from 2015 up until his 2016 State of the Union Address follow this more general logic. His thinking of TPP in terms of institutional competition with China is clearest in his op-ed in the \textit{Washington Post (Barack Obama 6)}. Titled “President Obama: The TPP would let America, not China, lead the way on global trade,” Obama writes:

“China is not wasting any time. As we speak, China is negotiating a trade deal that would carve up some of the fastest-growing markets in the world at our expense, putting American jobs, businesses and goods at risk. This past week, China and 15 other nations met in Australia with a goal of getting their deal, the \textit{Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership}, done before the end of this year...Fortunately, America has a plan of our own that meets each of these goals. As a Pacific power, the United States has pushed to develop a high-standard Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade deal that puts American workers first and makes sure we write the rules of the road for trade in the 21st century...We can lead that process, or we can sit on the sidelines and watch prosperity pass us by.”\footnote{Emphasis added.}
Obama’s understanding of institutional competition between TPP and RCEP is found to be essentially repeated across senior NSC officials and Cabinet members: United States Trade Representative Michael Froman, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor Wally Adeyemo, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Secretary of State John Kerry.\footnote{Sources: Michael Froman 2, Michael Froman 3, Ben Rhodes (White House), Wally Adeyemo (White House), Ash Carter, John Kerry 2 From Table 3.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>State of the Union Address</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirk Wager (US Amb. To Singapore)</td>
<td>2015 March</td>
<td>Interview (BBC)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Kurt Campbell 1</td>
<td>2015 March</td>
<td>Public Talk (Jamestown Foundation)</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ash Carter</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Public Talk (Arizona State University)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Campbell 2</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Testimony, Senate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Michael Green</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Testimony, Senate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graham Allison</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Testimony, Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter to Congress</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>2015 June</td>
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<td>Interview (NPR)</td>
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<td>TPP Leaders’ Statement</td>
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<td>Public Talk (George Washington)</td>
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<td>Barack Obama 5</td>
<td>2016 January</td>
<td>State of the Union Address</td>
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<td>John Kerry 2</td>
<td>2016 April</td>
<td>Public Talk (Pacific Council on)</td>
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<td>2016 May</td>
<td>Op-Ed (Washington Post)</td>
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<td>Ben Rhodes (White House)</td>
<td>2016 May</td>
<td>USTR blog</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Michael Froman 3</td>
<td>2016 July</td>
<td>Reuters report</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Reuters report</td>
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<td>Wally Adeyemo (White House)</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Reuters report</td>
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Table 3. Examination of U.S. Government Sources for “U.S.-China competition in TPP vs. RCEP,” 2015-2016
However, in the slightly lower ranks among Cabinet department officials that deal with East Asian policy directly, we can see that TPP was not considered a competitive strategy against China. The strongest contrary evidence comes from Daniel Russel, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.\(^{755}\) In one source, Russel states that “there’s a compelling strategic case for TPP” but clarifies that the various types of cooperation pursued under Obama’s Rebalance “Despite what many Chinese officials believe or at least say, this kind of cooperation isn’t directed at China. We do not have a containment strategy” (Daniel Russel 5). In another source, Russel states quite clearly that “we have been either happy with, or OK with, or supportive of alternative trade arrangements like RCEP, that we are not members to. But at the same time [we are] still focused on TPP” (Daniel Russel 3).

Closer insights gathered from interviews explain this inconsistency that the unified front from Obama and his team was largely a domestic political strategy to get TPP ratified and Daniel Russel’s policy line remained closer to U.S.’ actual TPP policy regarding China and RCEP.

In an interview with a senior official in the Treasury Department, who had direct and frequent contact with Chinese senior officials through the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), I asked whether TPP was about China.\(^{756}\) He answered that while China was part of the overall calculation, TPP was in “no way a containment strategy against China.” When discussing President Obama’s consistent “competition with China” framing of the TPP during 2015, he

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\(^{755}\) Daniel Russel has received less attention than his predecessor Kurt Campbell, who is often considered one of the key architects of the original “pivot” concept. However, prior to being appointed Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in 2013, Daniel Russel was also in the NSC. He served as director for Japan, South Korea and North Korea at the National Security Council from January 2009 to 2011 and as special assistant to the president and senior director for Asian Affairs until 2013, where “he helped formulate President Obama’s strategic rebalance to the Asia Pacific Region, including efforts to strengthen alliances, deepen U.S. engagement with multilateral organizations, and expand cooperation with emerging powers in the region.” “Daniel R. Russel,” U.S. State Department, [http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/212045.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/212045.htm) (last accessed: November 23, 2016)

\(^{756}\) Interview with senior official from Treasury Department, Department of Treasury, Washington D.C., December 2015
stated without hesitation: “This is obviously a domestic ploy to get TPP passed Congress. But our policy line [of the TPP being open to China] has remained the same, this has not changed.”

To corroborate this insight, I interviewed individuals at the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, from the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs. They confirmed that the discussions on TPP at the House of Representatives “always ended up” being about China. One of the interview subjects further explained that unlike bilateral FTAs where the economic impact of a prospective FTA could be discussed more concretely, doing this for multilateral FTAs involving more than ten countries was simply “more complicated.” A strategic competition with China worked as a “convenient foil” that would appeal more universally to Congressmen and their constituencies.

In April 2016, I interviewed a former senior U.S. government official in Beijing, who was aiding a delegation of 19 members of the U.S. Congress from March 28-April 4, 2016 in Beijing and Nanjing. The delegation met with 21 U.S. and Asian scholars to discuss a number

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757 The policy line he was referring to was TPP being an open architecture, even open to Chinese membership. The senior Treasury department official specifically identified National Security Advisor Susan Rice's public statement in 2013 as the clearest statement of U.S. “policy line” where Rice had openly invited China to join the TPP. He further explained that this statement was also basis for his own discussions about the TPP with his Chinese counterparts through the S&ED bilateral channel. See, Susan Rice’s 2013 statement titled “America's Future in Asia” was delivered at Georgetown University and accessible through the White House website. Here, Susan Rice clearly states that “We welcome any nation that is willing to live up to the high-standards of this agreement to join and share in the benefits of the TPP, and that includes China.” National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice “America's Future in Asia.” The White House at Georgetown https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/21/remarks-prepared-delivery-national-security-advisor-susan-e-rice (last accessed: December 23, 2015)

758 Among the 31 primary sources on U.S.’s position the “policy line” was reproduced only once by Secretary of State John Kerry on the same month of Susan Rice’s 2015 talk (Susan Rice) where the policy line was not repeated. What is notable is that Kerry’s statement came during his visit to Kazakhstan and in an interview with the local TV station, Mir TV (John Kerry I). The interview details were also largely only picked up by non-Western media outlets.

759 Interview with individuals from Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, from the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Washington D.C., January 2016.

760 Interview with former senior U.S. government official, Beijing China. April 2016.
of issues affecting Asian and U.S. security, economic, and energy/environmental interests. The former U.S. official told me that the central interest of the Congressmen lay with TPP, with the primary sentiment being the U.S. “gotta get TPP done, as it is a key part of the rebalance, and our credibility in the region relies on it.”

He added that the 19 Congressmen “all talk about how the electorate cares about jobs, and China is taking jobs, undermining the environment. That’s kind of the attitude.” He concluded by saying “I think it’s about “trying to sell the deal” and it shows where Obama’s priorities lie,” adding that “Being familiar with the American domestic politics of things... [this] makes good sense, not saying it is right.”

In November 2016, I asked once more about Obama’s TPP vs. RCEP logic to Susan A. Thornton, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the second most senior official at the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs after Daniel Russel. Thornton responded by saying “No, that is what the Chinese think. But not what we think. We do not think TPP is competitive to the RCEP.” She proceeded to explain that the U.S. wants “to see that TPP is set first, so it sets the standards for trade moving forward. Finishing RCEP, which has lower standards, is not relative, it does not affect TPP.”

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764 Specific wordings of the question were: “I have a question regarding the region's trade architecture. One of the recent logics behind the TPP is that “if it is not ratified, other countries like China will set the regional rules of trade with their own initiatives, like the RCEP.” On your spectrum of cooperation and competition, am I right in thinking that trade architecture is an area of competition, TPP vs. RCEP?” Question at public talk, “Susan Thornton: Managing China's Rise: Views from the Administration,” China and the World Program, Princeton University, November 9, 2016.
In a private discussion with a former colleague of Susan Thornton, and former senior State Department official, the source commented on the clear discrepancy between the unified “China competition” rhetoric from President Obama and his aides and Susan Thornton's statement about TPP being non-competitive: “Well, what Susan can’t say, is that that [competitive logic] is political.”

Although it is difficult to conclude that the “TPP vs. RCEP” logic was entirely a political framing strategy by the Obama administration, it would explain why the values for “U.S.” and “China” (Table 3) have stronger values in 2016 and why more sources clearly identify China as the competitor and mention RCEP by name further into 2016. President Obama’s op-ed submission to *Washington Post* in May 2016 also makes more sense in the American domestic political context. Given that the Obama administration had roughly half a year before the U.S. presidential elections, with an anti-TPP stance strongly emerging from both presidential candidates Clinton and Trump, it makes sense that President Obama and his team would want to directly intervene in the American public discourse on TPP, providing an alarmist justification behind TPP to garner support. Though not conclusive, the argument that the competition between TPP vs RCEP was a function of domestic politics is compelling.

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765 Interview with former State Department Official, November 2016.
2.3.2. Did China understand itself to be in competition with U.S. as TPP vs. RCEP?

On October 5th 2015, the U.S. and the other eleven member states announced the completion of the TPP negotiations. In a clear statement about the competition for regional trade rules with China, Obama announced on the same day that “we can’t let countries like China write the rules of the global economy. We should write those rules.”

With the unveiling of the completed TPP negotiations, Western media described China’s perception of TPP as a restrained sense of panic or a forced smile in the face damning news. *Foreign policy* covered how the Chinese social media had exploded with criticisms against the TPP as “obviously directed” against China and a “smack in the face” for Xi Jinping in the competition with the U.S., highlighting what the author argued to be the increasing anxiety by citizens and experts against the Chinese government’s handling of domestic reform, liberalization and global competition. The *BBC* and *Time* reported on MOFCOM’s official English response to the TPP announcement as a “cautious” welcome and “hesitantly embracing” the news, while *Foreign Policy* suggested that “Chinese policymakers have been eager to project something bordering on indifference to TPP” and that the Xinhua report“downplayed TPP’s role.” The *Financial Times* soon after reported how “the debate [about

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770 “Why Won’t Anyone Play With Us?’ China’s Internet Erupts With TPP Angst
TPP’s impact began just days after TPP’s announcement with China’s National Bureau of Statistics stating that China has “potential countermeasures” to offset China’s exclusion from the TPP, further reinforcing the notion that U.S. and China were in a kind of tit-for-tat strategic competition over regional FTAs, and China was hurriedly responding to the TPP’s conclusion.

Taking a closer look at Chinese sources, however, suggest that there is both a truth and false in this mainstream account.

i. False: A more confident and reassured China

The false is that although the TPP may have come as a surprise to the ordinary citizens of China, it was in no way a surprise for Chinese policymakers, experts, and most likely the CCP leadership. The spectrum of officially endorsed opinions regarding the news of TPP’s conclusion range from; regarding the TPP as U.S.’s bid for leadership in the competition for institutional power and China’s exclusion as intentional and dissatisfactory, to embracing


“China lays out ‘countermeasures’ to offset exclusion from TPP: Alternatives to US-led plan include bilateral free trade agreements and Xi Jinping’s ‘New Silk Road’” Financial Times, October 19 2015) https://www.ft.com/content/8e81ab8c-763c-11e5-a95a-27d368e1ddf7?utm_source=The+Sinocism+China+Newsletter&utm_campaign=0b4dc2b548-Sinocism10_19_1510_19_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_171f237867-0b4dc2b548-29646789&m_cid=0b4dc2b548&m_cid=3b0d4d9b81#axzz3owlsF2sy (accessed: October 20, 2016)

771 “By virtue of the fact of where they were published without being censored.

772 “美国欲通过 TPP 抓经贸规则主导权” CCTV13 中央电视台新闻, 5:19pm, October 6, 2015 (See Appendix II (iv)

TPP as consistent with China’s core principles and direction of domestic reform,\textsuperscript{775} to clear statements that deny that China thinks TPP is aimed against China or a means to contain it.\textsuperscript{776}

However, the debate about how to view the TPP and respond to it did not begin just days after the TPP announcement, but begun several years earlier where it was already identified that “worriers” called for countermeasures and “supporters” called for domestic reform and joining the TPP, in a manner similar to joining the WTO.\textsuperscript{777} As CASS Director Zhang Yunling stated in 2014, “TPP is really at the beginning a big surprise,” but “We realize TPP is a fact. China cannot stop it.”\textsuperscript{778}

As explored earlier, the TPP was a surprise and a threat to China around 2011-2012. This was because, first, there was little information on the TPP except that it was part of the U.S. Pivot and, second, China’s institutional strategies had not taken into account the TPP. But, since 2011, China took TPP as “fact,” internalized the threat, and had time to prepare.

Contrary to the characterization that China had drawn up “potential counter measures,” as explored earlier, China’s institutional strategy had already adapted to the TPP by at least 2012 with its adjustment from EAFTA to CJK FTA and RCEP in 2012 and then to the FTAAP in 2014. As MOFCOM Minister Gao Hucheng describes in light of TPP’s announcement, China’s portfolio of institutional responses had since developed. Not only was China promoting RCEP, CJK FTA and the CAFTA upgrade since 2012, but China has concluded 14 FTAs with 22

\textsuperscript{775}“Ruhe Miandui TPP (How to face the TPP)” Xuexi Ribao (Study Times), Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, October 26, 2015, \url{http://www.ccps.gov.cn/xssh/xssh_20151026/201510/t20151026_68225.html} (accessed: July 16, 2017)


countries and regions. What is more, a closer reading of the original Chinese text for National Bureau of Statistics’ announcement suggests that China’s “potential counter measures” is more accurately translated as “already existing responsive measures.”

What we also see in 2015-2016 is that China’s FTA strategy evolved further. The CJK FTA which had lost political momentum since 2012 was re-launched with the trilateral summit reconvening in 2015 and added back into China’s armory of FTA responses. Also, not only was the construction of FTAs elevated to “national strategy” at the 17th Party Congress, but at the 18th Party Congress the “Accelerated Implementation of FTA strategy (AIFS)” was promoted, and at the 18th Party Congress 3rd plenum, the AIFS took “periphery countries” as its building foundation. As Xi Jinping stated in the 19th Group Study at the end of the 18th Party Congress, China’s “potential counter measures” to offset exclusion from TPP: Alternatives to US-led plan include bilateral free trade agreements and Xi Jinping’s ‘New Silk Road’.

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780 “China lays out ‘counter measures’ to offset exclusion from TPP: Alternatives to US-led plan include bilateral free trade agreements and Xi Jinping’s ‘New Silk Road’,” Financial Times, October 19 2015, https://www.ft.com/content/8e81ab8c-763c-11e5-a95a-27d368e1ddf7?utm_source=The+Sinocism+China+Newsletter&utm_campaign=0b4dc2b548-Sinoicism10_19_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_171f237867-0b4dc2b548-29646789&mcid=0b4dc2b548&mceid=3b0d4d9b81#axzz3owlsF2sy (accessed: October 20th, 2016)


782 Also, rather than “China lays out ‘counter measures’,” the announcement was more accurately a routine announcement by the spokesperson regarding China’s third quarter, where he additionally responds to a journalist’s question about TPP in the Q&A session. “统计局： TPP的通过和实施有不确定性短期影响不会很大,” Xinhua October 19th, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2015-10/19/c_128333894.htm (accessed: 20th October, 2016)


784 Although the CJK was not really omitted from the list of strategies, and the negotiations did not stop. “Japan-China-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, http://www.mofa.go.jp/pcm/ep/page23e_000337.html (June 24, 2017)


of 2014, the AIFS is China’s “proactive participation in defining international trade rules and an important platform to fight for institutional power (zhiduxing quanli) in global economic governance.”\textsuperscript{788,789} At the end of 2015, the State Council further operationalized the AIFS in the published document “A Number of Opinions of the Accelerated Implementation of FTA Strategy.”\textsuperscript{790} Known as \textit{yijian} or \textit{Opinions}, MOFCOM describes the document as the “the first strategic, comprehensive document since the Country has initiated the process of FTA construction, for our country’s FTA construct is a “top floor plan”, with concrete requirements.”\textsuperscript{791} Later, in March 2016, \textit{Opinions} is also adopted and expanded on in the Fourth Session of the Twelfth National People’s Congress in the document “Government Work Report (zhengfu gongzu baogao).”\textsuperscript{792}

Zhang Jianping, a researcher at the influential PRC National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) explains that AIFS is the urgently required response to “developed economies having attempted to pass TPP, TTIP and EU-Japan FTA and other such FTAs, promoting a kind of major country-led economic integration process and achieving new global competitive advantage.”\textsuperscript{793}

\textsuperscript{788} The Group study Included Li Guanghui from MOFCOM International Trade and Economic Cooperation Research Center as well Xi Jinping and other “members of the central government.”


Concretely, “From bilateral FTAs to CJK, from RCEP to FTAAP, these combine to the newly released *Opinions*, an increasingly clearer Chinese trade strategy.” More specifically, *Opinions* outlines a three-level FTA strategy or what *Xinhua* refers to as “three steps forward” strategy. This involves: first, constructing FTAs in China’s periphery region and creating a “periphery grand market” (zhoubian dashichang). Second, constructing FTA along the OBOR line creating an “OBOR grand market” (yidai yilu dashichang). And thirdly, “radiate” (fushe) OBOR outwards to construct a “global network of high-standard FTAs (quanqiude gaobiaozhun ziyoumaoyiqu wangluo).”

The latest reports suggest that while China looks to build FTAs on the OBOR line, with MOFCOM stating clearly that its mandate is to execute the *Opinions*, in light of U.S.’s withdrawal from the TPP and questions about Chinese membership into the TPP-11, we see that China primarily regards RCEP and FTAAP as its main regional integration strategy. When asked how China will respond to Australian Finance Minister’s hope that China join the TPP, MFA spokesperson avoided a direct answer and instead reiterated that: “At the APEC Summit, we already established the vision and plan of FTAAP, we believe we will continue putting great

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effort into this process. We have also made great progress on RCEP, and will be concluded soon, giving new momentum to Asia-Pacific and global economic development.\(^{800}\)

China’s “indifference” on the day of TPP’s announcement thus partly came from fully internalizing the competition with U.S.’s TPP and for several years building up a comprehensive response to it: first, adjusting its strategy in accordance with the institutional moves by Japan and ASEAN in 2012 and then taking the time to develop a more proactive Chinese approach, first with the FTAAP and eventually crystalizing with *Opinions* by the end of 2015, just months after TPP’s conclusion.\(^{801}\)

The other reason for China’s measured response comes from dealing with the “surprise” element, namely, the information problem China initially faced in 2011-2012. Partly this took the form of intense domestic debate and research regarding the TPP, but a large part is the direct communication between U.S. and China that functioned to mollify Chinese concerns about the TPP. As early as 2012, U.S. and China agreed to exchange information about each other’s regional FTA initiatives at the 4th U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue,\(^{802}\) most likely as a response to China’s concerns about the TPP.\(^{803}\) There are also reports that at the Sunnylands meeting in 2013, Xi had asked Obama to share information on the developments of the TPP negotiations.\(^{804}\) Though scattered, further evidence is available, which ranges from senior U.S.


\(^{801}\)An additional point of confidence comes from Chinese understanding of its own economy. Gaining a boost in confidence with the AIIB, China realized once again that even though China was no match for the U.S. militarily power, in terms of economics, China is in a more advantageous position in the long run. Interview with Chinese Think Tank expert, Beijing, April 2016.


officials from the S&ED,\textsuperscript{805} to Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel,\textsuperscript{806} to U.S. President Barack Obama\textsuperscript{807} and Treasury Secretary Jack Lew,\textsuperscript{808} which all suggest discussions with China regarding the TPP have been on-going for several years prior to TPP’s conclusion. As MOFCOM Minister Gao Hucheng explains from the China-side, “U.S. officials and TPP members have expressed several times that TPP is not aimed at China, it is not for containing China, and it has no intention of excluding China.”\textsuperscript{809} Finally, in an interview, a U.S. foreign policy expert in a Beijing-based Chinese think tank further explained that in the first few years of Obama’s second term, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing also played a significant role in public diplomacy and explaining the TPP “because they realized the locals were worrying.”\textsuperscript{810}

\textsuperscript{805} Interview with senior Treasury Department official, December 2015.
\textsuperscript{806} "The United States is leading a constructive dialogue with the Chinese authorities considering the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement, Assistant Secretary of the US State Department's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs said Tuesday. “With regards to China, virtually every chapter in TPP represents an ongoing discussion a line of effort between Washington and Beijing and, as [US] Ambassador [to China Jon] Huntsman can attest, we have a truly robust dialogue at multiple levels,” from “Washington, Beijing Lead constructive dialogue on TPP deal – US State Dept.” Sputnik, October 28, 2015, \url{http://sputniknews.com/politics/20151028/1029203085/us-china-tpp-deal-discussion.html}
\textsuperscript{807} “President Obama says China open to joining trade partnership,” MarketPlace (radio interview), June 3, 2015, \url{https://www.marketplace.org/2015/06/03/world/president-obama-talks-trade/president-obama-says-china-open-joining-trade-partnership} (accessed: November 16, 2016)
\textsuperscript{810} Interview with Chinese Think Tank expert, Beijing, April 2016.
ii. True: TPP still seen as a piece in the institutional competition with the U.S.

While the Western mainstream characterization of an anxious China hurriedly responding is therefore false, there is truth in that China still primarily understood TPP as a function of institutional competition, with the Obama’s anti-Chinese rhetoric in 2015-2016 reinforcing this further.

A Chinese expert with connections to the Chinese government explained in April 2016 that there are “different schools” in China regarding the TPP; those like MOFCOM who have a “pure economic perspective” and are in favor of the TPP and other such as MFA who have a “more or less negative view” that the TPP is about strategy and “competition for economic leadership.” He explained that the latter view was more predominant in the Chinese government, pointing out that the China Central TV (CCTV) coverage of TPP’s announcement subitled “America uses TPP to seize leadership of trade rules” §811 was closer to what the predominant Chinese perception was of the TPP in 2016. §812 Explaining that China’s changing view of the TPP roughly parallels China’s changing understanding of the pivot, he described that China’s

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811 The CCTV news on the day of TPP conclusion titled its report “America uses TPP to seize leadership of trade rules” “美国欲通过 TPP 抓经贸规则主导权” CCTV13 中央电视台新闻，5:19 pm, October 6, 2015. See Appendix II (iv)

812 This is slightly different to the characterization of different public opinions put forward in the Study Times of the Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, where the author categorizes public opinion reaction to TPP announcement into three categories: (1) “Conspiracy theory” (阴谋论, yīnnuóluàn) who “believe that TPP is a way of isolating and constraining China, that China is getting squeezed out of Asia-Pacific group” (2) “Attack theory” (冲击论, chōngjūlùn): believes that even though China is not being isolated, the hit on China’s foreign trade is large, and China’s exports are obstructed (3) “Rapidly-enter theory” (速入论, sùrùlùn): China should join TPP as soon as possible because China will receive benefits from TPP rules and repeating China’s experience of entering WTO, China could use international rules to compel domestic reform. “Ruhe Miandui TPP (How to face the TPP)” Xuexi Ribao (Study Times), Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, October 26, 2015, http://www.ccps.gov.cn/xxsd/xxsd_20151026/201510/t20151026_68225.html (accessed: July 16, 2017)
perception of the TPP was more “comfortable” in 2016, perceiving the TPP now as a “challenge but no longer a danger.”

More broadly, Zhai Kun, Professor at Peking University, made the observation that with U.S.’ entering the politics of regional-institution building in East Asia with the Pivot and TPP, regionalism shifted to a period marked by regional institutional competition between major countries:

“At the beginning no one knows the role [of China]. If China can support ASEAN then that is good as it allows ASEAN to gain influence. Now everyone knows the game. We went back to power politics and every other country is a very good player: India, Russia, and the United States.”

Though the anti-Chinese rhetoric promoted by Obama and his senior aides was most likely aimed for mobilizing domestic support for the TPP in the U.S., this not only reinforced the idea that TPP was a strategic tool to enhance U.S. institutional power against it but brought about discomfort in China.

When explaining that the dominating Chinese perception of TPP is that of competition over leadership, the Beijing-based U.S. foreign policy expert simply pointed to Obama’s statements to support this view, “you only need to look at what Obama is saying, TPP is about American leadership over [the regional] economy and its rules.”

President Barack Obama’s *Washington Post* op-ed provocingly titled “The TPP would let America, not China, lead the way on global trade” provides one of the clearest statements of TPP’s competition with a China-led RCEP. The article was picked up by *People Daily* that

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813 Interview with Chinese Think Tank expert, Beijing, April 2016.
814 Interview with Zhai Kun, Peking University, April 2016.
noted that “this is not the first time Obama expressed this opinion.” The article criticizes Obama’s statement that “America’s position exposes the incompatibility between its small thinking” and the demands of this “large era.” MOFCOM’s Global Economic Research Center Director Liang Yanfen is further quoted as explaining that while regional FTAs are typically a good thing in light of the stalling of the multilateral liberalization frameworks:

“U.S.’ view and thinking behind the attempt to, as one country, unilaterally decide on another country, region or even global trade rules, is thought-inertia persevering hegemonism and not beneficial for Asia-Pacific or global development”

In fact, on the day of TPP’s conclusion, U.S. senior official in the S&ED recalled that despite the U.S. having welcomed China to join the TPP, his Chinese counterpart sent him a confused text asking “should we still join the TPP?” Soon after, during his visit to China, the senior U.S. official recalled that there was a curious change in sentiment in Beijing: “I don’t know who said it, but somehow they’re convinced that U.S. will not let China join”

Discussing the effects of Obama’s anti-Chinese rhetoric on China’s perception of the TPP, the Beijing-based think tank expert expressed his distress: “This causes a lot of problems” and “U.S. will have to pay for it... and so will China.” He further explained, “There are people like

lead-the-way-on-global-trade/2016/05/02/680540e4-0fd0-11e6-93ae-50921721165d_story.html?utm_term=.3c70f1ae23481 (last accessed: July 18, 2017)


817 He further added that “this is an instinctual reaction to protect U.S. hegemonism in the face of its weakened influence.” “贸易规则要具有开放包容性,” The State council, the People’s Republic of China, May 6, 2015, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-05/06/content_5070644.htm (last accessed: July 17, 2017), originally published in People Daily.

818 He guessed that it was “Probably some “specialist” in the U.S., who does not speak on behalf of the American government” Interview with senior Treasury Department official, December 2015
me, but there are also many others that have a surface reading in the government – and that is a problem.”

3. CASE RECONSTRUCTION

In light of the process testing results, we can update our empirical knowledge of the case and our theoretical understanding of competitive institutionalism more generally with case reconstruction. This is composed of two parts: the first part provides the revised case narrative based on the process testing results of the previous section. Based on the revised case narrative, the second part updates the theory.

3.1. Reconstructing Case Narrative

Figure 10 below provides a modified version of the Figure 7, which illustrated the timeline of TPP and RCEP along with the three “Analytical Time Frames” (pg.10). Figure 10 modifies the analytical time frames into event-history maps. The top three boxes (1), (2) and (3) represent the event-histories associated with the original theory of institutional competition we started with, and the bottom three boxes represent the corresponding revised event-histories in light of the empirical results of process testing.

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819 Interview with Chinese Think Tank expert, Beijing, April 2016
Figure 10. Comparing Event-History Maps for Institutional Competition Theory and Revised Narrative

Following the three nodes of the event-history maps in order, the “TPP vs. RCEP” case narrative can be reconstructed as follows.

First, instead of the TPP being an intentional U.S. FTA strategy against China, the U.S. belatedly joined the TPP at the invitation of other regional states for two main reasons, none of which were directly related to China. The primary reason was that the Bush administration wanted to diversify its liberalization policy away from the increasingly unsuccessful policies of pursuing liberalization through the WTO and the APEC-wide regionalization effort of the FTAAP. At a time when the USTR felt the U.S. needed a different approach, the P4 nations offered the U.S. an alternative model with the TPP, where a small “coalition of the willing”
could push for a high-standards FTA. The secondary reason was that the U.S. judged that it was increasingly excluded from East Asia’s evolving trade architecture as regional states had already begun responding to the stalling of the WTO processes by rapidly concluding a large number of bilateral FTAs and developing region-wide FTAs such as Japan’s “+6” CEPA and China’s “+3” EAFTA. A “China factor” is identifiable in this second reason, although it was only a part of the wider calculation regarding the overall institutional landscape in East Asia. While key U.S. officials would later adopt a conspicuous “China competition” rhetoric to justify the TPP, the China factor remained largely absent from U.S. calculations behind the TPP, even until a year into the official negotiations under the Obama administration in 2011.

Second, China did not respond to a U.S. institutional strategy with its own FTA grouping, the RCEP. Rather, China was for the most part preoccupied with regional institutional competition with other local states – ASEAN and Japan. China was increasingly frustrated with the secondary role that it played in ASEAN-led initiatives since the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s and was looking to further its institutional position by constructing a regional FTA under the ASEAN+3 framework where it enjoyed the most influence. This FTA initiative, the EAFTA, was in direct contention with Japan’s proposal, the CEPA, and China was also aware that ASEAN welcomed neither initiatives as it undermined ASEAN centrality. With China’s preoccupation with the local institutional competition, the TPP’s initial development and launch went undetected by China.

In 2011, five years since its inception, the TPP belatedly appeared on China’s radar and came across as a surprise. As the APEC host that year, the Obama administration signaled its “noisy entry” and “increased intervention” into East Asian affairs and the TPP was unveiled as a component of U.S’s comprehensive regional vision in the “Asia pivot” policy package. The other
local states quickly adjusted to the new regional FTA landscape. Challenged by China’s EAFTA, Japan’s CEPA, and now U.S.’s TPP, the ASEAN responded first by initiating the RCEP thereby co-opting the “+6” framework firmly into the ASEAN framework. Japan also abandoned CEPA and started to seriously consider the option of joining the TPP, something that was on the cards since U.S. officially joined the TPP in 2008.

By the end of 2011, China was threatened by U.S.’s TPP, interpreting as a China containment strategy, and also found itself outmaneuvered by local institutional competitors ASEAN and Japan. China thus started searching for an appropriate institutional strategic response while holding onto the FTA options it had left. Abandoning its original goal of leading East Asia’s regional integration with EAFTA, China thus bandwagoned with ASEAN, re-accepted ASEAN leadership, and reluctantly supported the RCEP as a buttress against the TPP. China also held onto the core component of original EAFTA policy, the trilateral FTA between China, Japan and South Korea, the CJK FTA. However, even the CJK FTA was not an effective response to the TPP as Japan had publicly committed to joining the TPP and the new Abe government effectively put an end to substantive trilateral cooperation until TPP’s conclusion in 2015. While supporting the RCEP and CJK FTA, China thus started engaging in a concerted effort to develop a regional FTA where it could maximize its influence. China thus adopted the FTAAP as its own proposal at the Beijing APEC 2015 and started sketching out the basic outlines of the One Belt, One Road initiative (OBOR). China thus misperceived TPP as a strategy directed at China, and searched for a strategic response where the RCEP was primarily an ASEAN strategy and a second-best option for China.

Third, instead of 2015-2016 exhibiting the most heated institutional competition between the U.S. and China, the “U.S.-TPP vs. China-RCEP” competition was primarily a narrative, a
U.S. government framing strategy, used by Obama and his senior aides to mobilize U.S. domestic support for the TPP. This was in stark contrast to the earlier moves made by the U.S., which included inviting China to the TPP as early as 2013 as well reassuring China of TPP’s benign motives through high-level bilateral channels such as the S&ED.

By the time of TPP’s conclusion in 2015, China also felt less threatened by the TPP. However, this was in large part because China had been long preparing and building its portfolio of institutional strategic responses to TPP since 2011. Under Xi Jinping’s leadership, China had more comprehensively rolled out the One Belt, One Road initiative (OBOR), which appeared to match the strategic scale of U.S.’s “Asia pivot.” Moreover, during 2014 and 2015, FTA policy was elevated to national strategy (guojia zhanlüe) status and developed as a coherent strategy with the Accelerated Implementation of FTA strategy (AIFS). As a “top floor plan,” China’s AIFS was formulated at the highest level of leadership from Xi Jinping and was then operationalized as the policy trickled down to the State Council, MOFCOM and the National People’s Congress. By early 2016, China thus arrived at a clear and comprehensive FTA strategy aimed at building FTAs among periphery nations, among and along the OBOR, and then eventually “radiate” out to construct a “global network of FTAs.” In China’s increasingly clear vision of regional trade order, RCEP plays an increasingly smaller role.

Despite China’s greater confidence, China did continue to perceive U.S. and TPP as its institutional competition. While China’s attitude towards the TPP had in fact “warmed” over time, the mainstream understanding of the TPP in China was still that TPP was U.S.’s strategy to intervene and maximize influence in East Asia at the cost of China’s. U.S.’s “China threat” TPP narrative designed for an American domestic audience also served to reinforce this perception in China and fuel China’s push for developing its comprehensive FTA strategy.
3.2. Inductive Insights

3.1.1. Theory-Building

How do the empirical results update our general understanding of institutional competition? While the process test results and the revised case narrative complicates an otherwise simple and straightforward initial understanding of competition between U.S. and China, we can glean some insights into how institutional competition might occur more generally between states.

We can achieve this by “going up the ladder of abstraction” from the revised event-history map to a corresponding causal graph. The generalized causal graph shown in Figure 11 provides an update of our initial theory of institutional competition in light of the process tests and the revised case narrative.

The first feature of Figure 11 that differs from our initial model of institutional competition is the element of unintentionality in institutional competition. If there are two states A and B, they can end up in institutional competition with each other even when the initial mover state A did not intend to engage in competition with B. In other words, state A can construct an international institution without the intention to undermine or threaten another state
(1), but state B may misperceive the institution-building effort as a threat and respond strategically (2), thereafter generating institutional competition (3).

Second, what links the initial benign institution-building efforts to the outcome of generated institutional competition are the mechanisms of misperception and poor signaling of intentions. When constructing its international institution, state A may package its institution-building effort as part of a wider strategic vision for both domestic or international political purposes (1), or even go as far as to adopt a “competition” or “threat” narrative against the other state B in order to mobilize domestic political support for the institutional initiative (2). In both cases, even if state A’s true intentions are not to undermine or compete with state B, the poor signaling of true intentions will be perceived by state B as a threat to its own institutional standing and necessitate an institutional strategic response, (2) and (3).

To further unpack state B’s standpoint, even if state A separately signaled its true benign intentions to B through private communication or other institutional avenues, the public signals A sends regarding its institution building effort necessitates a strategic response. First, the mixed signals sent from state A makes states B uncertain of state A’s present and future intentions. Second, even if state B is convinced of A’s true benign intentions, more hawkish elements in the government and public in state B, for example, may be convinced of A’s malign intentions. This will make it hard for B to not strategically respond to A’s poor public signals.

With the traits of unintended competition and problems of poor signaling and misperception of intentions, the updated model of institutional competition can be labelled the 
*unintended* model of institutional competition.
3.1.2. Towards a Defensive Realist understanding of Institutional Competition

The original theory of institutional competition and the unintended theory of unintentional institutional competition have many parallels with traditional offensive realist and defensive realist theories of power competition. In offensive realism, states perceive each other as competitors and intentionally compete with each other to maximize power and security. In defensive realism, due to uncertainty of intentions, misperception problems, dual-use problem of defensive weapons, and domestic politics, originally peaceful or defensive states may end up engaging in expansion and the buildup offensive weapons thereby intensifying security dilemma and spiral dynamics between two states.

Offensive and defensive realism also offer us a useful framework to discuss our findings about institutional competition in the “TPP vs. RCEP” case. First, we can conclude with some certainty that the empirics fail to line up with the original model of institutional competition and thus an offensive realist understanding of intentional competition. Second, the results of the process tests show that many defensive realist pathologies operate in the context of institutional competition between U.S. and China.

Since the current study was designed to test the intentional model of institutional competition, the empirical results serve to falsify the original theory but do not corroborate the unintentional model, which was inductively arrived at from the results. In order to properly evaluate the analytical utility of the unintentional model, a more comprehensive defensive realist

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theory of institutional competition needs to be developed and tested separately but with equally rigorous empirical standards.

While I offer a way to apply offensive and defensive realism to institutional competition elsewhere, three insights can be collected from this study that more immediately inform our understanding of competitive institutionalism.

First, state intentions behind institution-building efforts are complex. The construction of international institutions takes a lot of time. The lifespan of the TPP, for example, spanned the Bush administration and both Obama’s first and second term in office, roughly a total of ten years. At any given time then, the relevant political actors possessing the “true” U.S. intention is different. However, at the same time, there is also an “intentions inertia” that comes from organizational continuity. We thus observed that certain career diplomats or officials remained in service and continued to support the implementation of the TPP in the manner that it was initiated. In other words, there are multiple relevant “intentions” across actors and across time that makes the identification of a singular “true” intention of a state’s institution building effort very difficult. In many ways, this insight re-emphasizes an old lesson in IR to not treat states as unitary actors.

Second, intentions are difficult to infer from publically available statements about institution building efforts because they are often signals intended for a different audience. In the U.S. case, inferring U.S. intentions from primary sources alone during 2015-2016 would have been very misleading. What appeared to be a strong and unified U.S. perception of RCEP as a threat from China turned out to be a narrative that was constructed by the government for the American public. In the case of China, inferring Chinese intentions directly from primary sources would still be misleading.

sources, such as the media posts and official statements on the government website, would have also been very misleading. While the government posts suggest that China was most threatened by the TPP in 2013, a closer analysis revealed that China felt most threatened in 2011, and by 2013, this threat had already been internalized. What we thus see is that the Chinese government permitted a larger volume of negative expression against the TPP when the government was in a much better position to deal with the challenge. In other words, the Chinese government signaled a perception of threat when it was confident and, conversely, signaled a positive perception when it felt threatened, most likely because the audience in mind was the Chinese public and not the U.S. government. From both U.S. and China, we can see that on the one hand, the problem of misperception comes from a state underestimating the extent to which signals coming from another state are often intended for that state’s domestic audience. On the other hand, the problem of poor signals comes from a state underestimating the extent to which signals meant for its domestic audience are perceived by another state as true expressions of the state’s foreign policy stance.

Third, and relatedly, there is difficulty in distinguishing ex poste justifications with ex ante intentions. Not only do intentions and justifications co-exist at different points in time as policy discussions surrounding institutional initiatives take on a life of their own, but an effective ex poste justification for supporting the construction of an international institution can become the ex ante intention for pursuing it after the initial years. In the case of the U.S., at a time when the Obama administration felt that domestic support for free trade and globalization was on the whole declining, the institutional competition logic was considered a good foil to convince Congress and singling out China as the competitor was a good framing strategy to mobilize domestic support more widely. But even though we identified that the “China threat” narrative
was domestic political rhetoric, this will no doubt remain in the permissible set of policy justifications for future FTAs. Moreover, having already rallied around the flag, U.S. voters may expect present and future U.S. leaders to pursue FTA policies against the “China threat.” This pathology is not alien to the students of IR as we have learnt that “myth-making” about expansive policies can result in “blow back effects” where subsequent leaders and policymakers either come to believe in their own myth-making or become entrapped by the rhetoric as the mobilized public hold the leaders accountable to deliver the expansive policy.\(^{823}\)

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlights how misperception and poor signaling is likely to play a much more pervasive role in the politics of international institutions than commonly thought. This means that not only can competition drive cooperation, but competition itself may be unintended. Thus, far from being solutions to political pathologies, international and regional institutions may be captured and driven by the very pathologies that they are meant to solve.

For researchers and analysts, the problems of misperception, uncertainty and poor signaling of intentions should highlight the importance of avoiding the production of unverified narratives of competition between the two states. Instead, researchers should focus on triangulating evidence, carrying out rigorous process tests and cross-checking the process test results. It is in part the responsibility of researchers to produce objective and balanced analysis that do not perpetuate the problems of misperception and poor signaling in the politics of international institutions.

The current study on institutional competition also has four overlooked policy implications and recommendations for current U.S.-China relations as it relates to institution-building in East Asia.

The first is that policymakers from both sides should understand that multilateral institutions are not always solutions to political pathologies like security dilemmas and misperception dynamics. Even in the realm of diplomacy, multilateral cooperation and institution building, problems of misperception and unintentional threats to another’s institutional power are rife. Unintended institutional competition is a tangible problem for building a healthy regional architecture as it can result in wasteful and duplicative institutions or at worst pull the regional architecture apart creating two parallel tracks of institutional politics. Without institutions being focal points for coordinating action and socializing states to common norms of behavior, a fragmented architecture can ultimately undermine the overall confidence that states have in conducting politics through institutionalized channels, meaning, states will be more willing to solve their differences through non-institutional politics and war.

Second, and relatedly, both sides need to be more cognizant of their roles in triggering or exacerbating unintended institutional competition. This means being careful not to misperceive the other state’s intentions, but also not to overestimate one’s own institution building efforts as obviously benign to the other state. Both U.S. and China therefore need to develop ways to signal true intentions regarding cooperation and institution building within the region, working also to avoid polemic domestic framing of cooperative projects that sends counterproductive mixed messages. This would also mean keeping a close track on how the media reports the country’s institution building efforts and developing proactive policies to counter unhelpful “noise” that exacerbates dynamics of unintended institutional competition.
Third, future institution-building efforts need to crosscut traditional friend-rival cleavages in the region where possible. The current U.S. approach of building on a core institutional group of U.S. and “like-minded states,” only later to include Beijing, will only make the unintentional competition dynamic worse by confirming fears in Beijing that it is being encircled and trapped in U.S. controlled institutions. The thread that pulls together the patchwork of regional institutions should therefore not be the network of U.S. bilateral alliances as some argue, but rather the U.S.-China bilateral relation. If the U.S.-China bilateral relation is not threaded correctly, there is a real chance that the whole patchwork could unravel. However, at the same time, since not every cooperative project and institution can and should include all the regional states, a broader regional forum may need to take on the additional function of being a credible outlet for signaling intentions well in advance when and if a country plans to create institutions that excludes the other.

Fourth, and relatedly, there needs to be a coordinating forum for the plethora of institutions in the region. The complex patchwork of institutions is not an efficient and practical design as some argue. Rather, it is, in part, the unintended product of states wishing to maximize their institutional power, that results in the fragmentation of the overall regional architecture and exacerbates the “spaghetti bowl syndrome” in the region’s trade architecture. To avoid functional overlap, the undermining of the integrity of legal regional norms and unintended institutional competition dynamics, a coordinating function in one of the premier forums should be studied and implemented.
References


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Appendix I

(i)  Regional institutions dataset

A. Review of current state of data on East Asian regional institutions

Despite the sustained focus and attention on international institutions and East Asian regional regimes, there is no comprehensive list of East Asian regional institutions to this date. The COW International Governmental Organization (IGO) dataset has been the go-to dataset for the study of international institutions in the wider IR literature. While regional organizations can be gleaned from this dataset, when used alone there are serious limitations in forming the basis of any comprehensive analysis of East Asian regional institutions. The first shortcoming is that the dataset only reaches 2005. This means many recent high profile regional institutions, such as the AIIB, in East Asia are excluded from the scope of the data set. The second shortcoming comes with the coding rule that requires organizations to have a permanent secretariat and corresponding headquarters. The concept of international institution is the superset of international organization, where international collaboration based on well-defined principles, norms, rules and procedures for actors' behavior can form in the absence of a secretariat and a headquarter. Moreover, East Asian regional institutions are noted to have lower levels of legalization and formalization, which makes organization-based definitions of regional institutions unable to capture many of the relevant and important regional institutions. As a

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result, even within the timeframe of the COW IGO dataset there are some glaring omissions such as the 1995 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 2001 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2003 Six Party Talks (SPT), 2005 East Asian Summit (EAS). All these regional institutions have been considered to have a central place in the region's institutional architecture both in the literature and in foreign policy formulations.

In the East Asian regional institutions literature, however, the contrary problem exists where there has only been selective focus on well-publicized regional institutions. Coverage of regional institutions has therefore has not been systematic or comprehensive. I have also found the sources for descriptive data on macro trends (such as the number of total regional institutions over time) are poorly reported and therefore impossible to replicate. Moreover, no analysis has provided an operationalized definition of regional institution. The result is that lists of East Asian regional institutions provided in the literature are partial and systematic analysis across literature is difficult to conduct. For example, Aggarwal and Koo’s edited volume *Asia's New Institutional Architecture*\(^{826}\) includes free trade agreements while Calder and Ye’s *The Making of Northeast Asia*\(^{827}\) includes a more comprehensive list of track-II channels such as the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC) as well as unsuccessful proposals such as the Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) and the Northeast Asian Development Bank (NEADB). In both their lists, however, regional institutions that are more functional in nature such as the Asia-Pacific Postal Union (APPU) are entirely absent. This shortcoming is shared widely in the academic literature on East Asian regional institutions.

\(^{826}\) *Northeast Asia: Ripe for Integration?* (Springer New York, 2009).

\(^{827}\) *The Making of Northeast Asia* (Stanford University Press, 2010).
B. Data Collection

I therefore construct the list of regional institutions from 1945-2014 by triangulation: a combination of regional IGO and FTA data, state-defined regional institutions, and academic consensus.

First, I gathered data on East Asian regional international organizations and FTAs from the COW IGO dataset and the Asian Development Bank’s Asian Regional Integration Center (ARIC) FTA database respectively. These provide cases for regional organizations and regional FTAs. The COW IGO dataset is itself coded from the Yearbook of International Organizations (YIO), which was used for crosschecking references. However, since IGOs can only be searched one at a time on the YIO website, without comprehensive scraping of the website information which is currently prohibited, it was impossible to update the COW data itself. As for FTAs, the more commonly used database is the WTO database. I opted out of using this dataset as it only records free trade agreements that are reported to the WTO. This data set, for example, would therefore exclude important regional free trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) or the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which have respectively just been concluded and entered into substantive negotiations. Moreover, there is often a time lag between FTAs being in effect and being reported to the WTO. China-ASEAN FTA (CAFTA) for example was signed and in effect by 2005, but was

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829 ADB. Asian Regional Integration Center (ARIC) database [www.aric.adb.org/fta](http://www.aric.adb.org/fta)

830 *Yearbook of International Organizations,* Union of International Associations [http://www.uia.org/yearbook](http://www.uia.org/yearbook)

831 World Trade Organization (WTO). Regional Trade Agreements Information System. [http://rtais.wto.org/UI/PublicAllRTAList.aspx](http://rtais.wto.org/UI/PublicAllRTAList.aspx)
only reported to the WTO in 2008. I therefore collect East Asian FTA data from the ARIC FTA database that more closely monitors FTA activity in East Asia.

To supplement the IGO and FTA data, I adopted an actor-centric approach to collecting observations on regional institutions, basing my sources on official government websites of East Asian states. East Asian states - the ministry of foreign affairs or the equivalent - often provide a list of what they understand to be regional regimes. These websites build on the limitations of the IGO data set by providing an up-to-date understanding of what institutions the state consider to be relevant to the institutional architecture of the region. I therefore gathered regional institutions data from the websites of the ten ASEAN states, Japan, South Korea, China, US as well as from the ASEAN website.³³²

Thirdly, I collected data on regional institutions listed in a select number of secondary literatures on East Asian regional institutions. I primarily collected observations from McDougall’s *Historical Dictionary of International Organizations in Asia and the Pacific,*³³³ one of the more systematic attempts at gathering observations of East Asian regional institutions. I

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/index.html
ASEAN http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/international-regional-organisations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam http://www.mofat.gov.bn/Pages/Regional-And-Multilateral.aspx
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Cambodia http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/?page=front&lg=en
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/countries_and_region/southeast_asia/myanmar.html
also scraped data from ‘comprehensive’ tables of regional institutions in Aggarwal and Koo’s *Asia’s New Institutional Architecture* \(^{834}\) and Calder and Ye’s *The Making of Northeast Asia* \(^{835}\) in order to cross-check whether the dataset missed any institutions that are extant in the academic literature. As it turns out Calder and Ye \(^{836}\) provide no new observations in addition to the other three sources, and Aggarwal and Koo \(^{837}\) provide two.

The three different sources - databases, websites, and secondary literature - together produce a dataset with 95 East Asian regional institutions during the period 1945-2014. During the temporal scope of my research 1989-2014, there are a total of 57 regional institutions observed. The observation includes institutions that were newly created during the period and those that succeed an institution created either in the same period or the previous period.

As it stands, of the 57 regional institutions, 47 are non-problematically coded as regional institutions while the other 10 remain uncertain and subject to reconsideration. Of the 10 uncertain observations, 2 cannot be properly ascertained as a regional institution due to missing information [Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific (FDL-AP), Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions], 3 remain relevant but fall outside the coding rules adopted [Shanghai Five, Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)], and 1 requires further research to determine whether it is an inter-regional institution [Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)]. The remaining 4 institutions are additional unique observations collected from two separate sources. They need to be reconsidered for their analytical value given the marginal cost incurred with the extra layer of data collection and coding rules. ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and US-Australia-Japan

\(^{834}\) *Northeast Asia.*
\(^{835}\) *The Making of Northeast Asia.*
\(^{836}\) Ibid.
\(^{837}\) *Northeast Asia.*
Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD) are the only two unique observations gleaned from analyzing the FY2014, FY2015, FY2016, “Budget Request for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs” and searching for words “regional institutions” “architecture”. Asian Bond Market Initiative (ABMI) and the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) are the only two unique observations gained from adding in secondary literature from Aggarwal and Koo. Calder and Ye provide no unique observations.

Also, it is worth noting that the 57 regional institutions between 1989-2014 do not include the institutions that survive from the previous period 1945-1988. Out of the 38 regional institutions listed in the previous period 1945-1988, 5 institutions have been succeeded by another institution during the same period and 7 have ceased, leaving 26 regional institutions by the beginning of 1989. Therefore, a total of 83 regional institutions have been observed between the period of interest 1989-2014. The full list of East Asian regional institutions is listed in the Appendix.

On a final note, the data set is not the final data set on regional institutional change, the dependent variable of my research. While ‘change’ in regional institutions includes the construction of new institutions, it also includes a significant change in membership. From this dataset, I plan to look at the membership data of each regime to determine how many of the given institutions have had significant membership changes. Secondly, I have identified where available two different institutions that are arguably two versions of one institution and counted each one as a unique observation (such as Shanghai Five and SCO are two separate observations). However, the list is most likely incomplete. Whether an institution has been succeeded by or has succeeded another institution also requires more research. Therefore, I

838 Ibid.
839 The Making of Northeast Asia.
expect the final regional regime change dataset will have more than 57 observations in the period of interest 1989-2014.

C. Coding decisions

1) COW IGO data – while the COW data has unit-level measures, it does not provide information on whether an IO is regional or East Asian in character. Therefore a separate coding rule was devised for gathering East Asian regional organizations from the overall IO list of 496. First, I dropped all the IOs if none of the East Asian states have membership in them, leaving 177 IOs between 1815-2005. Second, I code for whether the IO is East Asian. I count as East Asian if the IO name includes “Asia” “Asian”, “Asia-Pacific”, “Southeast Asia” or has a specific geographic name in East Asia such as “Mekong”. Third, I code for whether the IO is not East Asian. I drop any IOs if the name only has “African” “Inter-American” “European” “Caribbean” “Latin” “Arab,” “Northwest Atlantic,” “South” or “West” “Pacific”. I also drop the observation if the name has “Commonwealth”, “Francophone”, “Islamic” in their name. I also drop all those that are coded by YIO as having ‘universal membership’ as well as those that have “Global” “World” “UN” “Multilateral” “International” (or “Internationale”) in their name.

Fourth, for the remaining IOs, I first drop those that have a membership of more than 100 and then apply a 1/3 East Asian membership rule, such that if the composition of states that are East

840 It does provide a category for IO type - ‘Limited, regionally defined membership (D)’ – but this also includes functionally limited IOs such as the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries. Institutions that are typically considered East Asian such as APEC are coded as ‘inter-continental.’

841 The only exception is the International Tripartite Rubber Organization (ITRO), which has as its members Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia as well as the World Vegetable Center (ACRDC), which was originally founded by predominantly Asian states - Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, US, and now have a East Asian membership presence of 55.5%
Asian is less than a third of the total membership, I drop the observation. Here are the remaining borderline cases where the 1/3 membership rule was applied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>East Asian Membership %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITRO</td>
<td>International Tripartite Rubber Organization, Thailand</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANRPC</td>
<td>Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACRDC</td>
<td>ACRDC - The World Vegetable Center</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NPMSO</td>
<td>North Pacific Marine Science Organization</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATPC</td>
<td>Association of Tin Producing Countries</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NPAFC</td>
<td>North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop</td>
<td>INRO</td>
<td>International Natural Rubber Organization</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NPFSC</td>
<td>North Pacific Fur Seal Commission</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IRSG</td>
<td>International Rubber Study Group</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITC</td>
<td>International Tin Council</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the original 496 IOs, **a total of 31 IOs are East Asian regional organizations.**

There are currently limitations to my coding rule, three to be specific.

The first is the rule to drop those that have ‘international’ or ‘world’ in the name (as proxies to those that have universal membership and global scope). If I adhered strictly to this rule I would have dropped ITRO and ACRDC, which I coded East Asian after conducting more research. It turns out, Tin and Rubber are industries in which Southeast Asian countries hold a quasi-monopoly and therefore have constructed organizations that act similar to OPEC – a coherent regional bloc and arguably a cartel. The ACRDC on the other hand had a much stronger East Asian characteristic in its founding with all its members being East Asian. Its original name was the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center, hence the acronym ACRDC. The name later changed to become the World Vegetable Center when the membership was expanded.
although the acronym remains. However, the focus is still primarily East Asian and has a membership composition of 55.5%. I therefore code ACRDC as East Asian.

The second is the rule of counting an IO as East Asian if the geographic name is included. This has resulted in the problematic inclusion of the Asian Clearing Union (ACU). Out of the 9 member states only one, Myanmar, is in the geographic region I define as East Asia (the other states being Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka). Moreover, the headquarters are based in Tehran, Iran. While I am considering an extra layer of coding rule based on membership for those counted as Asian, I am unsure on how to proceed. While ACU does indeed have a very low East Asian membership presence of 11%, institutions that are commonly considered as East Asian also exhibit very low membership presence. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is at 19%, the AIIB at 18% and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) at 17%. Therefore, I have left the ACU included in the dataset for now. One way might be to add a rule where minimum two East Asian states must be present?

The third, and perhaps most important weakness, is that if I adhered to my coding rules then I would have to drop CICA, central to the analysis of understanding China’s approach to regional institutions (this is where Xi Jinping pronounced the concept of Asian Security for Asians and is seen as a potentially more robust venue for China to pursue security interests other than the SCO). This problem persists in other sources for Shanghai Five and SCO. While I keep these observations, I highlight them as being anomalous to my coding rules in the final report.
2) **ADB ARIC FTA data** – First, I compile all FTAs by country, where I only select on East Asian countries (10 ASEAN countries, Japan, China and Korea). Second, for each country, I code for whether the given FTA is East Asian and multilateral [East Asian bilateral FTA = 0, Non-East Asian bilateral FTA = -1, Non-East Asian multilateral FTA = -2, East Asian multilateral = 1, 0.5 is unsure and requires some looking into]. Some borderline coding decisions were used to determine the cases that I was unsure of:

- Chinese territories Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan were not treated as separate countries
- ASEAN+1 frameworks were considered multilateral, considering the ASEAN states also constructed bilateral FTAs separately also.
- 1/3 membership rule applied to rest of the indeterminate cases:
  - PTA G8 (Indonesia and Malaysia) - DROP
    - Member states are Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Nigeria, Turkey
  - Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (Singapore and Brunei) – COUNT
    - Member states are Brunei, NZ, Chile, Singapore
  - Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement – COUNT
    - Member states are PRC, ROK, Lao, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka

Third, I aggregate all observations coded as East Asian multilateral. I record the date which the FTA is signed and in effect. For the three FTAs that are not yet concluded, I record their negotiation start-date (RCEP, TPP and PRC-Japan-ROK trilateral FTA). As a result there are a **total of 9 East Asian multilateral FTAs**:
3) **Actor-centric website data** – The websites of U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, 10 ASEAN countries and the ASEAN was accessed to collect a list of the regional institutions. The wording ‘regional institution’ was not directly utilized in any of the websites and they ranged as follows (the wording refers to the ‘section’ or ‘page’ in which the list was published):

- China – “International and regional organizations”
- US – “Regional topics”
- Japan – “topics” (under Asia section) and “bilateral relations”
- Korea – “Regional cooperative mechanisms”
- ASEAN – “External relations”
- Brunei – “Regional & Multilateral”
- Cambodia – “International Organization”
- Indonesia – “Regional Cooperation”
- Lao – “International Cooperation/ Multilateral”
- Malaysia – “Multilateral Cooperations” and “Multilateral diplomacy”
- Singapore – “International Organisations and Initiatives”
- Vietnam – “International Organization”
- Missing mention of regional institutions or the like.
  - Myanmar – website under construction
  - Philippines – none
  - Thailand – none

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APTA</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN Free Trade Area</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN-People's Republic of China Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-Pacific SEP</td>
<td>Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN-Korea Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJCEP</td>
<td>ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Trans-Pacific Partnership</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC-Japan-Korea FTA</td>
<td>People's Republic of China-Japan-Korea Free Trade Agreement</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCEP</td>
<td>Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all cases I dropped observations that were either “global” (UN, WTO etc.) or from different “regions” (SAARC, Pacific Islands Forum, Melanesian Spearhead Group). Also, those that were “bilateral” were dropped.

In the case of Japan, the institutions were in the list of 15 “topics”. Among these, 7 were institutions and the rest were issues relating to historical and geographical disputes [5] and current news highlights [3]. In the case of the US website, the list of regional institutions was also under “regional topics.” However, there was no problem after the first set of rules for dropping data – drop global, region, and bilateral.

There were a number of cases that were ambiguous and required further research and coding rules [The Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement, The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Mekong Private Sector Development Facility, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, South-South Cooperation, Developing 8, Francophonie]. Of these, two were dropped as private and as a state agency (MPSDF and JICA) and the rest were dropped after applying the 1/3 membership rule. One observation was dropped due to missing data on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lao (LLDSCs).

Out of a total of 256 observations (China and South Korea alone mention 137) from 15 sources (of which 3 had no data, so 12) there were a total of 32 East Asian regional institutions mentioned. Of these, 15 are mentioned by more than one country. There were very few surprises on the ones that get mentioned the most such as ASEAN, APEC, ARF, EAS, APT. There is a high mentioning on inter-regional institutions such as ASEM, FEALAC, AMED, ACD. In terms of timing, it not surprising there are more institutions listed that were created in the 2000s (see table on the right). This was expected since websites are more likely to mention institutions that
are either old and durable, or new and politically fashionable. Surprised to see Mekong initiatives becoming central and also the energy partnership by the U.S.

There are a couple of few pending problems and limitations with the data collection.

The first is that for all countries (and ASEAN) observations were made from the websites. The only exception I made was with the U.S. where I additionally looked at three documents posted on the website – the FY2014, FY2015, FY2016, “Budget Request for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.” In these documents, I searched for words “regional institutions”, “architecture.” These documents all had central to them 6 institutions – ASEAN, APEC, ARF, LMI, TPP, AEC – while EAS was mentioned twice out of three sources. The new observations from the document (compared to the webpage on “regional topics”) included the ARF, EAS, AEC and TSD. However, other sources note ARF and EAS, meaning the unique observations collected from this extra set of sources are two institutions – ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD). I need to consider whether there is value in getting two additional observations with this much method-added. I report this issue in the final dataset.

The second problem is one I found in the COW data, which is that my coding rule results in the exclusion of the SCO and CICA. I have counted them in the dataset while noting the incompleteness of my coding rule.
4) Secondary literature – the Historical Dictionary of International Organizations in the Asia-Pacific provides a chronology of the construction of the regional institutions from 1945-2014 and then provides a glossary that gives basic information on terms and specific institutions. I go through the chronology and code for any East Asian regional institution dropping those that are associated with other sub-regions (Central Asia, South Asia, Pacific) or those that are non-regional groupings such as those associated with the Commonwealth, and institutions such as the Non-aligned movement (NAM) or the BRICs. I also collect observations for changes within ASEAN, but only code positively for them if they expand the scope of their membership. For example, the construction of ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (AMMAF), the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) or the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children (ACWC) are not coded as a new observation. However, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting + (ADMM+) are coded as new observations. The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (APMC) is also included since this became the venue in which ASEAN dialogue partners could attend and collaborate. This yields a total of 69 regional institutions. Of these, 35 are unique observations (compared to the COW, FTA, and website based data-collection methods).

From the Historical Dictionary, I could not code for three regional institutions given the information available, thereby requiring further research [Regional Commission on Food Security in Asia and the Pacific (RCFSAP), Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific (FDL-AP), Asia Pacific Forum on National Human Rights]. Shanghai-Five also falls outside my coding rule, but I have kept in the dataset for now.
5) Secondary literature – Calder and Ye (C&Y) and Aggarwal and Koo (A&K) - Calder and Ye provide a table of regional institutions ‘Table 3.2. Critical Junctures as a Catalyst for Regional Organization in East Asia (1950-Present) along with the description of the table from (Calder and Ye 2010: 73-78). I collect all observations from this table providing a total of 27 regional institutions.

Aggarwal and Koo is an edited volume and four tables on regional institutions are relevant for collecting observations: (i) ‘Table 1.1. Modes of economic and security arrangements in Asia’, (Agarwal and Koo 2009: 9) (ii) ‘Table 5.1. The institutional environment in Northeast Asia’ by Min Ye in (ibid. 130) (iii) ‘Table 6.1. Regional arrangements governing Southeast Asia’s trade and financial relations’ by Helen E.S. Nesadurai (ibid. 152) (iv) ‘Table 7.2. Post-Cold War security arrangements in Southeast Asia’ by Ralf Emmers in (ibid. 192). I collect all observations from these tables under the heading ‘minilateral’ that provide a total of 36 regional institutions.

When comparing the observations collected from Calder and Ye (C&Y), and Aggarwal and Koo (A&K) with other sources, they actually provide a very limited number of unique observations. Calder and Ye’s unique observations are all in the area of failed proposals and Aggarwal and Koo includes two financial institutions the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) and the Asian Bond Market Initiative (ABMI). Since I drop failed proposals (see next section), Calder and Ye’s observations do not provide unique observations. However, CMI and ABMI are listed in the dataset while I have noted that it comes from A&K.

6) Dropping sub-state institutions, failed proposals, and interregional institutions – after the observations were collected on regional institutions for each source, I amalgamated them into

842 The author’s definition of ‘multilateral’ is global in scope.
one dataset. Afterwards, having eye-balled the data, 3 additional rules were applied to narrow down on the institutions I am more interested in.

The first was to drop all those that were considered inter-regional. Since the original coding rule was to include all institutions that have ‘Asian’ in the name this ended up including inter-regional institutions. I therefore dropped all institutions that also had the name of another region. This coding rule excluded the Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), which on surface seems to be inter-regional. I have noted this in the final dataset. I dropped 8 observations as inter-regional:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAC</td>
<td>Asian-African Conference (Bandung Conference)</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AARDO</td>
<td>African-Asian Rural Development Organization</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AALCO</td>
<td>Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEM</td>
<td>Asia Europe Meeting</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEF</td>
<td>Asia-Europe Foundation</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEALAC</td>
<td>Forum for East Asia and Latin America Cooperation</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AASCROC</td>
<td>Asian African Sub-Regional Organization Conference</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMED</td>
<td>Asia Middle East Dialogue</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second was to drop all sub-state institutions including Track-II institutions. Initially I thought of distinguishing between those that allowed for sustained government-to-government contact and strictly non-governmental institutions. But the distinction was much more complicated in practice. There are those that are clearly private such as the PBEC and PAFTAD and those that are coordinated among non-state (non-private) actors such as ASEAN-ISIS, NEAT. Then there are institutions like CSCAP and NEACD that put themselves forward as a serious “Track-II”. To a less serious degree there are also forums like the NEAEF 1991 that typically has lower level officials or retired officials attending. Then there are conferences – Boao Forum, Jeju Conference, Future of East Asia Conference – that I have difficulty coding while my hunch is that this is a lower level forum also. Finally, there are those that are top-down mandated that support non-state cooperation such as ASEF and EAVG. The other problem was that since the framework adopted by authors who collected data on these institutions were mainly focused on state-to-state institution, the list did not seem comprehensive to include forums such as the Boao, Jeju, and the Xiangshan forum. I therefore decided to simply drop all sub-state regional institutions. Apart from FAC, which was collected from the Japanese MOFA website, all observations on sub-state institutions are from the secondary literature:
The third was to drop all proposals and failed institutions. Again, all of these were noted only in the secondary literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PBEC</td>
<td>Pacific Basin Economic Council</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFTAD</td>
<td>Pacific Trade and Development</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECC</td>
<td>Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN-ISIS</td>
<td>ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAEF</td>
<td>Northeast Asia Economic Forum</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCAP</td>
<td>Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEACD</td>
<td>Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAC</td>
<td>The Future of Asia Conference</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAT</td>
<td>Network of East Asian think-Tanks</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangri-La Dialogue</td>
<td>Shangri-La Dialogue</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAVG</td>
<td>East Asian Vision Group</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### D. Regional institutions 1945-1988 (N=38)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPFC</td>
<td>Indo-Pacific Fishery Commission</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APFC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLOMBO</td>
<td>Council for Technical Cooperation in South and Southeast Asia (Colombo Plan), Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAC</td>
<td>Military Armistice Commission</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APO</td>
<td>Asian Productivity Organization</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPU</td>
<td>Asian-Pacific Postal Union, adopted in 1990</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAMEO</td>
<td>Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANRPC</td>
<td>Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVRDC</td>
<td>ACRDC - The World Vegetable Center</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Power Defense Agreements</td>
<td>Five Power Defense Agreements</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACU</td>
<td>Asian Clearing Union</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCC</td>
<td>Asian and Pacific Coconut Community</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APT</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Telecommunity</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Asian Reinsurance Corporation</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APTA</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIBD</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN PMC</td>
<td>ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMC</td>
<td>Interim Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin (Interim Mekong Committee)</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPU</td>
<td>Asian-Pacific Parliamentarians' Union</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFOFISH</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Organization for Marketing Information and Technical Advisory Services for Fishery Products in the Asia and Pacific Region (INFOFISH)</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCFSAP</td>
<td>Regional Commission on Food Security in Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATPC</td>
<td>Association of Tin Producing Countries</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCOP</td>
<td>Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Area</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECAFE</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASA</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asia</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APU</td>
<td>Asian Parliamentarians' Union</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCOP</td>
<td>Committee for Coordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Area</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Asian Coconut Community</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Far East Commission</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATO</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Treaty Organization</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maphilindo</td>
<td>Maphilindo</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASPAC</td>
<td>Asian and Pacific Council</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDC</td>
<td>Asian Industrial Development Council</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFTA</td>
<td>Pacific Free Trade Area</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Council of Ministers for Asian Economic Cooperation</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### E. Regional institutions 1989-present (N= 57)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACA</td>
<td>Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRADP</td>
<td>Tumen River Area Development Programme</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APAN</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Agroforestry Network</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSD</td>
<td>ASEAN Asia-Pacific security dialogue</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPAFC</td>
<td>North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PICES</td>
<td>North Pacific Marine Science Organization</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMS</td>
<td>Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALTID</td>
<td>Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APFIC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Fishery Commission</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPF</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFTA</td>
<td>ASEAN FTA</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIMP-EAGA</td>
<td>The Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Malaysia Philippines – East ASEAN Growth Area</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCOP</td>
<td>Coordinating Committee for Coastal and Offshore Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDL-AP</td>
<td>Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEDO</td>
<td>Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Mekong River Commission</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN Asian-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation program</td>
<td>ASEAN Asian-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation program</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
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(ii) **PT Assumptions**

The third and final component of process testing involves its assumptions or PT assumptions. Despite their central importance in determining the validity of process testing, PT assumptions have been discussed in various places but have yet to be systematically incorporated into process tracing procedures. Here, I summarize the main insights into PT assumptions discussed by process tracing methodologists in a non-formal setting. For a comprehensive discussion in the formal setting, see Humphreys and Jacobs.\(^{843}\)

PT assumptions form the back bone of PT tests and have been variously referred to as “assumptions,” “generalizations,”\(^{844}\) and “Bayesian priors” in Bayesian process tracing methods.\(^{845}\) PT assumptions involve generalizations about the nature of the relationship between

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theoretical components of the causal graph and the CPO, as well as assumptions about the frequency with which a given CPO is expected to occur more generally. These assumptions determine the type and strength of the PT tests as well as pre-assign probative value to the CPO to be collected.

Sufficiently weak PT assumptions transform hoop tests and smoking gun tests into straw in the wind tests. Hoop tests and smoking gun tests are based on nomological statements that posit law-like generalizations. The associated CPOs accordingly provide decisive evidence to confirm (passing a smoking gun test) or falsify (failing a hoop test) the theory. However, when the researcher cannot draw on nomological statements, she must rely on probabilistic generalizations. This transforms nomological PT tests into probabilistic straw in the wind tests, which consequently reduces the probative value of the given CPO. Collier illustrates from Sherlock Holmes’ *Silver Blaze* story that the CPO of a “timid suspect” fails the hoop test that “murderers are necessarily not timid.” However, a weaker generalization that “murderers are likely not timid,” transforms the hoop test to a straw in the wind test. Depending on the PT assumption, “timid-ness” of the suspect thus also transforms from a decisive piece of evidence to evidence with only incremental value.

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848 Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences.”

849 PT tests are also understood as being undergirded by a different type of cause to those adopted in quantitative analysis or frequentists. Based on set theory, causes are understood to be “logical causes” composed on necessary, sufficiency and INUS conditions (Individually unnecessary and insufficient, but necessary for combination of factors that are jointly sufficient.) Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton University Press, 2012); Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation.” Also see Braumoeller, Bear F. and Gary Goertz, 2000. “The Methodology of Necessary Conditions” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 4, pp.844-858


Nomological PT tests also vary in strength depending on our assumptions about CPOs, such that we can get “demanding/ difficult” and “trivial/ easy” smoking gun and hoop tests. The strength of the nomological PT tests directly rests on our assumptions about how common or rare we think the CPO is. In other words, the frequency with which the specific CPO is present more generally.\textsuperscript{852,853}

Typically, we understand that a hypothesis cannot be rejected if it fails a smoking gun test and a hypothesis cannot be confirmed if it passes a hoop test.\textsuperscript{854} However, the consequence of varying the assumptions about CPOs is that failing a trivial smoking gun test and passing a difficult hoop test can actually serve to falsify and corroborate respectively.\textsuperscript{855} Difficult hoop tests rely on CPOs assumed to be rare, abnormal or atypical. The more difficult the hoop test, the smaller the size of the hoop that the hypothesis must jump through to remain under consideration. The logical implication is that it is more difficult to pass the hoop test unless the hypothesis is actually true. Thus, the more difficult the hoop test, the more it also tests for sufficiency and can identify corroborative evidence. Take Van Evera's classic example of a hoop test that asks “was the murderer in the state on the day of the murder?” A suspect failing the test is proved innocent, while passing the test does not confirm the guilt of a suspect.\textsuperscript{856} A difficult hoop test uses conditions that we assume to be rarer and thus more difficult to pass unless the

\textsuperscript{852}Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences”; Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation.”

\textsuperscript{853}For the most clearest statement that employs both set theory and Venn diagrams see Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation.”. Also see Goetz, Garry “Assessing the Trivialness, Relevance, and Relative Importance of Necessary or Sufficient Conditions in Social Science” Studies in Comparative International Development, Summer 2006, Vol.41, No.2, pp.88-109


\textsuperscript{855}Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences,” 573.

\textsuperscript{856}Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science.
hypothesis is true. For example, we could ask instead “was the murderer in the room at the time of the murder?”

Here, passing the difficult hoop test based on a rarer CPO does increase the possibility that the suspect was the murderer.

Trivial smoking gun tests conversely rely on CPOs assumed to be more common, typical and frequently occurring. The more trivial the smoking gun test, the easier it is for the hypothesis to pass the test and the more it can provide a criterion for rejecting the hypothesis if the CPO fails the test. A trivial smoking gun test therefore also tests for necessity and can identify falsifying evidence. The logic here is similar to feeling around for change in your pocket. Since this is evidence we would expect to see readily, failure to find something constitutes evidence against the hypothesis.

What should become apparent is that the validity of the inferences made from process testing rest heavily on the validity of the PT assumptions. Consider again Van Evera's hoop test “was the accused in the state on the day of the murder?” The implicit assumption made by Van Evera is that the hoop test is not difficult because many individuals can be present in the given state on the day of the murder and did not commit the crime. However, it may be the case that the state is very remote and has a very small population. Moreover, if the suspect is originally known to reside in a different state on the opposite side of the country, passing the hoop test does raise suspicion about the suspect's guilt. This means that depending on our assumptions about the CPO, Van Evera's classic hoop test can actually be a difficult hoop test

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857 Extremely difficult hoop tests and extremely trivial smoking gun tests are therefore analogous to doubly decisive tests.
859 Whether passing this hoop test acts as a difficult hoop test and provides positive evidence depends on our assumptions about how abnormal it is to be present in the state of the day of the murder.
and change the inferences we would make from the same CPO, i.e. specific information concerning the whereabouts of the accused on the day of the murder.\textsuperscript{860}

Consider finally the implicit generalization employed in the hoop test: “murderers are \textit{necessarily} present in the state of the crime scene on the day of the murder.” While the generalization is reasonable, its nomological status can be debated. There is a possibility that the murderer killed the victim using a method that involves a time lag, such as a slow acting poison. The correct generalization may thus be that “murderers are \textit{likely} to be present in the state of the crime scene on the day of the murder.” If the murderer had actually poisoned the victim and fled the state days before it killed the victim, the CPO would fail Van Evera’s original hoop test and we would erroneously conclude that the real murderer is innocent.\textsuperscript{861} As Mahoney cautions, mistaken assumptions can result in “potentially devastating consequences for the validity of one's inference.”\textsuperscript{862}

While PT test results are sensitive to the assumptions on which they rest, there are no clear criteria to determine the validity of PT assumptions and generalizations. Process tracing methodologists have largely just noted that PT assumptions come from prior knowledge and draw from pre-existing generalizations.\textsuperscript{863,864} However, in practice, it is difficult to determine

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{860} Likewise, it can be transformed into a trivial hoop test if the posited condition is assumed more trivial. For example, the country in question could be composed of one or two states, rather than fifty one in the case of the United States.
\item \textsuperscript{861} Similarly, in Collier's example from the \textit{Silver Blaze}, using the strong generalization, the “timid” suspect fails the hoop test and is cleared as innocent, while in weak generalization employed in the straw in the wind test, failing the hoop test lends more but not decisive evidence that the suspect is innocent. It is entirely possible that murderers could be socially maladjusted and therefore outwardly “timid.”
\item \textsuperscript{862} Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences,” 574.
\item \textsuperscript{864} Mahoney, for example, simply notes that they are often pre-existing relationships we draw upon that range from “relatively trivial relationships that amount to little more than platitudes” Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in Social Sciences,” 585., “elementary understandings of associations that are nearly universally regarded to be true” to those “derived from scientific analysis” Ibid., 571.
\end{itemize}
what the correct assumptions are and what type of PT test to carry out.\textsuperscript{865,866} Moreover, since the PT assumptions rely on familiarity or even expert knowledge of the case, it is even more difficult for the scholarly community to cross-check the validity of the chosen PT assumptions.\textsuperscript{867,868} The best practice available is that the researcher makes all process testing procedures transparent and report their confidence in the assumptions and generalizations on which their conclusions depend.\textsuperscript{869,870}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{866} This is analogous to the problem of assigning numerical value to Bennett’s Bayesian priors Bennett, “Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective.”. It may be the case that many hypotheses may uniqueness and certainty and therefore become straw in the wind tests with limited inferential value David Waldner, “Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference,” Security Studies 24, no. 2 (2015): 244.
\textsuperscript{867} Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices.”
\textsuperscript{868} Gerring, for example, thus suggests the possibility of a “crowd-based approach” to case study research, where a panel of experts are surveyed randomly on each point of judgment and then cumulated for an overall inference Gerring, “Qualitative Methods,” 14.
\textsuperscript{869} Mahoney, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation,” 217.
\textsuperscript{870} Bennett and Checkel similarly remind us that transparency should be valued over the strength of the analytical conclusion: “When the evidence does not allow high levels of confidence in supporting some hypotheses and discounting others, it is important to acknowledge the level of uncertainty that remains. Some may worry that such transparency will undercut their argument. However, the opposite is in fact the case. The explanation – its veracity and the soundness of its causal inferences – will only be enhanced. Indeed, the intellectual honesty and rigor of this approach is vastly better than the so-called “gladiator style analysis,” where one perspective goes forth and slays all others” Bennett and Checkel, “Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices,” 31.
\end{footnotesize}
Appendix II

Table 1

Total posts on www.cn.gov where government officials and leadership speak directly about China’s position towards the TPP.

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<td>MFA spokesperson</td>
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All positive contents by date and source ([www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn), 2010-2013)

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Table 3

All negative contents by time, source, type, content of interviews and title of post from www.gov.cn between 2010-2013

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<td>12. 26</td>
<td>Xinhua</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Expert, Official</td>
<td>三大抓手——展望 2014年中国经济外交</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>12. 26</td>
<td>Xinhua</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>多路推进 两翼齐飞 — 探析中国经济外交大棋局</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Examination of U.S. Government Sources for “U.S.-China competition in TPP vs. RCEP,” 2015-2016, arranged by level of authority of source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama 1</td>
<td>2015 January</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama 2</td>
<td>2015 June</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama 3</td>
<td>2015 October</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama 4</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama 5</td>
<td>2016 January</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama 6</td>
<td>2016 May</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Rhodes (White House)</td>
<td>2016 May</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wally Adeyemo (White House)</td>
<td>2016 November</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White House Council of Economic Advisers</td>
<td>2016 November</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Froman 1</td>
<td>2015 October</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Froman 2</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Froman 3</td>
<td>2016 July</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USTR</td>
<td>2015 October</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Rice</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>Yes/ No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kerry 1</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kerry 2</td>
<td>2016 April</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Campbell 1</td>
<td>2015 March</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Campbell 2</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Campbell 3</td>
<td>2015 June</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Allison</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Green</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Russel 1</td>
<td>2015 October</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Russel 2</td>
<td>2015 October</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Russel 3</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>Yes/ No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daniel Russel 4</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Russel 5</td>
<td>2016 April</td>
<td>Yes/ No</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk Wager (US Amb. To Singapore)</td>
<td>2015 March</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ash Carter</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Letter to Congress</td>
<td>2015 April</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP Leaders' Statement</td>
<td>2015 November</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>TPP Ministerial Statement</td>
<td>2015 October</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(i) All neutral posts arranged by date

- 陈德铭在亚太经合组织会议期间接受电视台专访, 2011.11.15.
- 中美发布”关于加强中美经济关系的联合情况说明”, 2012.2.15.
  [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-02/15/content_2067321.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-02/15/content_2067321.htm) (May 6, 2017)
- 鸠山由纪夫表示：日中两国人民应构筑信任关系, 2012.2.22.
  [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-02/02/content_2057058.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-02/02/content_2057058.htm) (May 6, 2017)
- 步入”深水区”前的思考—第十届两岸关系研讨会综述, 2012.3.23.
- 中美战略与经济对话框架下经济对话联合成果情况, 2012.5.5.
  [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-05/05/content_2130383.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-05/05/content_2130383.htm) (May 6, 2017)
- 第四轮中美战略与经济对话 5 月 3 日至 4 日在北京举行, 2012.5.5.,
  [http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2012-05/05/content_2130364.htm](http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2012-05/05/content_2130364.htm) (May 6, 2017)
- 王岐山在中美战略与经济对话联合记者会上的讲话, 2012.5.5.
  [http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2012-05/05/content_2130360.htm](http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2012-05/05/content_2130360.htm) (May 6, 2017)
- 商务部发言人回应中欧光伏争端等经贸热点, 2013.5.30.
- 商务部发言人就欧盟对华光伏产品反倾销初裁谈话, 2013.6.5.
  [http://www.gov.cn/gzt/2013-06/05/content_2419702.htm](http://www.gov.cn/gzt/2013-06/05/content_2419702.htm) (May 8, 2017)
- 李克强在第十届中国—东盟博览会和商务与投资峰会上致辞, 2013.9.3.
- 访中国（上海）自贸区总方案设计参与者王新奎, 2013.9.4
- 商务部新闻办公室召开“电子商务”专题新闻发布会, 2013.9.26
- 商务部俞建华在巴厘岛就 APEC 会议相关议题等受访, 2013.10.08,
(ii) Selecting content for “conventional wisdom” of the “TPP vs. RCEP” case

I selected a number of articles from Google searching three key words: “TPP,” “RCEP” and “TPP RCEP.” All searches were conducted for a week between 23rd and 30th of October 2016, where the search hits remained stable despite some changes in the order of their presentation. Of the total of 31 Google hits on the three key words, a total of 11 web pages were selected for examination, of which one was an overlap. Below, I disclose the full search returns and which articles were dropped from the sample.

For “TPP” a search returned 12 positive results of which 4 were selected for analysis (***)

- “The Trans-Pacific Partnership” (USTR.gov)
- “Trans-Pacific Partnership” (Wikipedia.com)***
- “TPP: What is it and why does it matter?” (BBC News)***
- “8 Terrible Things About the Trans-Pacific Partnership” (In These Times)
- “45 times Clinton pushed the trade bill she now opposes” (CNN)
- “The Trans-Pacific Partnership clause everyone should oppose” (The Washington Post)
- “Trans-Pacific Partnership” – Public Citizen (www.citizen.org)
- “Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement” (Electronic Frontier Foundation)
- “Expose the TPP” (www.exposethetpp.org)
- “Everything you need to know about the Trans Pacific Partnership” (The Washington Post)***
- “The Trans-Pacific Partnership, Explained” (the New York Times)***
For RCEP from the search return of 10 results, 1 was selected for analysis (**). 

- “RCEP” (Wikipedia)***
- “RCEP” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia)
- “Registered Continuing Education Program” (rcep.net, a portal for education and career record keeping)
- “RCEP” (ARIC.adb.org : Asia Regional Integration Center: Tracking Asian Integration)
- “RCEP” (ASEAN.org)
- “RCEP” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand)
- “RCEP” (bilaterals.org)
- “RCEP” (China FTA network, MOFCOM, Ministry of Commerce of PRC)
- “Trade Liberalization in India and the RCEP” (Global Research.ca)
- “Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist” (certification.acsm.org: ACSM Certification)

For “TPP RCEP” of the 9 results, 7 were selected for preliminary examination (one was an overlap) (**). 

- “TPP vs. RCEP: America and China battle for control of Pacific Trade” (The National Interest)***
- “RCEP” (Wikipedia)***
- “RCEP vs. TPP” (section in The Diplomat).
- “Should America Fear China's alternative to the TPP?” (The Diplomat)***
- “TPP? RCEP? Trade Jargon Explained” (BBC News)***
- “TPP vs. RCEP: Trade and tussle for regional influence in Asia” (Post-Western World)***
- “TPP and RCEP: Boon or Bane for ASEAN?” (The Asia Foundation)***
- “RCEP” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia)

(iii) Primary sources for U.S. for Table 3 (pp.182)

A total of 31 primary sources were collected between January 2015 and November 2016. The sources were collected by the author over time through various means; by searching statements made by U.S. officials on U.S. government websites, searching first-hand reports of released statements and comments made by officials by reliable media outlets, re-tracing primary sources that were cited but only dealt with in a cursory fashion in secondary material, and, for some, attending the delivered public talks in person. The overall inferences that are made from the sources are therefore subject to selection bias.

Listed in chronological order and in the order of Sources presented in first column of Table 2.

Examination of U.S. Government Sources for “U.S.-China competition in TPP vs. RCEP,” 2015-2016


(April 14th 2015) “United States Defense Policy Issues pertaining to the Asia-Pacific Theater” Hearing before the Committee on Armed services, United States Senate, one hundred fourteenth congress, April 14th 2015.
Statement of Kurt M. Campbell, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, the Asia Group
Statement of Dr. Michael J. Green, Senior Vice President for Asia and Japan, Chair, CSIS
Statement of Graham T. Allison, Director of the Kennedy School of Government’s Belfer Center For Science and International Affairs

(April 28th 2015) “TPP Letter to Congress for TPA approval”

(June 3, 2015) “President Obama Talks Trade: President Obama says China open to joining trade partnership,” Market Place, interview by Radioshow
https://www.marketplace.org/2015/06/03/world/president-obama-talks-trade/president-obama-says-china-open-joining-trade-partnership (accessed: November 16, 2016)

(June 20th 2015) “China Should Think Carefully About Provoking South China Sea Tension” Interview with Kurt Campbell, Asahi Shimbun, June 20th 2015, Original link:


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Appendices


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https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/12/remarks-president-barack-obama-
%E2%80%93-prepared-delivery-state-union-address (accessed: November 15, 2016)

(April 12, 2016) “Remarks at the Pacific Council on International Policy,” John Kerry, Secretary of State, Omni Hotel, Los Angeles, CA, April 12, 2016

(April 21st 2016) “America's Pacific Future is Happening Now,” Daniel R. Russel, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Stanford University,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obama-the-tpp-would-let-america-not-
china-lead-the-way-on-global-trade/2016/05/02/680540e4-0fd0-11e6-93ae-
50921721165d_story.html (accessed: June 24, 2016)

to-u-s-national-security-acacea90636e#.onxqfyjis (accessed: May 8, 2016)


(iv) CCTV13 report on TPP conclusion

“America uses TPP to seize leadership of trade rules”

美国欲通过 TPP 抓经贸规则主导权” CCTV13 中央电视台新闻，5:19pm, October 6,
Appendix References