



ASSESSING THE TRILATERAL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

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THE NATIONAL BUREAU *of* ASIAN RESEARCH

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The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue: Facilitating Community-Building or Revisiting Containment?

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NOTE This *Special Report* originates from two separate research endeavors led by the Australian National University. The first study entails collaborative research on “Regional Perspectives on Global Security” undertaken by institutions of higher education affiliated with the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU). The second project is sponsored by the Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF) at Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and focuses on emerging Australia-Japan security cooperation. The University of Sydney’s Centre for International Security Studies (CISS) and the Lowy Institute for International Policy were also instrumental in providing support for the workshop. Griffith University’s Centre of Excellence for Policing and Security (CEPS)—and particularly its deputy director, Peter Grabosky—should also be cited.

REPORT SUMMARY

This Special Report weighs the policy implications of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) and assesses its efficacy as a component of Asia-Pacific security architecture.

MAIN FINDINGS

- If managed successfully, the TSD can facilitate the integration of bilateral and multilateral models of security politics in the Asia-Pacific. Rigorous coordination of public statements and policy initiatives, however, will shape the degree to which such integration can be realized.
- The so-called quadrilateral initiative, in which India would join the TSD framework, was effectively neutralized, and eventually jettisoned, by domestic political developments in Australia and Japan.
- The 2008 U.S. presidential campaign failed to address the TSD and the U.S. bilateral alliance network, raising some minor apprehensions, particularly in Australia, over the future of U.S. alliance management in the region.
- There is optimism regarding the TSD's ability to avoid China perceiving the arrangement as a containment strategy. In part, however, that outcome is dependent on how China carries out its own regional security behavior in the near to mid-term.
- Given the legacy of successful bilateral Australia-Japan political-security relations, initial strains in Australia-Japan relations shaped both by Japan's perceptions that Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd was too "China-centric" in foreign policy orientation and by lukewarm responses in the region to Rudd's Asia-Pacific Community proposal will be temporary.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The TSD needs to avoid being seen—both in the allied capitals and in Beijing—as an instrument of containment directed against China.
- The new U.S. administration must place a consistent and concentrated emphasis on the TSD's potential for bridging bilateral and multilateral security politics in the Asia-Pacific.
- The TSD's credibility will hinge largely on its success in defining and implementing nontraditional areas of security collaboration. The decision to initially focus on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance was appropriate. Additional areas of collaboration in both traditional and nontraditional security politics would benefit the TSD.

When Barack Obama assumes the U.S. presidency in January 2009 he will be required to assess the relevance of U.S. security alliances around the world. Nearly six decades have passed since the “San Francisco system” of U.S. bilateral alliances in the Pacific was founded near the outset of the Cold War, and their current viability in a rapidly evolving international security environment has been underassessed. Recent efforts to introduce “minilateral” cooperation into this alliance framework by expanding trilateral security cooperation between Australia, Japan, and the United States—an initiative known as the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD)—are particularly noteworthy in this context and warrant special attention. How this initiative is interpreted both by the United States’ other regional security partners and by potential security rivals in the Asia-Pacific could determine future levels of security cooperation and stability in the Asia-Pacific. This Special Report assesses both the cooperative dimensions and possible competitive elements that the TSD initiative brings into that region.

The lack of debate over the future of the U.S. Pacific alliance network during this presidential election year warranted the convening of an international workshop focusing on the TSD. Over four days in early spring, March 31–April 3, 2008, The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) joined with the Australian National University, the Lowy Institute, and several Japanese institutions to assemble a group of internationally renowned scholars to assess the TSD’s meaning for Asia-Pacific security politics. The articles that follow in this report of the group’s proceedings provide findings and policy recommendations regarding the TSD’s future. Although their conclusions vary as to the extent to which the TSD acts as a regional stabilizer, the authors leave no doubt that this initiative is one of the most significant developments to have emerged in the region in terms of future implications for both Australian and Japanese security postures and behavior.

TSD Origins

The Asia-Pacific is the world’s most populous and, arguably, wealthiest region.¹ Despite recent progress toward resolution, the regional flashpoints represented by the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait both persist and are still capable of sparking great-power conflict in Northeast Asia. Southeast Asia remains a potential source of jihadist terrorism and is a critical and vulnerable chokepoint for the transit of global energy supplies. Amid such uncertainty, the traditional, U.S.-led network of bilateral security alliances in the region has endured and has arguably grown stronger since the end of the Cold War. That network, however, is increasingly challenged by indigenously generated alternatives for defining and sustaining regional order. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently acknowledged the need to adapt to and accommodate the extensive structural changes now shaping Asian security politics. He has argued strongly that increased cooperation among U.S. allies and security partners—“more multilateral ties rather than hubs and spokes”—is the best way for the United States to extract maximum benefits from both bilateral and multilateral forms of security cooperation. In this context, Gates concluded, the TSD involving the United States, Japan, and Australia exemplifies effective regional security collaboration.²

¹ The Asia-Pacific contains half of the world’s population, with approximately 2.4 billion people living in China and India combined. In early 2008 the region’s economies were estimated to constitute approximately 37% of global wealth. See Jean-Claude Trichet, “The Growing Importance of the Asia-Pacific Region” (speech given at the New Year’s Reception Asia-Pacific 2008 of the German-Asian Business Circle, Frankfurt am Main, February 25, 2008), <http://www.ecb.eu/press/key/date/2008/html/sp080225.en.html>.

² “Speech by Defense Secretary Gates in Jakarta, Indonesia Discusses a Range of Security Issues on East Asia,” February 25, 2008, America.gov website, <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/February/20080225130031eaifas0.2525141.html>.

The TSD was originally convened at the sub-cabinet level in mid-2002. It was upgraded to the current status of a “strategic dialogue” in May 2005 when U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, following meetings in Washington with Japanese foreign minister Nobutaka Machimura and his Australian counterpart Alexander Downer, announced that the process would be conducted largely at the full ministerial level.³ A major rationale for supplementing the separate U.S. bilateral alliances with Japan and Australia was to strengthen what Australian diplomats characterized as an underdeveloped or “weak third leg” of Australia-Japan security relations. Further, the Bush administration expected regional allies to do more to facilitate evolving U.S. global strategy to fight a war on terrorism, check nuclear proliferation by so-called rogue states, and sustain an acceptable international balance of power against aspiring hegemonic competitors. Creating a stronger Australia-Japan security dyad complied with these expectations. The U.S. Defense Department’s 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* stated:

In the Pacific, alliances with Japan, Australia, Korea and others promote bilateral and multi-lateral engagement in the region and cooperative actions to address common security threats...Close cooperation with these partners in the long war on terrorism, as well as in efforts to counter WMD proliferation and other non-traditional threats, ensures the continuing need for these alliances and for improving their capabilities.⁴

In return for more extensive and coordinated Australian and Japanese contributions to U.S. global strategy, policy planners in both Tokyo and Canberra anticipate tangible benefits. These include continued U.S. strategic involvement and the maintenance of strategic guarantees in their regions, reliable access to U.S. intelligence and defense technology, and Washington’s lead in underwriting the defense normalization of Japan in ways that would benefit allied and regional collective security without unduly alarming China and other regional actors. Integrating Japan’s Self-Defense Force into so-called nontraditional security operations such as disaster relief and counterterrorism missions has been a relatively uncontroversial core pursuit of the TSD. Other activities and positions—joint discussions on China’s military transparency, statements regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, postwar reconstruction in Iraq involving Australian and Japanese forces, and possible future roles for Japan in maritime patrolling or peacekeeping operations in combat areas (such as Afghanistan)—have been more controversial. Although conducted outside TSD auspices, continuing Japanese and Australian collaboration with U.S. missile defense research has been regularly criticized by Beijing.⁵

Most of the criticism directed toward the TSD has focused both on its potential to become an instrument of regional containment against China’s rising power and on the potential of that strategy to generate a new Cold War atmosphere in Asia. Southeast Asian countries are

³ “Japan, U.S., Australia to Hold High-Level Strategic Talks in Tokyo,” *Asian Political News*, October 24, 2005, available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_/ai_n15738180. For extensive background on the policy factors and implications of the formation of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), see William T. Tow, Mark J. Thomson, Yoshinobu Yamamoto, and Satu Limaye, eds., *Asia-Pacific Security: Australia, Japan and the United States* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C., February 6, 2006), 88.

⁵ Although not usually grouping the three Pacific allies together explicitly, Beijing clearly has the TSD powers in its sights when China issues one of its frequent statements condemning missile defense research and development. A late February 2008 statement issued by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs typifies Beijing’s position on the issue: “China believes that a missile defense (MD) system could not resolve a country’s security concern. On the contrary, the deployment of MD systems is detrimental to global strategic balance and stability, undermines mutual trusts among countries and affects regional and international security. It might also result in the proliferation of missile technologies and bring about an arms race. China hopes countries concerned should act prudently on this issue.” See “Missile Defense,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 29, 2008, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbj/zjzg/jks/kjlc/wkdd/t410755.htm>.

comfortable and preoccupied with building a regional security community and with the ASEAN Regional Forum's objectives of greater confidence-building and preventive diplomacy—objectives that need China's neutrality or support to succeed. These states are thus wary of any initiative that may appear to target China as a destabilizing force in the region.

To Contain (or Not)

Just prior to the inaugural TSD ministerial level meeting in Sydney in March 2006, speculation by Secretary Rice that China could become a negative force in the region intensified regional suspicions about the actual purpose of the TSD. (Secretary Rice subsequently softened her rhetoric—probably as a result of Australian diplomatic pressure—to conform with the meeting's joint communiqué observation that “welcome[d] China's constructive engagement in the region.”)⁶ Subsequent initiatives spearheaded by U.S. vice president Dick Cheney and other conservatives in the Bush administration to draw India into the TSD framework through joint naval exercises similarly aroused suspicion about the TSD. Australia and Japan, meanwhile, had issued a high profile Joint Security Declaration (the prime ministers of both countries signed the document) in March 2007. From early 2006 onward, as the momentum for a containment approach seemed to be crescendoing, perceptions in Beijing that the TSD was transforming into a “little NATO” in Asia intensified.⁷

Speculation about the TSD and a “containment revisited” posture diminished, however, during the second half of 2007 as domestic political forces in the TSD countries and in India worked against the adoption of such a strategy. Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, who had instigated the unprecedented growth of Japanese-Indian bilateral political-security relations, was forced to resign due to ill health immediately after the September 2007 APEC Leaders Meeting convened in Sydney. His conservative Australian counterpart, John Howard, was defeated in a national election by the Australian Labor Party, led by Sinophile Kevin Rudd. Cheney and other U.S. neoconservatives were facing a decline in their political influence as the Iraq War became increasingly protracted. As ratification of the U.S.-India Nuclear Cooperation Promotion Act became entangled in both countries' legislatures, the Singh government in India shifted toward a more traditional Indian foreign policy posture of non-alignment. By the end of June 2008, the quadrilateral dimension of the TSD appeared to have lost momentum. The TSD has gravitated increasingly toward focusing on nontraditional security areas such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, Pacific island development issues, climate change, and common approaches to counterterrorism. Nuclear nonproliferation on the Korean Peninsula remains a TSD concern, but the extent to which concrete policy coordination on that issue occurs in a trilateral context is limited.⁸

⁶ “Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement Australia-Japan-United States,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Press Release, March 18, 2006, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0603-2.html>.

⁷ Purnendra Jain, “A ‘Little NATO’ Against China,” *Asian Times Online*, March 18, 2006, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HC18Ad01.html>.

⁸ For background on the TSD's evolution through 2006–07, see William T. Tow, “Tangled Webs: Security Architectures in Asia,” Australian Strategic Policy Institute, ASPI Strategy Paper, July 2008, 18–24; “The Second Press Conference, 27th June 2008,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Press Release, June 27, 2008, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/2008/6/0627-2.html>; and Stephen Smith, “Trilateral Strategic Dialogue: Joint Statement,” Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Press Release, June 27, 2008, <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s080627.html>.

Future Directions

The fate of the TSD will lie in the hands of the next U.S. presidential administration. Neither the McCain nor the Obama campaign has focused on the TSD, but foreign policy surrogates from both sides have addressed U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Australia relations. Surrogate and candidate statements have generally been consistent with the Bush administration's most recent approaches toward U.S. alliances with Japan and Australia, emphasizing functional and nontraditional security tasks underpinned by common values and interests.

In foreign policy addresses delivered at the Woodrow Wilson Center in August 2007 and Purdue University in July 2008, for example, Barack Obama lumped Japan and Australia along with South Korea and India in a broader "Shared Security Partnership Program" designed to strengthen the intelligence and law enforcement capabilities of allies and friends to act with the United States against international terrorism.⁹ Two of Obama's key foreign policy spokespersons, Richard Danzig and Joseph Nye, writing for the *Asahi Shimbun* in late June 2008, envisioned U.S.-Japan security relations as encompassing the reconstruction of Afghanistan, coordinated diplomacy on North Korea via the six-party talks, and greater synchronization of nontraditional security activities. Their basic argument was that, as a mature and trusted ally of the United States, Japan should do more to contribute to common alliance security interests in Asia. The previous month John McCain co-authored an op-ed piece with his long-time colleague Senator Joseph Lieberman in the Japanese daily the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. The op-ed projected a similar message: the United States and Japan should accelerate policy coordination to contain North Korea's nuclear capacity, enmesh China in an Asia-Pacific security community, and sustain open regionalism through joint trade liberalization.¹⁰ This Japan-specific posture comprised part of a broader McCain proposal for creating a "League of Democracies" to complement the United Nations by "by harnessing the political and moral advantages offered by united democratic action."¹¹

There has been less discussion regarding the U.S.-Australian bilateral alliance. In early February 2008 Susan Rice (no relation to Condoleezza Rice), one of Obama's key foreign policy advisers, reportedly criticized the Bush administration for "failing to give due heed to Australia and to ASEAN."¹² The McCain campaign echoed this concern. Richard Armitage, a Republican foreign policy advisor well known in Australian circles, noted that Secretary Rice had been lax in her duties of alliance management by missing two out of three of the last Australia-United States ministerial (AUSMIN) annual meetings. He predicted that the U.S.-Australian alliance "would be nothing but roses" during a McCain presidency.¹³ Australian participants at the June 2008 Australia-American Dialogue in Washington, however, were reportedly worried about the possible protectionist tendencies of an Obama administration's economic policy toward China spilling over to complicate Australia's management of its own interests in the context of Sino-U.S. relations.¹⁴

⁹ "Obama's Speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center," Council on Foreign Affairs website, August 1, 2007, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/13974/>; and "Obama's Remarks on Confronting Terrorist Threats," *Washington Post*, July 16, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/16/AR2008071601474.html>.

¹⁰ John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, "Putting Our Allies First: U.S.-Japan Ties Bedrock of Asian Peace," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 29, 2008.

¹¹ John McCain, "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 6 (November/December 2006): 26.

¹² Peter Hartcher, "Australia Now in the 'Top Tier' of US Allies," *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 7, 2008.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Paul Kelly, "The Rudd Alliance," *Australian*, June 28, 2008. See also an interview with Allan Gyngell, director of the Lowy Institute and a respected former Australian diplomat, in "Gyngell: East Asia Worries about 2008 Democrats' Trade Rhetoric," Council on Foreign Relations, April 21, 2008, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16074/gyngell.html>.

This anxiety reflected a general feeling shared by both Canberra and Tokyo that, despite domestic political criticism emanating from various U.S. political factions, the Bush administration has generally managed its Asia policies successfully, and that drastic or abrupt changes at this time would be unnecessary and possibly even destabilizing. In this sense, the TSD is viewed by both countries as a low-key but useful mechanism both for coordinating views on foreign policy and defense challenges and for influencing U.S. views on regional security politics. It would have been comforting if the presidential candidates had offered more direct and stronger support for this existing instrument rather than introducing expansive but perhaps less focused concepts of a Shared Security Partnership Program or a League of Democracies.

Conclusions

Three major trends constitute the most important outputs of this conference and its associated research. Two of these trends relate to China's future role as a security actor in the Asia-Pacific region; the third focuses on the potential value of minilateralism as a catalyst for regional security community-building.

One key finding was that Chinese hostility toward the TSD is not a preordained outcome of that arrangement's continued existence and activities. Much will depend on the exercise of sensitivity by the TSD countries in their joint communiqués concerning Beijing's interests and legitimacy as a regional security actor. Such sensitivity was demonstrated in the March 2006 declaration of the inaugural TSD meeting that praised China's efforts to facilitate constructive engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.

Equally important, however, is how China's own regional security policies develop over the next few years. A China determined to challenge, without provocation, what it views as U.S. hegemonic policies in the region inimical to China's ambitions would only increase the prospects of the TSD transforming into an anti-China instrument. To date, this fundamental point seems to be understood in Beijing. The level and intensity of anti-TSD rhetoric (as opposed to strong and vocal opposition to India joining the group as part of the so-called quadrilateral initiative) has manifestly declined after an initial flurry of condemnation. China has also pursued independent measures to neutralize what it regards as the most threatening characteristics of the TSD by pursuing a forceful diplomatic campaign to counterbalance them. China's successful campaign to establish a Sino-Australian strategic dialogue, which was agreed upon at the September 2007 Sydney APEC meeting, is illustrative. So too are its recent efforts to develop the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Central Asia as a multilateral security grouping. A major challenge for the TSD powers is to constrain their joint posture toward China. They must calibrate TSD development while maintaining an effective capacity to coordinate against more aggressive Chinese regional security behavior should that become necessary. As a recent U.S. Congressional Research Service study has argued: "developing multilateral groupings poses its own challenges, as all states must harmonize their approach to Beijing: at times it may be difficult."¹⁵

A second major conclusion of the workshop was that Sino-Japanese relations are the most important determinant of how cooperative or competitive the TSD could become. Several analysts argued that, especially with Abe's departure, less hard-line governments in Japan would be more

¹⁵ Emma Chanlett-Avery and Bruce Vaughn, "Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture of Asia: Bilateral and Multilateral Ties among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, R34312, January 7, 2008, 17.

likely to seek diplomatic accommodation with China compatible with the two countries' extensive bilateral economic ties. This would mirror Australia's own carefully crafted posture of seeking greater balance between traditional alliance relations with the United States and increasingly critical economic bonds with China. Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao's landmark visit to Japan in April 2007, which resulted in a joint press statement that emphasized the primacy of contemporary mutual interests over lingering historical tensions, set the tone for improved bilateral strategic ties.¹⁶ So did a subsequent meeting between Wen Jiabao and then Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda at the East Asia Summit held in Singapore in November 2007, Fukuda's visit to China in December 2007, and his decision to attend the opening of the Beijing Olympics in August 2008.

Other workshop participants were less confident about impending Sino-Japanese rapprochement, however, asserting that various outstanding differences between China and Japan are still capable of escalating into regional and international crisis. These differences include China's right to use force against Taiwan if the latter were someday to move toward greater independence from the Chinese mainland, still-outstanding territorial issues in the East China Sea, and the pace and scope of each other's military modernization programs. Participants noted China's continued apprehensions over Japan's involvement in U.S. missile defense programs as well as Japanese apprehensions over intermittent Chinese demonstrations of warfare capabilities (such as China's successful anti-satellite missile test in January 2007) that could disrupt U.S.-Japan command and control networks. Though taking note of these issues, the majority of workshop participants concluded that the overall strategic environment in Northeast Asia was relatively benign, affording TSD policy managers the opportunity to upgrade Australia-Japan-U.S. trilateral coordination.

This second general conclusion led to a third and final critical deduction: the TSD can potentially serve as a means for enmeshing U.S. power into a broad and gradual process of Asia-Pacific community-building. Since the adjournment of the workshop, Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd has advanced an Asia-Pacific Community initiative as the main element of his government's regional engagement strategy and as a complement to a viable Australian-American alliance.¹⁷ The response to this proposal has been mixed thus far; regional leaders claim they were not consulted sufficiently in advance. The proposal appears, however, to roughly coincide with the regional security approach Fukuda outlined in a foreign policy address in late May 2008 envisioning the Pacific Ocean as an "inland sea" unifying all those countries along its shores.¹⁸ Weakened by a shaky domestic political base, Fukuda's successor, Taro Aso (who assumed the position of prime minister in September 2008) has also stressed the importance of geographic proximity as a factor in developing Japan's contemporary relations with China and other Asian countries.¹⁹ Although some Australian commentators viewed Australia's apparent exclusion from Fukuda's grand design

¹⁶ For an extensive summary and assessment of this document, see "East Asian Strategic Review 2008," National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) Japan, 2008, 81–82.

¹⁷ Rudd spelled out his vision during a speech to Australia's Asia Society. The president of that grouping, retired Australian diplomat Richard Woolcott, was selected as an envoy to sound out Rudd's proposal in various regional capitals. See Tim Colebatch, "Rudd's Grand Vision for Asia-Pacific," *Age*, June 5, 2008.

¹⁸ Yasuo Fukuda, "When the Pacific Ocean Becomes an 'Inland Sea': Five Pledges to a Future Asia that 'Acts Together'" (speech to the fourteenth International Conference on the Future of Asia, May 22, 2008, Tokyo), <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/speech0805-2.html>.

¹⁹ See Taro Aso, "My Personal Conviction regarding Japan-China Relations" (remarks at the reception to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China, Beijing, October 24, 2008), available at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/address0810.html>.

as reflective of strains in Australia-Japan relations following Rudd's ascension to power, the TSD's third ministerial meeting held in Kyoto in late June reaffirmed the participants' commitment to "strengthen the existing regional security architecture."²⁰

It was evident to most workshop participants that the prospects for the TSD are best cultivated by adopting a building-block approach to trilateral strategic cooperation—selecting low-key, relatively uncontroversial areas of security cooperation with high prospects for successful interaction as precedents for trilateral policy coordination. The designation at the June 2008 TSD of humanitarian and disaster relief as a policy area warranting enhanced coordination and capacity-building among the three member states was illustrative of this approach. This area of focus flowed logically from their successful experience in jointly responding, as part of the Core Group, to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Skeptics of the TSD might criticize the dialogue for having visible difficulty in developing policies that confirm "a vast range of transnational threats of which it is aware but has yet to resolve while simultaneously managing standard commitments of alliance politics."²¹ As long as the TSD is applied primarily as a consultative instrument for greater policy synchronization to meet emerging transregional challenges, the dialogue has the prospect of becoming an effective bridge between bilateral and multilateral security approaches in the Asia-Pacific. An even modest realization of this prospect would be a positive contribution to the region's security and stability.

²⁰ "Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement," Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 27, 2008, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0806-2.html>. For independent Australian concerns over recent strains in the bilateral relationship impinging on TSD ties and cooperation in security architecture-building, see Greg Sheridan, "Rudd Can Fix Japan Shambles," *Australian*, June 7, 2008.

²¹ See, for example, Nick Bisley, "The Australia-Japan Security Declaration and the Changing Regional Security Setting: Wheels, Webs and Beyond?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 1 (March 2008): 50. It should be noted that Bisley attended the TSD workshop as a valued participant and imparted his views forcefully and cogently at the proceedings.

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Shaping a Pacific Future: Washington's Goal for the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay discusses the history and prospects of the U.S.-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), particularly in the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

MAIN ARGUMENT

In response to changes in the Asia-Pacific region, including the rise of China and nontraditional security threats, U.S. strategic thinking has begun to look beyond the traditional hub-and-spoke model of post-war U.S. alliances. Washington has joined Canberra and Tokyo in a dialogue designed to focus their bilateral relationships on joint regional concerns. Initiated in 2005, the TSD agenda has remained focused on more narrowly defined security concerns, including maritime security, nonproliferation mechanisms, counterterrorism, and missile defense. At a minimum, the U.S. is pushing for the enhancement of information exchange on these issues as well as for sharing strategic assessments with Japan and Australia in order to have similar regional pictures. Engaging Japan in TSD discussions over common threats and common responses can serve to help further refine the goal of globalizing the U.S.-Japan alliance, as seen in TSD-initiated joint military exercises held among the three countries.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The TSD process will succeed only with the highest political support; therefore, the governments should maintain the TSD at the ministerial level while expanding the number of necessary working groups.
- Creating greater trust among the three participants in shared goals is crucial to the process. This can be achieved by structuring regular TSD-unique exercises in crisis scenarios, the sharing of ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) maritime security, ballistic missile defense (BMD), and humanitarian relief.
- Eventually, the TSD can give the partners confidence to begin jointly discussing cooperation on major security issues. During this process, therefore, the three governments should push forward on achieving complementarity in BMD systems and ISR capabilities but also focus more on maritime security, especially antisubmarine warfare, which is of vital concern in the Asia-Pacific region.

For over six decades, since the end of World War II, the United States has been central to promoting stability and economic development in the Asia-Pacific region. The primary security posture underpinning this role is a forward-based military presence and a system of hub-and-spoke bilateral alliances, among which those with Japan and Australia have been the most important. Throughout the Cold War, freedom of the seas was ensured by U.S. warships operating increasingly with allied forces, and in the post-September 11 environment, Australian and Japanese forces have undertaken significant missions related to the global war on terrorism.

Yet the strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific has undergone rapid change since the end of the Cold War. Although the rise of China is undoubtedly the primary regional issue, for both positive and negative reasons, the spread of Islamic terrorism groups, the unresolved territorial questions regarding the Taiwan Strait and Korean Peninsula, the nuclear capability of North Korea, and the growing influence of multilateral organizations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the East Asian Summit (EAS), all have played roles in shifting the strategic terrain and engendering questions over how best to shape a regional future that is peaceful, prosperous, and conducive to the further liberalization of political and economic systems in the region.

In response to such questions, U.S. strategic thinking has begun to look beyond the traditional hub-and-spoke model. Hesitantly, but with growing interest, Washington has initiated a variety of trilateral dialogues aimed at leveraging close U.S. alliance relationships into broader arrangements focused on regional concerns. This new approach is in no way designed to supplant the bilateral model, nor is it seen as a stop on the way toward a formal multilateral collective security mechanism a la NATO. Rather, Washington perceives a limited amount of utility in discussing broad regional issues with its closest alliance partners, even as it continues to engage China and work within a multilateral framework to solve the North Korean nuclear crisis.

This essay will explore one particular initiative, the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), held among Australia, Japan, and the United States. Beginning with an overview of U.S. strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific, the essay will explore the bilateral alliance system, then move to a discussion of the background and agenda of the TSD, followed by an analysis of U.S. goals for the process and an examination of the impact of the TSD on the U.S.-Japan alliance. It will conclude with a set of policy recommendations for the future of the dialogue.

Background to the TSD

U.S. Security Doctrine in the Asia-Pacific Region

Since World War II, the United States' strategic goal in Asia has been to promote security and peaceful development in the region by deterring aggression, spreading democracy, strengthening trade relations, protecting vital transport routes, and advancing regional security cooperation.¹ For the bulk of the postwar period, U.S. strategy in the Asia-Pacific was to contain the influence of the Soviet Union, particularly by bottling up Soviet forces in the Far East as well as by preventing the rise of Communist regimes in the region. Washington also made it a high priority to oppose any expansion of the People's Republic of China, in part by committing to the defense of Taiwan

¹ See the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) mission statement, available at PACOM's website, <http://www.pacom.mil/about/mvp-statements.shtml>.

and also by guaranteeing the security of Japan. Unlike in Europe, where U.S. forces avoided combat during the Cold War, in both Korea and Vietnam the United States fought extended wars, incurring over 300,000 casualties over a period of three decades.

The United States' primary instrument for achieving its strategic goal has been U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), the largest and oldest of the unified combatant commands. PACOM was founded on January 1, 1947, and eventually subsumed the Far East and Alaska commands in 1957. Through the 1970s and 1980s, PACOM (then known as Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, or CINCPAC) steadily expanded its responsibilities throughout the region, eventually stretching from Eastern Africa through the Indian and Arctic oceans, down to Antarctica, and nearly to the west coast of the United States. Although a subsequent redrawing of unified command plans at the dawn of the 21st century slightly reduced PACOM's area of responsibility, it remains the largest command in the world, covering nearly 105 million square miles (169 million square kilometers).² Contained within that area is more than 50% of the earth's surface, close to 60% of the world's population, and over 40 sovereign states.

Under PACOM's command are 300,000 military personnel from all four services, including 100,000 forward-deployed forces.³ PACOM's service components include the U.S. Pacific Fleet, which comprises the Third Fleet (based in California) and the Seventh Fleet (based in Japan); the army's Headquarters I Corps; the I and III Marine Expeditionary Forces; and the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), including the Fifth, Seventh, Eleventh, and Thirteenth Air Forces. Subordinate unified commands within PACOM include U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ), U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), and the Eighth U.S. Army. PACOM is currently headed by Admiral Timothy Keating, whose role overlaps into diplomatic representation and public relations given the expansive nature of the command.

The significance of the Asia-Pacific region to U.S. strategic interests is underscored by the fact that the world's largest armed forces all reside in the region (the United States, China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, India, and South Korea), and that nearly 40% of U.S. total global trade (over \$1 trillion) is with countries in the Asia-Pacific. For all its dynamism, however, the region is also a hotbed of instability and potential conflict. It is the only region in the world where nineteenth century-style territorial disputes embroil all of the major state actors. The most potentially dangerous of these are the half-century division of the Korean Peninsula—now with a nuclear-capable North—and the disputed status of Taiwan. In addition, Japan faces territorial challenges from Russia over the Kurile Island chain, and Korea faces challenges both from Russia over the Takeshima/Dokdo Islands in the Sea of Japan and from China over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands in the East China Sea. Beyond these territorial disputes are threats from terrorist groups, including Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and from piracy in and around the strategic waterways in Southeast Asia.⁴

The U.S. Alliance System in Asia: Partners in Values or Force Multipliers?

U.S. policymakers knew that in order to consolidate and maintain the gains won during World War II, the United States would have to work with other countries in the Asia-Pacific. As the Cold

² PACOM website, <http://www.pacom.mil/about/pacom.shtml>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bruce Vaughn, "U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships in the Asia-Pacific Region," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RL33821, January 22, 2007, 23.

War intensified in the late 1940s, an ideological rationale was layered onto the security dimension of U.S. outreach to Asian nations. Indeed, over the succeeding decades the Asia-Pacific would be home to five of the seven postwar U.S. mutual defense treaties: the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines in 1951; the ANZUS Treaty with Australia and New Zealand in 1952; the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of Korea in 1954; the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty with France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines in 1955; and the Mutual Defense Treaty with Japan in 1960.⁵ That most of these treaties were with democratic states allowed Washington to seek support for such alliances on both strategic and moral bases. At their core, the pacts provided both political guarantees that the United States would serve as the ultimate protective shield for its partners and an implicit recognition that U.S. forces would remain in the region on a permanent basis.

In contrast to U.S. strategy in Europe, however, Washington never attempted to create an overarching collective self-defense treaty organization akin to NATO in the Asia-Pacific. In part this reflected the lack of a clear enemy facing U.S. allies as in the East-West face-off across a divided Europe. At another level, the vast distances and dispersion of allies made it more difficult to define either a single defensive line or shared security concerns; regional variety left Washington dealing with various threats at various times, and thus having to deploy assets in a flexible manner. Finally, poor relations among U.S. allies precluded the formation of a cohesive coalition. In particular, Australia and South Korea, nursing numerous grievances against Japan over the wartime atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army, were in no way ready to accept a close political or security relationship in the early postwar years.

Given these difficulties, Washington instead built a hub-and-spoke system. Key U.S. security agreements were structured as bilateral or trilateral alliances, the most important being those with Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and South Korea. Each alliance, however, took on a different configuration and level of integration. The tightest U.S. alignment was with South Korea, where a combined forces command was established that would place South Korean army units directly under U.S. control in a time of war. In Japan a parallel system of command with close coordination and consultation developed and over time moved toward greater integration. Under ANZUS, however, there was no integrated defense structure or dedicated forces.⁶

Japan served, and continues to serve, as the linchpin of the United States' strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to hosting approximately 53,000 U.S. troops both ashore and afloat, Japan maintains 240,000 Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), including the highly trained and equipped Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and capable Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF). Years of joint exercises with the U.S. Navy have given the JMSDF critical experience in maritime operations, including cutting-edge ballistic missile defense (BMD) and the deployment of Aegis-equipped guided missile destroyers. Currently, U.S. and Japanese defense planners are moving to more fully integrate the two forces, based on agreements reached both in 1997 in the revised Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation and in 2005 in a security consultative meeting between the foreign and defense ministers of both countries.

Of particular interest to planners is tighter command-and-control coordination. A "bilateral, joint operations coordination center (BJOCC), established at Yokota Air Base, will include a

⁵ See the PACOM website, <http://www.pacom.mil/about/pacom.shtml>.

⁶ "Background Note: Australia," U.S. Department of State, September 2008, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2698.htm>.

collocated air and missile defense coordination function.”⁷ The United States continues to work collectively with Japan on missile defense, and in December 2007 a Japanese Aegis guided missile destroyer intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile target in space.⁸ The successful use of the SM-3 missile put Japan on par with U.S. missile defense capabilities. In addition, Japan has fielded PAC-3 missile interceptor systems and shares information in real time with U.S. forces in Japan from an X-band radar site in the country. Japan has also committed to upgrading its aging jet fighter fleet and requested to purchase the F-22 Raptor from the United States. Although that looks unlikely, the JASDF is also actively exploring the possibility of buying the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter—for deploying fifth generation fighters is deemed crucial to maintaining a qualitative edge in air superiority in the region.

In comparison, Australia fields a much smaller military force, numbering only 51,000 active duty personnel. No U.S. military bases are located in Australia, though the two countries do jointly operate a satellite network ground station at Pine Gap in the Northern Territory that collects signals intelligence. Like their Japanese counterparts, Australian leaders have moved over the past decade to increase their military force. Canberra’s focus on upgrading the Royal Australian Navy includes bringing three Aegis-equipped destroyers online by the middle of the next decade.⁹ In terms of air power capability, Australia primarily flies the F/A-18 and F-111 but has partnered with the United States to develop the Joint Strike Fighter.

Despite the relatively limited size of its military, however, Australia has acted as a steadfast ally of the United States, especially under Prime Minister John Howard (1996–2007), who committed troops to U.S.-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. During these same years, the Australian defense budget increased by 47%.¹⁰ An important upgrade to the Washington-Canberra relationship took place in September 2007, when President Bush and Prime Minister Howard signed the U.S.-Australia Treaty on Defense Trade Cooperation. The treaty promotes defense-related trade between the two countries in part by easing restrictions of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).¹¹ The new treaty is expected to stimulate R&D, production, access, and joint projects. Equally important are the political benefits to Canberra: by putting Australia into the innermost circle of trusted U.S. allies, such as Great Britain, the treaty serves strategic as much as economic purposes.

The TSD Process

During the Cold War, U.S. strategy in the Asia-Pacific focused on containing Soviet influence, keeping peace both in the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean Peninsula, and in promoting free trade throughout the region. By the dawn of the 21st century, the United States faced a very different set of challenges—from the rise of China to a nuclear-armed North Korea to various terrorist threats. In response, Washington looked to begin discussions with U.S. allies on a common vision to

⁷ “United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation,” U.S. Department of State, May 1, 2006, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/65517.htm>.

⁸ “Japan Successfully Destroys Ballistic Missile During First Test of Lockheed Martin Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System,” PR Newswire, December 18, 2007, <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/12-18-2007/0004724681&EDATE=>.

⁹ “Background Note: Australia”; see also Australian Government Department of Defence, *Australia’s National Security: A Defence Update 2007* (Canberra, July 5, 2007).

¹⁰ Emma Chanlett-Avery and Bruce Vaughn, “Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture in Asia: Bilateral and Multilateral Ties Among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India,” CRS Report for Congress, RL34312, January 7, 2008, 6.

¹¹ Bruce Vaughn, “The U.S.-Australia Treaty on Defense Trade Cooperation,” CRS Report for Congress, RS22722, December 12, 2007.

maintain stability and promote continued liberalization and economic development. Although the United States and its allies already engaged in various regional multilateral groups, such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), concerns over the loss of direction in APEC and a recognition that the ARF was not equipped to deal substantively with the most serious security questions led to closer consultation among the United States and its key allies in the region, Japan and Australia.

Such a trilateral dialogue had been foreshadowed in the late 1990s with the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), which was formed to align the policies of Japan, South Korea, and the United States toward North Korea. Working at various levels, the TCOG included head of state, ministerial, and subministerial working group meetings.¹² With its narrow focus, the TCOG was a manageable way to grope toward a common policy on one critical issue but did not lend itself to larger discussions of security or political issues. From 1999 through 2004, the key work of the TCOG took place at the assistant secretary level, which required extra effort on the part of bureaucrats who did not have a special secretariat to deal with the agenda. Eventually, out of both inertia and exhaustion, the TCOG was enveloped into the six-party talks framework. Nonetheless, its existence over half a decade had shown that trilateral coordination was at least feasible, if not yet perfectly implemented.

The TCOG experiment may have contributed to the origins of the TSD among Australia, Japan, and the United States. Tokyo and Canberra had begun political-military and military-military talks in the middle of the 1990s. These talks were due in part to growing regional interest in multilateral security discussions—exemplified by ARF—but were also due to concerns over the limitations of such vehicles.¹³ Bilateral security relations between Japan and Australia have deepened since 2000, especially with the tasking of Australian Defence Forces soldiers to protect JSDF on their rebuilding mission in Iraq, thus making both countries more willing to discuss issues influenced by their relations with the United States.

At the July 2001 meeting of ARF, Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer proposed a trilateral meeting on security issues between Australia, the United States, and Japan. U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell and Japanese foreign minister Makiko Tanaka soon agreed to Downer's suggestion. Washington was satisfied with periodic meetings, coordinated by the Department of State's Japan Desk, but held the meetings at the subministerial level.¹⁴ Despite the lack of a high-level, public meeting, an informal dialogue did take place at least at the next rung down—for example, in June 2003 Vice Foreign Minister Yukio Takeuchi, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and the secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Ashton Calvert, met in Tokyo.¹⁵

In 2005 the talks were upgraded to the ministerial level, with the first formal meeting taking place in Sydney on March 18, 2006. Downer, Japanese foreign minister Taro Aso, and U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice discussed the Korean Peninsula, Iran's nuclear program, terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, and humanitarian issues, according to the official statement released

¹² For an analysis of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), see James L. Schoff, "The Evolution of the TCOG as a Diplomatic Tool," Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, November 2004; and James L. Schoff, "Security Policy Reforms in East Asia and a Trilateral Crisis Response Planning Opportunity," Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, March 2005.

¹³ Purnendra Jain, "Japan-Australia Security Ties and the United States: The Evolution of the Trilateral Process and Its Challenges," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 4 (December 2006): 524.

¹⁴ Interview with a U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

¹⁵ Purnendra Jain and John Bruni, "Japan, Australia and the United States: Little NATO or Shadow Alliance," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 4, no. 2 (August 2004): 281.

after the meeting. The overarching goal of the TSD, according to the statement, was to “maintain stability and security globally with a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region.”¹⁶

As indicated by the official statement, the TSD was seen as a continuation of U.S. strategic goals, working in concert with key U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific. A second ministerial meeting was held in Hanoi in November 2006, and subministerial meetings took place as well throughout 2007. During the December 2007 meeting, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns emphasized that his talks with DFAT Secretary Michael L’Estrange and Deputy Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka focused on global political issues, including the Middle East, China, Burma, and Asian multilateral organizations, but not on defense-specific issues, such as missile defense.¹⁷

U.S. Goals and Setting the TSD Agenda

From the beginning, all three governments made it clear that the TSD was not conceived of as a formal alliance or even as a mechanism to possibly replace the hub-and-spoke system under whose umbrella both the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Australian alliances fit. Rather, the goals expressed by Washington remained vague while its support for the process was couched in terms of informal consultation and discussion. Although the tenor of the TSD changed in 2006 with the upgrading of the dialogue to a ministerial meeting, it remains merely one of a number of multilateral arrows in the strategic quiver of U.S. policy toward Asia.

Nonetheless, administration officials believe there is utility in trying to forge a more common regional vision with Canberra and Tokyo. The approach so far, according to one Department of State official, is to keep coordination and general agenda setting at a high (i.e., ministerial) level while working groups and undersecretary level meetings carry out most of the actual work.¹⁸ Yet an Australian official has noted that the mechanics of scheduling and holding meetings are perhaps the most difficult part of the process, given the demands on officials’ time. This same official states that the process has not moved much beyond a “useful means” of discussing issues of mutual concern.¹⁹

Even though Under Secretary Burns raised a large number of political and diplomatic issues in his talks, the agenda has remained focused on more narrowly defined security concerns. These include maritime security, nonproliferation mechanisms, counterterrorism, and missile defense. At a minimum, the United States is pushing for the enhancement of information exchange on these issues as well as for sharing strategic assessments with Japan and Australia in order to have similar regional pictures.²⁰

At the same time, however, the TSD has spurred a modest level of joint exercises among the three nations’ militaries. One such initiative is the Pacific Global Air Mobility Seminar (PGAMS), which has practiced coordinated responses to humanitarian disasters. In February 2008, PGAMS included an exercise of loading a JASDF helicopter onto a U.S. C-17 to further explore quick responses to regional contingencies, which could eventually be directed to more traditional

¹⁶ “Trilateral Talks Strengthen U.S.-Australia-Japan Cooperation,” U.S. Department of State, March 22, 2006.

¹⁷ “Media Roundtable Discussion in Australia,” U.S. Department of State, Transcript, December 5, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2007/96226.htm>.

¹⁸ Interview with an official from the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

¹⁹ Interview with an official from the Embassy of Australia, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

²⁰ “Trilateral Talks Strengthen U.S.-Australia-Japan Cooperation.”

security ends.²¹ Similarly, joint exercises with P-3Cs could, under optimal conditions, move toward joint surveillance activities if conditions required such cooperation.²² At the outer edge of the TSD process is U.S. interest in regularizing maritime security exercises. A major step forward in this regard was the September 2007 Malabar 07-02 exercise, involving U.S., Australian, Japanese, Indian, and Singaporean naval vessels, including three aircraft carriers and over twenty thousand naval personnel.²³ Maintaining Japanese and Australian support for such joint exercises, and even expanding them into larger interdiction or ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) exercises, is a goal for the U.S. government, and one that gives substance to the TSD. The following month, the three navies conducted drills simulating search and rescue activities as well as the defense of naval ships.²⁴ Of even greater interest to Washington is moving forward on an integrated missile defense system, though that requires legal reform in Japan and a major upgrade in Australian capabilities. Nonetheless, such a long-term goal is one indication that the bilateral alliance system might be altered by outside influences in coming years.

The TSD and the U.S.-Japan Alliance

The question of how the TSD fits into the bilateral alliance framework is one that has not yet fully been answered. It is of particular importance in the case of Japan, where Washington has moved forward on a number of important alliance reforms since the promulgation of the 1996 Revised Guidelines. Both Tokyo and Washington are committed to realigning U.S. troops in Japan, moving eight thousand U.S. marines from Okinawa to Guam, relocating airbases, and clarifying roles and missions in BMD, antisubmarine warfare (ASW), and the like.

Politically, one of Washington's goals is to make Tokyo "think more about the world like Australia and the United States do," according to a U.S. official.²⁵ At one level this will require persuading Japan to move forward on approving a permanent law that would allow the dispatch of JSDF forces abroad and legitimize the concept of collective self-defense. Although a Pentagon official has noted that cooperative BMD research "is the best thing we've got going" with Tokyo, linking such activity with a sensitivity to the security role Japan can play regionally is one of the key goals of the TSD.²⁶

The irony is that Australia, at least under John Howard, was fully committed to partnering with the United States, even as Australian capabilities were limited and no U.S. troops were stationed on Australian soil. The opposite is true in the case of Japan: it is the United States' key forward operating base and has excellent capabilities, yet Japan is hamstrung by the U.S.-imposed pacifist postwar constitution. At a minimum, then, engaging Japan in extended discussions over common threats and common responses can serve to help further refine the goal of globalizing the U.S.-Japan alliance, even if joint action is still at a lower order level. The degree to which participation in the TSD may work to push forward constitutional revision in Japan, or the passage of a permanent deployment

²¹ See "Airmen Load Japanese Helicopter into U.S. Plane," Air Force Link, February 27, 2008, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123087945>.

²² Interview with an official from the Embassy of Australia, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

²³ See "Exercise Malabar 07-2 Kicks Off," U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs, September 7, 2007, http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=31691.

²⁴ Chanlett-Avery and Vaughn, "Emerging Trends in the Security Architecture in Asia."

²⁵ Interview with a U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

²⁶ Interview with an official from the U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., March 2008.

law, is far harder to determine, but Washington hopes that by participating in the TSD, Japanese policymakers and the public will become more favorably disposed to extending Japan's global role.

Shaping the Pacific: Next Steps

The key question facing the TSD is where it will go with new leadership in all three countries. Japan's domestic politics are paralyzed, with prime ministers Abe and Fukuda both resigning barely a year after taking office. While the TSD was a brainchild of the Junichiro Koizumi era and enthusiastically pursued by Shinzo Abe during his brief term in office, Fukuda was a far more cautious politician and made strengthening relations with China and South Korea a priority for his administration. His successor, current prime minister Taro Aso, is by temperament more closely aligned with Abe and Koizumi and would likely desire to expand Japan's TSD participation. Given, however, the necessity of focusing first and foremost on domestic politics, it is unlikely that Aso will take any initiative in foreign affairs before holding general elections in 2009.

Similarly, Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd has moved swiftly to reach out to Beijing and avoid the appearance of ganging up on China since taking office in December 2007. Well known as a Mandarin-speaking official, Rudd has already quashed ideas of formally inviting India into the TSD process, even as he has maintained that the alliance with the United States is the cornerstone of Australian security policy. Yet the balancing act Rudd is attempting may not be sustainable if Beijing attempts to drive a wedge between Washington and Canberra. Potentially downgrading the TSD to a working-level group might seem attractive as a way of continuing allied dialogue without putting too high an imprimatur on it.

The next U.S. president must also decide how much and how far to push the TSD process. After six decades of a hub-and-spoke alliance structure, there are good reasons for looking to a new set of arrangements. One reason is budgetary: the United States is increasingly constrained in the resources it can bring to bear in the Asia-Pacific, and closer coordination with key allies may allow for smarter burden-sharing on ISR, BMD, and the like. A second reason is strategic: the rise of China, continuing North Korean instability, and pan-Asian multilateral drivers such as ASEAN pose challenges to a clear U.S. policy of maintaining stability and promoting development. Working with like-minded allies on clear strategic objectives can facilitate a U.S. presence in Asia that makes long-term U.S. objectives apparent to all actors while at the same time allowing for various points of entry into larger multilateral processes.

Given these goals, the United States should take a number of steps:

- reaffirm the overall strategic goal of closer coordination and consultation with key allies in the Asia-Pacific region (i.e., Australia and Japan);
- maintain the TSD at the ministerial level while expanding the number of necessary working groups;
- consider inviting observers on an occasional basis, such as South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, and India;
- structure regular TSD-unique exercises in crisis scenarios, ISR sharing, maritime security, BMD, and humanitarian relief—utilizing the upgraded base on Guam for more intensive exercises;
- push forward on complementarity in BMD systems and ISR capabilities but also focus more on maritime security, especially ASW, which is of vital concern in the Asia-Pacific region.

Pursuing common strategic assessments, upgrading complementary defensive systems, and increasing joint interoperability are goals central both to maintaining stability in the Asia-Pacific region and to instilling confidence in U.S. partners that the United States remains a credible regional presence. Sharing these goals can help bring two of the United States' key allies in the Pacific closer to Washington and each other while providing a foundation for nurturing common values around the region.

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Squaring the Triangle: An Australian Perspective on Asian Security Minilateralism

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay examines the criteria Australia uses in deciding whether to pursue minilateral security dialogue arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region, applied to the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) and the short-lived quadrilateral dialogue.

MAIN ARGUMENT

Australia's deepening role in the TSD with the U.S. and Japan, and its flirtation with a quadrilateral dialogue involving India, can be explained according to a set of national-interest criteria that include, but go beyond, a soft balancing of Chinese influence. These include a wish to help socialize Japan as an active regional security provider, an imperative to keep U.S. attention focused on the region, and a concern to ensure a continued major place for Australia in the system of U.S. alliances and partnerships.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Australia will benefit from sustaining and deepening the TSD, while using its new strategic dialogue with China to help moderate any Chinese perceptions of the TSD as a threat.
- The experiment of the quadrilateral dialogue suggests that Asia-Pacific countries should make a greater effort to identify areas for security dialogue and cooperation where shared values are not a prerequisite for progress.
- At the same time, Australia cannot assume that its distancing itself from the quadrilateral dialogue will end the trend of connecting the spokes among U.S. allies and partners: Canberra will need to be mindful of potentially being excluded from a continuation of that process, for instance through growing Japan-India ties.

A notable feature of Asia-Pacific regional security architecture in the first decade of the 21st century has been a modification of the rigid hub-and-spoke system of bilateral alliances centered on the United States. Specifically, this has involved what might be termed “connecting the spokes”: the creation and strengthening of strands of dialogue and cooperation among U.S. allies and partners.¹ Australia’s moves in this direction have included deepening ties with Japan through a 2007 security declaration and the first steps toward a serious strategic relationship with India. New “minilateral” mechanisms have also emerged, however, which strengthen security relations between U.S. partners and allies while simultaneously tightening these states’ links with Washington. The most developed of these mechanisms is the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) involving the United States, Japan, and Australia. A less successful venture was the quadrilateral dialogue (or “quad”), which included India. This dialogue convened once in 2007 before being set aside.

This essay offers an evaluation of the TSD and, briefly, of the quad from the perspective of Australian national interests. It poses the following questions: What does Australia want from regional security architecture? How does the TSD fit Australia’s requirements? Did the quad fit Australia’s requirements, and if not, why not? The preliminary conclusions from this brief discussion are useful in explaining some of Australia’s choices regarding participation in and prioritization of particular minilateral institutions as well as in predicting future Australian policy behavior in this field.

The Rise of Minilateralism

The Asia-Pacific appears doubly cursed when it comes to region-wide multilateral diplomatic architecture. On the one hand, there are too many arrangements.² The region is criss-crossed by an array of forums, with overlapping memberships and agendas and a confusing range of appellations and acronyms: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), various ASEAN +1 arrangements, ASEAN +3, and the East Asia Summit. On the other hand, the architecture generally does too little. Dialogue tends to be superficial and to skirt sensitive issues, interstate cooperation and policy harmonization are curtailed by the jealous protection of national sovereignty, and the region lacks the genuine confidence-building measures so familiar in European security multilateralism.

The weakness of multilateralism in Asia is not surprising, given the enduring rivalries and mistrust among many of the region’s states and the extent to which the preferred mode for security diplomacy has long been bilateralism—an approach favored not only by the region’s dominant power, the United States, but also by the region’s chief rising power, China.

Nonetheless, in recent years a growing taste has emerged in Asia, among powers large and small, for what might be termed minilateralism: the self-selection of small subgroups of countries. Minilateral arrangements tend to complement bilateralism and region-wide multilateralism. The specific reasons for pursuing minilateral arrangements vary widely. Some arrangements—such

¹ Malcolm Cook and Rory Medcalf, “Connecting the Spokes” (lecture delivered at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, May 9, 2007), available at <http://www.lowyinstitute.org/Publication.asp?pid=592>.

² On the need to rationalize Asia’s surfeit of multilateral arrangements, see Allan Gyngell, *Design Faults: The Asia Pacific’s Regional Architecture* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2006).

as the six-party talks surrounding North Korea's nuclear ambitions or the trilateral coordinated patrolling of the Malacca Strait by Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia—are aimed at finding solutions to specific challenges where bilateralism is insufficient but region-wide multilateralism is unwieldy (and where some players may find both bilateralism and all-inclusive multilateralism unwelcome). Other arrangements, notably the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, appear to be tools for powerful states (in this instance China and Russia) to manage their differences and consolidate their influence in a region of mutual interest. One observer has suggested that minilateral arrangements in Asia tend to lean toward being either cooperative or competitive in nature, though none is entirely one or the other.³

There has been considerable debate over the precise purposes of two minilateral endeavors involving U.S. allies and partners: the TSD and the quad. The positions in this debate range from claims that the two arrangements are primarily elements of a strategy to hedge against or even contain China—NATO-like alliances in embryonic form—to protestations that they are overwhelmingly focused on improving the abilities of the participants to coordinate in tackling transnational challenges, such as terrorism and natural disasters, for the good of the region.⁴ For Australia, the real imperatives are more complex.

What Does Australia Want from Minilateral Regional Architecture?

Offered below is a list of the criteria Australia would do well to follow—and which generally it does—in joining or shaping minilateral security arrangements. The arrangements in question should fulfill a number of goals:

- simultaneously serve, and be seen to serve, Australian and wider regional interests—for instance, through the provision of security “public goods” that many countries can benefit from;
- complement rather than weaken the Australia-U.S. alliance;
- complement rather than weaken Australia's existing relations with Asia-Pacific powers, especially Japan, China, India, South Korea, and Indonesia;
- avoid entangling Australia in potential confrontations it might otherwise evade;
- reasonably reflect power realities (participants should have something to offer);
- fully engage the participants (participants should not just have something to offer but should actively offer it);
- have a practical and evolving agenda;
- be credible (the rhetoric of the arrangement should not be far out of step with reality);
- not be dominated by a single player;
- include a serious role for Australia.

The last point would seem to state the obvious but deserves some elaboration. Australia's isolated location and hybrid geopolitical status—as a country that is neither strictly Western nor Asian—have generated occasional anxiety in Canberra regarding inclusion in, or more specifically

³ William Tow, *Tangled Webs: Security Architectures in Asia* (Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2008), 3.

⁴ On the possibility of alienating China, see, for instance, Alan Dupont, “We Need to Tell Condi Some Blunt Truths,” *Australian*, March 15, 2006, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,18466282-7583,00.html>.

potential exclusion from, diplomatic processes in Asia. Thus, for example, there are sometimes hints that Canberra sees its deep economic and strategic equities in North Asia as a good reason for Australia to be given a special place in any future process that emerges from the six-party talks, of which the country is not a member.

How Does the TSD Fit Australia's Requirements?

U.S., Japanese, and Australian senior officials established a security dialogue in 2002, which was elevated to the ministerial-level TSD at the start of 2006. The creation and evolution of the dialogue have served multiple purposes for each of the participants, ranging from balancing China's power to socializing Japan as a regional security player. The following discussion is concerned only with Australia's objectives. To varying degrees the TSD meets all of the ten criteria outlined above.

From the outset, the TSD has been, in Australia's view, a valuable complement both to the U.S. alliance and to bilateral relations with Japan. Though it is fair to say that there is a China-balancing element at play, this has hardly been the only consideration for Canberra. Each participant has presumably seen the TSD as a vehicle through which it can attempt to better coordinate the perceptions and policies of its two partners. For Canberra, the TSD has been a useful vehicle for ensuring that Australia's role as Washington's closest ally in Asia is not overshadowed by Japan's role as Washington's most important ally in Asia. In other words, the TSD could help reduce the risk of Australia's value to the United States diminishing if Japan's value (and the intimacy of U.S.-Japan military cooperation) rises. The dialogue has also helped provide an extra conduit for keeping the United States engaged in the region at a time when events in the Middle East have threatened to dominate foreign and security policy priorities in Washington.

Australia has been especially pleased at the singular role of the TSD in helping to socialize Japan as a constructive security actor in ways suited to Australian interests. This has come at a time when Japan has been hesitantly but purposefully becoming a more willing contributor to regional and global security needs. In the TSD, Japan knows it is able to share perspectives and thinking among friends—that is, with partners who understand and acknowledge that Japanese militarism is a thing of the distant past and who want to see Japan's capabilities more fully employed in service of regional and global security. Though the precise interplay of cause and effect may be largely intangible, it is reasonable to conclude that participation in the TSD has helped raise Japan's comfort level for more active engagement on a range of security issues, including the contribution of maritime assets to Operation Enduring Freedom and participation in maritime and counterproliferation exercises with a wide range of partners.

Australia sees the TSD as a mechanism to serve wider regional interests: a way to mobilize, harmonize, and coordinate the capacities of the three participants in addressing transnational challenges that threaten not only each country individually but also the stability and security of the region. These threats include terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, and the impact of natural disasters. The role of the TSD in addressing such threats—a role that was reaffirmed by the renaming of the dialogue as “strategic” rather than “security”—was demonstrated through the practical cooperation of the TSD partners, plus India, as the core group in relief operations following the December 2004 tsunami. The establishment of collaborative activities and information exchanges

on counterterrorism as well as on disaster relief and humanitarian assistance has further advanced the TSD's role in improving cooperation against transnational dangers. This role has become even more pronounced in Australia under Kevin Rudd's Labor government.⁵

Like the 2007 Australia-Japan security declaration, the TSD is far short of an alliance: in no way does the dialogue oblige Australia or Japan to aid the other in the event of a military threat. The TSD does not entangle Australia in potential security contingencies facing Japan, such as confrontation with China or South Korea over contested waters and islands. With regard to the most serious possible North Asian security scenarios—crises over Taiwan or North Korea—Australian interests and U.S. alliance obligations would potentially embroil Australia at an early stage in any case. Indeed, the TSD provides another way for Canberra to help ease tensions in North Asia by allowing Australia to share candidly perspectives with the United States and Japan at the same time. It is conceivable that any two partners in this forum could bring simultaneous suasion to bear on the third if they considered the third state's thinking to be in need of moderation in order to reduce chances of a security miscalculation. In such circumstances, the existence of the TSD as a restraint multiplier could be of direct benefit to China.

All the same, the main problem for Australia in managing the TSD is how to handle the perceptions of non-participants and of China in particular. There are signs, however, that this challenge is being met. Although the Howard and Rudd governments have not denied that issues relating to China's rise are discussed at some TSD meetings, they have repeatedly assured Beijing that "there are plenty of issues for us to talk about other than China" and that the TSD is not part of a policy of containment or hostility.⁶ The establishment in 2007 of an Australia-China strategic dialogue at the foreign minister level will serve, more effectively than mere public denials, to reassure China that Canberra is not seeking to exclude Beijing from Australia's web of high-level dialogues on regional security. That Australian foreign minister Stephen Smith's public repudiation of the quadrilateral dialogue took place immediately following the first meeting of the Australia-China strategic dialogue in early 2008 has presumably added to China's comfort level (just as it caused some misgivings in the other quad capitals). Curiously, the emergence of the quadrilateral dialogue in 2007 seems to have made the TSD, as the lesser of two evils, a relatively acceptable forum to China.⁷

There are two ways in which Australia can work to convince China and others that the TSD is essentially a mechanism that has the collective regional interest at heart: exercising transparency in explaining the purposes and evolution of the trilateral dialogue and cooperation; and ensuring that trilateralism is developed in tandem with, rather than in opposition to, Australia's ties with other powers and engagement in multilateral regional architecture. It is in Australia's interest to use the TSD to encourage greater U.S. and Japanese engagement with China and involvement in regional multilateralism—in other words, to use a strand of competitive multilateral architecture as a way of bolstering cooperation. After all, Australia entered into—and has continued to support—the TSD without diminishing the country's interest in and contributions to region-wide

⁵ The joint statement for the 2008 TSD placed strong emphasis on trilateral cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. See "Trilateral Strategic Dialogue: Joint Statement," Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release, June 27, 2008, <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s080627.html>.

⁶ Graeme Dobell, "Trilateral Talks Mark Evolution in Japanese Thinking," *ABC Online*, March 19, 2006, <http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2006/s1594359.htm>.

⁷ According to several Chinese scholars interviewed by the author in September 2007, the TSD was more acceptable than the quad from a Chinese point of view. One scholar added that even the quad could potentially be acceptable to China provided that there was a high degree of transparency regarding the work of the dialogue. See Rory Medcalf, "Chinese Ghost Story," *Diplomat*, February-March 2008, 16-18.

multilateral institutions: Australia actively and successfully strove to join the East Asia Summit in 2005 and in March 2008 launched a fresh diplomatic campaign to develop region-wide diplomatic architecture.

The Quadrilateral Dialogue: A Square Peg?

The quadrilateral dialogue among the United States, Japan, India, and Australia amounted to one meeting of officials on the margins of an ARF meeting in 2007. The meeting seems to have had no formal agenda, although disaster relief was reportedly the main topic discussed.⁸ Nonetheless, Chinese officials and scholars strongly criticized this meeting, with Beijing issuing demarches to the participating countries. Following the resignation of Shinzo Abe as Japan's prime minister in September 2007, enthusiasm for the forum waned. In Australia, Rudd's Labor government announced in early 2008 that it would not propose a second round.

The quad is considered by many Australian security analysts and commentators to have been a diplomatic and strategic error—an unnecessary provocation of China. Yet when measured against the ten criteria enumerated above—identifying how such an arrangement could serve Australia's interests—the qualities of the quad are more mixed. In fact, the quad might be seen more as an experiment than as a downright mistake.

- *Simultaneously serve, and be seen to serve, Australian and wider regional interests:* Even more so than the TSD, the quad could have been a vehicle for coordinating the capabilities of four major potential contributors to maritime security, disaster relief, and other public goods—the four countries at the core of the 2004–05 tsunami relief effort, which was a catalyst for the quad. In addition, just as the TSD has helped to socialize Japan as a regional security actor, the quad could assist in gradually socializing India as a security player in East Asia in ways that are consistent with Australia's interests. Had the quad remained in existence in 2008, for instance, the dialogue might have served as a venue for the United States and Australia to encourage a more responsible Indian (and Japanese) role in urging the Burmese authorities to accept earlier and larger-scale foreign assistance following a devastating cyclone.
- *Complement rather than weaken the Australia-U.S. alliance:* Given the growing U.S. strategic partnership with India, the involvement of Australia in a security dialogue with India in company with the United States would certainly complement the alliance.
- *Complement rather than weaken Australia's existing good relations with the region's powers, especially Japan, China, India, South Korea, and Indonesia:* This is the sticking point. Australia's involvement in a minilateral forum with India would obviously complement bilateral relations with India and Japan, and would be unlikely to trouble Indonesia. South Korea is a trickier proposition: Seoul was likely curious as to why, as a U.S. ally, it was excluded from the new forum. It is clear that Beijing saw the quad, at least as conceived and executed in 2007, as cutting across rather than complementing the participants' relations with China. Earlier and more consistent signals of reassurance might have ameliorated some of this damage, but an exaggerated emphasis on the supposedly pro-democracy or quasi-alliance qualities of the quad by its chief advocates, Abe and U.S. vice president Dick Cheney, did not help.
- *Avoid entangling Australia in potential confrontations it might otherwise avoid:* The quad was far less developed than the TSD, and it is unlikely it would have evolved far or fast in the same

⁸ Author's conversation with Andrew Shearer, foreign affairs adviser in 2007 to Prime Minister John Howard, Sydney, July 2008.

direction. Even more so than the TSD, therefore, the quad was not, on its own, going to embroil Australia in the troubles of others, for instance an India-China rivalry.

- *Reasonably reflect power realities:* The quad was a recognition of India's rising power and engagement in East Asian affairs. By the same token, however, the quad could not be characterized simply as a mechanism for engaging security contributors according to their ability and willingness to contribute. Were that the case, then other partners—such as Singapore, South Korea, or China—would need to be considered. Unlike the TSD, which is clearly an arrangement of the United States and formal U.S. allies, the quad did not appear to have a credible common denominator for its exclusivity other than democracy.
- *Fully engage its participants:* How actively or fully India would have contributed to East Asian security under the auspices of the quad is an open question. The drivers of Indian policy will continue to include the capricious coalition-building of the country's democratic politics. For instance, throughout much of 2008, Indian naval diplomacy in East Asia was less active than it had been the year before—a decline that can be partly explained by the sensitivities of the Indian Left after controversial naval exercises with quad partners and Singapore in September 2007.
- *Have a practical and evolving agenda:* The character of the quad's agenda is also an open question. Yet the generally rapid development of U.S.-India security cooperation and the willingness of India to deploy its navy following the tsunami suggest that a practical agenda was at least a possibility.
- *Be credible:* The credibility of the official rhetoric (of which there was little) regarding the quad's precise role was not a problem. The mismatch, however, between the quad's low-key reality and the democracy rhetoric of its more outspoken supporters worsened suspicions, contributing to its early disappearance.
- *Not be dominated by a single player:* Even more so than the TSD, the quad offers U.S. allies—and a major U.S. partner—a forum for influencing Washington at least as much as being influenced by it.
- *Include a serious role for Australia:* This was certainly the case. Australia-India relations have long been underdeveloped, and the quad could have accelerated their deepening. It is also reasonable to speculate that one reason Canberra initially was interested in participating in the quadrilateral meeting was to avoid the possibility of a new U.S.-Japan-India forum evolving in which Australia did not have a place and that might have in time reduced the value Washington places on the Australia-U.S. alliance. Indeed, the October 2008 conclusion of an India-Japan security declaration and the convening that month of a “second track” trilateral dialogue among the United States, Japan, and India serve to underscore the prospect that Australian abstention from minilateral arrangements is not the end of the matter: other U.S. allies and partners may be inclined to explore minilateral or spoke-connecting options minus Australia.⁹

The resurrection of the quad appears unlikely in the near term. Nonetheless, the unusual rise and fall of the idea in 2007 has reminded the region that where region-wide institutions disappoint, minilateral alternatives will be pursued. The failure of the quad has also reminded participants that perception matters profoundly: a convincing rationale for an exclusive approach to membership is vital if a forum intended to have a serious element of cooperation is not to be seen

⁹ Rowan Callick, “Asia to Emerge Stronger from Credit Crunch,” *Australian*, October 27, 2008 <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/business/story/0,28124,24555400-643,00.html>.

as purely competitive. In light of this experience, Australian governments will be conscious that any additional minilateral enterprises in the region are more likely to be widely accepted if they are founded primarily on capabilities and interests rather than on a sense of shared values. The trouble, however, is that a key requirement of an effective minilateral initiative is the willingness of participants to contribute. To the extent that such a willingness to contribute is derived from shared values, there is a potential mismatch between what defines a widely acceptable minilateral venture and what constitutes an effective one. The challenge for Asia-Pacific governments, therefore, is to identify more areas for security cooperation where—as with the six-party talks—shared values are not a prerequisite for progress.

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Trilateral Strategic Dialogue: a Japanese Perspective

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay overviews Japan's approach to the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD).

MAIN ARGUMENT

Although Japan has undergone a fairly steady process of normalization in its security policy since the end of the Cold War, the country has failed to devise an enduring and comprehensive international strategy to integrate various policy elements. Japan's approach to the TSD has also reflected these two trends: on the one hand, the TSD is an element of the "normalization" of Japan's security policy; on the other hand, the lack of a stable comprehensive national security strategy has complicated Japan's role in the dialogue.

The three prime ministers who have succeeded Koizumi—Abe, Fukuda, and Aso—all tried to reestablish Japan's international policy in their respective ways. Although the general election that should be held by September 2009 may affect Japan's international and security policy, the basics of this policy are not likely to change regardless of who wins. The TSD is expected to continue but the scope and concrete modes of operation remain to be clarified.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The critical variables in Japan's international and security policy may include:

- whether or not further normalization of the legal framework continues
- whether or not the Japanese government increases the power of the prime minister to formulate and implement international and security policy in a more integrated fashion
- whether or not China continues to take a moderate foreign and international policy
- what kind of approach the new U.S. administration takes toward international security in the Asia-Pacific

As these variables change, the scope and modes of operation of the TSD may vary.

Although Japan has undergone a fairly steady process of normalization in its security policy since the end of the Cold War, the country has failed to devise an enduring and comprehensive international strategy to integrate various policy elements. On the one hand, Japan has steadily normalized the legal framework for its security policy. Legislation has been enacted in the last fifteen years both to deploy the Self-Defense Forces for limited UN peacekeeping operations and to facilitate better coordination with the United States in case of East Asian contingencies other than a direct attack on Japan. The Defense Agency was also promoted to the level of a full-fledged ministry in 2007. Though still limited, Japan has been acting more and more like a normal U.S. ally. Japan sent the Maritime Self-Defense Force to the Indian Ocean to supply fuel to allied ships participating in the operation in Afghanistan. Japan has also sent the Ground Self-Defense Force for humanitarian and reconstruction missions in the southern part of Iraq, and the Air Self-Defense Force for transport cooperation in Iraq.

On the other hand, Japan has failed to integrate this evolution of its security policy into a coherent and comprehensive international strategy. Sino-Japanese relations were nearly highjacked by the controversy over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine.¹ Whatever the merit of Koizumi's view of his visit to the shrine (he believed that China was wrong to interpret his visit as glorifying Japanese militarism in the past), Japan lost maneuverability in policy toward China. Domestic instability after Koizumi's departure from office has not helped Japan formulate an enduring security strategy. Both Shinzo Abe, Koizumi's successor, and Yasuo Fukuda, Abe's successor, were more conscious of Japan's regional strategy than Koizumi; however, because they pursued two different approaches, the rapid succession from Abe to Fukuda brought about a rather abrupt change of Japan's regional policy (at least rhetorically). The fact that the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and New Komeito Party, which controls a two-third majority in the lower house, lost the majority in the upper house in July 2007 further complicates the government's efforts to pursue a consistent international policy—especially where new legislation is needed.

The TSD under Koizumi

Japan's approach to the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) has reflected these two trends: on the one hand, the TSD is an element of the "normalization" of Japan's security policy; on the other hand, the lack of a stable comprehensive national security strategy has complicated Japan's role in the dialogue. The inauguration of the TSD was a natural step in normalizing Japan's security policy. Given the similarities between Japan and Australia—both are mature democracies with economies that are naturally complementary—and given that both countries are allies of the United States and have been closely working together as diplomatic friends, there is nothing stopping the expansion of a bilateral strategic dialogue between Washington and Tokyo to include Canberra. With Koizumi's attention to security affairs focused almost exclusively on relations with President Bush, however, this opportunity for expanding the TSD escaped the prime minister's attention.

The process of upgrading the TSD from the vice-ministerial level to the ministerial level in May 2005 coincided with other developments in U.S.-Japan security relations. Japan and the United States upgraded their alliance through 2+2 meetings (the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative

¹ For details of the Yasukuni issue, see Akihiko Tanaka, "The Yasukuni Issue and Japan's International Relations," in *East Asia's Haunted Present*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 119–41.

Committee involving the U.S. secretaries of state and defense and the Japanese ministers of foreign affairs and defense). In February 2005 the committee announced the “common strategic objectives” and agreed in October 2005 on the roles and missions that the two allies will pursue in the coming years.²

These developments also coincided, however, with a rapid downturn in Sino-Japanese political relations. China criticized Japan for including Taiwan in the list of the alliance’s common strategic objectives mentioned above. Although the 2+2 document simply encouraged “the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue” and proposed to develop “a cooperative relationship with China, welcoming the country to play a responsible and constructive role regionally as well as globally,” China regarded this as an anti-Chinese posture.³ Sino-Japanese relations were further strained by the violent outbursts of anti-Japanese nationalism in various parts of China, including Shanghai and Beijing, in April 2005.⁴ Following these protests, Tokyo and Beijing had not been able to engage in meaningful diplomatic activities until the departure of Koizumi in September 2006. Koizumi’s intention was certainly not to antagonize China either by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine or by agreeing to the 2+2 documents; rather, he wholeheartedly endorsed the concept of helping China to become a constructive member of the international community. Nonetheless, whatever his motive for visiting the shrine and whoever is to blame, as a result of the Yasukuni controversy, constructive engagement with China became almost impossible.

Abe’s Value-Oriented Diplomacy

Abe, who succeeded Koizumi in September 2006, understood the futility of sticking to the controversial issues of history and tried to become more strategic in his approach to Japan’s international security policy. Although Abe’s ideology was more consistently conservative than Koizumi in terms of his view of Japan’s history, he stopped making further controversial statements and decided not to visit the Yasukuni Shrine. As China regarded the history issue as the single most important and decisive issue in Sino-Japanese relations, Abe tried to strengthen Japan’s position by making a concession on this issue. This approach worked. Abe was welcomed in Beijing in his first foreign visit in October 2006, and Chinese leaders were mostly silent on the history issue. Additionally, when premier Wen Jiabao visited Japan in April 2007, he acknowledged that Japanese leaders had already made a number of apologies to the Chinese for the war and expressed appreciation for Japan’s assistance to China’s development.

Restoring normalcy in Tokyo’s relations with Beijing, Abe and his advisors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) found the theme of “universal values” to be a card that Japan could utilize in the diplomatic game. Abe, who possessed a more sober view of China and its rising military power than Koizumi, seems to have considered the theme of universal values useful as a means to soft-balance against China. Abe declared that his diplomacy was a “value-oriented” one and began to assert the importance of Japan strengthening ties with countries sharing the same

² “U.S.-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future,” Japan Ministry of Defense, October 29, 2005, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_policy/dp11.html.

³ “Joint Statement U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee,” Japan Ministry of Defense, February 19, 2005, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_policy/dp10.html.

⁴ Although what happened behind the scenes in China in the spring of 2005 has not been made clear, it seems impossible to have such large displays of violence in of all places Shanghai and Beijing without significant support in some quarters of Chinese power circles.

universal values. He explicitly mentioned Australia and India as such countries in his first policy speech to the parliament. In late November 2006 Taro Aso, Abe's foreign minister, introduced a new geographic concept to guide Japan's diplomacy: the "arc of freedom and prosperity"—the zone of countries on the rim of the Eurasian continent from Northeast Asia, through Southeast Asia, to the Caucasus and Central and Eastern Europe. Aso emphasized the need for Japan to support those countries on the "arc" trying to achieve freedom and prosperity.

In this context, TSD is a natural component of such value-oriented diplomacy. It is no accident that Abe and Howard agreed to issue the first Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in March 2007. Though the areas of cooperation were limited mostly to nontraditional security issues—as these were practically the only feasible areas that Japan could pursue in the current legal framework, despite recent normalization of Japan's security-related legislation—it was the highest moment in Japan-Australia defense cooperation in recent history.

Yet when Abe, partly at the suggestion of U.S. vice president Dick Cheney, seriously started to consider the possibility of creating a quadrilateral initiative for security cooperation among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, China reacted negatively. Abe believed that the first and best way to strengthen ties to a country holding the same universal values was to extend the TSD to India. Relations between Tokyo and New Delhi had been abnormally weak and should thus be strengthened. Beijing, however, saw this approach as extending the ties of the U.S.-Japan alliance to a country that had never been involved in the alliance. This quadrilateral initiative probably did not have a chance of success in any case because India did not wish to be entangled in a potentially anti-Chinese coalition.

Abe's international policy was more strategic than Koizumi's. Improving Japan's weak hand (i.e., by downplaying or making concessions on the history issue), Abe tried to utilize what he considered the strong cards that Japan held (i.e., shared universal values). His strategy seems to have worked to some extent. China was irritated by Abe's value-oriented diplomacy but had not shown any desire to downgrade its relations with Japan again. At the same time, how much Abe and Aso could follow through in their value-oriented diplomacy was not clear. India, Australia, and the United States sought to distance themselves a bit from Japan on the quadrilateral initiative out of fear of a possible negative reaction from China. Given domestic instability in Japan, it was not clear whether Abe could make a substantive international move such as sending troops for his value-oriented diplomacy; actual Japanese action might not live up to Abe's rhetoric. In any case, Abe did not have a chance to validate his strategy. In July 2007 he resigned as prime minister to take responsibility for his party's disastrous defeat in the upper house election.

Fukuda's Quiet Diplomacy

Yasuo Fukuda, who succeeded Abe in September 2007, held a less ideological and more cautious world-view than Abe. Though sharing with Koizumi and Abe the conviction of the fundamental importance of the alliance with the United States, Fukuda also believed in the intrinsic importance of Japan's relations with its neighboring countries, especially China. He emphasized the importance of creating "synergy" between relations with the United States and relations with other Asian countries. At the same time, Fukuda mentioned neither Australia nor India in his first Diet speech and rarely mentioned universal values. Fukuda's foreign minister, Masahiko Komura, ordered MOFA officials to remove mention of the arc of freedom and prosperity from the MOFA

website. Fukuda refrained from any action that might have appeared as an attempt to isolate or encircle China.

If Abe had pursued an approach of soft-balancing against China, Fukuda's approach was more inclusive; in a speech to clarify his vision of Japan's Asia policy, he mentioned the necessity to regard the Pacific Ocean as an "inland sea" for the 21st century just as the Mediterranean was depicted by Fernand Braudel as an inland sea in the 16th century. Fukuda's view of the players in this inland sea is very inclusive:

If we take the Pacific Ocean for an inland sea, then whose "inland sea" is this, exactly? Clearly, it is an inland sea for Japan and the countries of ASEAN, yet also one for North and South America and for Russia if the development of its Far East region progresses. It is most certainly an inland sea for China and the nations of Indochina as well as Australia, and New Zealand, and in my view this sea also continues beyond India to connect to the nations of the Middle East.⁵

The inclusive approach, when translated into actual policy—toward China, for instance—would appear to mean a kind of quiet diplomacy. When it was revealed that some frozen dumplings (*gyoza*) exported from China to Japan were contaminated with a poisonous pesticide, the Fukuda government—despite the uproar raised in the Japanese media—refrained from vocal accusations. Likewise, when many Western leaders, including President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, openly criticized China for its repression of the Tibetan riots, Fukuda said that it was not useful to make open accusations but rather that it was more productive to provide China with friendly advice to explore dialogue with the Dalai Lama.

Whether Fukuda's inclusive approach and quiet diplomacy were effective remains to be seen. With respect to Sino-Japanese relations, however, this approach achieved some positive results—the most significant of which was the Sino-Japanese agreement on the joint development of gas fields in the East China Sea. Despite involving questions of sovereignty, the issue was solved in a mutually agreeable manner in early July 2008. Fukuda seems to have applied this same inclusive approach to negotiations with North Korea on the abduction issue. Although North Korea finally agreed to renew investigations into the abduction of Japanese citizens, how satisfactory these investigations will prove remains uncertain.

Obviously, Fukuda's strategic approach is not a panacea for all diplomatic and strategic issues. It is, however, for now at least consistent with the new government of Australia and the current *modus operandi* of the Bush administration's Asia policy. The third TSD, held in Kyoto in early July 2008, indicated that all three partners use this mechanism mostly for cooperation in the humanitarian and nontraditional security areas. Depending on the results of U.S. presidential election, Japan's approach may need to be adjusted. Additionally, to the extent that the new U.S. administration's Asia policy will be a function of Chinese behavior, China's foreign policy posture after the Olympics will also make a difference.

⁵ Yasuo Fukuda, "When the Pacific Ocean Becomes an 'Inland Sea': Five Pledges to a Future Asia that 'Acts Together'" (speech delivered at the 14th International Conference on the Future of Asia, Tokyo, May 22, 2008), http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hukudaspeech/2008/05/22speech_e.html.

Further Normalization?

Despite successes on the diplomatic front, Yasuo Fukuda was not able to sustain his power domestically. He also made an abrupt declaration to resign as prime minister just one year after Abe's sudden resignation. In a hastily prepared presidential election, the LDP elected Taro Aso to succeed Fukuda as its president. The lower house of the Diet, which was still under the control of the LDP and Komeito, then selected Aso as succeeding prime minister. Originally, it was expected that Aso would dissolve the Diet immediately to hold a general election. Yet because of the financial crisis that shook the world in the autumn, Aso decided to ask the Diet to deliberate on necessary economic policy. On the foreign policy front, Aso seems to have continued the approach he took when he was foreign minister under Abe but, because of the overwhelming necessity of dealing with the financial crisis, he was slow to present his foreign and security policy agenda. Aso seems more interested than Fukuda in upgrading Japan's security relationship with Australia and India. The TSD thus may be given a further impetus under the Aso administration.

A general election will be held by September 2009, when the term of the lower house expires. Aso may or may not serve as prime minister after the election. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) may have a chance to obtain power. Depending on which party controls the government, Japan's foreign policy in general and its approach to the TSD in particular may change. Nonetheless, the basics of Japan's security policy, including the alliance with the United States, will not be questioned no matter who wins the election. The DPJ, the main opposition party to the LDP, also believes in the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance. The moderate application of such a "minilateral" mechanism as the TSD is expected to continue. The critical variables in Japan's international and security policy may include: (1) whether further normalization of the legal framework for this policy continues, (2) whether or not the Japanese government increases the power of the prime minister to formulate and implement international and security policy in a more integrated fashion, (3) whether China continues to adopt a moderate foreign and international policy, and (4) what kind of approach the new U.S. administration takes toward international security in the Asia-Pacific. As these variables change, the scope and modes of operation of the TSD may vary.

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TSD—Euphemism for Multiple Alliance?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay examines the role that the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD)—a new institution that excludes and appears directed at China—can have in creating true security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

MAIN ARGUMENT

For the U.S., the rise of China portends huge risks because Beijing has potential to become a peer competitor; for China, the U.S. is also the largest likely cause of frustration to its own development. By more tightly joining the U.S., Japan, and Australia, the TSD may very well compound rather than alleviate regional instability.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In order to achieve a much broader and more stable regional security arrangement that will stand the test of time, U.S. policymakers need to take a more forward-looking and pragmatic approach to the Asia-Pacific. This would require combining alliance politics with the legitimate security concerns of individual countries. The U.S. should join China, Japan, Korea, Australia, and other states in the Asia-Pacific to create a new and larger security architecture for the region.

The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between the U.S., Japan, and Australia is a means by which the three countries can articulate their common security concerns in the Asia-Pacific. This general purpose aside, the TSD is in effect an important effort to counterbalance China's rise and military buildup in the region: without the specter of a rising China, Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra would not have begun intensifying defense cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. Concurrent with the development of this new dialogue, however, each country in this alliance is also continuing its own long-standing bilateral engagement with China, relationships that are designed to encourage Beijing to constructively work to enhance the region's security.

This essay poses a number of questions. Can this multilateral TSD-based alienation of China continue to coexist with bilateral policies of engagement with China? Is the TSD likely to evolve into some sort of new, narrowly-based security apparatus designed to make the region more secure by in effect countering China? Alternatively, could the TSD become a parallel complement to the existing regional security architecture, one that both includes China and is aimed at promoting multilateral cooperation in regional security?

This essay has four sections. The first examines whether the TSD is in fact a prelude to a wider alliance system. The second section looks at the dialogue not from a strict military-security perspective but rather from the perspective of norms. The next section shows how, regardless of intention, the TSD will create a security dilemma that could have negative consequences for regional stability. A conclusion briefly explores the likelihood of tying the TSD to a wider and more inclusive effort at regional security.

The TSD: Prelude to a Wider Alliance?

In the eyes of Beijing, the TSD is a prelude to an alliance that will surely, even if slowly over an extended period of time, turn a web of bilaterally based U.S. alliances into a more formal multilateral alliance structure. Such an alliance would exclusively target the rise of China in a way that does not constructively engage China's own mounting security concerns. The TSD, therefore, contradicts Beijing's "new security perception" (*xin anquan guan*) first formulated in the middle of the 1990s, and even highlights U.S. strategic endeavors to weaken or contain China in the Asia-Pacific.¹ This "perception" strongly stipulates that the exclusion of China from any expansion of allies would be a deliberate isolation of Beijing. Despite repeated assurances from Washington that the United States has neither the will nor interest to encircle or contain China, China's sense of insecurity is clear given U.S. geopolitical primacy and Washington's security commitment to Taiwan for the peaceful settlement of the cross-strait dispute—even in the case of a Taiwanese declaration of independence. Thus, it is doubtful that Beijing's investments in Sino-U.S. relations will bear the type of strategic benefits China desires. Due to China's historical grievances, the Chinese Communist Party's sense of regime insecurity, and the open and daunting conflicts between the two countries over the value of democracy, Beijing has viewed any updates of the U.S. alliance system in the region as a pressing menace. From China's perspective, the TSD could very well become an Asian version of NATO—a turning of a "hub-and-spoke" web of bilateral

¹ On China's new security perception, see Bates Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007); and Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

alliances with the United States into a multiple-ally institution. If the TSD does move in that direction, Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra could reap enormous benefits arising from increased coordination on China policy, a more formal security commitment, and a lower likelihood of differences in the diversity amid the following responses. At the very least, the TSD is designed to encourage Canberra to be less “pro-Chinese” because of the dialogue’s limited focus on trade links with China.²

As it stands now, the TSD is not a trilateral alliance but rather a mechanism by which Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra are able to routinely discuss substantive security concerns. Even this current articulation of the TSD does not, however, sit well with some leaders in Beijing. China has long been concerned about a potential expansion of a U.S.-centered alliance system. This fear stems partly from Beijing’s general vigilance regarding U.S. policy toward China and partly from China’s comparably weak position in the Asia-Pacific power structure. This fear is aggravated by general discussion of a regional “coalition of democracies.”

The TSD is in fact not entirely opposed in China. Moreover, China has been gradually adapting to U.S.-centered alliance politics. But any expansion of a hub-and-spoke system of bilateral alliances into a trilateral or multilateral alliance system will certainly be an eyebrow-raising move. The pace at which the United States pursues an expansion of its ally framework in the Asia-Pacific depends on two factors: how determined Washington is to restructure the balance of power in favor of the United States and to what extent other powers entertain dynamics of the power shift in the region. Despite China’s ongoing ascent, there is no evidence that a rising China will soon lead to a fundamental change in the current power structure centered around U.S. preeminence. At most what has been occurring has been a power shift rather than a power transition. Given that the United States vastly exceeds China in all categories of power, there is no need for Washington to fear that China will constitute an insurmountable rival or competitor. The “China threat” is rather an almost passionate yet abstract search by the United States for an “enemy” in the post-Cold War era. In practical terms, the United States does not feel compelled to encircle or contain China by substantiating a wider alliance and forcibly instituting any power reshuffle in the Asia-Pacific. Any positive trend in U.S.-China relations depends on the aspiration of the United States to effectively reconcile its bilateral alliances with multilateral security cooperation—that includes China—rather than a trilateral arrangement.³

True, being overwhelmingly dependent on overseas oil, raw materials, and markets, China’s demands for maritime security and reactive crisis-management capability are increasing. To be a great power, furthermore, China needs robust military deterrence against Taiwan’s independence movement, an advanced navy to counterbalance Japan’s naval leadership in Asia, and limited but efficient power leverage to countermeasure the United States’ conventional denial strategy in the Asia-Pacific. Beijing will, however, likely fulfill its strategic transformation by focusing more on domestic problems and paying more attention to transnational security challenges. As long as China’s strategic transition remains unfinished, it is quite unlikely that China will be jockeying for military influence with the United States. Instead, Beijing accepts U.S. primacy because it greatly reduces the cost of China’s own military development and also prevents the emergence of other challengers, such as a rearmed Japan or a provocative India. Even in the mid- to long-term, China’s

² Graeme Dobell, “Correspondent’s Report: Australia Seeks to Strengthen Relations with Regional Neighbors,” *ABC News Online*, July 2, 2006.

³ Amitav Acharya and William Tow, “Asia-Pacific Security and Alliance Politics: Facing Demise?” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Hilton Hawaii, Hawaii, March 5, 2005).

military is mainly mandated to keep secure both the ruling regime and the country's territory but not to meddle with overseas concerns. China's ascent would not lead to a dramatic subversion of the regional security order in the foreseeable future, but any overreaction by other powers to China's re-emergence could inappropriately provoke Beijing.

The TSD and Value Diplomacy

From China's perspective, one key danger of the TSD is that it may lead to the formulation of a "democracy coalition" in the Asia-Pacific, one that is bound to be targeted at China by default. Promoting freedom, liberty, and democracy has long been a strong element of U.S. security strategy in East Asia. The democratic appeal, in particular, has echoed broadly and loudly. Beijing, however, will not likely yield to any aggressive attack on its human rights performance and will persistently reject any values-based diplomacy. There is also no indication that Beijing will quickly transform its domestic political system. Although frustrating for Washington, the likelihood of political change in China will hinge on the willingness of Chinese people and domestically produced political reform; external pressure will not likely lead to real democratization but could very well spark patriotism in China instead and lead to a harsh backlash.

In terms of the promotion of democracy, to what extent can regional security be achieved by democracy promotion? How reliable is the proposition that a democratic China would make the region safe? One might argue that value diplomacy could actually trigger a geopolitical divide that might otherwise be avoidable. Japan's Koizumi administration and the successor Abe government loudly promoted value diplomacy by advocating the building of a democratic coalition in the Asia-Pacific. This talk unnecessarily raised concerns in Beijing and met with strong resistance from New Delhi. The Fukuda administration wisely gave up on value diplomacy and instead sought to reduce tensions, for instance by openly assuring that there would be no visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. Ironically, less inspired by values in foreign policy and more motivated by the traditional value of the "Asian way," Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda achieved more progress than his two successors.⁴ Based on the "Fukuda Doctrine, Version 2," Japan has managed to stabilize ties with its Asian neighbors. Since October 2006 China and Japan have exchanged four summit visits and bilateral relations have made impressive improvements. The Aso administration, taking office in September 2008, has so far been silent regarding Aso's previous promotion of value diplomacy and instead has pragmatically turned to improving Tokyo-Beijing ties. It is still too early to know for sure if Tokyo has abandoned value diplomacy, but for now at least Japan has decisively recognized the risk that a values-based realignment could have for escalating tension in the East.

In Australia, Kevin Rudd's China policy has been as equally well-received in Beijing because he and his government are more resilient and less ideological in the handling of China affairs. As a result, Australia has turned out to be more successful in encouraging China to be a responsible stakeholder. Prime Minister Rudd has stated that Canberra could be a broker between China and the West in the move to foster better understanding in general and to secure Beijing's active participation in emissions reduction cooperation in particular. His overall confidence does not

⁴ Prime Minister Fukuda spoke up on the values issue, stating that the universality of human rights should be respected while also the traditional values rooted in the history of Asian countries should be equally observed. Clearly, the Fukuda government considered both sets of values aligned. See "Global Times," *Huanqiu Shibao*, December 29, 2007.

stem from his proficiency in the Chinese language but rather from his admirable insight into how to achieve positive change with China. Perhaps to placate China's concerns, on August 8, 2008, Rudd pointedly proposed establishing an "Asia-Pacific Community."⁵ This proposal was an effort to re-steer the future of region.

Thus, although the TSD has some potential to reshape the Asia-Pacific security architecture according to U.S. interests and values, there is similarly momentum for pragmatic relations in Asia that could push for more constructive engagement and thus a more stable region. Against this backdrop, the TSD controversy will likely die down.

The TSD and the Security Dilemma

In effect, China's skepticism regarding the TSD results largely from feelings of insecurity. Though China's security interests in the post-Cold War era have been increasing rapidly, the country's key concern has been to prevent a U.S.-imposed strategic encirclement or containment of China. Despite the many improvements in the Beijing-Washington relationship over the past decade, and no matter whether the White House characterizes ties with China as a "constructive working relationship" or, more productively and encouragingly, refers to China as a "responsible stakeholder," Beijing has always been cautiously monitoring Washington's strategic calculations toward China.

Beijing's perception of U.S. strategy stems explicitly from a security dilemma. The Chinese leadership increasingly understands the costs of confronting the benefits of accepting U.S. hegemony; at the same time, however, Beijing remains clear that only Washington is capable of stopping China's rise and that China's hedged acquiescence to U.S. hegemony does not automatically mean the United States will in turn be accommodating to China.⁶ A similar dilemma faces the United States in particular and the West in general: will China use its increasing influence in a cooperative and beneficial manner and integrate itself peacefully into the existing world order? But even if China does so, the rise of China still portends huge risks because it has the potential to become a peer competitor. But the key issue is that China's re-emergence will entail military modernization and rising international influence. The question then is how to ensure that China's rise will not exacerbate the security dilemma that usually arises from power shifts.

Traditionally, the study of security dilemmas has focused on whether a country is motivated to be aggressive or to cooperate.⁷ In the case of China-U.S. ties, however, their motivations are relatively stable and fixed. In this current dyad what matters more is the fact that both sides are handling the relationship based on vastly distinct but converging approaches. The Bush administration has employed a role-defined approach to evaluate China's international presence. Washington tends to press China to take on international responsibilities—both regionally and globally—as much as possible, hoping to condition Beijing with carrots and sticks. For example, the United States praises China for its mediation in the six-party talks for the nuclear dismantlement of North Korea while criticizing Beijing's policies toward Burma, Sudan, and

⁵ Kevin Rudd, "It's Time to Build an Asia Pacific Community" (address to the Asia Society Australia Asia Centre, Sydney, June 4, 2008).

⁶ Minxin Pei, "China's Hedged Acquiescence: Coping with US Hegemony," in *Power and Security in Northeast Asia: Shifting Strategies*, ed. Byung-Kook Kim and Anthony Jones (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 99–125.

⁷ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); and Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–214.

Zimbabwe. In sharp contrast, Beijing's preference is for a relationship-defined approach to relations with the United States. Though openly opposed to the U.S. military invasion of Iraq, Beijing nevertheless warmly regarded President Bush's participation in Beijing's opening ceremony to the Olympic Games on August 8, 2008—so thankful as to even deliberately overlook the vocal criticism of China's human rights record that he voiced in Bangkok and Seoul prior to his arrival.⁸ In sum, Beijing's relationship-defined approach opts for dealing with the United States as it would be and not as it should be. Washington's role-defined approach is the mirror opposite. This distinctive variation reflects not only different philosophies of foreign affairs but also the huge gap in relative power positions.

We can thus say that the TSD dispute can be viewed along two dimensions. The first dimension is power calculation. As the only hegemonic power in the world, the United States enjoys superiority over China. Regardless of how rapidly China's military spending is increasing, the gap between the United States and China in terms of military capabilities and general power projection capabilities will not be effectively narrowed for quite some time. The United States will remain unchallengeable in the years to come. Beijing's military modernization is accelerating, but what China desires from such modernization is more in terms of increased national pride and added strategic weight to prevent an awkward failure in responding to any U.S. coercion. For example, Beijing has to keep one eye on Taiwan and another eye on the increasing of the U.S. military presence in the Taiwan Strait. Based solely on the Taiwan issue, then, Beijing must strengthen its ability to counter U.S. capabilities—otherwise, China will be incapable of preventing Taiwan's independence. China is, moreover a great power—and a great power cannot sit idly by and watch its military degrade. The construction of one aircraft carrier would be enough merely to withdraw overseas Chinese in the event that rioting broke out in an ASEAN country. For the foreseeable future Beijing has no ability to build a navy strong enough to confront the United States in the Asia-Pacific. The frenetic debate within China mostly reflects the country's mounting fear of the growing asymmetry in military capabilities between the United States and China, and particularly mounting national pride: “why shouldn't China have an aircraft-carrier when India has two?” To use the TSD as an attempt to deter China from some alleged military provocation is to overestimate China's ascent in terms of both military capability as well as Beijing's intentions. Technically, the U.S. Pacific Command alone could respond effectively to any military defiance from China. The United States can easily employ its credible conventional deterrence capability to deny any provocation from China. Faced with U.S. military preeminence in the region, Beijing will not enter into a suicidal provocation—with a declaration of independence from Taiwan being perhaps the only exception to this. This U.S. superiority will not change in the foreseeable future, no matter how much Chinese hard-liners dream of fielding a blue water fleet. Similarly, China's demand for security, which has been always overshadowed by U.S. hegemony in the global alliance system, deserves respect.

The second dimension of the TSD dispute is competing approaches to evaluating country behavior. In contrast to the power dimension, divergent domestic contexts and strikingly competing values usually and even unwittingly lead to a much greater divergence in perspectives. The issue of

⁸ “The United States and Asia: Enduring Freedom and Prosperity,” White House, Press Release, August 7, 2008, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/08/20080807.html>; and “Statement of the ROK-U.S. Summit,” White House, Press Release, August 6, 2008, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/08/20080806-6.html>.

Taiwan is a case in point. Washington applies a role-defined approach to judge China's behavior, whereas China adopts a relationship-defined approach. Thus a common Chinese perception is that the U.S. support of Taiwan is a manifestation of the United States wanting to control or supplant China, and has little to do with U.S. values or a more general liberal internationalism. The TSD is but another arena where these different approaches to evaluating behavior emerge. Contending identities—whether by China or the United States—explain much of the ill-will the two sides have toward each other.⁹

If the TSD truly represents an honest and constructive attempt to strengthen regional security, one can question the value of the approach. Given new political dynamics that have occurred in Taiwan since President Ma Ying-jeou took office on May 20, 2008, the prospects for military conflicts over the Taiwan Strait have faded substantially. The cross-Strait relationship is likely to be stable, peaceful, and cooperative during the Ma administration. For the moment, the appeal of Taiwanese independence has given way to respect for the status quo and the fostering of close contacts. This dramatic improvement in cross-Strait ties is nothing short of a window of opportunity for military and strategic confrontation to be pushed aside by the institution of new multilateral security cooperation. By excluding China and other countries, however, the TSD not only fails to take advantage of this opportunity to lower the adverse effect of the security dilemma, but also works to steal momentum from other institutional efforts at cooperative security. So far, the continuation of the six-party talks has sparked much discussion about evolving the talks into a regional security arrangement. If this evolution takes place, there is no doubt that East Asia would see a robust multilateral security mechanism that addresses contending security concerns in a collaborative and substantive manner. Any development of the TSD framework would certainly have only the opposite effect on regional security.

Conclusion: The TSD or a Regional Security Arrangement?

Washington has viewed Beijing as its main strategic competitor. The United States thus is focused on China's potential to challenge U.S. hegemony in the region or to damage the credibility of the U.S. security commitment to the Asia-Pacific. To counter Beijing's presumed strategic intentions, Washington is expanding its alliance network, with the enhancement of trilateral or multilateral arrangements being the main component of its East Asian security strategy. As a result, Beijing has been paying careful attention to how the United States adjusts its alliances.

If the goal is to create a truly comprehensive and stable security structure, the future of the TSD depends largely on whether it can be legitimately coupled with larger security institutionalization in the Asia-Pacific. Given the expanding and deepening financial crisis and looming global economic recession, the imperative for closer cooperation among the powers in the region has never been greater. Any approach that engages China commercially while strategically alienating Beijing is destined to be problematic. One of the challenges that the upcoming Obama administration faces is how to deal with this problem and create a coordinated security architecture that productively engages China. One option is to energize

⁹ Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (London: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2008), 104–6.

the region to aim for security multilateralism rather than distancing Beijing from any regional security architecture formed along ideological and geopolitical lines. Any new architecture in the region should be inclusive, multilateral, and integrative. The TSD, when all is said and done, has only one-sided security cooperation appeal. Sidelining Beijing will certainly not provide a balm to any security trauma the region experiences. Through working with China, we might curb rampant nationalism within China and avoid complicating Beijing's mediation role in the process of the North Korean denuclearization.

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The United States, Japan, and Australia: Security Linkages to Southeast Asia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay analyzes the similarities and differences in how Southeast Asian states and the U.S., Japan, and Australia prefer to enhance Southeast Asia's security.

MAIN FINDINGS

- The U.S., Japan, and Australia have different, though compatible, strategic interests. With respect to Southeast Asia, their interests converge on freedom of the sealines of communication (SLOC), counterterrorism, and political stability.
- ASEAN states follow a hedging strategy toward external powers, inviting their economic and security participation while insuring that no one power dominates.
- Washington is increasingly emphasizing multilateral security activities to supplement bilateral relations in Southeast Asia.
- Southeast Asian states are somewhat suspicious of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, and wonder if it is being developed as an alternative to the ASEAN Regional Forum.
- Maritime nationalism has been an obstacle to external navy patrols and even to some naval cooperation among the states in the Strait of Malacca. Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, however, have coordinated anti-piracy patrols in the Strait of Malacca and have sought technical assistance from Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra.
- With the exception of Singapore, ASEAN states oppose "securitizing" anti-piracy and anti-terrorism activities in the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. ASEAN members prefer to deal with the challenges as maritime crime and, therefore, as a law enforcement problem based on national jurisdictions.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- With respect to Southeast Asia, the trilateral countries should coordinate maritime safety and security assistance with the littoral states (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore).
- Law enforcement agencies from the trilateral states should offer more technical assistance to Southeast Asian partners to enhance their capabilities to counter terrorism, drug and human trafficking, gun-running, and money laundering.
- The trilateral states should consider holding regular security discussions with their Southeast Asian partners to determine the kinds of assistance that Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra could provide.

In the post-September 11 world, two concerns dominate U.S. security policy in Southeast Asia. The first concern is a long-standing commitment to maintaining the freedom of the sealines of communication (SLOC) for international commerce—a public good that benefits all trading states. The second concern is combating radical Islamist terrorism, a task upon which Washington has placed a high priority in its bilateral relations with Southeast Asian states as well as in its diplomacy toward regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) held between the United States, Japan, and Australia, covers a number of topics, but from a Southeast Asian perspective the most salient include terrorism, WMD proliferation, and preparation for possible pandemics. Nevertheless, most Southeast Asian governments express little interest in the dialogue. If anything, some view the meetings as efforts by wealthy, developed powers outside Southeast Asia to devise an alternative to the impotent ARF.¹

Australia in particular has developed bilateral security dialogues with Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand. Additionally, Malaysian and Singapore defense relations with Australia go back decades through the Five Power Defense Arrangements. Moreover, Australia has signed counterterrorism memoranda with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Through APEC, the three dialogue partners and Southeast Asian states have also agreed to counterterrorism action plans related to international trade. (Only Malaysia has objected to APEC's counterterrorism requirements, complaining that the organization is moving beyond its commercial mandate.)²

The Australia-Japan defense relationship was significantly strengthened with a 2003 memorandum of understanding that regularized consultation and coordination between defense departments. Joint naval exercises constitute the dominant form of cooperation, and the two defense forces have also worked together in Cambodian peacekeeping (1992–93) and in East Timor where Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) engineers have engaged in reconstruction. Additionally, Japanese personnel have been involved in monitoring developments in Aceh and in offering an aid package to Mindanao in the Philippines. Moreover, Japan dispatched a thousand JSDF troops for humanitarian assistance to Aceh after the December 2004 tsunami.³

Counterterrorism: The Focal Point of Trilateral Security

After September 11 and the 2002 Bali bombings, Australian and U.S. priorities in Southeast Asia focused single-mindedly on counterterrorism. In May 2006 Australia announced a four-year \$70 million aid plan for Southeast Asia to combat terrorism. Support and training would be provided for border control, WMD surveillance, and efforts to counter terrorism propaganda. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) would also step up law enforcement, forensics, and technical training for regional police forces. Coordinating with Canberra, the United States inaugurated a program entitled “Rewards for Justice” that allocated millions of dollars for the capture of Jemaah

¹ Topics covered at the 2006 Sydney trilateral dialogue are cited in Purnendra Jain, “Japan-Australia Security Ties and the United States: The Evolution of the Trilateral Dialogue and Its Challenges,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 4 (December 2006): 530–31.

² Tanya Ogilvie-White, “Non-proliferation and Counter-terrorism Cooperation in Southeast Asia: Meeting Global Obligations through Regional Security Architectures?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 28, no. 1 (April 2006): 12–14.

³ Lam Peng Er, “Japan’s Human Security Role in Southeast Asia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 28, no. 1 (April 2006): 143, 152, 154.

Islamiyah (JI) leaders who were wanted for the Bali attacks and other depredations in Indonesia and the Philippines.⁴

ASEAN has generally welcomed this external support, though its own counterterrorism actions have been more cautious, reflecting the multi-confessional demographics of several ASEAN states. At its January 2007 summit, ASEAN leaders signed their first convention on counterterrorism but insisted that “terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, or ethnic group.” Moreover, unlike the hard-line U.S. approach to terrorism, ASEAN pledged to try to rehabilitate and reintegrate convicted terrorists back into society.⁵

The Maritime Dimension of Southeast Asian Security

Multilateral maritime security is an ASEAN priority. Though the declaratory target is piracy, in effect, anti-piracy capabilities are much the same as those required for maritime counterterrorism. In 2002 the ASEAN Work Program adopted in Kuala Lumpur called for information-sharing on pirates and also acknowledged the need to seek technical and financial assistance from dialogue partners, including Australia, Japan, and the United States. The states in the Strait of Malacca—Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—have asked user states to share the costs of ensuring maritime safety and security. International Maritime Organization meetings in Jakarta (2005) and Kuala Lumpur (2006) urged user countries to fulfill their UN Law of the Sea obligations. However, only Japan has offered to contribute. Meanwhile, at the Kuala Lumpur meeting, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia tabled four projects that could be funded by user states: wreck removals, situational awareness build-ups to respond to hazardous incidents, provision of AIS transponders to small ships, and replacement and maintenance of navigational aids.⁶

The United States has been particularly interested in promoting naval cooperation. The annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercises with Southeast Asian navies have included surveillance, SLOC protection, and countermeasures against mines. Nevertheless, there exists a disjunction between the U.S. Navy’s focus on littoral operations and expeditionary forces, on the one hand, versus regional navies that are interested in sea-denial capabilities to defend their littorals, on the other. Moreover, Southeast Asian states have a strong commitment to sovereignty in their territorial seas that even extends to their exclusive economic zones (EEZ).⁷

When U.S. Pacific Command announced a Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) designed to call on available maritime forces to protect Southeast Asian SLOCs, Malaysia and Indonesia objected to the notion of patrols conducted by extraregional countries. To preempt this project, Operation MALSINDO was devised whereby the three littoral Malacca Straits states would be responsible for straits security. The first trilateral patrols were launched in July 2004. By 2006 seventeen ships had been allocated to the patrols: seven from Indonesia, five from Malaysia, and five from Singapore. Yet these ships may only patrol within the territorial waters of their own states and no “hot pursuit” protocol has been devised. Instead, “reverse hot pursuit” agreements

⁴ Joshua Eisenman, “Australia: An Ally Down Under,” *Journal of International Security Affairs*, no. 11 (Fall 2006): 2, 7.

⁵ Diane Mauzy and Brian Job, “U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia: Limited Re-engagement after Years of Benign Neglect,” *Asian Survey* 47, no. 4 (July/August 2007): 639.

⁶ Sam Bateman, “Regional Responses to Enhance Maritime Security in East Asia,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 41–43.

⁷ Bateman, “Regional Responses,” 51; see also Kazumine Akimoto, “The Threat of Maritime Terrorism and Responses: The Zone of Threat and the Sea-Lanes in a Global Strategy Map,” *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 66.

have been discussed among Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines that would allow the ships of one state to drive the ship being pursued into the coastal waters of a neighbor whose own navy (or coast guard) would be waiting.⁸

In 2003, motivated by the prospect of North Korea providing WMD contraband to so-called rogue states such as Syria and Iran, Washington inaugurated the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) with like-minded states that agreed to open their own flagged vessels for cargo inspection and to interdict suspicious ships entering the territorial waters of PSI members. Japan, Australia, and Singapore were among the original PSI adherents. Other ASEAN states have expressed interest in the PSI but for various reasons have refrained from joining. Indonesia and Malaysia see PSI as an encroachment on sovereignty, while the Philippines lacks the naval capability to participate.⁹

Coast guards have the potential for a greater role in maritime security along the Southeast Asian littoral. As maritime police rather than navies, they maintain a lower political profile and are less threatening to countries particularly sensitive to sovereignty. Indicative of the importance of coast guards to Asia-Pacific security is the 2006 decision by the U.S.-led Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) to invite coast guards to participate in WPNS sea exercises. The Royal Australian Navy exercised with a Japanese coast guard vessel in the 2003 Pacific Protector exercise in the Coral Sea, a part of the PSI.¹⁰ For Southeast Asian navies, the littorals are vital human and economic spaces that need to be protected against criminal and terrorist activities. Coast guards are better equipped and trained for this role than western navies with expeditionary forces that view the littorals as a space from which large forces can leap from the sea to the land.¹¹ These navies are not constabulary forces. Of the three trilateral countries, Japan's coast guard has been the most attentive to Southeast Asian needs. Tokyo trains Southeast Asian coast guard personnel in Japan and has hosted seminars on port security in Southeast Asia as well as has worked individually with Indonesia to help Jakarta create an independent coast guard.¹²

Malacca Straits Security—A Multinational Enterprise

For several years, the Malacca Straits states conducted parallel, though independent, anti-piracy patrols. In 2005 these efforts were enhanced through greater coordination (discussed above). These efforts now include the Eyes in the Sky initiative by which one country's surveillance aircraft include personnel from the other two littoral states on board when monitoring suspicious maritime activity and notify their respective navies to take action. The United States offered to assist these efforts. Singapore endorsed the U.S. offer, but Malaysia and Indonesia demurred, saying that direct U.S. involvement would violate their sovereignty. Nevertheless, deputy prime minister and defense

⁸ A good discussion may be found in Joshua Ho, "The Security of Sea Lanes in Southeast Asia," *Asian Survey* 46, no. 4 (July/August 2006): 471; and Sam Bateman, "UNCLOS and Its Limitations as the Foundation for a Regional Security Regime," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 53. See also Sheldon W. Simon, "Military Relations Restored with Indonesia, while U. S. Passes on First East Asia Summit," *Comparative Connections: A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* 7, no. 4 (January 2006): 55–66.

⁹ Martin N. Murphy, "Suppression of Piracy and Maritime Terrorism: A Suitable Role for the Navy?" *Naval War College Review* 60, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 23–44.

¹⁰ Ho, "The Security of Sea Lanes," 573; and Desmond Ball, "Whither the Japan-Australia Security Relationship?" Nautilus Institute, Austral Policy Forum, September 2006.

¹¹ This argument is made by Murphy, "Suppression of Piracy and Maritime Terrorism," 39, 41.

¹² Bateman, "Regional Responses," 43–45.

minister Najib Tun Razak stated that the United States would be welcome to provide aircraft for Eyes in the Sky as long as the personnel on board were exclusively from the straits states.¹³

In January 2007 Admiral Michael Mullen, then U.S. chief of naval operations, during a visit to Singapore praised the coordinated anti-piracy patrols conducted by the Malacca Straits states as a “model maritime network” and offered U.S. information technology.¹⁴ Subsequently in March, then commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Admiral Gary Roughead, stated that there was no need for the U.S. Navy to patrol the straits because the littoral states were “doing very well. We cooperate closely with these countries.”¹⁵

The littoral states have been pressing users of the Malacca Straits to contribute a fair share of the costs needed to ensure their navigational safety. Najib in mid-March 2007 stated that user states that want to see better safety arrangements should help finance their upgrade. He praised Japan’s Nippon Foundation, which has proposed a special fund to which shipping companies could contribute to finance navigational aids and the removal of shipwrecks from the straits.

A separate U.S. exercise, Southeast Asia Cooperation Against Terrorism (SEACAT), was held in mid-August 2007, involving navies from Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand working with U.S. ships in a variety of scenarios. For example, the Singapore exercise focused on the tracking of ships transiting through the Singapore Strait as well as an anti-terrorist simulation involving the hijacking of a merchant ship.¹⁶

The Japanese and Australian Roles in Southeast Asian Security

Unlike more broad-gauged U.S. security relations with Southeast Asia, Japan and Australia have focused on counterterrorism and transnational crime. Canberra has entered into security agreements with Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, whereas Japan has been concerned primarily with assistance in the maintenance of open SLOCs. Australia is a key partner in the longstanding 1971 Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) that includes the UK, New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia. The FPDA Integrated Air Defense System provides for the rotation of combat aircraft from all five states to Malaysia’s Butterworth Air Force Base. FPDA armed forces exercise together annually. The only Southeast Asia relationship Australia dominates, however, is with East Timor, for whom Canberra is an ally and guarantor. Australia’s position in East Timor complicates Canberra’s relations with Indonesia, though common counterterrorism needs, especially after the 2002 Bali bombings, have led to renewed military and police ties. On February 7, 2008, Jakarta and Canberra ratified a 2006 agreement on counterterrorism, intelligence, and maritime security cooperation scheduled to run until 2011.

Australia’s security relations with Singapore are very close. The two countries’ armed forces are the most advanced and capable in the region. Personnel exchanges are high, and Singaporean armed forces regularly train in Australia, also prepositioning some equipment

¹³ Sheldon W. Simon, “Better Military Relations and Human Rights Concerns,” *Comparative Connections: A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* 9, no. 2 (July 2007): 68.

¹⁴ Incorporating the naval capabilities of friendly states in a common security endeavor is the idea behind Admiral Mullen’s “thousand ship navy” concept.

¹⁵ Sheldon W. Simon, “Military Support and Political Concerns,” *Comparative Connections: A Quarterly E-Journal of East Asian Bilateral Relations* 9, no. 1 (April 2007): 67–68.

¹⁶ Sheldon W. Simon, “Burma Heats Up and the U.S. Blows Hot and Cold,” *Comparative Connections: A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* 9, no. 3 (October 2007): 62.

at Australian training areas. The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) has operated a pilot training facility in western Australia since 1993, and in August 2005 Singapore was given access to the Shoalwater Bay Training Area in Queensland, where the country may deploy up to 6,600 personnel and their equipment for up to 45 days each year through 2009. Australia has also provided military equipment to Southeast Asian states—for example in May 2007 donating 28 high-speed gunboats to the Philippine Navy for use in its southern waterways. Australia, the United States, and the Philippines are particularly concerned about sea boundaries between Borneo and the Philippines, where smugglers, pirates, human traffickers, and JI militants cross at will.¹⁷

Conclusion

The trilateral countries and Singapore would like to “securitize” anti-piracy efforts in Southeast Asia by linking them to counterterrorism. This linkage would make maritime security cooperation a part of the national security strategies of Southeast Asian participants alongside Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra. The other ASEAN members, however, do not concur. Protective of their sovereign prerogatives, they insist that piracy and maritime terrorism should not be conflated and that piracy is a criminal activity and therefore is subject to national criminal jurisdictions. No external powers should be involved in suppressing pirates.¹⁸ In effect this means that Southeast Asian states will limit U.S., Australian, and Japanese security activities to technical assistance, financial support for regional armed forces, training of coast guards, and naval and air joint exercises—the last dominated by the United States.

Singapore remains the exception as the only ASEAN state whose armed forces qualitatively match those of the trilateral members. Singapore’s interest in playing in the “big leagues” was dramatically demonstrated in the joint exercise Malabar-07-02. In the largest multinational Asian naval exercise in decades, Singapore joined large naval contingents from the United States, India, Japan, and Australia from September 4–9, 2007, in the eastern Indian Ocean. The exercises featured a range of scenarios, including mock air battles involving Indian and U.S. carriers, sea strikes near the Strait of Malacca, as well as anti-piracy and anti-gunrunning drills off the Andaman island chain. Malabar-07-02 came at a time when then chief of naval operations Admiral Mullen called for a “thousand ship navy” consisting of countries that have a common concern in protecting the SLOCs from piracy and illegal trafficking as well as the proliferation of WMD. Humanitarian relief from the seas was also a component of the exercise.

Some analysts have described Malabar-07-02 as a response to China’s “string of pearls” strategy, whereby the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has gained access to Indian Ocean ports in Burma and Bangladesh. Others see the exercise as the beginning of an “alliance” of Asian democracies. However, the commander of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, Vice Admiral Doug Crowder, underplayed these speculations. He insisted that the war games, held not far from Burma, were directed against no country but rather provided for the common good of keeping the sea lanes open for international commerce. Similarly, U.S. Pacific Commander Admiral Timothy Keating stated: “There is no—let me emphasize no—effort on our part or any of those

¹⁷ Simon, “Better Military Relations,” 68.

¹⁸ Ralf Emmers, “Comprehensive Security and Resilience in Southeast Asia: ASEAN’s Approach to Terrorism and Sea Pirates,” *Pacific Review* (forthcoming, 2008).

countries' parts, I'm sure, to isolate China.”¹⁹ The high-level assurances from the United States followed angry expressions from Beijing that the war games constituted an effort to “contain” China in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, the United States, Australia, Japan, and India are all engaging in strategic consultations that began on the sidelines of the May 2007 ARF meeting in Manila.

Whether Malabar-07-02 will be a one-off event or the beginning of more elaborate multinational security exercises in and around Southeast Asia remains to be seen. ASEAN members will view future exercises involving large numbers of external forces with some anxiety as a potential encroachment on the responsibilities of ASEAN states for the maintenance of security in their own neighborhoods. External assistance for building these capacities continues to be welcome, as can be seen in current weapons sales to ASEAN armed forces. Any external efforts to usurp regional security roles, however, will be resisted. For the trilateral states a balance must be struck with Southeast Asia whereby regional strategic interests are supported but not replaced.

¹⁹ Simon, “Burma Heats Up,” 61–62.

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