

Amimut (Ambiguity): The Strategic Use of Uncertainty in Diplomacy and International Relations

Douglas C. Youvan

doug@youvan.com

October 1, 2024

In the realm of international diplomacy, Amimut—the strategic use of ambiguity—has emerged as a powerful tool for states navigating complex geopolitical landscapes. By deliberately withholding clarity or maintaining uncertain positions on key issues, nations can deter potential adversaries, preserve diplomatic flexibility, and manage domestic and international pressures. This strategy has proven particularly effective in sensitive areas such as territorial disputes, nuclear policy, and military intervention, where ambiguity creates uncertainty and forces rivals to proceed cautiously. However, the use of Amimut is not without risks. The potential for miscalculation, escalation, and loss of credibility remains significant, particularly as technological advancements and hybrid threats blur the lines between traditional conflict and new forms of warfare. This paper explores the multifaceted role of Amimut in modern diplomacy through case studies, including Israel’s nuclear policy, U.S.-China-Taiwan relations, NATO’s stance on cyberattacks, and China’s claims in the South China Sea. By examining these examples, we analyze both the benefits and limitations of strategic ambiguity in the context of evolving global power dynamics.

Keywords: Amimut, strategic ambiguity, diplomacy, deterrence, international relations, nuclear policy, territorial disputes, NATO, South China Sea, U.S.-China relations, hybrid warfare, geopolitical strategy. 47 pages.

Note: Verbatim GPT-4o for documentation.

1. Introduction

In the realm of international relations and diplomacy, the strategic use of ambiguity, or Amimut, plays a pivotal role in shaping global power dynamics. Derived from the Hebrew word for "ambiguity" or "obfuscation," Amimut refers to a policy where a state deliberately withholds clear information or maintains an unclear position on critical matters. This tactic, often characterized by the refusal to confirm or deny certain actions, capabilities, or intentions, creates an environment of uncertainty for potential adversaries and international actors. By keeping rivals guessing, states employing Amimut can protect sensitive information, enhance deterrence, and maintain flexibility in rapidly changing geopolitical landscapes.

Definition of Amimut

At its core, Amimut is the deliberate use of ambiguity in statecraft to achieve strategic objectives. Unlike explicit policies that clearly signal a state's intentions or capabilities, Amimut blurs the lines, often leaving key questions unanswered. The intent behind this ambiguity is multifaceted: it can prevent adversaries from accurately assessing a state's military or political capabilities, allow a state to avoid diplomatic commitments, and serve as a deterrent against hostile actions by creating doubt and uncertainty.

One of the most famous applications of Amimut is Israel's nuclear policy, in which the state neither confirms nor denies the possession of nuclear weapons. This approach prevents Israel from becoming a declared nuclear power while still signaling to adversaries that any existential threat could provoke a potentially devastating response. Beyond military applications, Amimut can also be seen in diplomatic negotiations, where states might intentionally obscure their positions or intentions to maintain leverage and flexibility.

Relevance in Diplomacy and International Relations

In the fluid and often volatile arena of international relations, Amimut offers significant advantages. Ambiguity can act as a diplomatic tool that allows states to maneuver within complex situations without committing to rigid positions. It provides breathing room for negotiation, reduces the risk of escalation, and creates space for more creative problem-solving in high-stakes conflicts.

In military terms, Amimut can bolster a state's deterrence capabilities by making it difficult for adversaries to assess risks and rewards. When an adversary cannot accurately predict a state's response to a threat, they are more likely to exercise caution, thus maintaining a balance of power. Similarly, in diplomatic contexts, ambiguity can be used to manage competing pressures from domestic audiences, allies, and rivals, all while maintaining strategic flexibility.

For instance, the United States has employed Amimut in its policy toward Taiwan and China. By maintaining an ambiguous stance on whether it would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack, the U.S. deters aggression from China while avoiding a formal commitment that could escalate tensions. This ambiguity allows the U.S. to navigate its complex relationship with both China and Taiwan without provoking a full-blown crisis.

Purpose of the Paper

The primary aim of this paper is to explore how Amimut, or strategic ambiguity, is employed by states as a diplomatic and geopolitical tool. By analyzing various case studies across different regions and historical periods, this paper will illustrate how nations use ambiguity to achieve their goals, deter conflict, and maintain strategic flexibility. Whether in the context of military deterrence, diplomatic negotiations, or managing alliances, Amimut serves as a powerful instrument for states to navigate the uncertainties of the international system.

This paper will also delve into the advantages and risks associated with Amimut. While ambiguity offers a state greater maneuverability and protection, it can also backfire if misinterpreted or if it leads to unintended escalations. Understanding the balance between ambiguity and clarity is essential to grasping why and how Amimut works as a diplomatic strategy.

Thesis Statement

Amimut, or deliberate ambiguity, has proven to be a highly effective strategy in diplomacy, allowing nations to navigate complex global dynamics by fostering uncertainty in their adversaries. Through carefully cultivated ambiguity, states can enhance their deterrence posture, manage delicate international relationships, and retain the flexibility needed to adapt to evolving geopolitical challenges. However, the success of this strategy depends on maintaining the right balance,

as excessive ambiguity may lead to miscalculations or unintended conflicts. By examining key historical and contemporary examples, this paper will demonstrate how Amimut operates as a cornerstone of modern diplomacy and international relations.

2. Historical Context of Amimut

The use of ambiguity as a strategic tool in diplomacy and international relations is not a new phenomenon. While Amimut has been popularized as part of Israel's nuclear strategy, the roots of deliberate ambiguity can be traced back to ancient civilizations and classical diplomacy. From the earliest negotiations between warring states to the delicate balancing acts of empires, ambiguity has been a crucial tool for leaders seeking to maintain power, manage complex relationships, and avoid unnecessary conflicts. Understanding the historical origins of Amimut provides deeper insight into how and why ambiguity continues to play such an important role in modern diplomacy.

Origins of the Concept

The strategic use of ambiguity in diplomacy has its origins in the earliest interactions between human societies. As soon as organized states began to form alliances, wage wars, or engage in trade, leaders understood the value of withholding information or maintaining uncertainty about their intentions or capabilities. This allowed them to manage threats, foster cooperation, and maintain flexibility without fully revealing their positions or making commitments that could limit their future actions.

In international relations theory, ambiguity aligns with the realist school of thought, where states prioritize survival and power. The realist perspective emphasizes the importance of uncertainty and unpredictability in maintaining a state's advantage over others. Leaders who master the art of ambiguity can prevent rivals from gaining insight into their strengths, weaknesses, or future plans. The foundational ideas of realist theory, as developed by thinkers like Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, stress the importance of maintaining strategic advantage through calculated opacity and deception.

Ambiguity also intersects with the theory of deterrence, which became especially prominent during the Cold War. In deterrence theory, the uncertain threat of retaliation is often more effective than a clearly defined one, as ambiguity forces adversaries to second-guess their actions. As we explore the origins of Amimut, it becomes evident that ambiguity has always been a valuable tool in diplomatic and military strategy, allowing states to manage complex and potentially dangerous relationships.

Use in Classical Diplomacy

Ambiguity has been employed by ancient empires and states throughout history, often as a way to balance power, avoid conflict, or buy time in negotiations. Here are several notable examples from classical diplomacy:

1. Ancient Greece and the Delphic Oracle:

- In ancient Greece, ambiguity was a common feature of diplomatic strategy. One of the most famous examples is the Delphic Oracle, where city-states would seek divine guidance before making decisions on war, alliances, or political matters. The oracle's responses were notoriously ambiguous, allowing leaders to interpret the messages in ways that suited their needs or justified their actions. This form of ambiguity gave Greek leaders a flexible tool to manage internal and external pressures without committing to a fixed course of action.
- For instance, King Croesus of Lydia famously consulted the Delphic Oracle before attacking the Persian Empire. The oracle ambiguously responded that “if you attack, a great empire will be destroyed,” which Croesus interpreted as a sign of victory. In the end, it was his own empire that fell, illustrating the power and danger of ambiguous interpretations in diplomacy.

2. The Roman Empire and Diplomatic Flexibility:

- The Roman Empire often used Amimut in its dealings with neighboring states and client kingdoms. Roman leaders would intentionally leave treaties vague, particularly in areas concerning territorial boundaries and obligations of allies. This allowed Rome to

adjust its stance depending on the geopolitical situation and to maintain control over regions without direct confrontation.

- An example of this is the Roman approach to its relationships with client kings, such as King Herod in Judea. Rome's agreements with client states often left the terms of Roman intervention vague, allowing the empire to intervene or withdraw based on its own interests, while keeping local rulers dependent on Rome's support.
- Additionally, Roman peace treaties often included ambiguous clauses that could be interpreted in multiple ways. This allowed Rome to justify future actions—whether that meant reasserting control over a rebellious territory or renegotiating alliances without causing diplomatic rifts.

3. Machiavellian Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy:

- Niccolò Machiavelli's writings in *The Prince* (1513) embody the strategic use of ambiguity in statecraft. Machiavelli argued that rulers should maintain flexible alliances and obscure their true intentions to outmaneuver rivals. The concept of *Amimut* aligns with his belief that it is often better for a ruler to appear trustworthy or benevolent while hiding their real ambitions and capabilities.
- During the Renaissance, city-states like Florence, Venice, and Milan employed ambiguous diplomacy to navigate the complex web of alliances and rivalries that characterized the Italian Peninsula. Machiavelli's ideas reflected the necessity of maintaining uncertainty in dealings with both allies and enemies, as rigid commitments could leave a ruler vulnerable to betrayal or shifting alliances.

4. Ottoman Empire's Capitulations with European Powers:

- The Ottoman Empire employed ambiguity in its diplomatic agreements with European powers through a system known as the "capitulations." These agreements granted European states commercial privileges within the Ottoman Empire but were deliberately left vague in terms of political or military obligations.

- By keeping these agreements ambiguous, the Ottoman sultans could maintain favorable trade relationships with European powers while avoiding entanglements in European conflicts. The lack of clear commitments allowed the Ottomans to renegotiate or adjust the terms of these agreements as the balance of power in Europe shifted, all while maintaining the upper hand.

5. China's Tributary System:

- During the Ming and Qing dynasties, China maintained a tributary system with neighboring states, which was purposefully ambiguous in terms of the nature of the relationships. States that participated in the tributary system were expected to recognize China's cultural superiority and offer tributes, but the exact political obligations were left vague.
- This ambiguity allowed China to claim a dominant position over its neighbors without having to enforce direct control. For tributary states, the system allowed them to maintain their independence while benefitting from Chinese trade and protection. China's ability to use ambiguity to manage its relationships with neighbors created a stable system of regional influence without provoking conflict.

Conclusion

The historical use of Amimut demonstrates its long-standing value as a diplomatic tool. From ancient Greece to Renaissance Italy, ambiguity allowed states to maneuver through complex political landscapes, manage rivalries, and maintain strategic advantages. This historical context sets the stage for understanding how Amimut continues to play a critical role in modern diplomacy, particularly in situations where states seek to maintain flexibility, deter conflict, and protect their national interests without fully committing to fixed positions. The lessons drawn from these historical examples remain relevant today, as modern nations continue to employ ambiguity in their international strategies.

3. Case Study: Israel's Nuclear Policy

Israel's approach to nuclear weapons is one of the most widely recognized examples of *Amimut* (ambiguity) in modern international relations. While many states openly declare their nuclear capabilities, Israel has maintained a deliberate policy of nuclear ambiguity, never officially confirming or denying its possession of nuclear weapons. This strategic choice, often referred to as *Amimut* in Israeli policy discussions, has had a profound impact on regional security, serving as a deterrent while avoiding the political and diplomatic consequences that come with open nuclear declarations. Israel's nuclear ambiguity is deeply intertwined with its defense posture and its role in maintaining a delicate balance of power in the Middle East.

Background on Israel's Nuclear Ambiguity

Israel's *Amimut* regarding its nuclear program can be traced back to the early 1960s, when it began developing nuclear capabilities at the Dimona reactor in the Negev Desert with French assistance. As the regional security environment became increasingly hostile, particularly following the Arab-Israeli conflicts and the rise of pan-Arab nationalism, Israel viewed nuclear weapons as an essential deterrent against existential threats.

However, rather than openly declaring itself a nuclear power, Israel adopted a policy of nuclear opacity or ambiguity. This approach involved refusing to publicly acknowledge its nuclear arsenal, even though it is widely believed that Israel possesses a significant number of nuclear weapons. By neither confirming nor denying the existence of its nuclear weapons, Israel has avoided direct confrontation with international nuclear treaties, particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which it has not signed. This allows Israel to avoid the international pressures that come with being a declared nuclear power, while still reaping the benefits of nuclear deterrence.

The concept of *Amimut* allows Israel to strike a delicate balance between deterrence and diplomacy. On the one hand, the implicit understanding that Israel may have nuclear weapons deters potential aggressors from launching large-scale attacks. On the other hand, by not officially declaring its nuclear arsenal, Israel avoids sparking a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, which could destabilize the region even further. The ambiguity surrounding Israel's nuclear

program thus functions as both a shield and a diplomatic tool, protecting the state from existential threats while minimizing the political fallout of possessing nuclear weapons.

Impact on Regional Stability

Israel's nuclear ambiguity has had significant implications for regional stability in the Middle East. In a region marked by long-standing tensions, periodic conflicts, and the presence of numerous state and non-state actors with hostile intentions toward Israel, nuclear deterrence has become a critical factor in maintaining Israel's security. By fostering uncertainty about its nuclear capabilities, Israel prevents its adversaries from calculating a clear path to military victory, thereby reducing the likelihood of large-scale attacks.

One of the main effects of Israel's Amimut is its role in preventing conventional wars from escalating into existential threats. Israel's ambiguity ensures that potential aggressors—whether state actors like Iran or non-state actors like Hezbollah—are never entirely sure about the consequences of a full-scale attack. This uncertainty serves as a powerful deterrent. Even if Israel does not publicly acknowledge its nuclear weapons, the fear that these weapons could be used in response to a catastrophic military strike creates a significant disincentive for adversaries contemplating aggression.

Furthermore, Israel's policy of Amimut also affects the strategic calculations of its neighbors, many of whom have refrained from pursuing their own nuclear weapons programs, partly because Israel's ambiguous posture lowers the immediate pressure to match a declared nuclear arsenal. The fact that Israel does not openly flaunt its nuclear capabilities provides some breathing room in the region's arms race dynamics, as states can avoid direct nuclear competition while still maintaining their conventional and non-conventional forces.

However, Israel's nuclear ambiguity is not without its critics. Some argue that the policy contributes to regional instability by preventing transparency and encouraging other regional powers—like Iran—to pursue nuclear weapons programs in secret. Israel's Amimut may also increase the risk of miscalculation, where adversaries might underestimate Israel's willingness to use its nuclear arsenal, potentially leading to unintended escalations in conflict. Nevertheless, for decades, Israel's nuclear ambiguity has largely succeeded in maintaining a fragile

equilibrium in a volatile region, helping to prevent major wars or large-scale attacks that could threaten its existence.

The Samson Option

Central to Israel's nuclear strategy is the Samson Option, a doctrine that directly ties into its policy of Amimut. Named after the Biblical figure Samson, who brought down a Philistine temple on himself and his enemies, the Samson Option represents Israel's last-resort contingency plan. The doctrine suggests that if Israel were ever faced with an existential threat—where the state's survival is at stake—it would be prepared to use its nuclear weapons as a final act of deterrence, even if it meant risking widespread destruction.

The Samson Option plays a critical role in maintaining the effectiveness of Israel's nuclear ambiguity. By cultivating uncertainty about when and how Israel might use its nuclear weapons, Israel ensures that any existential threat carries the risk of catastrophic retaliation. This ambiguity increases the deterrent effect of Israel's nuclear arsenal, as adversaries cannot be certain of the specific thresholds that would trigger a nuclear response.

The Samson Option is more than just a defensive doctrine; it is a reflection of Israel's strategic culture and its historical experience of being surrounded by hostile neighbors. For Israel, the potential use of nuclear weapons under the Samson Option is not merely a military tool but a safeguard for the survival of the Jewish state. By maintaining ambiguity around both the existence of its nuclear arsenal and the conditions under which it would be used, Israel signals that it is willing to go to extreme lengths to protect itself from annihilation.

Critically, the Samson Option strengthens the policy of Amimut by preventing adversaries from dismissing the possibility of nuclear retaliation. While Israel does not openly declare its nuclear strategy, the mere existence of the Samson Option forces adversaries to consider the worst-case scenario in their strategic calculations. This creates a powerful deterrent effect, as no state would want to risk triggering a nuclear exchange that could lead to mutual destruction.

Conclusion

Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity, or Amimut, is a cornerstone of its national security strategy, allowing it to maintain a credible deterrent without officially

joining the ranks of declared nuclear powers. Through ambiguity, Israel is able to protect itself from existential threats while minimizing the political and diplomatic fallout associated with openly possessing nuclear weapons. The Samson Option further reinforces this ambiguity by signaling Israel's willingness to use nuclear weapons as a last resort, thereby deterring potential aggressors from escalating conflicts to existential levels.

As a case study in the strategic use of ambiguity, Israel's nuclear policy offers valuable lessons for understanding how Amimut can function as a diplomatic tool and a deterrent in international relations. It underscores the importance of uncertainty in maintaining strategic flexibility and security in a complex and often hostile environment, making Amimut a powerful element in the arsenal of modern diplomacy.

4. Amimut in U.S. Diplomacy: Taiwan and China

The United States has long used strategic ambiguity as a key component of its diplomacy in the Taiwan Strait. In its relations with both China and Taiwan, the U.S. has maintained an intentionally vague position regarding its potential military response in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. This policy, rooted in ambiguity, aims to deter Chinese aggression while preserving U.S. flexibility and avoiding a direct confrontation with Beijing. The delicate balance the U.S. has struck between supporting Taiwan and maintaining productive ties with China reflects how Amimut can serve as a powerful tool for navigating complex geopolitical dynamics.

Ambiguity in U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

The complex triangle of relations between the U.S., China, and Taiwan is deeply influenced by the U.S.'s policy of Amimut. Since the 1970s, the U.S. has adhered to the One China policy, which acknowledges that there is only one China, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) being the legitimate government. However, the U.S. has simultaneously maintained strong, unofficial relations with Taiwan, which views itself as an independent entity separate from mainland China. Taiwan's status has been a major flashpoint in U.S.-China relations, with China

consistently regarding Taiwan as a breakaway province and threatening to use force to bring it under Beijing's control.

The U.S. response to this tension has been deliberately ambiguous. While it has never formally recognized Taiwan as an independent state, it also provides Taiwan with military and diplomatic support, as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. This act states that the U.S. would consider any attempt to forcefully change Taiwan's status as a "grave concern," but it does not explicitly commit the U.S. to defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

This ambiguity is key to U.S. policy. By not clearly stating whether or not it would intervene militarily to defend Taiwan, the U.S. creates uncertainty in Beijing's strategic calculations. The possibility that the U.S. might come to Taiwan's defense makes it harder for China to confidently pursue military action, as it could trigger a direct confrontation with the U.S., a superpower with significant military capabilities in the region. At the same time, the U.S. avoids formally committing to Taiwan's defense, which would risk provoking China and escalating tensions unnecessarily.

The Amimut in U.S. policy allows it to balance two competing priorities: deterring Chinese aggression while maintaining diplomatic engagement with Beijing. If the U.S. were to take a firm position either way—either by fully committing to Taiwan's defense or by publicly renouncing it—it would likely destabilize the region. A clear commitment to defend Taiwan could push China into aggressive actions to assert control over the island, while an open renunciation would embolden China to take military steps, believing the U.S. would not intervene.

Thus, ambiguity serves as a form of equilibrium, keeping both sides in check. By remaining vague about its intentions, the U.S. can avoid provoking a crisis while keeping its options open for future actions.

Strategic Ambiguity and Deterrence

The U.S.'s policy of strategic ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait is primarily aimed at deterring Chinese aggression without committing to an automatic military response. The idea is that uncertainty itself can serve as a deterrent. If China is unsure about whether the U.S. would intervene militarily, it may decide that the risks of an invasion outweigh the potential benefits. This ambiguity forces China

to calculate that even if there is a chance the U.S. would defend Taiwan, the cost of confrontation with the U.S. military would be too high.

In the context of Amimut, the ambiguity surrounding U.S. intentions prevents a clear-cut calculation for China, thereby preserving peace and stability. This ambiguity allows the U.S. to send mixed signals that maintain a constant level of deterrence without triggering a direct response from China. The risk of miscalculation is part of the deterrent effect: China cannot be sure what the U.S. will do, and that uncertainty forces caution.

Strategic ambiguity also offers flexibility. The U.S. can adjust its policy over time depending on the evolving geopolitical environment without being tied to a formal commitment. For example, in recent years, the U.S. has strengthened military ties with Taiwan through arms sales and training programs, which signal its continued support for the island. At the same time, the U.S. has maintained diplomatic engagement with China, seeking to manage tensions and prevent an escalation of hostilities.

This flexibility is especially important given the changing power dynamics in the region. As China continues to grow in military and economic strength, the U.S. must adapt its policies to maintain deterrence. Strategic ambiguity allows the U.S. to respond to these shifts without committing to a rigid course of action that might become obsolete in the future.

The Role of Amimut in U.S.-China Relations

The policy of Amimut has been particularly useful in preventing a direct U.S.-China military confrontation, which could have devastating consequences for global stability. By maintaining ambiguity, the U.S. avoids provoking China while keeping its own deterrence posture intact. This balancing act allows for diplomatic engagement with China on a range of issues, from trade to climate change, without letting the Taiwan issue dominate the entire relationship.

At the same time, ambiguity reassures Taiwan that it has U.S. backing without pushing for formal recognition, which would undoubtedly escalate tensions with Beijing. The U.S. has provided Taiwan with defense capabilities through arms sales, but has stopped short of forming a formal military alliance, keeping the lines of communication with China open.

Challenges and Risks of Amimut in U.S. Policy

While Amimut has worked effectively to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait, there are inherent risks associated with this approach. The ambiguity in U.S. policy could lead to misunderstandings or miscalculations. If China were to believe that the U.S. would not intervene in the event of a Taiwan conflict, it might be emboldened to take military action. Similarly, if Taiwan were to overestimate the likelihood of U.S. military support, it could adopt a more confrontational stance, potentially provoking China.

Moreover, the policy of strategic ambiguity has come under increased scrutiny in recent years, as tensions between the U.S. and China have risen. Some policymakers in the U.S. have argued that the time has come to abandon ambiguity and make a clear commitment to defending Taiwan in order to deter China more effectively. Others argue that such a shift could lead to a dangerous escalation, pushing China to act preemptively.

The rise of Chinese military power also complicates the effectiveness of ambiguity. As China develops more advanced capabilities, including naval assets and ballistic missiles designed to deter U.S. intervention in a Taiwan conflict, the balance of power may shift in ways that make strategic ambiguity less effective as a deterrent. The U.S. may need to reassess its posture in light of these changes, potentially adopting new forms of Amimut to adapt to the evolving strategic landscape.

Conclusion

The U.S.'s policy of Amimut in its relations with Taiwan and China is a classic example of how ambiguity can be used as a tool of diplomacy and deterrence. By maintaining a deliberately vague stance on whether it would intervene in a conflict over Taiwan, the U.S. is able to deter Chinese aggression while avoiding an outright confrontation with Beijing. This strategic ambiguity has allowed the U.S. to preserve stability in the Taiwan Strait for decades, giving it the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances without locking itself into a formal commitment.

However, the changing dynamics of U.S.-China relations, coupled with the growing military capabilities of both powers, suggest that the policy of Amimut may need to evolve in the future. While ambiguity has served as an effective

deterrent, the risks of miscalculation are always present, and the U.S. will need to continue balancing deterrence and diplomacy to prevent a conflict in one of the most volatile regions of the world.

5. NATO's Strategic Ambiguity

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has employed strategic ambiguity in its approach to collective defense, particularly concerning the scope of Article 5—the mutual defense clause of the NATO Treaty. As security threats have evolved, so too has the nature of NATO's ambiguity. In particular, the rise of non-traditional threats like cyberattacks has introduced new dimensions to how NATO defines the boundaries of its collective defense mechanisms. Through strategic ambiguity, NATO creates uncertainty in potential adversaries about when and how the alliance might respond to different kinds of threats, thereby enhancing deterrence while maintaining flexibility in an ever-changing security environment.

Article 5 and Undefined Red Lines

Article 5 of the NATO Treaty is the cornerstone of the alliance's collective defense. It states that an armed attack against one member state is considered an attack against all, obligating the alliance to take collective action in defense of the attacked member. This provision was famously invoked for the first and only time following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, signaling NATO's readiness to confront non-state actors and unconventional forms of warfare.

However, NATO's strategic ambiguity lies in the fact that Article 5 does not clearly define what constitutes an "armed attack." While traditional military invasions or air strikes clearly fall within its scope, NATO has deliberately left certain red lines undefined when it comes to newer forms of aggression, such as cyberattacks or hybrid warfare (which includes misinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and subversive actions by non-state actors). This ambiguity serves multiple purposes.

Firstly, by not explicitly stating which acts of aggression would trigger a collective response, NATO makes it harder for adversaries to plan or execute attacks with confidence. Potential aggressors, particularly state actors like Russia, are left in a

state of uncertainty, unsure whether a specific action will provoke a unified military response from NATO. For example, Russia's use of hybrid tactics in Ukraine, including support for separatist movements and disinformation campaigns, exploits this gray area of ambiguity. NATO's refusal to define specific thresholds creates deterrence by ensuring that adversaries cannot predict when the alliance might respond militarily.

Secondly, ambiguity regarding Article 5 allows NATO to retain flexibility in responding to various threats. As the security environment evolves, new forms of aggression—such as cyberattacks or attacks on space infrastructure—pose different challenges. By keeping its response criteria vague, NATO can adapt its approach to meet the specific nature of the threat without being bound by rigid definitions that may not be applicable in new contexts.

An example of NATO's strategic ambiguity was demonstrated during the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia. While the annexation was a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, Ukraine is not a NATO member, so Article 5 was not invoked. However, NATO's response to the situation was intentionally ambiguous. By conducting military exercises in Eastern Europe and providing support to non-NATO allies like Ukraine, NATO sent a strong deterrent message without crossing the threshold of direct military engagement. This ambiguity allowed NATO to remain engaged without being drawn into a full-scale conflict with Russia, maintaining flexibility while signaling the importance of alliance solidarity.

NATO's Article 5 ambiguity extends to its treatment of so-called "gray zone" conflicts, where state actors employ subversive tactics without initiating full-scale military operations. By not clearly defining whether actions like cyber intrusions or economic coercion constitute an "attack," NATO leaves adversaries uncertain about the consequences of engaging in such behavior. This uncertainty is central to NATO's deterrence strategy, as it prevents potential aggressors from calculating that they can achieve their objectives without triggering a collective NATO response.

Cybersecurity and Modern Threats

One of the most significant areas where NATO's strategic ambiguity plays out today is in the realm of cybersecurity and modern threats like cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and hybrid warfare. As the nature of warfare evolves,

cyberattacks have become a major concern for NATO, yet the alliance has deliberately kept its position ambiguous regarding how it would respond to large-scale cyberattacks.

While NATO has recognized cyberattacks as potential triggers for Article 5, the precise conditions under which a cyberattack would invoke a collective defense response remain vague. In 2016, at the Warsaw Summit, NATO officially declared that a cyberattack could, in principle, trigger Article 5, but it left open the interpretation of what kind of cyberattack would meet the threshold for invoking the clause. This ambiguity allows NATO to maintain flexibility in determining its response based on the scale, severity, and intent behind a cyberattack, while simultaneously deterring adversaries who might otherwise see cyber warfare as a low-risk form of aggression.

For instance, in 2007, Estonia, a NATO member, experienced one of the first major cyberattacks attributed to a state actor (Russia), which targeted government websites, banks, and media outlets, crippling the country's infrastructure. Although this cyberattack did not lead to the invocation of Article 5, it raised important questions about NATO's preparedness for cyber threats. The ambiguity surrounding whether such attacks would warrant a collective defense response served both to deter future cyber aggression while also allowing NATO to develop its cyber defense strategies without being bound by rigid protocols.

Similarly, as hybrid warfare tactics—combining cyberattacks, disinformation, and economic pressure—have become more prevalent, NATO's strategic ambiguity in this area is increasingly important. Hybrid warfare, by its very nature, exists in the gray area between peace and war. By leaving open the question of whether hybrid attacks would trigger Article 5, NATO ensures that adversaries, such as Russia, are uncertain about the extent to which NATO might respond. This uncertainty serves as a deterrent, as adversaries must calculate the potential risk of provoking a NATO response even when engaging in actions that fall short of traditional military aggression.

Ambiguity is also essential in preparing NATO for future, as-yet-undefined threats. As technology evolves and new forms of warfare emerge, NATO's refusal to clearly define every possible scenario under which Article 5 would be invoked allows it to adapt its policies and responses in real-time. For example, as cyber

warfare increasingly targets critical infrastructure like energy grids, financial systems, and communications networks, NATO can adjust its definition of what constitutes an "attack" based on the evolving nature of the threat. This adaptability is one of the primary advantages of maintaining strategic ambiguity.

However, NATO's use of Amimut in cyber and hybrid warfare also presents challenges. The lack of clear definitions can lead to frustration among member states, especially those on NATO's eastern flank, which feel most vulnerable to Russian hybrid tactics. Some NATO members, particularly in Eastern Europe, have called for clearer red lines in response to hybrid and cyber threats to prevent adversaries from exploiting ambiguity. Others argue that too much clarity could limit NATO's flexibility and undermine the very deterrence that ambiguity is meant to create.

Conclusion

NATO's strategic ambiguity, particularly in relation to Article 5 and modern threats like cyberattacks and hybrid warfare, plays a critical role in the alliance's deterrence strategy. By deliberately keeping certain red lines undefined, NATO creates uncertainty in the minds of potential adversaries, making it difficult for them to predict when and how the alliance will respond to different forms of aggression. This ambiguity has helped maintain peace and stability in the face of evolving security challenges, from hybrid warfare in Eastern Europe to the growing threat of cyberattacks.

At the same time, strategic ambiguity gives NATO the flexibility to adapt its collective defense posture to meet new and emerging threats. As cyber warfare and other non-traditional forms of aggression become more prevalent, NATO's refusal to lock itself into specific definitions of what constitutes an "attack" allows it to remain agile and responsive to the changing nature of conflict. However, this ambiguity also presents risks, particularly in the form of potential miscalculations by adversaries or frustration among member states. Balancing ambiguity with the need for clarity will be a central challenge for NATO as it continues to confront modern threats in the 21st century.

6. Ambiguity in U.S.-Iran Relations (Pre-JCPOA)

The diplomatic relationship between the United States and Iran has been characterized by significant tension, particularly surrounding Iran's nuclear program. In the lead-up to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, ambiguity played a critical role in shaping U.S. strategy. By leveraging uncertainty about potential military action and combining it with diplomatic overtures, the U.S. was able to create pressure on Iran while maintaining flexibility in its approach. The policy of Amimut (ambiguity) allowed the U.S. to balance threats with negotiations, ultimately contributing to the de-escalation of one of the most volatile international conflicts of the 21st century.

Diplomatic Tensions: How Ambiguity Surrounding Military Action Helped Create Leverage in the Iran Nuclear Negotiations

From the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, Iran's nuclear program was a source of deep concern for the international community, particularly the U.S. and its allies. Iran maintained that its nuclear activities were for peaceful purposes, but suspicions that Tehran was pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities led to escalating tensions, economic sanctions, and the real possibility of military confrontation. In this context, ambiguity regarding U.S. military action played a significant role in the diplomatic standoff and in pushing Iran toward negotiations.

The U.S. adopted a deliberately ambiguous position on whether it would use military force to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. On multiple occasions, U.S. officials, including President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, emphasized that "all options are on the table," without specifying the exact conditions under which military action would be taken. This statement of strategic ambiguity served several key purposes in the U.S.-Iran diplomatic dynamic:

1. **Deterrence:** By not ruling out military action, the U.S. kept the possibility of a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities in play. This ambiguity created uncertainty for Iran, forcing its leaders to consider the risks of continuing their nuclear program without reaching a diplomatic agreement. The threat of U.S. military intervention was credible enough to raise the stakes for Iran, even though the exact circumstances under which the U.S. would act remained unclear.

2. **Leverage in Negotiations:** The ambiguity surrounding potential military action provided the U.S. with significant leverage in diplomatic talks. While the U.S. pursued sanctions and economic pressure, the implicit threat of force was always in the background, increasing the urgency for Iran to come to the negotiating table. The U.S. could leverage this uncertainty to extract concessions from Iran, pushing for limits on uranium enrichment and greater access for international inspectors. Iran's leadership was left to navigate the difficult terrain of negotiating with a superpower that might, at any moment, shift from diplomacy to military force.
3. **Flexibility for Diplomatic Maneuvering:** By keeping its military intentions vague, the U.S. avoided locking itself into a specific course of action. This flexibility allowed American diplomats to adjust their approach as negotiations progressed, depending on Iran's behavior and the international context. If Iran showed signs of willingness to negotiate, the U.S. could emphasize diplomatic solutions. If Iran stalled or appeared to be accelerating its nuclear ambitions, U.S. officials could increase the rhetoric around military options, all without committing to a clear red line that could constrain future decisions.
4. **Coordination with Allies:** Ambiguity also allowed the U.S. to manage its relationships with key allies, particularly Israel, Saudi Arabia, and European nations. Israel, in particular, took a hardline stance against Iran's nuclear program and frequently called for military action. By maintaining ambiguity, the U.S. could reassure Israel that it was not ruling out the use of force while also tempering calls for immediate strikes. At the same time, European allies preferred a diplomatic resolution and were heavily involved in the negotiation process. The U.S.'s vague position on military intervention allowed it to maintain a united front with both hawkish and dovish allies.

The Role of Ambiguity in De-escalation: Balancing Threats with Diplomatic Engagement to Achieve the 2015 Nuclear Agreement

As the U.S. and its allies worked to bring Iran to the negotiating table, ambiguity played a central role in de-escalating tensions while maintaining pressure. The dual strategy of sanctions and the threat of military force, combined with

diplomatic overtures, ultimately led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. Ambiguity allowed the U.S. to walk a fine line between coercion and compromise, resulting in a deal that limited Iran's nuclear capabilities in exchange for sanctions relief.

1. **Creating Space for Diplomacy:** Ambiguity helped the U.S. create the space needed for diplomacy to work. By maintaining a credible threat of force, the U.S. signaled that it was serious about preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, the lack of a clearly defined red line or timeline for military action also gave diplomats the time they needed to pursue a negotiated settlement. Iran, facing severe economic pressure from sanctions and the possibility of military action, saw negotiations as the least costly option, but the U.S.'s ambiguous stance ensured that the pressure was maintained throughout the process.
2. **The "Dual-Track" Approach:** The U.S. employed a "dual-track" approach during the pre-JCPOA period, combining diplomatic engagement with the threat of punitive action. This approach relied heavily on ambiguity. On the one hand, the U.S. and its partners in the P5+1 (the U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China, and Germany) engaged in negotiations with Iran, offering economic incentives and the potential for sanctions relief in exchange for limits on its nuclear program. On the other hand, the U.S. continued to emphasize that military options were still on the table if diplomacy failed. This ambiguity about whether the U.S. would turn to force if talks broke down allowed the U.S. to maintain leverage throughout the negotiation process.
3. **Managing Domestic and International Expectations:** Ambiguity also played a crucial role in managing both domestic and international expectations. In the U.S., there were divisions between those who favored a diplomatic resolution and those who advocated for a more confrontational approach, including military intervention. By keeping its position ambiguous, the Obama administration was able to navigate these internal divisions, assuring hardliners that military action was not off the table while giving diplomacy a chance to succeed. Similarly, internationally, the U.S. could

maintain its leadership role in the negotiations without alienating allies who were more skeptical of a purely diplomatic solution, such as Israel.

4. **Facilitating De-escalation:** The role of ambiguity was particularly important in facilitating de-escalation. By gradually reducing the rhetoric around military action as progress was made in the negotiations, the U.S. was able to ease tensions without giving up its leverage. Iran, in turn, felt increasingly secure that a deal could be reached without the threat of immediate military action hanging over its head. This created the conditions for a constructive dialogue, leading to key breakthroughs on the most contentious issues, such as uranium enrichment limits and inspections.
5. **Signaling Commitment Without Escalation:** Throughout the pre-JCPOA negotiations, ambiguity allowed the U.S. to signal its commitment to preventing a nuclear-armed Iran without escalating the situation unnecessarily. This delicate balancing act was essential in keeping the diplomatic process on track. Had the U.S. explicitly committed to military action at any point during the negotiations, it could have derailed the talks and pushed Iran into a more defiant posture. Likewise, ruling out military action entirely might have weakened the U.S. position, emboldening Iran to delay or refuse to make meaningful concessions.

Conclusion

Ambiguity played a central role in shaping U.S.-Iran relations in the years leading up to the 2015 JCPOA. By keeping the possibility of military action vague, the U.S. was able to create leverage in negotiations, deter Iran from pursuing its nuclear program more aggressively, and maintain flexibility in its approach to the crisis. At the same time, this strategic ambiguity helped facilitate de-escalation, as it gave both sides the space needed to negotiate without the immediate threat of conflict.

The successful use of Amimut in this context demonstrates how ambiguity can be a powerful tool in international diplomacy. It allowed the U.S. to balance threats with engagement, maintain leverage while pursuing a diplomatic solution, and ultimately achieve a landmark agreement that limited Iran's nuclear program. However, this approach also required careful management to avoid

misunderstandings and ensure that ambiguity did not lead to escalation or miscalculation. As such, the U.S. use of ambiguity in its Iran policy provides valuable lessons for future diplomatic efforts in similarly volatile contexts.

7. European Union Enlargement and Amimut

The European Union (EU) has long used strategic ambiguity, or Amimut, in its approach to enlargement, particularly with regard to potential membership for countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Enlargement represents one of the EU's most significant foreign policy tools, offering the prospect of membership as an incentive for political, economic, and legal reforms in neighboring states. However, this process has become increasingly complicated, as both internal opposition within the EU and geopolitical realities have made it difficult to offer clear timelines or guarantees for membership to aspiring countries. By employing ambiguity in its enlargement policy, the EU is able to manage expectations in candidate countries while balancing the concerns of member states and addressing the broader political dynamics of the region.

The Case of Turkey and the Balkans: How the EU Uses Strategic Ambiguity to Manage Enlargement Expectations and Internal Opposition

The EU's enlargement policy is a prime example of Amimut in action, particularly in the cases of Turkey and the Western Balkans. Both regions have long been in negotiations with the EU over the possibility of joining the union, but their paths toward membership have been characterized by prolonged delays, shifting conditions, and ambiguity regarding the final outcome.

1. Turkey:

- Turkey's relationship with the EU is one of the most complex and longstanding examples of enlargement ambiguity. Turkey first applied for membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), the precursor to the EU, in 1987. Official membership negotiations began in 2005, but since then, progress has been slow and highly controversial. While Turkey has made significant strides in aligning with EU regulations and norms, particularly in the early 2000s, there are deep concerns within the EU regarding Turkey's human rights

record, its treatment of minorities, and, more recently, its democratic backsliding under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

- The EU has employed Amimut in its dealings with Turkey by keeping the possibility of membership open but never clearly committing to a specific timeline or definitive outcome. This ambiguity allows the EU to maintain leverage over Turkey, using the prospect of membership to push for reforms while avoiding a firm promise that could alienate current EU members who oppose Turkish accession. Countries like France, Germany, and Austria have expressed strong reservations about Turkey joining the EU, citing cultural differences, human rights concerns, and the size of Turkey's population, which would significantly alter the balance of power within the EU.
- By leaving Turkey's EU membership bid unresolved, the EU can continue to engage with Turkey on important issues such as migration, security, and trade, without being forced into a clear-cut decision. This strategic ambiguity has allowed the EU to navigate a delicate diplomatic relationship, although it has also fueled frustration and skepticism within Turkey, where leaders and citizens question whether EU membership is still a realistic goal.

2. Western Balkans:

- The Western Balkans—including countries like Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo—represent another region where the EU has employed strategic ambiguity in its enlargement policy. The EU has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to integrating the Western Balkans, but the process has been slow, with several countries remaining stuck in the early stages of the accession process for years.
- The ambiguity surrounding enlargement in the Western Balkans is largely driven by internal opposition within the EU. Many current EU members, particularly France, the Netherlands, and Denmark, are hesitant to expand the union further, citing concerns about the capacity of the EU to absorb new members, the economic and political stability of the candidate countries, and the potential for

increased migration. At the same time, the EU recognizes the geopolitical importance of the Western Balkans, as the region remains a hotspot for ethnic tensions, corruption, and external influence from powers like Russia and China.

- By keeping the prospect of membership vague, the EU is able to balance the need for stability and reform in the Western Balkans with the concerns of member states. The EU's Berlin Process, launched in 2014, is an example of this approach. The process aims to promote regional cooperation and economic development in the Western Balkans, while maintaining the long-term goal of EU membership as an incentive for continued reform. However, the lack of a clear timeline for accession has led to frustration among Balkan leaders, who often feel that the EU's promises of enlargement are more rhetorical than real.

Implications for Regional Politics: The Role of Ambiguity in Sustaining Reform Efforts in Candidate Countries

Strategic ambiguity in the EU's enlargement policy plays a critical role in shaping the political dynamics of candidate countries, particularly in terms of promoting and sustaining reform efforts. The prospect of EU membership is a powerful incentive for political, economic, and institutional reforms in aspiring member states, as joining the EU offers significant benefits, including access to the single market, structural funds, and political stability. However, the ambiguity surrounding the timeline and conditions for membership creates both opportunities and challenges for these countries.

1. Incentivizing Reforms:

- The EU has long used the promise of membership as a tool to promote reforms in neighboring states. For candidate countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey, the potential to join the EU has driven significant reforms, particularly in areas like the rule of law, judicial independence, anti-corruption measures, and human rights. Even though the path to membership remains unclear, the Copenhagen Criteria—the set of rules that define whether a country

is eligible to join the EU—provide a clear framework for the types of reforms that candidate countries must implement.

- Ambiguity about the timing of accession allows the EU to continue using membership as leverage, keeping candidate countries engaged in the reform process. The absence of a fixed timeline creates a sense of urgency, as candidate countries must continually demonstrate progress to keep their bids alive. In this sense, Amimut serves as a motivator for ongoing reforms, as leaders in aspiring member states understand that EU accession remains a possibility, even if it is distant or uncertain.

2. Frustration and Political Backsliding:

- However, the ambiguity surrounding enlargement also creates challenges. The lack of clear progress on accession can lead to frustration and disillusionment within candidate countries, particularly when reforms are difficult and politically costly. In Turkey, for example, the prolonged and ambiguous nature of the EU accession process has contributed to a growing sense of skepticism about the EU's commitment to Turkish membership. This frustration has fueled a nationalist and authoritarian turn under President Erdoğan, as the government increasingly views EU demands for democratic reforms and human rights protections as unnecessary interference in domestic affairs.
- Similarly, in the Western Balkans, the slow pace of enlargement has led to political stagnation and, in some cases, backsliding. Leaders in countries like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have expressed frustration with the EU's lack of clarity on membership, arguing that the absence of a clear path to accession undermines the credibility of the EU's reform agenda. This frustration has allowed political elites in some countries to justify delays in implementing reforms, as they point to the EU's ambiguous commitment to enlargement as evidence that reforms will not lead to tangible benefits in the short term.

- In some cases, this frustration has opened the door for external actors like Russia and China to gain influence in the region. Both countries have used financial aid, investment, and diplomatic engagement to fill the gap left by the EU's ambiguous stance on enlargement, particularly in the Western Balkans. For example, Serbia has deepened its ties with both Russia and China, balancing its EU accession bid with closer relations to these external powers. This has complicated the EU's efforts to maintain its influence in the region and underscores the risks of prolonged ambiguity.

3. Maintaining Stability in the Region:

- Despite these challenges, the EU's strategic ambiguity has also played a role in maintaining stability in candidate countries. By keeping the door to membership open, the EU provides a long-term goal that encourages cooperation, dialogue, and reform, even in the absence of immediate progress. For countries in the Western Balkans, in particular, the prospect of EU membership offers a vision of political and economic stability that remains a powerful motivator for reform.
- The EU has used ambiguity as a way to manage the complex political landscape of the Western Balkans, where ethnic tensions and historical grievances still pose significant risks to regional stability. By offering a vague but attainable goal of EU membership, the EU has been able to promote regional cooperation through initiatives like the Berlin Process, which encourages Western Balkan countries to work together on infrastructure projects, economic development, and reconciliation efforts. This cooperation is driven in large part by the belief that it will bring the region closer to EU membership, even if the exact timeline remains unclear.

Conclusion

The EU's use of ambiguity in its enlargement policy, particularly regarding Turkey and the Western Balkans, reflects the delicate balancing act that the union must perform as it seeks to manage both internal opposition and external pressures. By keeping the prospect of membership open but undefined, the EU maintains

leverage over candidate countries, encouraging reforms while avoiding commitments that could alienate member states.

However, this strategic ambiguity is not without risks. Prolonged uncertainty can lead to frustration and political backsliding in candidate countries, undermining the very reforms that the EU seeks to promote. It also creates opportunities for external actors like Russia and China to gain influence in regions where the EU's commitment to enlargement appears weak.

Despite these challenges, the EU's ambiguous approach has, for the most part, kept candidate countries engaged in the reform process and contributed to regional stability. The challenge for the EU moving forward will be to strike the right balance between ambiguity and clarity, ensuring that it can continue to use enlargement as a tool for promoting stability and reform without creating frustration or disillusionment among candidate countries. Prolonged ambiguity risks undermining the credibility of the EU's enlargement process, leading to political stagnation or backsliding on reforms. At the same time, too much clarity or rigid commitments may alienate existing member states who are wary of further expansion, particularly in the face of economic or political instability within candidate nations. The EU must carefully navigate these competing pressures to maintain its influence in the region, ensuring that enlargement remains a viable incentive for reform while avoiding the negative consequences of overpromising or underdelivering. Ultimately, the success of the EU's enlargement strategy will depend on its ability to adapt to shifting geopolitical realities while maintaining cohesion and credibility within its membership.

8. China's Ambiguity in the South China Sea

China's actions and claims in the South China Sea have become one of the most prominent examples of Amimut (ambiguity) in international relations. Over the past few decades, China has maintained deliberately vague territorial claims over large portions of this strategically important region, using ambiguity as a central strategy to assert its dominance while avoiding direct confrontation with neighboring countries and the international community. This approach has created significant tensions and uncertainty, as China's unclear claims challenge

established norms of international law and complicate diplomatic efforts to resolve territorial disputes peacefully.

Vague Territorial Claims: Analysis of China's Amimut Strategy in the South China Sea

China's claims in the South China Sea are rooted in historical assertions that lack clear legal or geographical boundaries. The most widely known of these claims is the "Nine-Dash Line," a demarcation line that appears on Chinese maps but has never been clearly defined in terms of coordinates or legal status. The line encompasses approximately 90% of the South China Sea, extending well beyond China's mainland coast and overlapping with the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of several Southeast Asian nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia. Despite the far-reaching nature of these claims, China has refrained from providing a detailed explanation of the legal basis for the Nine-Dash Line, leaving its neighbors and the international community uncertain about the exact scope of its ambitions.

China's Amimut strategy in the South China Sea operates on several levels:

1. Historical Claims without Clear Boundaries:

- China justifies its claims in the South China Sea by citing historical maps and documents that allegedly demonstrate Chinese sovereignty over islands and waters in the region, including the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, and Scarborough Shoal. However, these historical references are often vague and inconsistent, and China has not provided a detailed legal argument to support its claims under international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which defines maritime boundaries based on EEZs and continental shelves.
- The ambiguity surrounding the Nine-Dash Line allows China to maintain flexibility in its territorial assertions, as it avoids locking itself into a specific legal framework that could be challenged in international courts. This strategy keeps neighboring countries guessing about China's true intentions and prevents them from building a coordinated legal case against Chinese claims.

2. Gradual Assertion of Control:

- Rather than clearly defining its territorial claims, China has pursued a strategy of gradual and incremental assertion of control over disputed areas in the South China Sea. This includes building artificial islands and military installations on reefs and atolls, conducting patrols with its coast guard and fishing fleets, and engaging in resource exploration activities, such as oil and gas drilling. By slowly expanding its presence without issuing explicit territorial declarations, China avoids provoking immediate backlash from its neighbors or the broader international community, while steadily strengthening its de facto control over the region.
- This approach mirrors the concept of "salami slicing", where small, incremental steps are taken to alter the status quo without triggering a major conflict. By keeping each move relatively low-level and ambiguous, China makes it difficult for neighboring countries to justify military responses or escalate the situation, even as China gradually consolidates its influence in the South China Sea.

3. Diplomatic and Military Ambiguity:

- China's strategic ambiguity extends beyond its territorial claims to its military and diplomatic actions in the region. On the diplomatic front, China has participated in multilateral forums, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), where it has expressed a willingness to negotiate disputes. However, China has consistently resisted efforts to reach legally binding agreements, preferring vague, non-committal declarations, such as the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. This ambiguity allows China to engage in diplomacy without committing to specific terms that would constrain its actions.
- Militarily, China has deployed naval and coast guard forces to patrol disputed areas, but it has rarely issued clear ultimatums or threatened direct military action, instead focusing on coercive tactics like economic pressure and maritime blockades. This military ambiguity heightens uncertainty for China's rivals, making it difficult

to predict how China might respond to a challenge or escalation in the South China Sea.

4. Strategic Use of Ambiguity in Bilateral Relations:

- China has also employed ambiguity in its bilateral relations with individual claimant states. For example, China has engaged in joint development talks with Vietnam and the Philippines over resource exploration in disputed waters. These talks often lack clear parameters and definitions of sovereignty, allowing China to maintain the appearance of cooperation while asserting control over the contested areas. By keeping these agreements vague, China prevents its partners from challenging its broader claims, while creating the illusion of progress in resolving the disputes.

Impacts on International Law and Diplomacy: How China's Ambiguity Complicates Efforts to Resolve Territorial Disputes

China's Amimut strategy in the South China Sea has far-reaching implications for international law and diplomacy. The deliberate vagueness of China's claims and actions creates significant challenges for the international community, as it undermines the established legal frameworks and norms that govern maritime disputes and makes it difficult to reach diplomatic solutions.

1. Undermining the UNCLOS Framework:

- The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the primary international legal framework for resolving maritime disputes, establishing clear guidelines for defining EEZs, territorial seas, and continental shelves. Most Southeast Asian nations have based their claims in the South China Sea on UNCLOS, which limits their maritime jurisdiction to 200 nautical miles from their coastlines.
- China's refusal to clarify its claims under UNCLOS creates a significant legal challenge. By invoking vague historical claims that predate UNCLOS and refusing to engage with the treaty's mechanisms for dispute resolution, China effectively undermines the authority of international law in the region. This ambiguity creates a legal gray area, making it difficult for smaller nations to challenge China's

actions through legal means. For example, when the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled in favor of the Philippines in a 2016 case challenging China's claims, China simply rejected the ruling, citing its ambiguous historical rights.

- This ambiguity weakens the credibility of international legal institutions and encourages other states to pursue their claims outside the established legal framework, potentially leading to a breakdown of norms in maritime disputes around the world.

2. Challenges for Diplomatic Resolution:

- China's ambiguity also complicates diplomatic efforts to resolve the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. By refusing to clearly define its claims, China makes it difficult for its neighbors and other international actors to engage in meaningful negotiations. Without clear boundaries or legal justifications, it is challenging to find common ground or compromise on specific issues.
- The ambiguity also allows China to shift its position depending on the circumstances, maintaining flexibility in its diplomatic strategy. For example, while China has engaged in bilateral negotiations with some of the claimant states, it has consistently rejected calls for multilateral discussions or arbitration through international courts. By keeping the terms of its engagement unclear, China can prolong negotiations indefinitely while continuing to assert control over the disputed areas.

3. Creating Tensions and Uncertainty:

- China's Amimut strategy in the South China Sea has heightened tensions and uncertainty in the region, particularly for smaller claimant states like Vietnam and the Philippines. These countries are left in a precarious position, unsure of how far China is willing to go to assert its claims and uncertain about the consequences of challenging China's actions.
- The ambiguity also complicates the efforts of external powers, such as the United States, to manage the situation. The U.S. has

conducted freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea to challenge China's expansive claims, but the lack of clear territorial boundaries makes it difficult to establish clear rules of engagement. China's ambiguous claims make it harder for the U.S. to rally international support for a consistent policy response, as each incident in the South China Sea is open to interpretation.

4. Impact on Regional Alliances and Power Dynamics:

- China's strategic ambiguity has significant implications for regional alliances and the broader power dynamics in Southeast Asia. By maintaining vague claims, China has kept the door open for bilateral diplomacy and economic engagement with individual states, which weakens the unity of ASEAN and other regional organizations that might otherwise take a collective stance against Chinese actions.
- This ambiguity also creates divisions among external powers, particularly between the U.S. and its allies in the region. While the U.S. has maintained a strong position against China's actions in the South China Sea, some of its allies have adopted more ambiguous stances, fearing economic retaliation from China. This has led to a fragmented regional response, where some countries are willing to tolerate China's incremental advances while others seek greater U.S. involvement.

Conclusion

China's Amimut strategy in the South China Sea represents a masterclass in the use of ambiguity to assert dominance while avoiding direct confrontation. By maintaining vague territorial claims, China creates uncertainty for its neighbors and the international community, making it difficult to challenge its actions through legal or diplomatic means. This ambiguity undermines established frameworks like UNCLOS, complicates efforts to resolve the disputes peacefully, and heightens tensions in one of the world's most strategically important regions.

At the same time, China's strategic ambiguity allows it to maintain flexibility in its approach, gradually expanding its control over the South China Sea while avoiding the appearance of outright aggression. However, this approach also carries

significant risks, as the lack of clear boundaries or rules of engagement increases the potential for miscalculation or unintended escalation. As the South China Sea remains a flashpoint for regional and global tensions, China's use of Amimut will continue to shape the geopolitical landscape in Southeast Asia for years to come.

9. Amimut as a Diplomatic Tool: Strengths and Limitations

Amimut (ambiguity) has been a central strategy in diplomacy, utilized by states to manage complex and volatile international relationships. By deliberately withholding clarity or maintaining uncertain positions on key issues, countries can leverage ambiguity to achieve strategic objectives while avoiding firm commitments that might limit their options or provoke confrontation. While this approach offers numerous benefits, such as flexibility, deterrence, and the preservation of diplomatic space, it also carries significant risks, including the potential for miscalculations, unintended escalations, and damage to credibility when ambiguity is taken too far. In this section, we will explore the strengths and limitations of Amimut as a diplomatic tool.

Benefits of Strategic Ambiguity

1. Flexibility in Diplomatic Maneuvering

- One of the primary advantages of Amimut is the flexibility it provides to states in their diplomatic engagements. By maintaining vague or non-committal positions, a country can keep its options open, adjusting its strategy as circumstances evolve. This flexibility is particularly valuable in situations where the future is uncertain or where rapid changes in the geopolitical landscape are expected.
- For example, in the context of U.S.-China-Taiwan relations, the U.S.'s deliberate ambiguity about whether it would intervene militarily in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan allows Washington to adapt its response based on changing political, military, or economic conditions. This flexibility ensures that the U.S. is not bound by rigid commitments that could lead to a direct conflict with China or undermine its diplomatic leverage.

2. Deterrence through Uncertainty

- Strategic ambiguity can serve as an effective deterrent by creating uncertainty in the minds of potential adversaries. When a state deliberately withholds clarity about how it will respond to a specific threat, it forces its opponents to consider the worst-case scenario, making it harder for them to predict and plan their actions.
- A classic example of this is Israel's nuclear policy, where the deliberate ambiguity surrounding whether or not Israel possesses nuclear weapons creates uncertainty for its adversaries. This ambiguity enhances deterrence by making it difficult for hostile states to assess the risks of launching a large-scale attack against Israel, as they cannot be sure whether it would trigger a devastating nuclear response.
- Similarly, NATO's ambiguous stance on what constitutes an "armed attack" under Article 5 increases uncertainty for potential aggressors. By keeping the exact thresholds for invoking collective defense undefined, NATO prevents adversaries from calculating precisely what actions they can take without provoking a unified NATO response, thus bolstering deterrence.

3. Preservation of Diplomatic Space

- Amimut allows states to preserve diplomatic space by avoiding firm commitments that could close off avenues for negotiation or dialogue. When a state takes a clear and definitive position on a contentious issue, it often limits its ability to engage with other parties or adjust its stance without losing face. By contrast, ambiguity enables a state to engage in multiple diplomatic tracks simultaneously, exploring different options and leaving room for compromise.
- In the case of EU enlargement, the EU's ambiguous stance on the accession of Turkey and the Western Balkans allows it to maintain engagement with candidate countries while addressing the internal concerns of member states. By not committing to a specific timeline

for membership, the EU keeps the door open for negotiations, providing an incentive for candidate countries to continue reforms without provoking opposition from those within the EU who oppose further enlargement.

4. Avoiding Escalation and Managing Tensions

- In highly sensitive or volatile situations, ambiguity can help manage tensions and avoid unnecessary escalation. By keeping intentions unclear, states can de-escalate confrontations without appearing weak or making formal concessions.
- For example, in U.S.-Iran relations, the ambiguity surrounding the possibility of U.S. military action helped prevent direct conflict while creating leverage in negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. By refusing to clarify under what conditions the U.S. might use force, Washington maintained pressure on Iran without escalating the situation into open warfare. This ambiguity allowed both sides to pursue a diplomatic resolution through the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) without locking themselves into confrontational postures.

Challenges and Risks

1. Potential for Miscalculations

- One of the most significant risks associated with Amimut is the potential for miscalculations. When states rely on ambiguity to deter adversaries or maintain flexibility, they increase the likelihood that their actions or intentions will be misunderstood. If a state's adversaries misinterpret its ambiguous signals, they may make decisions based on incorrect assumptions, leading to unintended escalation or conflict.
- For instance, in the context of U.S.-China relations over Taiwan, China might miscalculate U.S. intentions due to the ambiguity of the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan. If Beijing believes that the U.S. would not intervene in a conflict, it might take aggressive actions to assert control over the island, potentially triggering a confrontation

that both sides would prefer to avoid. In this way, strategic ambiguity, while effective as a deterrent, also increases the risk of accidental war or escalation.

2. Escalation Due to Unclear Boundaries

- Amimut can also lead to escalation when the boundaries of acceptable behavior are left undefined. Without clear red lines, adversaries may test the limits of what they can do without provoking a response, leading to a gradual escalation of tensions. This dynamic is often referred to as "gray zone" conflict, where states engage in low-level, ambiguous actions that fall short of open warfare but still pose a challenge to the status quo.
- China's actions in the South China Sea are a prime example of this risk. By maintaining vague territorial claims and pursuing incremental actions, such as building artificial islands and deploying military assets, China has tested the boundaries of international norms and the patience of its neighbors. This ambiguity has allowed China to expand its influence without triggering immediate retaliation, but it has also raised the risk of a miscalculated response from rival claimants or external powers like the United States.

3. Loss of Credibility

- Another challenge associated with Amimut is the potential loss of credibility if ambiguity is perceived as indecision or weakness. When states rely too heavily on ambiguity, they risk being seen as unwilling or unable to commit to a clear course of action, which can undermine their standing on the global stage. This is particularly problematic in alliances or security arrangements, where credibility and trust are essential for maintaining deterrence and cohesion.
- For instance, if NATO were to remain overly ambiguous about its response to a cyberattack, it might embolden adversaries to engage in more aggressive cyber operations, believing that NATO is unwilling or incapable of responding decisively. This could lead to a loss of confidence among NATO members, particularly those on the

alliance's eastern flank, who rely on the credibility of NATO's security guarantees to deter potential aggression from Russia.

- Similarly, in EU enlargement, prolonged ambiguity about the accession prospects of countries like Turkey and the Western Balkans has led to frustration and skepticism among candidate states. As the EU continues to delay clear decisions, these countries may question the EU's commitment to integration, leading to political disillusionment and, in some cases, backsliding on reforms.

4. Ambiguity as a Short-Term Solution

- While ambiguity can be an effective short-term strategy for managing crises or maintaining flexibility, it is often unsustainable in the long term. Over time, the lack of clear policies or boundaries can lead to uncertainty and instability, as both allies and adversaries seek greater clarity. In many cases, Amimut is a temporary tool used to navigate immediate challenges, but it must eventually give way to more concrete and transparent strategies.
- In the case of U.S.-Iran relations, the strategic ambiguity surrounding military action helped create leverage for the JCPOA negotiations, but the eventual collapse of the agreement under the Trump administration highlighted the limitations of this approach. Without clear, long-term commitments from both sides, ambiguity can lead to a breakdown in trust and cooperation, making it harder to achieve lasting diplomatic solutions.

Conclusion

Amimut is a powerful diplomatic tool that allows states to navigate complex international relationships by maintaining flexibility, deterring adversaries through uncertainty, and preserving diplomatic space for negotiations. It can help manage tensions, avoid unnecessary escalation, and keep options open in an unpredictable geopolitical environment. However, the strengths of strategic ambiguity are accompanied by significant risks, including the potential for miscalculations, unintended escalation, and loss of credibility when ambiguity is pushed too far.

As a short-term strategy, Amimut can be highly effective in preventing conflict and maintaining leverage in negotiations. However, for ambiguity to remain useful, it must be carefully managed and eventually replaced by more transparent and concrete policies. In the long term, ambiguity must give way to clarity, as states and their allies require clear commitments and boundaries to ensure stability and prevent the erosion of trust in diplomatic and security arrangements. Therefore, while Amimut remains a valuable tool in the diplomatic arsenal, it is not a permanent solution and must be used judiciously to avoid the pitfalls of over-reliance on uncertainty.

10. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

The use of Amimut (strategic ambiguity) in international diplomacy has proven to be an effective and enduring strategy for states navigating complex geopolitical landscapes. Through deliberate vagueness, ambiguity allows nations to deter potential adversaries, manage domestic and international pressures, and preserve diplomatic flexibility. Across numerous case studies—whether in Israel’s nuclear policy, U.S.-China-Taiwan relations, NATO’s collective defense strategy, or China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea—Amimut has played a critical role in shaping global power dynamics.

The strength of Amimut lies in its ability to maintain uncertainty, which forces adversaries to calculate the worst-case scenario and act cautiously. This uncertainty serves as a powerful deterrent, making it difficult for potential aggressors to anticipate responses or consequences. Ambiguity also provides states with the flexibility to adapt their policies as circumstances change without committing to rigid courses of action. This is particularly useful in volatile environments, where clear declarations of intent may escalate tensions or limit diplomatic options.

Moreover, Amimut has been shown to preserve diplomatic space by allowing states to engage in negotiations without fully disclosing their positions. This has been especially important in multilateral settings, where vague commitments can help manage competing interests among stakeholders. For instance, the

European Union's ambiguity on enlargement has enabled it to maintain engagement with candidate countries, even as internal opposition to further expansion grows.

However, as the analysis has shown, Amimut also comes with significant risks. The potential for miscalculations is one of the greatest dangers, as ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings about a state's intentions. When adversaries misinterpret ambiguous signals, it can result in unintended escalations or conflicts.

Additionally, prolonged ambiguity can lead to frustration among allies or partners, as seen in the EU enlargement process with Turkey and the Western Balkans, where continued uncertainty has undermined reform efforts and strained relationships.

Another key challenge is the potential loss of credibility. When states rely too heavily on ambiguity, they may be perceived as indecisive or weak, which can erode trust in their commitments. In security alliances like NATO, credibility is essential for deterrence; if ambiguity is perceived as a lack of resolve, it may embolden adversaries or undermine cohesion within the alliance.

Ultimately, Amimut is a strategy best used judiciously. While it offers immediate advantages in maintaining flexibility and deterring aggression, it must be carefully managed to avoid the pitfalls of over-reliance on uncertainty. States employing Amimut must be prepared to transition from ambiguity to clarity when necessary, especially when long-term stability or the integrity of alliances is at stake.

Future Implications

As the global geopolitical landscape evolves, the role of Amimut is likely to become even more important, but also more complex. Technological advances and changing security dynamics will challenge traditional uses of strategic ambiguity and create new opportunities and risks for states relying on this approach.

1. The Rise of Cyber Warfare and Emerging Technologies:

- One of the most significant challenges to the traditional use of Amimut comes from the increasing importance of cyber warfare and other emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), space capabilities, and autonomous weaponry. These new forms of conflict

are often conducted in the "gray zone" between peace and war, where actions are covert, incremental, and ambiguous by design. This environment lends itself to Amimut, as states may choose not to clarify whether certain cyberattacks or technological disruptions constitute acts of war.

- However, the ambiguity surrounding cyberattacks and the lack of clear international norms for cyberspace increase the risk of miscalculations. Without well-defined red lines, states may engage in escalating cyber operations, unsure of when they have crossed a threshold that would provoke retaliation. In this context, Amimut can create dangerous uncertainty, as actors are unsure whether a cyberattack will lead to diplomatic consequences, sanctions, or even military responses. States will need to carefully balance ambiguity with clearer guidelines on cyber conduct to prevent unintended escalation.

2. Ambiguity in Hybrid Warfare:

- Modern conflicts increasingly feature hybrid warfare, which combines conventional military operations with irregular tactics such as disinformation, economic coercion, and cyberattacks. Russia's actions in Ukraine, including the use of unmarked troops and covert support for separatist movements, exemplify how Amimut can be applied in hybrid warfare. By maintaining plausible deniability, Russia has avoided triggering a clear military response from NATO, while still achieving strategic objectives in destabilizing Ukraine.
- The growing prevalence of hybrid warfare means that strategic ambiguity will continue to be a key tool for states seeking to operate in this "gray zone." However, it also means that international organizations like NATO and the European Union will need to adapt their policies to address the challenges posed by ambiguity in hybrid warfare. Clearer frameworks for responding to hybrid threats, particularly those involving non-state actors and covert operations, will be essential to maintaining security in this new environment.

3. The Impact of Global Power Shifts:

- As global power shifts toward multipolarity, with China and other emerging powers challenging the dominance of the U.S. and its Western allies, strategic ambiguity will play an increasingly prominent role in managing great power competition. China's Amimut strategy in the South China Sea is a prime example of how rising powers use ambiguity to assert regional dominance without provoking outright conflict. As China's global influence grows, it is likely to continue employing ambiguity to navigate its relations with the U.S., Russia, and regional powers in Asia and beyond.
- Similarly, the U.S. will need to continue using Amimut to manage its commitments to allies in regions where its interests are challenged by rival powers. For instance, the ambiguity surrounding U.S. security guarantees in the Indo-Pacific region—whether in defense of Taiwan, the South China Sea, or other flashpoints—will be critical in deterring Chinese aggression while avoiding unnecessary escalation. However, as the global balance of power shifts, the U.S. will need to ensure that its use of ambiguity does not undermine the credibility of its alliances or lead to strategic miscalculations.

4. The Role of Multilateral Organizations:

- Multilateral organizations like the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union will continue to grapple with the use of Amimut in their policies and responses to global challenges. As seen in NATO's stance on cyberattacks and hybrid warfare, ambiguity can be useful in preserving unity among diverse member states, but it can also create uncertainty that weakens collective defense. Moving forward, multilateral organizations will need to strike a balance between maintaining strategic ambiguity to deter adversaries and providing clearer commitments to reassure member states.
- In the realm of international law, the ambiguity surrounding territorial claims, as seen in the South China Sea and other contested regions, will test the resilience of global legal frameworks. The challenge for the international community will be to develop

mechanisms that can address disputes where Amimut plays a central role, without escalating tensions or undermining the rule of law.

Conclusion

The strategy of Amimut has proven its worth in international diplomacy, providing states with the tools to deter adversaries, maintain flexibility, and preserve diplomatic space. However, as global power dynamics shift and new forms of conflict emerge, the role of strategic ambiguity will need to evolve. While it remains a valuable tool, its effectiveness will depend on how well states and international organizations can manage the risks of miscalculation, escalation, and loss of credibility.

In the future, the challenge for policymakers will be to adapt the use of Amimut to the changing geopolitical and technological landscape, ensuring that ambiguity continues to serve as a deterrent and a diplomatic tool while avoiding the dangers of uncertainty. Ambiguity may not always provide the long-term solutions that global stability requires, but it will remain a crucial component of statecraft in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

References

1. Allison, G. (2017). *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
 - This book explores the dynamics of great power competition, particularly between the U.S. and China, highlighting how ambiguity can shape diplomatic and military strategies.
2. Baker, P. (2015). "Obama Says U.S. Will Defend Asian Allies from China's Moves." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
 - An article discussing U.S. strategic ambiguity in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in response to China's actions in the South China Sea.
3. Bell, M. S. (2017). "What Do Nuclear Weapons Offer States? The Cases of North Korea and Iran." *International Security*, 41(3), 1–50.
 - This article analyzes the deterrence effects of nuclear ambiguity in states like Iran and North Korea, highlighting how uncertainty affects international security dynamics.
4. Blanchard, J.-M. F. (2013). "China's Maritime Disputes in the South China Sea: Strategic Ambiguity and Plausible Deniability." *Asian Survey*, 53(3), 518–545.
 - Examines China's use of strategic ambiguity in the South China Sea and the impact on regional and international diplomacy.
5. Dombrowski, P., & Reich, S. (2017). "Does Cyber War Matter?" *International Security*, 42(2), 72–109.
 - This paper explores how ambiguity in cyberspace creates challenges for international security and diplomacy, analyzing NATO's evolving position on cyberattacks.

6. Gomez, E. (2015). "The Strategic Use of Ambiguity in U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Taiwan." *Pacific Review*, 28(5), 683–706.
 - A study on U.S. policy toward Taiwan and China, illustrating the role of Amimut in managing the complex relationships between the three entities.
7. Gordon, P. H., & Shapiro, J. (2004). *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis Over Iraq*. McGraw Hill.
 - Discusses how strategic ambiguity affected U.S.-Europe relations during the Iraq War, illustrating broader applications of Amimut in diplomacy.
8. Graham, E. (2017). "The South China Sea: Defining the Limits of Strategic Ambiguity." *International Affairs*, 93(6), 1425–1441.
 - This article delves into the impact of China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, focusing on how ambiguity has been used to challenge international law.
9. Mazarr, M. J. (2015). "Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict." *Strategic Studies Institute*, U.S. Army War College.
 - Provides an analysis of hybrid warfare and the role of ambiguity in modern conflict, with insights into China and Russia's strategies.
10. Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. W.W. Norton & Company.
 - Mearsheimer's realist perspective offers insights into how states use ambiguity to balance power, deter aggression, and navigate international competition.
11. Nye, J. S. (2011). *The Future of Power*. PublicAffairs.
 - Nye discusses soft power and hard power, analyzing how ambiguity plays a role in the shifting dynamics of international influence and deterrence.

12. Smith, J. A. (2016). "NATO's Article 5 in Cyberspace: Collective Defense in the Age of Hybrid Warfare." *Journal of Strategic Security*, 9(2), 45–67.
- Focuses on how NATO's strategic ambiguity concerning cyberattacks impacts its collective defense posture and international security policy.
13. Swaine, M. D. (2011). "China's Assertive Behavior, Part Two: The Maritime Periphery." *China Leadership Monitor*, (35), 1-27.
- Analyzes China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea and how ambiguity plays a critical role in its regional strategy.
14. Weiss, J. C. (2014). "Circling the Wagons: China's Use of Ambiguity and its Strategic Response to Taiwan." *Security Studies*, 23(3), 404–431.
- This article examines China's use of ambiguity regarding Taiwan, emphasizing how it manages strategic ambiguity to achieve its long-term goals.
15. Wright, T. (2017). *All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the 21st Century and the Future of American Power*. Yale University Press.
- Wright discusses the role of strategic ambiguity in U.S. foreign policy, with a focus on how it influences interactions with rising powers like China and Russia.

