

STIMSON

# US-Japan-Australia SECURITY COOPERATION

Prospects and Challenges

edited by  
Yuki Tatsumi





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## Foreword

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I am pleased to present Stimson's latest publication, *US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges*. This edited volume is a collection of pieces by a diverse group of scholars and advisors from the United States, Japan, and Australia, together addressing key aspects of this evolving and dynamic relationship among key Asian allies.

The report examines the trilateral relationship from the lens of general international relations theory, as well as from its specific historical context. Within this framework, the volume discusses specific policy dimensions of the relationship: humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime capacity building, and defense technology.

I am confident that this publication will make an important contribution to the public dialogue regarding US-Japan-Australia trilateral security cooperation in the Asia Pacific. As the United States seeks to enhance its bilateral and "minilateral" relationships in the region, the three countries working together provides a valuable foundation for regional peace and security.

Yuki Tatsumi, who leads Stimson's work on Japan, did a remarkable job in assembling an impressive group of scholars and in facilitating this collaborative analysis of the trilateral relationship. She has also provided her own insights in this volume, particularly with regards to defense equipment cooperation, assessing the cases of F-35 production support and Australia's acquisition of next-generation submarines. As the three countries deliberately seek to expand defense cooperation, her analysis underscores both the potential and the challenges of the trilateral relationship.

Finally, I wish to thank our partners in this project, the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership and Japan-United States Friendship Commission.

Ellen Laipson  
President and CEO  
The Stimson Center





## Acknowledgements

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First and foremost, I would like to thank those who funded this project. The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership provided the essential funding to complete the project. In addition, the Japan-United States Friendship Commission provided critical supplementary support. Without these funders, the project would not have been possible. My deepest gratitude goes to them.

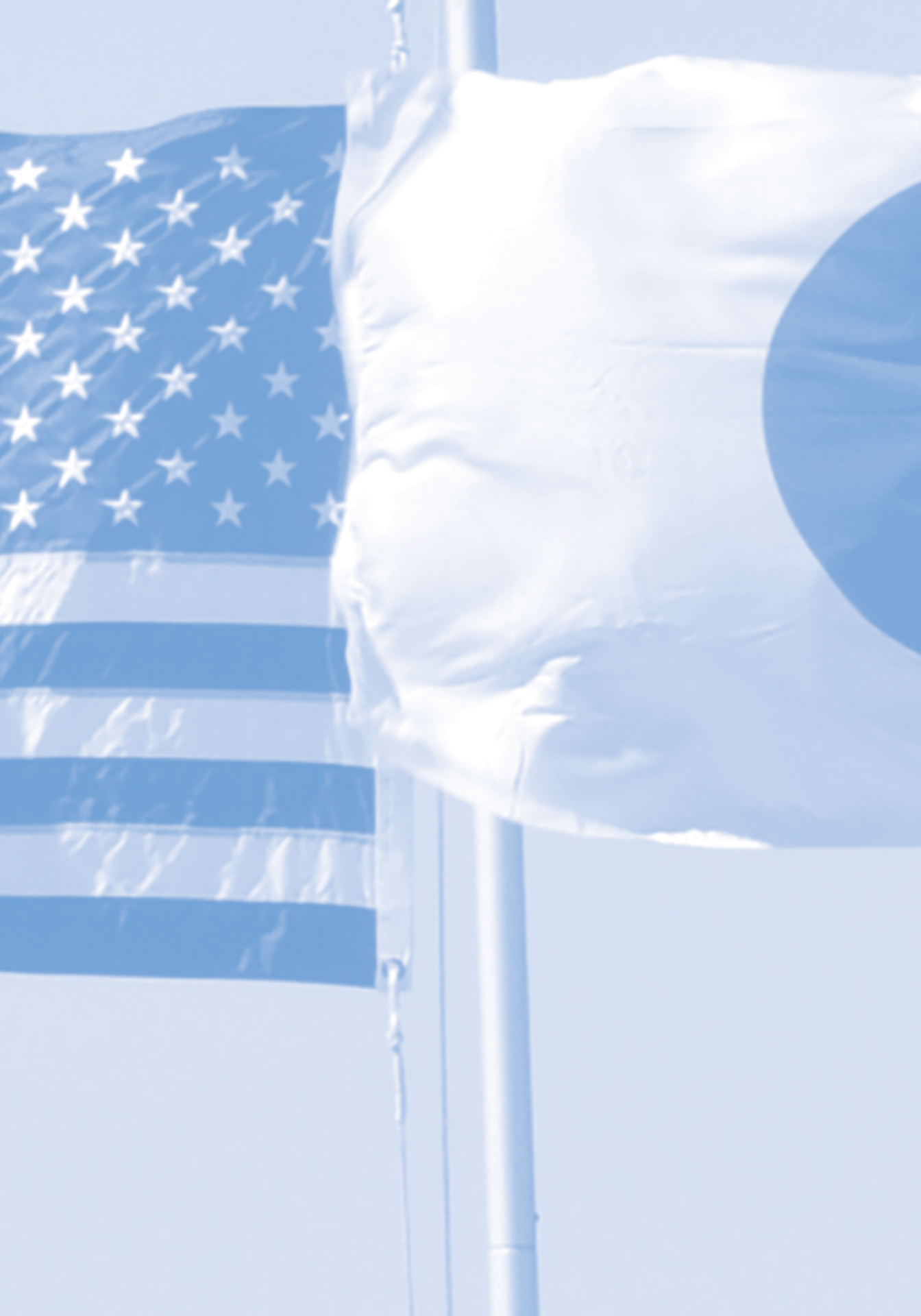
Next, I would like to thank my partners in this project. Dr. Ken Jimbo of the Canon Institute for Global Studies was resourceful in his ideas for various outreach activities following the publication of this report. I would also like to thank Dr. William T. Tow of Australian National University (ANU) for his counsel and his willingness to commit a great deal of ANU's own resources for this project. Other project participants — H.D.P. Envall, Ryo Sahashi, and James L. Schoff — also deserve special recognition. They are all very much in demand, and yet they were willing to commit much of their time and effort into contributing analyses for this volume. I have been incredibly lucky in all of the collaborative research projects I have managed, and I can say with confidence that this volume is a product of our genuine collective work.

I would also like to thank US, Japanese, and Australian government officials who offered valuable input in our meetings with them. Their names must remain anonymous as our discussions were held on a strictly off-the-record basis. But their willingness to share their thoughts on various elements of US-Japan-Australia security cooperation was essential as we shaped our ideas for the analyses included in this volume.

I am very grateful for my colleagues at Stimson who managed the logistical arrangements for this project. Hana Rudolph, my research assistant, tirelessly worked to make sure that our workshops ran smoothly and the report was produced on schedule. Lita Ledesma deserves special recognition for her awesome publication design.

Finally, my gratitude and appreciation go to my family.

Yuki Tatsumi  
Senior Associate, East Asia program



## Abbreviations

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A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
ACSA	Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADI	Australia Defence Industries, Ltd.
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
AFP	Armed Forces of Philippines
ANU	Australian National University
ANZUS	Australia-New Zealand-US Security Treaty
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUSMIN	Australia-US Ministerial Consultation
CARAT	Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training
CBA	Capacity Building Assistance
COP	Common Operational Picture
CUP	Capability Upgrade Program
DFAT	Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOD	US Department of Defense/Australia Department of Defence
DOS	US Department of State
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DTCT	Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty
EAS	East Asia Summit
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment

## Abbreviations

FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FPDA	Five Power Defense Arrangement
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GSCF	Global Security Contingency Fund
GSOMIA	General Security of Military Information Agreement
HA/DR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
IMET	International Military Education and Training
ISA	Information Security Agreement
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulations
JCG	Japan Coast Guard
JDSC	Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
JPO	Joint Program Office
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
MDR	Maritime Disaster Response
METI	Japan Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry
MOD	Japan Ministry of Defense
MOFA	Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MRO&U	Maintenance, Repair, Overhaul, and Upgrade
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines
NSS	National Security Strategy
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCG	Philippine Coast Guard
PHIBLEX	Amphibious Landing Exercise
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PPBP	Pacific Patrol Boat Program

PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
R&D	Research and Development
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
S&TF	Systems and Technology Forum
SCC	US-Japan Security Consultative Committee
SDCF	Security and Defense Cooperation Forum
SDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
TSD	Trilateral Strategic Dialogue
TCOG	Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
US	United States
USCG	US Coast Guard
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction



## Introduction

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Yuki Tatsumi

*“Prime Minister Tony Abbott of Australia, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, and President Barack Obama of the United States...expressed their commitment to deepening the trilateral partnership among Australia, Japan, and the United States to ensure a peaceful, stable, and prosperous future for the Asia-Pacific region. They noted that this partnership rests on the unshakable foundation of shared interests and values, including a commitment to democracy and open economies, the rule of law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.”*

— *Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Leaders Meeting*  
November 16, 2014.<sup>1</sup>

On November 16, 2014, US President Barack Obama, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met for a US-Japan-Australia trilateral summit meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders Meeting in Brisbane. It was the first time in over seven years since the leaders of the three countries had met. In a joint statement released after the meeting, the three leaders emphasized that trilateral relations among Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington were solidly founded on their shared interests, and they expressed their commitment to deepening that partnership as a stabilizing force in the Asia-Pacific region. They also reiterated the global scope of their cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

In the last several years, the trilateral security relationship among the United States, Japan, and Australia has quickly emerged as one of the most robust “minilateral” cooperative relationships that the United States has with its allies. Since the end of World War Two, the United States has approached the task of preserving peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region through a “hub-and-spokes” arrangement.<sup>3</sup> With the Asia-Pacific region lacking regional security organizations similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), this

approach has allowed the United States to ensure the stability of the region through a web of bilateral security alliances with key countries in the region.

Today, bilateral alliances continue to remain the principal venue through which the United States seeks to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. However, since the turn of the century, new and emerging security threats in the region have encouraged Washington to explore the potential of multilateral security cooperation among the regional countries. These multinational frameworks, often referred to as minilaterals, involve either US treaty allies and/or countries that the United States deems important strategic partners, generally including three to four participants. One primary example of minilateralism in this context is the US security operations conducted with Japan and South Korea in the 1990s, in order to face the growing security threats posed by North Korea. Other trilateral cooperative frameworks have also emerged in the region, including US-Japan-China and US-Japan-India arrangements. Washington has sought to utilize these minilaterals in order to complement its bilateral alliances and to encourage cooperation among its allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific region.

The US-Japan-Australia trilateral relationship first attracted attention in 2006 when then-US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Australian Foreign Minister John Downer, and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso met for the inaugural ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD) in Sydney. Yet no one expected then that in less than a decade, this relationship would grow to be the most-developed cooperative relationship Washington has in the Asia-Pacific region, with a broader and more robust agenda than any other trilateral relationship.

There is no doubt that the US-Japan-Australia trilateral relationship is rooted in the strong bilateral alliances that the United States enjoys with Japan and Australia. In fact, the United States has taken steps to further enhance these alliances in the last several years. With regard to the US-Japan alliance, Tokyo and Washington have moved to modernize the existing mechanisms of defense cooperation in order to reflect the changing nature of security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. In the joint statement *Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities*, issued on October 3, 2013, Tokyo and Washington laid out a comprehensive list of common strategic objectives.<sup>4</sup> The US and Japanese governments are currently in the final phase of revising the *Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation*, which will update the parameters of bilateral defense cooperation between the US military and the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF).<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the United States and Australia reaffirmed their alliance as an “anchor” of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific



region and beyond in their Australia-United States Ministerial Consultation (AUSMIN) Joint Statement, released on November 20, 2013. In the most recent August 2014 AUSMIN, Washington and Canberra signed the Force Posture Agreement, committing both countries toward fully implementing the Force Posture Initiative originally announced in 2011, which included plans for a rotational presence of the US Marine Corps in Darwin.<sup>6</sup>

What differentiates the US-Japan-Australia trilateral relationship from other minilaterals is the degree to which the security relationships between the non-US participants — Japan and Australia in this case — have deepened. In the case of the US-Japan-ROK trilateral, for instance, political tensions between Tokyo and Seoul have historically prevented the two non-US actors from forging close security cooperation, which in turn has prevented the trilateral relationship from optimizing its potential. While the Memorandum of Understanding for sharing intelligence on developments in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, signed on December 29, 2014, will mark an important first step, Japan and South Korea have a long way to go toward institutionalizing their security cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, security relations between Japan and Australia have steadily developed since the end of the Cold War. From the 1990s through much of the first decade of the 21st century, security cooperation between the two countries began within the context of larger multinational operations such as the UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) in East Timor and the post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq. However, security relations between Tokyo and Canberra quickly developed after the two countries signed the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC) in 2007.

Today, Japan and Australia are growing to be each nation's most important security partner following the United States. For both Canberra and Tokyo, the security relationship with each other constitutes their most institutionalized bilateral arrangement after their alliances with the United States. Their foreign and defense ministers have met for "two-plus-two" foreign and defense ministerial consultations annually since 2007. With the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) signed in 2010 and 2012 respectively, the two countries have the key agreements in place to facilitate deeper defense cooperation between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and SDF. In addition, when each country's foreign and defense ministers met most recently in June 2014, both sides agreed to explore the possibility of defense equipment cooperation.<sup>8</sup> The joint statement issued at the end of the June 2014 two-plus-two meeting identified several areas in which Japan and Australia agreed to boost cooperation. These areas

include (1) joint training and exercise opportunities, (2) personnel exchanges, (3) humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), (4) maritime security, (5) peacekeeping, and (6) capacity building. Trilateral security cooperation with the United States was also highlighted as a high-priority issue.<sup>9</sup>

The US-Japan-Australia trilateral security relationship is also unique in its strong inclination to engage in preserving and buttressing the existing international order in the region. Unlike the US-Japan-ROK security relationship, which is predominantly focused on the security threat posed by North Korea, US-Japan-Australia trilateral security relations are driven by the three countries' desire to utilize their trilateral framework in maintaining the existing international order and spreading fundamental principles such as democracy, respect for human rights, free trade, peaceful resolution of international disagreements, and freedom of navigation. With these shared values, deeper US-Japan-Australia trilateral cooperation can serve as the foundation for a broader regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, the US-Japan-Australia security relationship also has its challenges. The biggest is the diverging perceptions surrounding China's rise and each country's response to it. Today, the three countries' approach towards China is aligned closer than ever. Although Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra each consider Beijing as an important partner in the area of trade and economy, they also share concerns regarding China's assertive behavior, particularly its actions in the East and South China Seas. Beijing's position toward North Korea has also frustrated all three countries.

However, until Prime Minister Abbott took office in 2013, Australia had been reluctant to appear too eager to deepen its relations with Japan and promote trilateral security cooperation, because of concerns that it may antagonize China. It is probable that the three countries' approach to China may diverge once again, particularly with changes in leadership in each of the three capitals within the next several years.<sup>10</sup>

Still, the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security relationship is important today as the most developed trilateral security relationship in the Asia-Pacific region. Compared with other trilateral and minilateral frameworks, this trilateral relationship has the potential to become a foundation for engagement with other countries in activities that build regional peace and stability. For this reason, this volume dedicates its attention to the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security relationship, rather than focusing on three sets of bilateral security relationships.

In Chapter One, William T. Tow of Australian National University (ANU) introduces the theoretical debate over why minilateral or trilateral cooperation, including the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security arrangement, has emerged in recent years. He also discusses the limits in existing theories to explain what gives qualitative difference to the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security cooperation, what the development of US-Japan-Australia relations may suggest for other “inter-US allies,” what the security cooperation may offer to the United States and its allies, and what trilateral security cooperation ultimately means for efforts to maintain a stable and prosperous security environment in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

In Chapter Two, James L. Schoff of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace provides a comprehensive overview of the evolution of the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security relationship. In his detailed observations dating back to interactions in the 1990s, Schoff articulates how the trilateral relationship among Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra, once primarily led by diplomatic and economic motives, has evolved into a security partnership more strongly characterized by its political-military nature.

In Chapter Three through Chapter Five, the volume offers three case studies through which the evolution of the trilateral security relationship will be examined. In Chapter Three, H. D. P. Envall of ANU covers HA/DR as the first case study. He maintains that HA/DR cooperation has built “the habit of cooperation” among the US military, ADF, and SDF. Envall also suggests that HA/DR cooperation has provided a platform on which the three militaries can engage in joint operations, in a way that may not be permissible in other circumstances.

In Chapter Four, Ken Jimbo of Keio University and the Canon Institute for Global Studies tackles capacity building as the second case study. In this chapter, Jimbo posits that capacity building, which is given high priority in the security policy of all three countries, is like HA/DR cooperation in that it has allowed the three countries to gain a habit of cooperation and coordination. Jimbo further explains, since capacity building often involves state agencies that are not traditionally involved in national security, cooperation in this area has allowed the three countries to develop their security relationship in a comprehensive manner.

Chapter Five highlights the opportunities and challenges for defense equipment cooperation among the three countries. In this chapter, Tatsumi examines this very nascent area and argues that both fiscal and industrial incentives exist to encourage defense equipment cooperation among the United States, Japan,

and Australia. By examining recent examples, including the arrangement of F-35 production support and discussions concerning Australia's acquisition of next-generation submarines to replace its Collins-class, she argues that Japan's revision of its arms export principles has been critical in facilitating discussion in this area.

In Chapter Six, Ryo Sahashi of Kanagawa University places the developments in US-Japan-Australia relations that were discussed in Chapters One through Five within a broader context. In doing so, he identifies how the evolution of US-Japan-Australia security relations has and will continue to impact the larger debate over regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region.

This volume does not address certain aspects of the trilateral relationship, such as opportunities for trilateral cooperation in maritime security or peacekeeping operations. It also does not provide extensive analysis of the challenges the three nations face over deeper cooperation. In the Conclusion, Jimbo, Tow, and Tatsumi seek to remedy this by addressing some of these issues and offering "food for thought" as the authors look to the future of US-Japan-Australia security cooperation.

This volume is the result of truly collaborative work undertaken by six researchers. We hope that this volume will serve as an introduction to the evolving and dynamic trilateral security relations among Washington, Canberra, and Tokyo.

## Endnotes

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9. *Ibid.*
10. The US presidential elections will be held in 2016. In Australia, the next general election must be held before January 14, 2017. In Japan, the next general election must be held no later than December 2017.



## The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, Minilateralism, and Asia-Pacific Order Building

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*William T. Tow*

Minilateralism is becoming a more prominent security trend in contemporary Asia-Pacific geopolitics, and the debate is intensifying over what this means for regional security. Some argue that cooperation among small groups of states that are informally pursuing common security interests is a better fit for the post-war Asian model of informal negotiations and institution building. They argue that this approach facilitates rapid decision-making and greater efficiency in realizing mutual security objectives than do more formal, unwieldy multilateral institutions, and that it remains an integral part of a complex Asian patchwork of bilateral, minilateral, and multilateral regional security arrangements.<sup>1</sup> Others (particularly those in China) counter that minilateralism in Asia is merely the latest version of a strategy to enmesh Beijing in an American-dominated regional security system.<sup>2</sup> Minilateralism is, critics further assert, a less preferable means of dialogue to address seminal regional security questions than multilateral forums, which are more inclusive and amenable to implementing norms for regional order and governance.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter initially explores how minilateral security politics have advanced in the Asia-Pacific region during the post-Cold War era. It then describes the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) as a case study in evaluating the viability of minilateral security and, more specifically, “strategic triangularity.” Emphasis is directed toward discerning what these dialogues may offer the United States and its allies that could transcend the traditional US “hub-and-spokes” approach to regional security. The chapter’s final section offers assessments regarding what trilateralism and by extension minilateralism contributes to a stable and prosperous security environment in the Asia-Pacific region. It concludes that the success of trilateral and minilateral arrangements will depend upon striking a judicious politico-diplomatic balance. The United States and its regional security partners can use minilateral arrangements to resolve regional security challenges where high levels of policy unanimity exist between Washington and its regional allies. The application of these arrangements, however, will

be conditional on China's understanding that these are not directed toward restraining or balancing against China in ways that emulate traditional US Cold War strategy.

## Minilateral Security: Concepts and Challenges

Economists and experts in both global governance and climate change have readily embraced the concept of minilateralism in their work. Their disillusionment with the track record of existing multilateral institutions and with the pace of trade regulation has led to a plethora of recent works regarding the potential for minilateralism to manage international relations.<sup>4</sup> The concept of minilateralism has been under-discussed in regional and international security studies.<sup>5</sup> However, this may be changing due to a growing realization that the post-war US bilateral alliance network in the Asia-Pacific region — considered in Washington as the traditional linchpin of regional stability — can no longer operate as a purely “hub-and-spokes” or asymmetrical security system in an increasingly multipolar regional strategic environment. Nor have the region's multilateral security institutions been successful in filling the void. Minilateral initiatives that are ad hoc and therefore flexible, comprise member-states with common interests and unencumbered by formal treaty commitments. Such initiatives have become increasingly appealing to policymakers in the United States and its partners. As Moises Naim has argued, minilateralism is perceived as “a smarter, more targeted approach...bring[ing] to the table the smallest number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem.”<sup>6</sup> The collective goods problems normally associated with alliance politics are thereby circumvented, as is the imperative to reconcile the values and interests of diverse members in multilateral settings.<sup>7</sup>

This definition leads to questions about how multilateralism is actually defined or conceptualized in an Asia-Pacific security context. The stakes in maintaining regional peace and stability are too high to merely replicate US Supreme Court Judge Potter Stewart's axiom “I know it when I see it.”<sup>8</sup> If minilateralism is to play a key role in Asian security politics, Asian analysts and policymakers must further develop their thinking about what minilateralism is and how it fits into the region's overall security framework.

Minilateralism is additionally defined here as “usually three, but sometimes four or five states meeting and interacting informally (in the absence of a governing document) to discuss issue-areas involving mutual threats to their security or, more often, to go over specific tasks related to building regional stability and order.”<sup>9</sup> Minilaterals lack the exclusivity of bilateral alliances, where the



relative gains of both participants are maximized within collaboration against a common threat or the realization of a mutual interest. Nor do they aspire to identify or build norms, or establish rules. Minilaterals' "task orientation" renders them less threatening to states that perceive themselves to be the target of either bilateral alliances' containment or balancing strategies, or whose values and interests depart substantially from perceived multilateral agendas.

Naim's "magic number" formula of using the smallest number of powers to solve a particular policy challenge provides a foundation for evaluating minilateral, and particularly trilateral, groupings. Focusing on the optimum number of members in such groupings, however, leaves other critical aspects of the minilateralism approach unaddressed. Neo-realists in international relations, for example, would insist that the number of powers collaborating on a specific security issue is less critical than the involvement of regional great powers. Nor do they concede that when great powers act in concert with their middle or smaller-sized counterparts, security dilemmas can be avoided.<sup>10</sup>

Victor Cha has observed that minilateral approaches to Asia-Pacific regional security may be effective and compatible with both bilateralism and multilateralism, even in the absence of great power policy consensus. This is because all three approaches can work together to form a complementary "patchwork" that embraces "Asian informality" in the management of security politics and to integrate the objectives of bilateral, minilateral, and multilateral security institutions.<sup>11</sup> Whether regional security can truly be realized by such enlightened osmosis alone, however, remains questionable, even though minilateralism may be a more powerful catalyst in facilitating Asia-Pacific regional security politics than Cha allows.

In an important commentary on minilateralism, J. Martin Rochester supports Cha's view that informality is a critical component of the minilateral process, entailing "the pursuit of international cooperation through ad hoc, mostly issue-specific bargaining among like-minded, relevant actors." Rochester goes on, however, to observe that this process usually occurs "in multiple arenas rather than in a system-wide, universal context." This departs from Cha's notion that the Asia-Pacific regional security system is shaped predominantly and randomly by a "complex network" of bilaterals, trilaterals and other plurilateral configurations.<sup>12</sup>

Minilateral approaches to security interaction can initially be reactive instrumentalities, dependent upon the precise nature of the security challenges that generate them. But such associations have proven capable of acquiring ballast and durability. The Core Group — Australia, India, Japan, and the

United States — that emerged from the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami is illustrative of this point. Security collaboration among the four Core Group members metamorphosed in various ways over the past decade, perhaps most significantly in joint maritime security exercises. While the so-called 2006–2007 “Quadrilateral Initiative” initially considered by these four countries proved to be overly provocative towards China, more subtle interaction in intelligence sharing and ballistic missile defense research has been sustained or expanded.

Two key catalysts for minilateral security collaboration are the application of common values or mutual interests to a specific challenge and a realization that leadership is necessary for implementing coherent policy responses. The Core Group countries share human security values that were translated into effective and uncontroversial transnational cooperation in collective disaster relief. The effectiveness of this operation led them to consider (though not inevitably implement) other ways in which their collaboration could be targeted toward “traditional” security missions such as checking the geopolitical power of a revisionist China or working together toward non-traditional objectives including anti-piracy and counter-terrorism initiatives. Japan’s then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe provided early leadership on the quadrennial initiative, but his initiative was constrained by different Australian, Indian, and American interpretations of Chinese intentions at that time and by a concern that such a “league of democracies” would be destabilizing and invoke an unnecessarily strong Chinese response.

Through his subsequent term in office, commencing in late 2012, Abe has promoted a lower-key “diamond” strategy, again involving Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. China’s harder-line diplomacy over the past few years appears to at least partially justify this approach.<sup>13</sup> However, minilateral initiatives involving more than three states tend to be too large and diverse to be effective.<sup>14</sup> For example, India’s tradition of non-alignment does not fit well with the customary collective defense rationales that underpin the US-Australia and US-Japan relationships. Despite Abe’s efforts to advance his quadrilateral vision, the trilateral form of minilateralism generated by Australian, Japanese, and American collaboration via the TSD has clearly acquired more momentum and warrants further examination.

## Trilateral Security and the TSD

Theoretical work on minilateral security remains sparse, and this is certainly the case with its trilateral component. Early efforts to conceptualize trilateralism were focused on the TSD and, to a lesser extent, on the Trilateral Coordination

and Oversight Group (TCOG), which was formed by Japan, South Korea, and the United States in April 1999. However, the TCOG format was superseded by the Six Party Talks in 2006. While the TCOG arguably operated as an effective consultative mechanism between Japanese, South Korean, and American policy planners, it was impeded by an inability to develop joint proposals on issues like curbing North Korea's nuclear weapons programs to be presented to Pyongyang. It was also hindered by widening disparities between South Korean and US policies on North Korea during the presidential terms of Kim Dae-jung and George W. Bush, by intensified tensions between South Korea and Japan over territorial issues and unresolved historical differences, and by Chinese efforts to use its growing bilateral relationship with South Korea as a wedge within US alliance politics in Northeast Asia.<sup>15</sup> Intermittent arguments by various observers that the US-Japan-ROK security triangle should be strengthened on the basis of sheer geopolitical logic have largely failed to translate into actual policy.<sup>16</sup>

The TSD has fared better than the TCOG and has thus been subject to more theoretical analysis over its inter-relationships with existing regional alliances and alignments. A year after the TSD, which was convened in 2002 at the vice-ministerial level, was upgraded to the ministerial level in 2005, Thomas Wilkins offered a comprehensive examination of its format. While lacking formal treaty commitment and mutual assistance obligations, Wilkins asserted that the TSD is nonetheless a *virtual alliance*. It embodies shared interests and values in a tightly-bound minilateral consortium acting within the pretext of promoting regional order building in congruence with larger multilateral groupings.<sup>17</sup> Wilkins' major point was that the TSD is an example of how a traditional understanding of what an alliance is based on (threat calculations) must be reconsidered. In his later writings, Wilkins identifies "undeclared goals," as opposed to explicit treaty commitments, as a critical feature in evolving minilateral alliance politics.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time that Wilkins was grappling with the TSD's possible minilateral alliance identity, William Tow explored the applicability of "trilateralism" and "triangularity" in explaining the nature and rationale of the TSD as an example of minilateralism.<sup>19</sup> Trilateralism in this context was deemed to be cooperative security behavior among three states or polities to promote specific values and preferred avenues to order building. Triangularity is less about ideals and more about interests. It is pursued either by three states to balance or hedge against a rising and potentially hostile hegemonic power, or by a stronger state to intervene in disputes among weaker states with which the stronger state maintains alliance or coalition harmony.

The TSD format did not completely fit with either pattern. The joint statement emanating from its March 2006 inaugural conference in Sydney projected a

determination to support democracy and strengthen cooperative frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region. It also welcomed China's regional engagement as well as participation by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Korea, thereby embracing the principle that countries with diverse values could still be legitimate participants in the region's order-building process.<sup>20</sup> Nor did the United States regard the TSD as a necessary mechanism in intervening in the few Australian and Japanese differences that may have existed at the time. Australia's distance from and growing trade relationship with China modified the threat perceptions John Howard's government may have held regarding Beijing's strategic behavior, in contrast to Japan's more proximate geography, territorial disputes, and unresolved historical issues vis-à-vis Beijing. Tow argued that in the absence of these conditions, one could classify the TSD as a case of "contingent trilateralism," in which confidence building precedes threat perception as a security collaboration rationale and in which smaller allies (Australia and Japan) attempt to balance their relationships with regional powers without risking defection by their larger mutual ally (the United States).

In examining the TSD's minilateral role relative to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and other Asia-Pacific multilateral security initiatives, Kuniko Ashizawa introduced a critique of both Wilkins' intra-alliance politics framework and Tow's contingent trilateralism model. Ashizawa insisted that one needed to go beyond appraising the TSD's beginnings to examine its significance to "overall relations, patterns of interaction, or existing institutional arrangements among states at a sub-regional, regional or global level."<sup>21</sup> In this context she argued that the TSD was a by-product of collective Australian, Japanese, and American dissatisfaction with divisions within the ARF over how and at what pace to best implement regional confidence-building and preventive diplomacy measures required to defuse regional tensions and security dilemmas. She also argued that as "like-minded states," the three allies increasingly viewed one term — whether it may be minilateralism or trilateralism — as an attractive mechanism for managing China's rise compared with unwieldy multilateral instrumentalities such as the ARF.

In hindsight, one may conclude that Ashizawa underestimated the functional capacity and utility of the TSD as a minilateral mechanism and, with that grouping's other earlier critics, overplayed its potential to disrupt or contend with multilateral security politics in the region. The TSD's functional progress is covered in other chapters in this book. One general observation is that the TSD has matured by introducing a number of significant functional components related to its missions and operations, including the Security and Defense Cooperation Forum (SDCF), a trilateral missile defense forum, and an expanded series of joint military exercises.<sup>22</sup>

These developments appear to vindicate at least some of Wilkins' and Tow's early theoretical observations that trilateralism is an emerging and viable form of minilateralism, but certain aspects of their theories are still uncertain. The TSD has worked to strengthen alliance interdependence and cooperative security across a number of policy sectors. This process compares favorably with their policy toward the ARF, where consensus over how to instigate and sustain confidence building and preventive diplomacy remains elusive due largely to divisions within ASEAN (witness the latter organization's failure to release a joint communiqué at its annual ministerial summit in Phnom Penh in November 2012). The initial excitement over the prospects for the East Asia Summit (EAS) to become a dynamic and comprehensive architecture of regional security has also proved to be ill-founded. The TSD has reinforced the relevance of the post-war American bilateral alliance system by facilitating that system's adaptation to a more complex and less zero-sum international security environment than the relatively straightforward bipolarity that dominated the Cold War. The TSD's tacit or "soft-balancing" strategy, which was designed to preserve Asia-Pacific stability against potential Chinese revisionism, has worked in tandem with US and allied efforts to enmesh an increasingly wealthy China into the existing regional security order as a "responsible" regional security actor. This example corresponds with Tow's expectation that contingent minilateralism can bring together soft-balancing and cooperative security in ways that will gradually lead to genuine regional cooperation. As Michael Green has observed, "trilateral forums were established to leverage *common values and interests* in order to shape the larger regional agenda for security cooperation ... [and to pursue] a favourable balance of power." While doing so, he suggests that the "weaker legs" of the triangle — in this case the Australia-Japan security dyad — are strengthened and can contribute more effectively to the joint capacity-building process that is necessary in achieving leverage and maintaining regional and international stability.<sup>23</sup>

The TSD states have taken care to avoid tensions and hostilities with China and with other ARF members whenever possible, by projecting maximum transparency about its activities and even on occasion inviting China to interact with one or more TSD parties in joint military exercises. China's participation in the 2014 "Rim of the Pacific" (RIMPAC) multilateral exercises and the People's Liberation Army's participation in the October 2014 Exercise Kowari survival training and trust-building exercise near Darwin are two recent cases in point. It is impossible to completely avoid public expressions of differences as evidenced by China's warning to the United States and Australia not to get involved in regional territorial disputes following a TSD ministerial statement released in

Bali in October 2013.<sup>24</sup> Such Chinese statements, however, increasingly appear to be exceptions to the general trend of China's overall acceptance of minilateralism as an enduring fixture in the Asia-Pacific strategic landscape. Indeed, in the past decade Beijing has participated in several significant diplomatic and economic minilateral dialogues of its own. These have included the China-Russia-India Trilateral Foreign Ministerials (since June 2005) to coordinate common politico-diplomatic interests in South and Southwest Asia, and the China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit (since 2008, with a secretariat for this grouping established in Seoul in 2011).<sup>25</sup>

### Minilateralism and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability

Several years ago Zhu Feng, an authoritative Chinese analyst on regional security politics, argued that the TSD would be a benchmark for converting the traditional US bilateral alliance network in the Asia-Pacific region into a more formal multilateral alliance structure that would “exclusively target the rise of China in a way that does not constructively engage China's own mounting security concerns.”<sup>26</sup> In the same publication in which Zhu's essay appeared, Tow observed that the TSD could avoid being perceived as an instrument of containment directed against China if it could be regarded as a legitimate consulting mechanism for managing regional security.<sup>27</sup> Another contributor in that same publication argued that the quashing of the original effort to form a quadrilateral dialogue was illustrative of what could happen if China perceived minilateralism solely as a quasi-containment initiative.<sup>28</sup> Is it possible to synthesize these lines of reasoning to discover some useful generalizations about how the TSD and minilateral security will shape the future security environment of the Asia-Pacific region?

Green has speculated that future historians will reevaluate current minilateral (trilateral) initiatives “as characterising an intermediate phase between regional orders” and as a hedging instrument applied within an environment that has an “immature” regional security architecture. Such hedging distinguishes minilateralism from the old US “hub-and-spokes” alliance system because the more cautious party of such an alignment can modify the behavior of the most confrontational.<sup>29</sup> The case of the TSD's inaugural ministerial meeting convened in Sydney during March 2006 is illustrative. Just prior to attending that session, then-US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Indonesia and issued strong warnings about the implications of a strong Chinese military build-up. Sensing the need to preempt Beijing from linking Rice's remarks in Jakarta to a possible TSD containment mission, then-Australian Foreign



Minister Alexander Downer expressed his satisfaction with the general course of Sino-American relations and insisted that Australia never had any concerns that the United States was considering a policy of containment directed toward China.<sup>30</sup> A year later, then-Australian Prime Minister John Howard, on his way to Tokyo for the signing of a joint security declaration with Japan, credited Australia's cultivation of independent relations with China to his country achieving a stronger alliance with the United States and an appropriate bilateral security relationship with Japan.<sup>31</sup>

The March 2007 Australia-Japan security declaration and the strengthening of the Australia-Japan security dyad reflects a longer-term TSD objective: strengthening collaboration between and capacity-building potential of the US bilateral alliance system's traditional "spokes." This trend is viewed by US policy-makers as compatible with the gradual emergence of an Asia-Pacific multilateral security architecture.<sup>32</sup> The "centerpiece" of American rebalancing strategy in the region continues to be one of sustaining and strengthening the US bilateral security network with traditional treaty allies in the region.<sup>33</sup> However, the Obama administration is also focused on "enhancing our partner's capacity to address growing regional challenges in areas such as missile defense, cyber security, space resilience, maritime security, and disaster relief." These capacity increases are intended to reinforce the Asia-Pacific order-building process and can often be carried out best in a tighter and more manageable minilateral framework. Accordingly, the 2014 US Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) anticipates that "supporting trilateral engagements and exercises" will promote "responsible behavior" and the establishment of mechanisms that will prevent policy miscalculation and crisis escalation.<sup>34</sup>

If this strategy of minilateralism in Asian security politics continues, it can be argued that there will be "advantages in maintaining a series of trilateral security cooperation agreements that increase peer pressure within Asia to produce security goods for the region."<sup>35</sup> This postulate can likewise apply to minilateral initiatives that have high levels of consensus about security benefits. China, for example, is responding more readily to appeals for it to assume a central and increasingly "responsible" role in future contingencies such as typhoon relief and airline tragedies. China has increasingly sided with the TSD powers and ASEAN members in pressuring North Korea to discontinue its nuclear weapons testing and development. In doing so, China is beginning to counterbalance its nationalist agenda with a broader leadership role in shaping future regional and international security politics.

## Conclusion

A major policy challenge facing the Obama administration and its immediate successor will be to calibrate traditional alliance and coalition politics as it applies to power balancing in the Asia-Pacific region with a longer-term objective of building a new regional security order that includes a broader spectrum of actors, most notably Chinese participation. To date, trilateralism has been the most effective form of minilateralism that the United States has employed — but largely in non-traditional security categories.

One traditional security issue where substantial TSD and Chinese consensus has been realized is in preventing the development of a major North Korean nuclear weapons and delivery capability. Two of the three TSD affiliates (the United States and Japan) have worked with China in another minilateral context — the Six Party Talks — to implement a diplomatic solution to the North Korean problem, with limited success. It remains to be seen whether or not the TSD or other minilateral groupings can move beyond coordinating traditional intra-alliance security issues, to mesh their agendas with multilateral groupings in the Asia-Pacific region and with regional great powers such as China or Russia, in ways that genuine order building might be realized.

Ironically, greater inclusiveness at appropriate junctures may be key to successful trilateral and minilateral groupings. Those who attempt to theorize the minilaterals have cited the exclusivist nature of their participants as the basis for generating a degree of consensus over selected policy challenges that is required in successfully managing those challenges. As we have seen with the QDR precedent, however, exclusiveness can work against resolving Asia-Pacific security issues if it is seen by other states as precluding or marginalizing their own interests and influence in the process.

Another level of cooperation between minilateralism and multilateralism may be required to realize Naim's "magic number," which is required for optimizing tension reductions. In this context, "trilateralism-plus" or "minilateralism-plus" combinations may need to be identified and implemented. The ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (involving the ten ASEAN members plus its eight Dialogue Partners) has experienced some recent success in addressing broadly-based security questions. Its achievements might serve as a partial precedent for how minilateralism-plus groupings could be implemented.<sup>36</sup> A minilateral hybrid of like-minded allies and their obvious competitors may be the best short-term hope for addressing the tough issues that still divide the region.



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## The Evolution of US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation

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Examining the past and present of formal trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and Australia illustrates how each country's national security strategy has evolved during the post-Cold War period. The United States has shifted along a spectrum of regional and global emphasis; Japan has steadily sharpened its national defense policy with an increasing focus on the Far East; and Australia has embraced more active regional and global security cooperation. These changes have influenced — and in many ways increased the salience of — trilateral cooperation mechanisms such as the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) and the Security and Defense Cooperation Forum (SDCF), putting them at the forefront of ongoing and future trilateral policy coordination. Some observers have criticized these consultation mechanisms as tools for containment of China, but this is not the policy context from which they emerged or in which they currently operate. Instead, these forums are part of a broader and more organic evolution of trilateral relations since the 1990s, with each country seeking to leverage its strongest relationships in the region as one of several tools to hedge against global uncertainty and regional power shifts amid weak institutionalization in Asia.

### Post-Cold War Context

The aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse in the 1990s laid the foundation for future trilateral cooperation, as the United States sought some form of peace dividend by reducing its military forces and overseas footprint.<sup>1</sup> This stimulated new kinds of consultations with allies in Asia that sought to reorient the purpose of those relationships in a more diversified manner than before. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush envisioned a military for 1995 that would be

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capable of handling America's security needs with seventy-five percent of the troops that were then deployed.<sup>2</sup>

Even with fewer troops overseas, the United States remained focused on its regional role in the Asia-Pacific region: namely, ensuring regional stability amid geopolitical uncertainty, as a kind of insurance policy to encourage economic growth both for America and the region itself.<sup>3</sup> For example, North Korea and its nuclear program greatly worried US officials as perhaps the most dangerous wild-card of the region. The US government also voiced concerns about shifting leadership within China and its lax nuclear and missile proliferation policies, among other potential sources of instability in Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, US planners advocated a reduced but still robust forward-deployed military posture, which resulted in a roughly twenty-five percent troop cut to about 100,000 troops by the late 1990s (including base closures in the Philippines). To compensate for these cuts, US partners in the region were encouraged to "assume greater responsibility for their own defense" within the context of close alliance communication and cooperation.

The road toward substantive trilateral collaboration was initially paved with bilateral diplomacy that strengthened relations and opened up new connections. Japan quickly took steps to strengthen the US-Japan alliance, upon which its security policy was founded. Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) released in 1995 greatly emphasized the US-Japan alliance for Japan's own domestic defense going forward.<sup>5</sup> In the NDPG, Japan said it would strive to "ensure its own national defense" and work to enhance the "credibility" of its alliance with the United States. The document also said that the alliance was "indispensable" for the future security of not only Japan but also the region at large.<sup>6</sup> Then, in 1996, then-President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto released the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century, which (among other components) initiated a review of the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines.<sup>7</sup> The new Guidelines established a more significant role for Japan in certain "situations in areas surrounding Japan," including, for example, logistical support to US forces that might be fighting against North Korea. As a result, the US-Japan bilateral relationship emerged stronger and more active by the end of the 1990s.

The post-Cold War process of change in the US-Australia alliance resembled that of the US-Japan alliance. The 1990 Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) Joint Communiqué highlighted Australia's commitment to fulfilling its "alliance responsibility" by enacting "defense self-reliance and modernization, operating within an alliance framework and focusing on strategic responsibilities

and regional cooperation.”<sup>8</sup> In 1991, during the First Gulf War, Australia was one of the first countries to join the US-led coalition of forces by sending ADF air defense missile teams. Australia sent troops, warships for blockades, a supply vessel, four medical teams, and a mine-clearing diving team. Then in 1996, the United States and Australia released the Sydney Statement outlining their “strategic partnership for the twenty-first century,” including an extended lease at Pine Gap Joint Facility and expanded joint military training opportunities. Besides the release of the Communiqué, in 1996 Australia also supported the US decision to send an aircraft carrier battle group to the Taiwan Strait in response to Chinese military exercises in that same area around the time of Taiwan’s presidential election. Japan and Australia were the only Asia-Pacific nations to publicly support this move. Japan and Australia also strengthened their strategic relations in the mid-1990s by initiating high-level annual talks between Japanese and Australian political and military representatives.<sup>9</sup>

A notable example of how these three powers applied their burgeoning bilateral security relationships toward a broader purpose was in East Timor to quell violence and address a humanitarian crisis following a 1999 vote for independence from Indonesia. Australia led a UN-sanctioned international team in providing aid and bringing peace to the newly-founded country. The United States provided three military personnel to the UN force and thirty personnel to its own support group that coordinated periodic visits by US naval vessels to provide humanitarian assistance.<sup>10</sup> Japan sent 2,300 Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel after close consultations with Australian officials and later provided monetary aid.<sup>11</sup> The SDF deployment was a big step for Japan, and Australia’s leadership role was also praised in Washington and Tokyo. While not yet leveraged in a trilateral arrangement, the three countries used their bilateral alliances to support their vision for regional stability and each country’s security.

## The United States, Japan, and Australia in the Global War on Terror and TSD Beginnings

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Washington increasingly viewed its regional alliances in the Asia-Pacific region as part of its broader global war on terror. Cooperation among the three countries during this time and the initiation of the TSD demonstrate how the alliance system again adjusted itself to changes in the international security context.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, Japan and Australia provided strong support (each in its own way) for the US invasion and counter-



terrorism operations in Afghanistan. Japan passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law in October 2001, authorizing Japan to assist in non-lethal supply, support, search and rescue, and other humanitarian missions.<sup>12</sup> Japan also aided coalition forces by providing fleet refueling capability under certain circumstances. Australia invoked the Australia-New Zealand-US Security Treaty (ANZUS) with Parliament support, interpreting the terrorist attack in the United States as an attack on Australia as well, and Australia committed over 1,000 troops as well as aircraft and naval vessels for operations.<sup>13</sup> Both countries also greatly contributed to reconstruction and nation-building efforts in Afghanistan.

Although not originally a part of the so-called war on terror, Japan and Australia demonstrated a unique level of support for the US-led reconstruction mission in Iraq, following the US invasion. Japan provided money and also 600 Ground SDF personnel for civil engineering projects in Iraq along with 200 Air SDF personnel in Kuwait for logistical support.<sup>14</sup> Australia also contributed to US efforts, sending naval vessels, aircraft, and around 2,000 troops. Australia withdrew most of these forces in 2003 but redeployed military personnel in 2005, when, building on the East Timor experience, Japanese then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi asked Australian Prime Minister John Howard for help with protecting the SDF in Iraq, given Japan's limited rules of engagement due to domestic legal restrictions.<sup>15</sup>

It was in this expanded context of global counter-terrorism cooperation between the United States and its allies (along with the continued expansion of the North Korean nuclear threat) that the idea for the TSD emerged. In early 2001, Australia's then-Foreign Minister John Downer told journalists that the three parties were thinking about establishing an "information dialogue...at a lower level."<sup>16</sup> The first TSD-style meeting was held in 2002, and meetings of its kind were held between 2002 and 2005. These meetings did not produce joint statements, because these early trilateral discussions occurred only as an addition to bilateral US-Japan security consultations. Rather than holding separate trilateral meetings, the Australian Secretary of the Foreign Affairs and Trade Department would join talks between the US Deputy Secretary of State and Japanese Vice Foreign Minister after the latter two had concluded the bilateral consultations.<sup>17</sup> These initial talks included discussion of security concerns regarding North Korea, nonproliferation, and counter-terrorism, although they produced little "in terms of concrete coordinated policy or joint diplomatic action."<sup>18</sup> This kind of joint trilateral action is often difficult to arrange and rarely necessary, when information sharing and policy coordination will suffice. The merits of this joint activity,



however, were increasingly appreciated in all three capitals, and personal relationships among the three leaders continued to develop.

## Early Trilateral Cooperation: The Foundation of the TSD and SDCF (2006 — 2011)

The three countries upgraded the TSD to a ministerial-level dialogue with its first meeting in 2006, committing “[the three countries’] determination to work together to protect our shared strategic interests in promoting peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>19</sup> Critics suspicious of the trilateral initiative speculated that the meeting could be an anti-China containment attempt by Japan and the United States; a way for the three powers to undermine multilateral regional institutions such as ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) with the TSD as their own “minilateral” institution; or a mechanism for Washington to influence more directly the policies of its major allies in the region. However, the TSD, even at a ministerial level, was never meant as a formal alliance or a mechanism to engage in this sort of coordinated activity. Instead, it functions as a coordinating committee that sets the agenda for working groups and undersecretary meetings to pursue the declared policy goals.<sup>20</sup> These working groups convene regional and functional specialists from multiple departments of all three countries around issues such as HA/DR, non-proliferation, and counter-terrorism, among others.

While the TSD and following forums are unequivocally supportive of regional multilateral institutions and deal with a wide range of global and regional non-traditional security issues, concern about China’s rise was certainly growing during this time, especially in Japan. Japan-China relations deteriorated in the early 2000s due to history issues, including textbook entries about Japanese imperialism and visits by then-Prime Minister Koizumi to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, resulting in large-scale anti-Japan protests in China. Subsequently, a March 2006 editorial in *The Japan Times* interpreted trilateral talks largely as a way to deal with China: “Tokyo, Washington, and Canberra look to build constructive relations with Beijing and recognize that several issues have to be confronted before that is possible. Speaking with one voice about their concerns increases the chances that they will be heard and their warnings heeded.”<sup>21</sup> In a press conference, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also noted that the Asia-Pacific region was “in flux and change, first and foremost, because of a rising China” and that the United States, Japan, and Australia specifically had a “joint responsibility and obligation to try and produce conditions in which the rise of China will be a positive force.”<sup>22</sup>

Australia, however, enjoyed a somewhat closer relationship with China compared with its partners leading up to 2006, which may have worried Washington and Tokyo at times. China had become the greatest purchaser of Australian exports, buying, for example, a quarter of Australia's total iron-ore export.<sup>23</sup> In 2003, then-Chinese President Hu Jintao addressed the Australian Parliament directly, an honor formerly accorded only to US presidents. In 2004, then-Foreign Minister Alexander Downer told Beijing media that Australia did not necessarily feel obligated to support the United States in defending Taiwan if the island became involved in a conflict with China. Then, in 2005, Australia did not support Japan and the United States when they argued that the European Union should not lift its limits on arms sales to China.<sup>24</sup>

Given this backdrop, it is tempting to see the emergence of the TSD during this time at least partly as an effort to bolster trilateral solidarity and policy coherence vis-à-vis China. Yet the TSD initially grew from the bottom-up, nurtured by three bureaucracies with a wide-ranging agenda. The China factor was present but not the driver, and, if anything, it was a potential source of friction that was treated gingerly. Instead, the TSD chose to focus on other issues that have long been a concern for stability in the region. The first joint statement of the ministerial TSD meeting and initial actions, for example, show the relative lack of discussion about China. The 2006 joint statement only "welcomed China's constructive engagement in the region," and focused on nonproliferation regarding Iran and North Korea, terrorism, and non-traditional security issues such as pandemic diseases. As a result, Australia hosted its first exercise (air) for the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in 2006, and Japan hosted its first exercise (maritime) in 2007.<sup>25</sup> The 2008 joint statement welcomed more cooperation and coordination on peace-building activities in the Asia-Pacific region through non-traditional security means. For example, Australia co-hosted a disaster relief exercise in 2008 and the United States co-hosted one the following year, supported by ARF.<sup>26</sup>

As the TSD matured (and as defense officials became more deeply involved in the working group discussions and defense ties deepened from cooperation in Iraq and Afghanistan), the US Department of Defense (DOD) proposed in 2006 that the three countries establish a separate forum dedicated to strengthening trilateral security cooperation. Subsequently, at a February 2007 planning meeting, they approved the creation of the SDCF and held their first assistant secretary-level meeting a few months later in Tokyo. This group is not a defense-only group, as it is co-led by representatives of the defense *and* foreign ministries, and it also involves representatives from the militaries and service staff.<sup>27</sup> The SDCF has been convened almost annually

since “to advance trilateral security and defense cooperation by providing: visibility to ongoing initiatives, a venue for endorsing and launching new initiatives, regular review of new trilateral defense opportunities, and resolution of policy obstacles to coordination.”<sup>28</sup> The early agenda focused on HA/DR, missile defense, anti-piracy, “lessons learned” from past bilateral exercises, counter-proliferation, and interoperability and information sharing. China was referenced only in the context of framing the strategic environment: directly when officials noted North Korea’s growing missile and nuclear threats or complained about China’s lack of military transparency, and indirectly when participants emphasized their common values and strategic interests.<sup>29</sup>

The SDCF does not have a working group or committee structure, but it involves more people than an average TSD meeting, because of the involvement of representatives from the foreign, defense, and military communities. The SDCF is officially separate from the earlier-created TSD (there is no governance or reporting linkage), but the two are meant to be “coordinated and mutually supportive” of each other.<sup>30</sup> The overall goals of the SDCF are to enhance interoperability, build cooperative capacity with allies, and create more multilateral cooperation and capacity, not only with allies, but also with regional forums. In 2007, the three defense ministers also met trilaterally for the first time on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue (repeated later when their schedule allowed).

The United States, Japan, and Australia established an annual trilateral missile defense forum in 2007 to facilitate further discussion, including lessons learned from acquisitions. This was another, separate dialogue and did not report to the TSD or SDCF, but it involved a wide range of stakeholders including defense, foreign, and military representatives. At the service-to-service level, the three countries initiated joint exercises and seminars, such as one on air mobility that began in 2007 and beyond in order to coordinate trilateral airlift cooperation during times of regional disasters. Japan particularly has a large inventory of CH-47 transport helicopters that can be extremely useful in an emergency, but it does not have a way to quickly ship them overseas unless it can utilize US or Australian C-17 transport aircraft. In addition, the three countries have conducted P-3 maritime surveillance aircraft exercises. This kind of cooperation was readily achievable for the three countries in the early stages of the SDCF. In order to facilitate a higher level of cooperation in the future, the delegations frequently emphasized the need to strengthen information protection protocols between Japan and Australia and thus create an environment that is conducive to opening up a wider range of activity.

It is important to note that as trilateral cooperation grew, so did the bilateral relationship between Australia and Japan, in part because policymakers saw opportunities to strengthen what was viewed as the weakest link in the trilateral chain. The 2002 Japan-Australia Sydney Declaration stressed regional security as one of the main goals of Japan and Australia's relationship and cited US engagement in the region as one of the key factors in aiding peace and stability. Both governments called for expanded bilateral dialogue, bilateral cooperation, and multilateral cooperation in regional institutions.<sup>31</sup> In 2007, Japan and Australia signed the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, which "endorsed the existing cooperation and called for developing an action plan with specific security cooperation measures in areas of law enforcement, border security, counterterrorism, weapons of mass destruction disarmament, counterproliferation, peace operations, strategic assessment exchange, maritime and aviation security, humanitarian relief operations, and contingency planning."<sup>32</sup> Japan and Australia then established a two-plus-two meeting, where each country's foreign and defense ministers worked to finish an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) that was signed in 2010 and an Information Security Agreement (ISA) that was signed in 2012.<sup>33</sup> Such efforts allowed the bilateral relations between Japan and Australia to further the interests of the more recently established trilateral relationship, which made US-Japan-Australia cooperation easier.

## Trilateral Cooperation from 2012 and Potential Future Policies

Cooperating in relief operations for the March 2011 Great East Japan earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster strengthened the United States, Japan, and Australia as a trilateral group. Operation Tomodachi was undertaken by the United States and Japan and Operation Pacific Assist by Australia. Pacific Assist demonstrated the value of trilateral coordination, as Australia worked with US Air Operations Command in Japan. In fact, Australia and the United States, as part of both their missions, were the only two nations to provide airlift assistance within Japan after the crisis.<sup>34</sup> Since late 2012, when a new Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led government came into power in Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been pushing security reforms that will allow the SDF to participate in a wider range of logistical support and military activities in cooperation with trusted allies and partners. The government of Japan has also permitted its defense industry to begin exporting for the first time and to engage in deeper international collaboration, which is opening up a new avenue of cooperation with both Australia and the United States.

Coinciding with stepped-up trilateral cooperation has been China's growing status in the region along with its military activities, which have taken on greater importance in the TSD and SDCF discourse. What was once an abstract, peripheral issue in the early years of these forums has become more concrete, in part due to the tension between Japan and China in the East China Sea, flare-ups in the South China Sea, China's anti-satellite missile test in 2007, and dangerous incidents at sea involving US naval vessels encountering aggressive Chinese ships in China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The three countries still do not share the same views or policies toward China; Australia and the United States in particular remain sensitive to the perception that trilateral cooperation could be viewed as a containment policy towards China. However, discussions over China have become more frequent over time (especially in the maritime/territorial arena). Thus, while a 2013 TSD joint statement addressed global issues such as Syria's chemical weapons and Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programs, along with regional territorial issues, it also urged all parties embroiled in conflicts in the South and East China Seas to solve their issues by way of multinational regional bodies and international law.<sup>35</sup> The joint statement also called on China (by name) to establish a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea with ASEAN, which triggered a critical Chinese rebuke.

In the eight years since the SDCF's inception, various associated dialogues and exercises have been strengthened (regarding the use of space, missile defense, counter-proliferation, and other areas), and it is clear that trilateral cooperation will benefit from more direction and enhanced coordination among these initiatives in the future. At the third meeting of Defense Ministers at Shangri-La in 2013, the released Joint Statement outlined five goals for future trilateral cooperation: building a regional community that follows international law for peaceful resolutions of disputes and that regionally normalizes defense cooperation; strengthening HA/DR through cooperation; promoting freedom of navigation along with maritime security; improving regional defense capacities; and stabilizing the region by encouraging transparency. On the first point, the partners have prioritized the development of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus forum as a way to strengthen the regional security architecture.<sup>36</sup>

In 2012 and 2013, the SDCF partners increased the number of trilateral military exercises undertaken. After a two-week trilateral air force exercise Cope North by the three countries and South Korea in Guam, China reacted strongly, criticizing the exercise as explicitly anti-China.<sup>37</sup> However, the SDCF in 2014 cited this as an example of HA/DR preparedness, and noted the value of this exercise in better preparedness for responding to disasters, such as Typhoon

Haiyan and Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370.<sup>38</sup> One week of the exercise was dedicated to HA/DR, and the other week was for combat readiness and battle interoperability. In February 2012, bilateral air force exercises conducted by the United States and Japan were expanded to include Australia as a trilateral exercise that was held again in 2013 and 2014. The first of the two weeks was spent on HA/DR, and the second week was spent on combat preparedness, although military members who were interviewed cited events such as the March 11 disaster as the main reason for the exercise.<sup>39</sup>

While regional stability and robust allied leadership has been a key goal of all three countries' security policies, the three countries have placed greater emphasis on operational skills and trilateral interoperability, resulting in less frequent HA/DR-focused trilateral exercises in recent years. In June 2012, the three countries took part in Exercise Operation Pacific Bond off the coast of Kyushu, Japan. A statement by the US Navy described the exercise as "focused on anti-submarine warfare, maritime interdiction operations and maritime operations."<sup>40</sup> A year later they conducted a live-fire trilateral exercise in Australia called "Southern Jackaroo." Even though it was not a HA/DR mission, the March 11 disaster was again cited as a main reason for increased trilateral military coordination.<sup>41</sup> The exercise was repeated in 2014 with more than sixty military personnel, an increase from forty-two personnel the previous year.<sup>42</sup>

Despite this trend toward more trilateral military training with operational applications, the SDCF remains a forum aimed primarily at shaping and hedging, rather than confronting. Security challenges in Asia and around the world are complex and multiplying, and the United States, Japan, and Australia now have nearly two decades of experience coordinating their responses, each country making contributions that fall within their political and diplomatic limitations. The three countries expect to cooperate more extensively in the future, and their efforts toward improving trilateral cooperation are valuable investments in achieving that result. The extent to which China becomes a focal point of trilateral cooperation depends mostly on how it conducts its foreign policy in the coming years. The ideal outcome, of course, is to find ways to engage China in bilateral, trilateral, and perhaps quadrilateral activities using the SDCF and related forums. In this way, China can increasingly become a partner in addressing regional security challenges. All four countries share important strategic interests such as regional stability, predictable trade infrastructure, resiliency with regards to natural disasters, prevention of the spread of violent extremism, and anti-piracy. The parameters of this cooperation might be narrow at first, but any opportunity to pursue a collaborative course should be seized whenever possible.



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## Community Building in Asia? Trilateral Cooperation in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

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*H. D. P. Envall*

How important is the “community-building” dimension of the Australia-Japan-US trilateral relationship? This basic question is often overshadowed by a wider debate about whether or not the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) is a containment mechanism developed by the United States, Japan, and Australia to block China’s rise. As Zhu Feng argues, “The TSD is in effect an important effort to counterbalance China’s rise...without the specter of a rising China, Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra would not have begun intensifying defense cooperation.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the containment issue has become more pronounced since 2010, as not only Sino-American but also Sino-Japanese relations have become increasingly strained.

Although the question of community building receives less attention, it is nonetheless important. A key aim of the TSD has been to facilitate a “gradual process of Asia-Pacific community building.”<sup>2</sup> This purpose matches expectations that traditional bilateral alliance expectations will gradually be replaced by “multilateral groupings united by common rules and norms for regional governance.”<sup>3</sup> The United States, Japan, and Australia have often referred to community building, especially with regard to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), as a core objective of their cooperation. In the TSD’s first joint statement in March 2006, they specifically mentioned the aim of “strengthening cooperative frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>4</sup> The TSD could therefore provide a useful way to engage the region in the “relatively uncontroversial areas of security cooperation with high prospects for successful interaction,” engagement that might prove beneficial, not only for HA/DR purposes, but also for reducing tensions in the region.<sup>5</sup>

Because HA/DR has long been viewed as a promising area for such aims, it provides a useful case for examining the importance of this dimension of the TSD. Early criticism of the TSD was that it was tokenistic, lacked substance, involved little coordination, and was largely focused on the “symbolism of a

trilateral relationship configured around the United States.”<sup>6</sup> If subsequent HA/DR developments also match this characterization, the community-building objective must inevitably be viewed as shallow. The record of HA/DR capability development since 2005, however, has been more complex than this picture would indicate, suggesting that the TSD may have become a more substantial institution on the HA/DR front than originally anticipated.

## New Challenges, New Commitments

The goal of developing HA/DR policy existed well before the TSD was formally established. In the mid-1990s, as the United States began revising its alliance relationships with Australia and Japan, key changes were made to the types of activities considered to be within the scope of these relationships. In 1996, the United States and Japan agreed that they would further develop bilateral cooperation at both regional and global levels, and HA/DR was also emphasized in the subsequent Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security.<sup>7</sup> This declaration expressed the two countries’ commitment to cooperate in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) and international humanitarian relief operations, including “transportation, medical services, information sharing, and education and training.” The two countries also committed to conducting “emergency relief operations in response to requests from governments concerned or international organizations in the wake of large-scale disasters.”<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, at ministerial consultations in 1998, the United States and Australia emphasized “increased humanitarian assistance” when discussing turmoil in Indonesia. They also urged restraint and the need for a “lasting solution” for the problems in East Timor.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the 1999 Timor-Leste crisis played an important role in deepening Australia’s approach to HA/DR. In subsequent years, Australia and Japan (notwithstanding some initial disagreements) contributed significant resources to the international forces deployed to Timor-Leste, while the United States provided indirect support.<sup>10</sup> Tomohiko Satake argues that cooperation over Timor-Leste demonstrated a desire to broaden bilateral cooperation as a way to provide security for the wider region.<sup>11</sup> Soon after Japan became involved on the ground in Timor-Leste, Australia and Japan signed a Memorandum of Understanding over defense exchanges, from “high level” exchanges to “a range of working level contacts.”<sup>12</sup>

However, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami has had the most significant impact on the TSD’s approach toward disaster relief. According to Stacy White, the tragedy was of such an “unprecedented scope” that it led to a “transformative shift” in how the region “thought about risk.”<sup>13</sup> It contributed to various new HA/

DR initiatives, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, as well as a “Tsunami Core Group” (United States, Japan, Australia, and India), described at the time as “a new style of diplomacy.”<sup>14</sup> Further, it prompted the United States, Japan, and Australia to establish what would become a more robust and durable structure for cooperation on non-traditional security issues.<sup>15</sup>

According to Malcolm Cook, with regard to Japan and Australia in particular, HA/DR cooperation in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami has “helped broaden and deepen” a network of officials who are committed to furthering relations between the two countries and have worked to promote wider cooperation, including joint training and logistics.<sup>16</sup> Japan-Australia bilateral cooperation also emerged from the two countries’ participation in reconstruction work in Samawa, in Iraq’s Al Muthanna province. Between 2005 and 2006, Australia dispatched forces to Samawa specifically to protect Japanese forces (in light of the tight legal restraints under which they were operating) and also to help train Iraqi forces.<sup>17</sup>

## Formalizing Trilateral Cooperation

By May 2005, when upgrading the official level of dialogue at the TSD was proposed, the TSD members had accumulated a range of experience in HA/DR cooperation. Nonetheless, HA/DR did not attract a great deal of attention at the first TSD ministerial meeting in March 2006, even as other non-traditional security challenges were discussed.<sup>18</sup> However, the three nations continued to develop joint approaches to HA/DR in their bilateral relationships. At the Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) in November 2005, for instance, the United States and Australia agreed that “peace operations capacity, including humanitarian and disaster relief, is a critical component of Asia-Pacific and global security.”<sup>19</sup>

This process has continued since 2007. In March of that year, when Japan and Australia signed the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC), they included “peace operations” and “humanitarian relief operations, including disaster relief” among the key areas of cooperation. They also committed to conducting training and exercises to “further increase effectiveness of cooperation” in these areas. Likewise, under the 2007 Enhanced Defence Cooperation Initiative, the United States and Australia undertook to “develop a combined humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capability to enhance [their] joint responses to catastrophic regional events.” Later, at the February 2008 AUSMIN, the United States and Australia recommitted to this

decision and to further cooperation on HA/DR by agreeing to establish joint HA/DR capabilities through which they would “enhance their ability to respond to contingencies in the region.”<sup>20</sup>

Beginning in 2008, the three governments began to insert more detail into building HA/DR cooperation at the trilateral level. At the third TSD ministerial meeting, held in Kyoto in June of that year, they agreed to strengthen cooperation across a number of key areas, particularly HA/DR. Attached to this joint statement was an annex on trilateral cooperation, which included a commitment to build on the TSD members’ earlier record of HA/DR cooperation, notably in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. A decision was also made to establish a technical-level review for discussing areas for practical cooperation and information sharing. Joint exercises would also be conducted in order to “build understanding of respective emergency response procedures and capabilities.”<sup>21</sup> Technical discussions took place in late 2008 in Australia, with officials meeting to discuss setting up guidelines to coordinate the TSD activities on HA/DR. In the Action Plan for the JDSC, announced in December 2009, Japan and Australia agreed to work more closely on “disaster response and risk reduction.”<sup>22</sup>

Thereafter, HA/DR became more firmly entrenched in trilateral coordination, in both policy and practice. HA/DR activities conducted by the TSD members included responses to several disasters, such as the September 2009 Sumatra earthquake in Indonesia and July 2010 floods in Pakistan (conducted alongside Indonesia and China). Personnel, airlift, and medical support were provided in response to these disasters.<sup>23</sup> On the training front, the three countries also increased their joint exercises between 2007 and 2010. For example, in October 2007 and September 2009, the Japan Maritime SDF, the US Navy, and the Royal Australian Air Force carried out trilateral exercises involving P-3C patrol aircraft.<sup>24</sup>

Other policies aimed at increasing cooperation were also developed during this period. In March 2010, the Japanese and Australian governments signed the Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). Although the agreement did not commence until 2013, it was intended to “promote more efficient performance” between the two countries’ defense forces, via UN PKO and “humanitarian international relief operations.”<sup>25</sup> The desire to “strengthen bilateral cooperation in PKO, HA/DR, and other areas of international security operations,” as Yusuke Ishihara highlights, was a major driver of the agreement, as opposed to “direct cooperation on the national defense of the two countries.”<sup>26</sup>

## Crisis, Complexity, and Coordination

Notwithstanding these developments, however, the major test of HA/DR came with the Great East Japan earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster of March 2011. The two most substantial providers of HA/DR in response to the crisis in the Tōhoku region of Japan were the United States and Australia, with the United States providing the majority of support as part of Operation Tomodachi (lit. “Operation Friend”). The United States provided assistance that included 24 naval ships, nearly 190 aircraft, and about 24,000 personnel.<sup>27</sup> Australia’s contribution as part of Operation Pacific Assist focused on the provision of C-17 aircraft to transport search-and-rescue units, supplies, and SDF units (totaling more than 450 tons). The C-17 aircraft made thirty-one landings at different airfields in Japan during the twelve days of operations.<sup>28</sup>

The Tōhoku tragedy has had a substantial impact on policymakers’ understanding of HA/DR. Suzanne Basalla et al. describe the response as an “unprecedented whole-of-government effort by both Japan and the United States.”<sup>29</sup> However, this approach revealed a number of policy weaknesses, especially in terms of managing information flows between multiple agencies. Unlike regular US-Japan cooperation, largely conducted between the relevant defense agencies and forces, HA/DR during the Tōhoku disaster expanded the range of actors involved in the bilateral relationship, thereby creating significant coordination difficulties. As Nozumu Yoshitomi explains, the lack of a robust framework meant that cooperation could only be achieved through temporary solutions.<sup>30</sup> The communication challenges in the period initially after the disaster were particularly problematic. Further HA/DR policy development and practice were needed.<sup>31</sup>

The post-Tōhoku policy response has indeed followed this path. At the fourth Australia-Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations, held in Sydney in September 2012, Japan and Australia committed to strengthening “bilateral and regional cooperation on disaster management.” This included improving coordination across both civilian and military dimensions, as well as with “disaster preparedness and response.”<sup>32</sup> More has also been achieved in the area of joint training and mission preparedness. Indeed, the increase in such activities, according to Anthony Bergin, has likely created “fatigue in military and civilian circles from the burgeoning HA/DR exercise and ‘conference industry.’”<sup>33</sup> In Exercise Talisman Sabre in 2013, Australia and the United States sought to improve interoperability across a range of scenarios. Civilian agency involvement, so as to improve whole-of-government planning, was a key part of these exercises, with representatives from various international and non-governmental organizations participating.<sup>34</sup> Australia also joined Japan and



the United States at the exercise Michi'noku Alert, held in November 2014 in the Sendai region of Japan. The exercise enabled the TSD members to improve cooperation in an earthquake disaster scenario.<sup>35</sup>

Trilateral cooperation has also broadened to include wider multilateral bodies. The biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) military exercises already provide one such forum for HA/DR training. In July 2014, the United States, Japan, and Australia, along with nineteen other nations, participated in the exercises, which were designed to develop better cooperation in HA/DR between civilian and military organizations.<sup>36</sup> The TSD members have also played a role in developing HA/DR cooperation through the UN. Since 2002, Japan has led the UN Multinational Cooperation Program in the Asia-Pacific conference to study the coordination of multilateral HA/DR policy in the region.<sup>37</sup> Another well-established example of low-key multilateral cooperation incorporating the TSD members, but also encompassing other regional players, is the US Pacific Partnership mission to the Asia-Pacific region, conducted since 2006. As part of the US' ninth mission, conducted around Southeast Asia in 2014, a Japan Maritime SDF ship acted for the first time as the mission's primary platform.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

As rivalries grow in the Asia-Pacific region, so the containment issue continues to overshadow the HA/DR and community-building components of the TSD. Indeed, it may be that strategic motivations have heavily shaped the TSD members' thinking toward HA/DR. The analysis presented here does not address questions of wider motivations, although this issue has been examined elsewhere. Athol Yates and Bergin, for example, identify a number of non-humanitarian motives for such activities, including reinforcing established alliances, promoting national security interests, and developing interoperability.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, suspicions about the alliance utility of any such activities persist; containment and community-building objectives are not, after all, mutually exclusive.

However, as the above analysis shows, the development of HA/DR capabilities by the United States, Japan, and Australia since 2005 has been significant. This suggests a more complex reality than was perhaps initially anticipated, as HA/DR now has a substantial history as part of the TSD. Some of this history, it should be noted, has confirmed early skepticism: much HA/DR work has been aspirational rather than concrete, conducted at the bilateral rather than fully trilateral level, and limited to grandiose formal communiqués. Yet this is clearly not the whole story. As the TSD has evolved, tokenism has gradually been replaced with a range of sophisticated HA/DR capability-building activities.



A key example of the level of progress has been the recent attention given to whole-of-government challenges in coordinating HA/DR. The increased focus on these challenges, especially after the Tōhoku disaster in 2011, highlights this shift in HA/DR policymaking: from generalities to more complex questions of interagency coordination. Intermittent external shocks in the form of major disasters across the Asia-Pacific region — the 2004 Indian Ocean disaster and the 2011 Tōhoku disaster, in particular — have acted as crucial catalysts behind this shift. This indicates that HA/DR has been driven not only by motivations on the part of the TSD members to improve “habits of cooperation,” but also by the growing demand for multilateral HA/DR across the Asia-Pacific region.

Given the rapidly changing regional order, doubts about whether the TSD has been intended as a mechanism to contain China are likely to linger or even worsen. Yet as this chapter demonstrates, the TSD is not just a feature of the Asia-Pacific region’s more contested geopolitics; it has, in fact, established itself as an important institution for HA/DR cooperation across the region. Indeed, such “community-building” efforts — precisely because they offer strong prospects for engaging China — are likely to grow more important in the coming years.

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## Japan-US-Australia Cooperation on Capacity Building in Southeast Asia

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Maritime security and capacity building in Southeast Asian littoral states has become one of the primary pillars for Japan-US-Australia regional security engagement. While the origins, framework, and scope of each country's engagement towards Southeast Asia differ significantly from each other, Tokyo, Washington, and Canberra increasingly share a common understanding of how to approach maritime capacity building in this region. While each conducts capacity-building activities bilaterally, there is growing momentum to connect such efforts through cooperative frameworks such as bilateral-plus-one (i.e., Japan-US-ASEAN, Japan-Australia-ASEAN, and US-Australia-ASEAN) and trilateral-plus-one (such as Japan-US-Australia-ASEAN).

This chapter primarily aims to identify emerging trends in maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia by examining Japanese, US, and Australian approaches towards this effort. Then, it will focus on the emerging complementarity between bilateral efforts that the United States, Japan, and Australia undertakes in Southeast Asia, as well as trilateral and minilateral cooperation. The chapter ends with recommendations for Japan, the United States, and Australia as the three countries work to build a stable maritime order that is based on “asymmetrical equilibrium.”

### Japan's Capacity Building in Southeast Asia

Since the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Japan's engagement in Southeast Asia has been driven by its strong commercial interests. Large-scale Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Southeast Asia over past decades has established ASEAN as a hub of production networks for Japanese firms and their joint ventures in Asia. In August 1977, then-Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda articulated the Fukuda Doctrine which, while cautiously shying away from playing a greater military role, articulated Japan's resolve to support ASEAN solidarity and resilience for the sake of peace and



prosperity in Southeast Asia.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent prime ministers, regardless of their party affiliations, followed Fukuda's approach.<sup>2</sup> Since then, Japan has sought to avoid a direct military role while becoming the largest donor of official development assistance (ODA) in the region.<sup>3</sup> However, in recent years, Japan has begun to change this approach. This is particularly the case in the area of maritime security, to which Japan has historically approached with a focus on anti-piracy and sea-lane safety for merchant vessels. Driven mainly by China's rise and expanding influence in the maritime domain in Southeast Asia, Japan's approach is increasingly more conscious of a shifting balance of power in the region. The new approach stresses assisting Southeast Asian countries to acquire sufficient maritime security capacity, with a particular focus on enhancing their maritime domain awareness (MDA).<sup>4</sup>

For Japan, the concept of maritime capacity building first appeared in the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) in December 2010.<sup>5</sup> The 2010 NDPG stated, "Japan will also strive to establish and strengthen regional cooperation practice and support the capacity building of countries in the region" in the context of maintaining stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Following this announcement, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) established the Capacity Building Assistance (CBA) Office within the International Policy Division in April 2011.<sup>6</sup> The CBA Office, launched with a relatively modest budget, encompasses the following five areas of operations: 1) humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), 2) demining, 3) military medicine, 4) maritime security, and 5) UN peacekeeping operations (PKO).<sup>7</sup> MOD's initial efforts towards capacity building were focused on a modest "soft" approach of human resource development.<sup>8</sup> In 2012, the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) was dispatched to Cambodia and Timor-Leste to provide human resource development assistance for road building and vehicle maintenance provision. The SDF also organized short-term seminars for Vietnam, Indonesia, and Mongolia.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has also been keen to promote maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia, in the form of "strategic (*senryakuteki*) use of ODA."<sup>9</sup> In June 2006, Japan donated three patrol boats to Indonesia through its ODA. Japan took careful steps to make it an exception for the three principles on arms exports policy.<sup>10</sup>

In 2009, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) transferred high-technology equipment to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) for use in maritime safety and security.<sup>11</sup> This included satellite communications systems, a VHF/HF radio system, a microwave communications system, and transmitting and receiving equipment for various stations. In addition, since 2002, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) has regularly sent personnel to the PCG to conduct anti-piracy training. As they are stationed in the PCG headquarters in

Manila, they are often consulted for broader capacity building concerns.<sup>12</sup> In 2006, Japan helped Cambodia to improve security facilities and equipment in its main international ports. Likewise, projects sponsored by Japanese ODA in Southeast Asia are often infrastructure projects such as ports, airports, power generation stations, roads, and telecommunication systems, which can be related to security capacity building.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most important benchmark for “strategic” use of ODA is the decision to provide ten JCG vessels to Philippines.<sup>14</sup> In February 2012, then-Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba reiterated the connection between ODA and maritime security: “I intend to strategically use ODA and other appropriate schemes to address maritime issues, which are also important for national security. Specifically, I will promote measures to defend the security of sea lanes and to improve maritime security of coastal developing countries, including the provision of patrol boats to fight piracy and terrorism at sea.”<sup>15</sup> Japan’s proposal to provide ten patrol boats to PCG through its ODA is a visible outcome of Japan’s commitment to engage in promoting the maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia.

After the landslide victory of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the 2012 general election, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe further defined capacity building as a critical element of Japan’s security strategy. Japan’s first National Security Strategy (NSS), released in December 2012, reaffirmed Tokyo’s commitment to capacity building in the fields of maritime order, outer space and cyber space.<sup>16</sup> The NSS also reiterated that ODA and capacity-building assistance should be seamlessly utilized in security-related areas. The 2013 NDPG then clarified the objectives of Japan’s capacity-building efforts as follows:

- *Further strengthening relationships with partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region:* Japan will pursue this goal by promoting efforts such as joint training and exercises.
- *Promoting capacity-building assistance:* Through the SDF, Japan will continuously engage in capacity-building assistance such as human resource development and technical support, in order to enhance the ability of developing countries to be stabilizing actors in the Asia-Pacific security environment.
- *Ensuring maritime security:* An “Open and Stable Seas” is the cornerstone of peace and prosperity, particularly for Japan as a maritime state. Efforts to secure the safety of maritime traffic include conducting anti-piracy activities in cooperation with other countries, promoting capacity-building assistance to coastal states, and enhancing joint training and exercises in waters other than those immediately surrounding the country.

Japan's capacity building in Southeast Asia has further potential, as the Abe administration has significantly relaxed its longstanding ban on arms exports. On April 1, 2014, the Japanese government released the "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology" as the new set of principles for defense equipment and technology exports.<sup>17</sup> Under the new principles, the transfer of defense equipment may be permitted in the context of 1) the active promotion of "peace contribution and international cooperation" or 2) Japan's security. These principles will allow Japan a wider range of options for transferring its defense equipment and technology to Southeast Asia.

## US Capacity Building in Southeast Asia

The United States has a long-standing tradition of helping its allies and partners in capacity building. During the Cold War, the US security assistance program was a major component of its foreign engagement strategy, beginning in Western Europe, Greece, South Korea, and Southeast Asia. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (formerly Defense Security Assistance Agency, founded in 1961) has provided financial and technical assistance, military equipment transfers, and training and services to allies and partners, while also promoting military-to-military exchanges. This has been conducted through security assistance programs such as Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and International Military Education and Training (IMET).

In Southeast Asia, security assistance has been primarily focused towards key US allies in the region, namely, Philippines and Thailand. During the Cold War years, the Nixon Doctrine served as the basis for US security engagement in Asia, declaring its commitment to "furnish[ing] military and economic assistance" while "look[ing] to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense."<sup>18</sup>

In the 21st century, the US approach towards capacity building in Southeast Asia has been refocused by two major dynamics. First is the Department of Defense (DOD) initiative on security assistance reform. In 2007, US maritime forces — Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard — for the first time created a unified maritime strategy.<sup>19</sup> This strategy emphasized an integrated approach to foster and sustain cooperative relationships with international partners through capacity building. Furthermore, the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) noted that the US security assistance architecture has become outdated, because it was designed to support long-term relationships to resist a Cold War adversary and advocated whole-of-government, inter-agency approaches to partner capacity building.<sup>20</sup>



The second change has been the Obama administration's rebalance to Asia strategy. The military dimension of the rebalancing strategy was illustrated in the 2012 "Defense Strategic Guidance." Then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced in the press conference that the US military would "increase its institutional weight and focus on enhanced presence, power projection, and deterrence in Asia-Pacific."<sup>21</sup> At the 2012 Shangri-La Dialogue, Panetta stated, "By 2020 the Navy will re-posture its forces from today's roughly 50/50 percent split between the Pacific and the Atlantic to about a 60/40 split between those oceans. That will include six aircraft carriers in this region, a majority of our cruisers, destroyers, Littoral Combat Ships, and submarines."<sup>22</sup> Panetta emphasized that the United States would modernize and strengthen its alliances and partnerships in the region. While enhancing the traditional alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand, the US government would also invest in new security partnerships with India, Singapore, New Zealand, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Some significant outcomes included the US Marine Corps rotational deployment to Darwin, the littoral combat ships deployment to Singapore, and the enhancement of military relations with the Philippines.

The DOD rebalance simultaneously emphasized the role of existing alliances as a vital foundation for regional security and the importance of expanding security networks with emerging partners throughout the Asia-Pacific region to "ensure collective capability and capacity" to secure common interests. The main agenda of the rebalance was clearly targeted towards enhancing regional connectivity among US allies and partners to ensure regional capacity.

### *Case of Philippines*

Although the United States closed its military bases in the Philippines in 1992, the US-Philippines relationship has been revitalized by their close cooperating on counter-terrorism operations and hedging against China's rise in the maritime domain.<sup>23</sup> US military assistance to Philippines in the 2000s focused on counter-terrorism capacity building, since the Philippines was an important base for the US War on Terror in Southeast Asia. For nearly a decade, US-Philippines joint exercises and campaigns were primarily aimed at operations in western-Mindanao and Sulu to reduce the influence of Islamic terrorist groups.<sup>24</sup>

Since the Obama administration's pivot to Asia, US military assistance to the Philippines has shifted focus towards potential maritime threats in the South China Sea. US assistance has been invigorated through enhanced joint training and exercises with, as well as foreign military assistance for, the

Armed Forces of Philippines (AFP). For example, the US-Philippines bilateral military exercise Balikatan has incorporated exercises related to maritime security since the 2010s.

In 2011, the United States and Philippines agreed to upgrade AFP capabilities in maritime security through: 1) US funding support to AFP's Capability Upgrade Program (CUP), which includes equipment acquisition, as well as extensive refurbishing and maintenance of existing AFP material, and 2) the provision of additional funding for the Coast Watch South maritime surveillance system to boost the Philippine military's surveillance, communication, and interdiction capabilities.<sup>25</sup>

In the 2012 Balikatan, the United States and Philippines conducted joint combat drills off the coast of Palawan Island, which is located near the disputed Spratly Islands chain and the country's largest offshore oil field.<sup>26</sup> Exercises such as Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) and Amphibious Landing Exercise (PHIBLEX) constitute important platforms for the US Navy and AFP, as well as several other Southeast Asian military forces, to cooperatively enhance maritime patrol and HA/DR capability. The United States also transferred two former US Coast Guard (USCG) Hamilton-class cutters to the Philippine Navy through FMS. In December 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry announced the implementation of a three-year 40 million USD program for the Philippines under the Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF). The program will be used to improve maritime security and maritime domain awareness, as well as to provide assistance for law enforcement, counter-terrorism, and capacity building in the southern Philippines.<sup>27</sup>

In late April 2014, the two allies signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). EDCA envisions US support for AFP by "addressing short-term capability gaps, promoting long-term modernization, and helping maintain and develop additional maritime security, maritime domain awareness, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities."<sup>28</sup>

### *Case of Vietnam*

Secretary of State John Kerry announced in December 2013 an initial commitment of 32.5 million USD in new bilateral and regional assistance to advance maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia.<sup>29</sup> The United States intends to provide up to 18 million USD for search and rescue, disaster response, and other activities, including the provision of five fast patrol vessels to the Vietnamese Coast Guard. Existing bilateral programs seek to combat piracy in and around the Malacca Strait, counter transnational organized crime and terrorist threats, and expand information sharing and professional training through the Gulf of Thailand initiative.

## Australian Capacity Building in Southeast Asia

Since the end of the World War Two, Australia has proactively engaged in Southeast Asia security affairs and is committed to common, cooperative efforts towards defense of the region. Australia initiated the Colombo Plan in 1950 and became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954. Through SEATO, Australia supplied defense aid to Thailand, the Philippines, and South Vietnam. Australia also contributed forces to the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve in Malaya for the sake of the region's general defense in the late 1950s.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Australia was a major allied troop contributor supplier in the Vietnam War, dispatching approximately 60,000 Australian personnel.

Another institutional tool for Australia to engage in Southeast Asia defense issues was through the Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA), established in 1971 with Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.<sup>31</sup> Largely through FPDA, Australia developed regular bilateral and regional training and exercises with Southeast Asian counterparts. The FPDA regularly conducts exercises such as Exercise Barisama Shield to enhance interoperability and build capacity among participating defense forces. Outside FPDA, the exercise AUSTHAI was established as a combined biennial exercise between the Royal Thai Navy and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), aiming to improve interoperability and enhance proficiency in maritime war-fighting skills.

Today's Australian Defence Force (ADF) is actively involved in capacity building for regional maritime security.<sup>32</sup> Australia has promoted participation in various bilateral and multilateral exercises and operations, and it has also provided training for personnel. Australia has been particularly involved in maritime capacity building through the Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP). PPBP started in the 1980s, following the UNs Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which defined the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ).<sup>33</sup> During the period of 1987–1997, the PPBP supplied twenty-two patrol boats, associated training, and logistic support to twelve Pacific island countries to assist each country's patrolling capabilities within their wide maritime zones.<sup>34</sup> In June 2014, the Australian government announced that it would renew PPBP to those twelve nations, in order to replace the previously-donated vessels that are approaching the end of their service life.<sup>35</sup> Although these vessels are lightly armed, rarely equipped with more than medium machine guns, they are suitable for maritime surveillance, patrol, and fishery controls.<sup>36</sup> Some observers have suggested PPBP as a potential model for other states to exert a positive security influence in the region.<sup>37</sup>

Australia's bilateral defense engagements are a critical component of its maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia. Australia upgraded its partnership with Indonesia in 2012 with the Defence Cooperation Agreement, enhancing existing programs for maritime, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, and HA/DR activities.<sup>38</sup> Australia's defense relationship with Malaysia has its own significance, as Australia's continued presence at the Royal Malaysian Air Force Base Butterworth allows ADF to conduct maritime surveillance operations and humanitarian assistance missions in Southeast Asia.<sup>39</sup> Australia also supports the Philippines' efforts to improve its sea surveillance systems, border controls, and port security.<sup>40</sup> Australia enabled PCG to obtain the San Juan-class patrol ships, consisting of four vessels for search-and-rescue. Australia's PCG Maritime Disaster Response Helicopter Acquisition Project involved the procurement of seven Maritime Disaster Response (MDR) helicopters for PCG to strengthen and expand their MDR capabilities during maritime incidents and natural disasters.

## Japan-US-Australia Trilateral Developments

Although respective approaches in Tokyo, Washington, and Canberra towards maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia have different histories, motivations, and policy objectives, there has been an increasing tendency to share operational concepts.

During President Barack Obama's visit to Tokyo in April 2014, the United States and Japan released the Fact Sheet: U.S.-Japan Global and Regional Cooperation, which highlighted the potential for bilateral cooperation in Southeast Asia. Tokyo and Washington declared their commitment to coordinate "capacity building assistance on maritime safety and security for Southeast Asian countries," such as through the provision of patrol vessels to the Coast Guard and development of port facilities.<sup>41</sup> The document also noted that both countries are conducting discussions with ASEAN on additional assistance measures, including offering education and training for maritime safety officials among ASEAN nations.<sup>42</sup>

At the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) held in October 2013, the United States and Japan reiterated their commitment to collaborating on assistance to Southeast Asian littoral states in building maritime domain awareness and other capacities for maritime safety and security, so that regional countries can better enforce law, combat illicit trafficking and weapons proliferation, and protect marine resources. The joint statement noted, "The United States and Japan are committed to working together to increase security capacity regionally in Southeast Asia and globally" and are "resolved to build on

early efforts to collaborate on partnership capacity building projects in the Asia Pacific region. Cooperating in these efforts is to help ensure regional stability by promoting regional partner security capacities and helping other nations develop their own defense and law enforcement capabilities.<sup>243</sup>

The Japan-Australia Summit Meeting also highlighted the importance of capacity building. The joint statement Special Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century stated that the two countries would “deepen the bilateral security and defense relationship through enhanced training and exercises, increased personnel exchanges, and deepened cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime security, peacekeeping, capacity building and trilateral security cooperation with the U.S.”<sup>244</sup>

Finally, the media release from the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Summit Meeting stated, “The leaders expressed their firm commitment to deepen the already strong security and defense cooperation among the three countries and to strengthen the collective ability to address global concerns and promote regional stability through enhanced cooperation on: trilateral exercises; maritime security capacity building and maritime domain awareness; peacekeeping capacity building...”<sup>245</sup>

## Conclusion

Although Japan, the United States, and Australia have varying historical experiences in maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia, there is an increasing synergy and complementarity in their trilateral approaches.

There are two underling trends for this synergy: first, there are urgent needs for Southeast Asian littoral states to build maritime patrol and defense capabilities in light of the expanding capacity gap vis-à-vis China’s Coast Guard and People’s Liberation Army Navy. China has been actively fielding its coast guard vessels, enhancing maritime law-enforcement capabilities, and moving ahead with resource development and land reclamation in the disputed maritime zones, which constitutes “tailored coercion” against its ASEAN neighbors.<sup>46</sup> Steady rise in Chinese naval and air power will very likely lead China to align these capabilities to establish maritime and air superiority vis-à-vis Southeast Asia.

Second, the long-term shifts in maritime strategies, based upon the common strategic interests of Japan, the United States, and Australia, have created an opportunity for policy coordination among the three countries. Japan’s maritime security priorities in Southeast Asia are increasingly strategy-driven, based on the pursuit of a favorable balance of power. The US rebalancing has emphasized

the importance of operational access to the East Asian strategic theater, as well as encouraging allies and friends to help build capacity for maritime security. Australia's strategy so far has been normative, rather than strategic, driven by its desire to secure freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. However, Australia's long-standing defense ties with Southeast Asian littoral states provide a critical platform for multilateral defense exercises, trainings, and equipment cooperation.

The following are some recommendations for Japan, the United States, and Australia to further enhance cooperation for maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia.

### *Maritime Domain Awareness*

At the top of the agenda is providing littoral states in Southeast Asia, especially the Philippines and Vietnam, with better and shared intelligence-gathering capabilities at sea. The current lack of maritime domain awareness in the South China Sea is a strategic and operational problem. With countries in the region insufficiently equipped to monitor the near seas, this "fog" is prone to cause accidents, miscalculation, and adventurism. Japan, the United States, and Australia need to:

- Upgrade the Coast Watch System in the Philippines
- Build capacity for data gathering, processing, and sharing
- Build coast guard capacity
- Enhance intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability
- Enhance air assets for ISR<sup>47</sup>
- Share real-time satellite information
- Share real-time information of marine traffic via the Automatic Identification System
- Develop supporting infrastructure and communication systems

### *Common Operational Picture*

In cooperation with Southeast Asia littoral states, Japan, the United States, and Australia need to together develop a Common Operational Picture (COP) in the maritime domain. This is important in two senses: 1) littoral states should be able to share know-how to respond to "gray zone" activity in the South China Sea, and 2) "escalation management" is important, and can be most effectively done through US coercive diplomacy and military commitment.

### *Strategic Financing*

Japan's ODA, US FMS and assistance, and Australia's Defence Cooperation Program need to be further coordinated in order to enhance maritime capacity building in Southeast Asia. ASEAN's critical infrastructure — such as airports, seaports, roads, power generation stations and electricity supply, communications, and software development — are important and compatible components of their security sectors. Well-coordinated assistance by the three countries, in financial aid and investment promotions, can be a significant force multiplier.

### *Maritime Security Order based on Asymmetrical Equilibrium*

Japan, the United States, and Australia need to share the goal for a desirable balance of power in the South China Sea. Striving towards a “stable maritime order by the rule of law,” as the three countries have expressed, is a good starting point. However, this stability must be anchored in their shared awareness of balance-of-power dynamics. The only plausible model for strategic balancing in the South China Sea will be through “asymmetrical denial.” Just as China is acquiring anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities to counter the United States, the Philippines' and Vietnam's capacity may likewise work best by building collective capacity to deny any effort to change the status quo by force. By acquiring cost-imposing capabilities that can produce negative consequences in response to assertive unilateral behavior, countries can create effective denial capabilities. The model of maritime stability by “asymmetrical equilibrium” can serve as the new model of stable maritime order in Southeast Asia.



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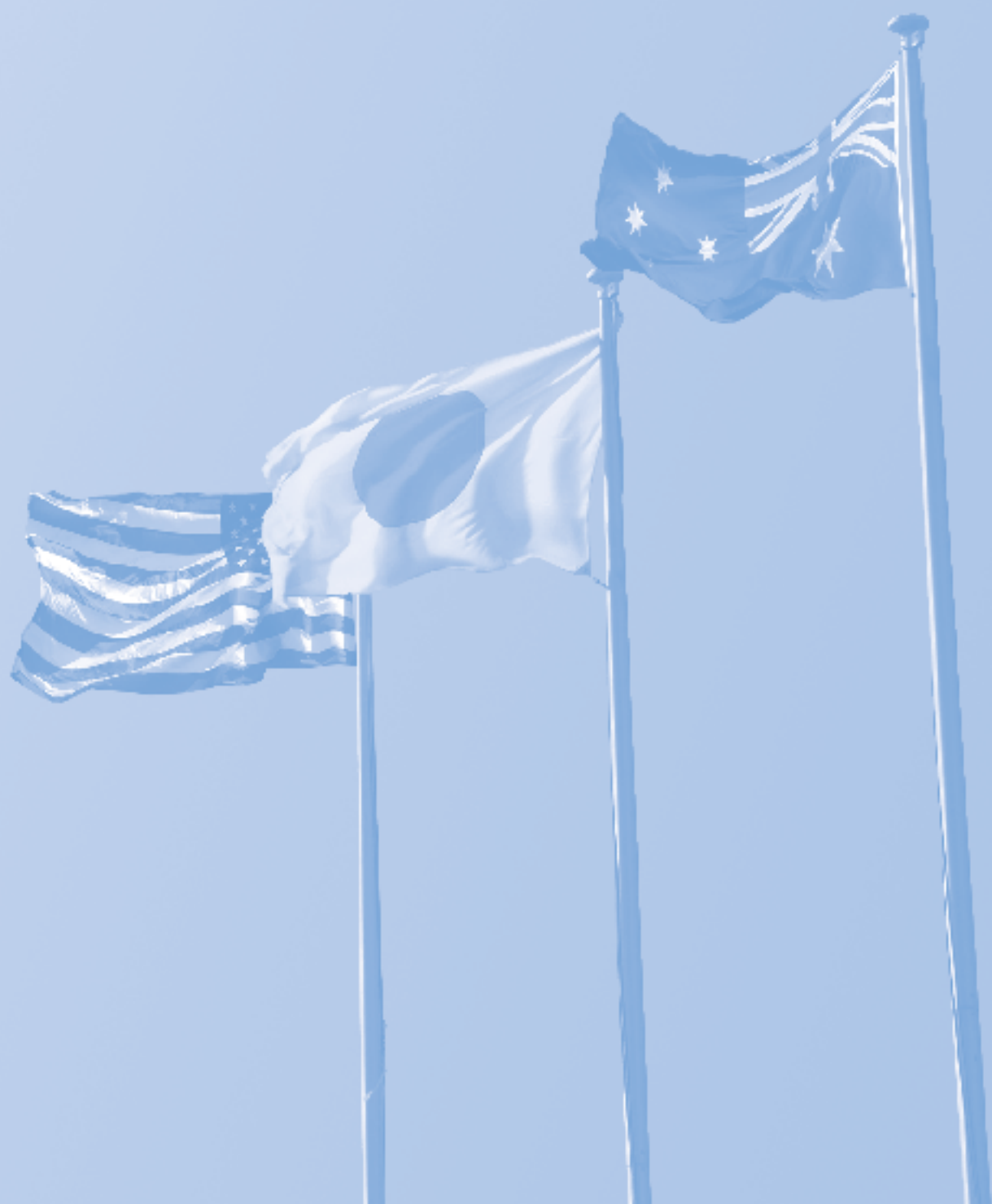


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## US-Japan-Australia Cooperation in Defense Equipment: Untapped Potential or a Bridge Too Far?

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*Yuki Tatsumi*

In November 2014, US President Barack Obama, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott met for the first US-Japan-Australia trilateral summit in seven years on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Brisbane. At their meeting, the three leaders identified several areas in which pursuit of trilateral cooperation should be prioritized. Defense equipment was identified as one of these priorities.

Despite globalization, the defense industry tends to remain one of the most protected industries in any country that can afford to have one. Citing national security concerns, countries choose to maintain a robust indigenous defense industrial base to serve the countries' national defense needs whenever possible. Amplified by the natural preference not to depend on other countries for defense and technological advantages, countries tend to hesitate to explore international cooperation in this area.

Nowhere is this desire to protect defense equipment and technology stronger than in the United States. The United States has an extremely stringent, complicated, and cumbersome export controls system to protect its technological advantage over other countries. Its long International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) list includes everything from state-of-the-art stealth technology to the nuts and bolts that are used to build jet fighters and other platforms — prohibiting other countries, even US allies, from benefiting from the most advanced military technologies that the United States has developed for its own force. Complex interagency processes to approve the transfer of sensitive US weapons technology further discourage companies.

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However, rapid advancement in globalization has resulted in the private sector, rather than the defense sector, holding an edge in many of the technologies critical for national defense. As former US Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn III writes, “Although the Pentagon historically exported many technologies to the commercial sector, it is now a net importer.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, a rapid rise in acquisition costs and the downward trends of defense budgets in many countries, including the United States, has increased incentives for governments to encourage their defense industries to seek international partnerships among allies and partners. The process of the development of F-35 fighter jets and plans for their maintenance is prophetic in showing the most likely arrangement for any major weapons platform to be developed and produced in the future — no single country can shoulder the cost of research and development (R&D), production, and maintenance, and they will have to be done based upon international industrial partnerships.

Prioritization of defense equipment cooperation among the United States, Japan, and Australia is occurring in this larger context. In an era of rising acquisition and maintenance costs and declining/flattening defense budgets, it makes sense for these three countries to pursue collaboration in development and acquisition of their defense equipment. On a practical level, the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and Australian Defence Force (ADF) already use many US defense equipment items to maintain a high level of interoperability with the US military, and civilian leaders in Tokyo and Canberra are both committed to deepening defense cooperation with Washington. Furthermore, the existence of the U.S.-Australia Defense Trade and Cooperation Treaty (DTCT), U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, and Japan-Australia agreement on the transfer of defense equipment and technology provide the three countries a foundation on which to pursue cooperation in defense equipment. Therefore, it makes practical sense for the three countries to enhance cooperation in defense equipment development.

Still, there are challenges that must be overcome if the three countries are to optimize the potential. The United States, Japan, and Australia all have strong domestic constituents that are interested in keeping the old way of doing business, even if it makes less economic sense. Furthermore, defense equipment cooperation often stirs concerns that the countries’ indigenous defense industrial base would be weakened and would cause the countries to become dependent on foreign companies for their national defense, making it a highly politically-sensitive issue.

This chapter argues that, despite these concerns and potential challenges, there are greater factors that incentivize the United States, Japan, and Australia

to seek closer defense equipment cooperation. The chapter first looks at the context in which these three countries have been motivated to explore the internationalization of their defense industries. It then takes a closer look at two cases — F-35 maintenance and the development of Australia's next-generation submarines — that can serve as the model for future US-Japan-Australia defense equipment cooperation. The chapter concludes by identifying the potential challenges for the three countries in deepening their cooperation in this area and discusses what can be done to address such challenges.

## Drivers for US-Japan-Australia Defense Equipment Cooperation

The United States, Japan, and Australia all have domestic reasons to enhance defense equipment cooperation with one another. Such interests have been driven by two major factors — the rising cost of acquiring advanced weapon systems and the trend of flattening/declining defense budgets.

Concern regarding the rising costs of weapon systems has existed for some time. In the area of fighter jets, the F-22 is said to cost an average of 190 million USD per jet, which is considerably more expensive than older variants of the F-15 (for which the per unit cost is under 30 million USD) that it is developed to replace.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a 2006 study by RAND Corporation also shows that the average development cost for the weapon systems that the report analyzed — forty-six completed programs over the past thirty years in addition to many ongoing programs at the time of analysis — remained high, despite numerous initiatives by the Department of Defense (DOD) to rein in the development cost. While the report explains that some of the cost increase is inevitable due to the reality that weapon systems development often involves the introduction of new and emerging technology that makes accurate cost calculation extremely difficult, it also argues that DOD can and should try to do better in controlling cost.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, in the United States there has been an acute concern that, during the ten years when the US military engaged in large-scale military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the resources for R&D and acquisitions for major weapons platforms suffered. Furthermore, efforts to rein in the nation's spending, including that of national defense, has resulted in a declining trend in the US defense budget since 2010. The ongoing disagreement between the White House under President Obama and the Republican-controlled Congress on how to reduce the nation's debt has aggravated concerns for the lack of resources to invest in R&D, production, and maintenance of weapon systems. Failure to achieve a comprehensive debt-reduction agreement triggered the



“sequestration,” by which the defense budget is to be reduced by approximately 500 billion USD between 2013–2023, or 50 billion USD per year until 2023. This has driven US defense companies, which have traditionally depended on contracts from DOD and other US government agencies for much of their revenue, to seek international markets and industrial cooperation with defense industries in other countries.

In Japan, slightly different dynamics have been at play for the last several years. The Japanese defense industry has been just as domestically oriented as the US and Australian industries. The self-imposed total ban on arms exports since 1967 deprived the industry of opportunities to engage with the defense industries of other countries except for that of the United States, thereby limiting competitiveness and efficiency.<sup>4</sup> The decline in Japan’s defense spending combined with an increase in the cost of defense acquisitions has caused a growing concern among Japan’s Ministry of Defense (MOD), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and defense industry regarding the sustainability of its indigenous industrial base. With the revision of the arms exports principles in April 2014, there is a rapidly growing appetite within Japanese industry to explore overseas markets, as well as industrial cooperation with US and non-US companies.

Australia has had a considerably smaller defense industrial base, compared to the United States or Japan. In 1989, Australia Defence Industries, Ltd. (ADI) was created as a government-owned corporation to be an integral part of the Australian defense industry.<sup>5</sup> In addition Tenix Defence was established in 1997 and grew considerably for eleven years, but it was then bought by BAE Systems, Inc. and became BAE Systems Australia. In 2006, ADI was taken over by Thales Group, a French defense company, and the company name was also changed to Thales Australia. In today’s Australia, therefore, the two biggest defense contractors are both foreign-owned, and there is no significant indigenous defense company. Furthermore, because most of the defense equipment that ADF uses today is American, US defense contractors have been winning many of the bids for ADF equipment. These circumstances in Australia have been referred to as “abysmal” by some.<sup>6</sup> As a means of boosting the indigenous industrial capacity, the Australian defense industry also has an incentive to explore partnerships with foreign defense contractors.

All these developments have driven the United States, Japan, and Australia to view defense equipment as an area for future cooperation. In the United States, the driver is largely cost efficiency, due to uncertainty surrounding the future trajectory of defense spending, particularly in the area of R&D. In Japan, the principal driver is the desire to identify more business opportunities for its defense industry, in the wake of the revised arms exports principles. For

Australia, defense equipment cooperation can nurture its indigenous defense industrial base, potentially making it less dependent on non-Australian defense firms.

In addition, the high level of interoperability between both the ADF and the SDF with their American counterparts encourages this development. In fact, much of the equipment that Japan and Australia now use and look to acquire in the near future are US equipment, used by US military. Particularly in the case of Japan, its defense industry has a long history of manufacturing equipment for the SDF under the framework of license production. License production has allowed the Japanese defense industry to access advanced technology in US defense equipment while sustaining its indigenous defense industrial base. The production volume has remained small, because the blanket arms export ban has made the MOD and SDF the sole customers of the Japanese defense industry, contributing to rising acquisition costs for the MOD. Still, this experience has allowed the Japanese defense industry to achieve manufacturing as well as repair and maintenance capabilities, which can be useful for the United States and Australia.

## US-Japan-Australia Cooperation in Defense Equipment

The previous section examined the factors that provide incentive for US-Japan-Australia cooperation in defense equipment. This section looks at the two cases (one still remains a prospective case) of the three countries collaborating in defense equipment development. One is the development, production, and maintenance of the F-35 Lightning II, and the other is potential US-Japan-Australia cooperation in Australia's next-generation submarine.

### *F-35*

In December 2014, the F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) of the DOD announced that both Japan and Australia will be assigned to develop the regional Maintenance, Repair, Overhaul, and Upgrade (MRO&U) capabilities. The announcement stated that both Japan and Australia will be asked to develop MRO&U capabilities for F-35 airframes no later than early 2018. For the engines, Australia will provide initial MRO&U capabilities by early 2018, and Japan will follow with the equivalent capabilities three to five years later. These facilities in Japan and Australia will provide critical maintenance, repair, and upgrade services for the F-35s that Australia and Japan purchase, the F-35 fleet to be deployed to the Asia-Pacific region by US forces, as well as the F-35s likely to be introduced by other

US allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific region. Although the DOD announced that these work distributions will be reviewed every two to three years, the initial announcement suggests that Japan and Australia are regarded as integral to the Asia-Pacific region-wide maintenance and repair hubs.<sup>7</sup>

The F-35 Lightning II is a fifth-generation, multi-role aircraft whose three variants (A, B, and C) have been developed to primarily serve the US Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. When fully operational, the three variants are expected to replace the F-16, A-10, F/A-18, AV-8B, and other aircrafts currently used by the US military and forces of US allies. Unlike any other advanced weapons system development that the United States has undertaken in the past, F-35 Lightning II was developed to be “exportable” from the beginning, with industrial participation of international partners anticipated in the development process. Although its development has been led by the United States, which selected Lockheed Martin as the primary developer of the aircraft, industries from eight US allies — Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, and the United Kingdom — have participated in the development program. The industries in these original eight countries are called “international industrial partners,” and they have contributed to the development of the requirements, design, and test programs. In addition, Japan, South Korea, and Israel have selected the F-35 to replace their own aging aircrafts and will purchase the F-35 under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) framework. The industries in these three countries are also now eligible to compete for industrial participation.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout its development process (which began in 1996), development delays and cost overruns have plagued the F-35 development program. By 2006, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) referred to the F-35 development program as “the most expensive aircraft program,” criticizing the DOD development and acquisitions strategy for the F-35 as “risky.” GAO recommended at that time that Congress delay authorizing and appropriating resources for further F-35 development until DOD developed a less risky and more pragmatic development plan.<sup>9</sup> In 2013, the DOD agreed to pay Lockheed Martin 112 million USD per F-35A, 139 million USD per F-35B, and 130 million USD per F-35 C. The F-35 JPO maintains that costs per unit, or what is known as “recurring flyaway costs,” include the airframe, engine, mission systems and concurrency.<sup>10</sup> However, this figure has been disputed by non-government analysts who are critical of the F-35 as “not just the most expensive warplane ever, but the most expensive weapon program ever.”<sup>11</sup> They suggest that these publicized numbers do not reflect the real price of the F-35, as it does not include the costs for R&D, tests, and evaluation. When these costs are included, critics argue, the F-35 costs between 148 million USD apiece to 337 million USD apiece, depending on the variables.<sup>12</sup> With the

program still well in development, both proponents and critics agree that the unit cost for F-35 is likely to go up rather than down. Therefore, in addition to the fact that the F-35 has been developed with the intention of non-US industrial partner engagement, the United States has an incentive for seeking international cooperation to reduce the cost for post-production MRO&U.

For defense industries in non-US countries that are buying the F-35 to replace aging aircrafts, it is critical that they have the opportunity to compete for contracts related to MRO&U. With multiple countries purchasing the F-35, even a small (relative to the overall program) contract for the F-35 can be highly lucrative for the non-US defense industry. For some countries such as Japan, the increase in per unit cost has jeopardized the indigenous industrial base from producing, maintaining, repairing, and overhauling their military aircrafts, making it unsustainable for the domestic industry to stay in business. The inability to get into the F-35 supply chain might considerably weaken their indigenous defense industrial base.

The Japanese and Australian governments have already committed to the F-35 program. Australia has been a participant of its development, and despite strong critics inside the country, it has moved forward with the decision to purchase fifty-eight F-35 A's with a total cost of 11.5 billion USD.<sup>13</sup> Japan decided to purchase forty-two F-35 A's in December 2012, also despite criticisms. Therefore it is highly important for both governments to prove that their F-35 deal will lead to business opportunities for their own defense industries. The US decision to designate Japan and Australia as the regional hub for F-35 MRO&U in the Asia-Pacific region can serve as a useful example of how trilateral defense cooperation benefits all three countries. For the United States, the arrangement allows it to contain the transport cost of F-35 MRO&U, which contributes to saving expenses in the post-production recurring cost. For Japan and Australia, although JPO claims that the contract will be revised every few years, the deal increases the probability of their defense industries receiving F-35-related contracts in a sustained manner.

### *Future Submarine Program in Australia*

In a 2009 Defense White paper, Australia's Department of Defence announced its intention to double its submarine fleet size from six to twelve for the next generation. Entitled *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific Century: Force 2030*, it identifies Australia's strategic interests as: (1) the defense of Australia, (2) stability in its immediate neighborhood, (3) strategic stability in the Asia-Pacific region, and (4) a stable, rules-based international order. It identifies maritime

power as critical to the ADF's force posture to support these strategic interests. For this, submarines are considered to be essential.<sup>14</sup>

On May 3, 2012, in a joint press conference attended by then-Prime Minister Julia Gilliard, Defence Minister Stephen Smith, and Defence Materiel Minister Jason Clare, the Australian government outlined four possible ways for replacing its aging Collins-class submarines — import with no modifications, import with modifications, redesign the Collins class, or develop indigenously.<sup>15</sup> As a joint media release attended by the prime minister, the announcement was a reflection of the high political significance that the Collins-class submarine replacement program has for the Australian government. Indeed, the program is the biggest defense procurement decision in Australia's history.

The Australian government faces two major factors to consider in its decision. The first is time. Currently at the halfway point of their thirty-year lifespan, the decision on Collins-class submarines' replacement needs to be made soon to ensure that there is no capability gap between the retirement of the Collins-class fleet and the introduction of the new fleet. The second is capabilities. Lack of a regulatory agency for nuclear energy and a strong anti-nuclear power sentiment among the public make it practically and politically impossible for Australia to choose nuclear submarines, making the conventional (diesel-electric powered) as the only option. Other factors include costs: the cost of building domestically is estimated to be around 36 billion USD, compared to 20 billion USD for importing.<sup>16</sup>

In December 2014, Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey indicated that Australia would not hold an open bidding process prior to the decision on the Collins-class replacement program.<sup>17</sup> This fueled speculation in the media that the Australian government strongly favors the Japanese Soryu-class submarine as its replacement choice. The Soryu-class submarine is considered to be one of the best diesel-type submarine classes in the world, with much greater capability than the Collins-class. Prior to Japan and Australia's signed agreement regarding the transfer of defense equipment and technology during Prime Minister Abe's visit to Australia in July 2014, the two governments had already agreed to proceed with joint research on submarine-related technology.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the MOD reportedly suggested to its Australian counterpart that the two countries should jointly produce the hull of the Collins-class replacement.<sup>19</sup> The Japanese media has also reported that the United States is exploring how it may also participate in the Japan-Australia joint development and production of the Collins-class replacement.<sup>20</sup>

However, defying speculation that the Australian government has decided to partner with Japan on the development of next-generation submarines, the Australian Department of Defence identified France, Germany, and Japan as potential partners for Australia in this project. In a statement issued on February 20, 2015, Defence Minister Kevin Andrews stated that the Australian government expects the submarine deal to generate jobs for the domestic Australian shipbuilding industry.<sup>21</sup> During the following press conference, Andrews further emphasized that the Australian government would seek to maximize participation by Australian industry in the construction phases of the submarine, including but not limited to combat system integration, design assurance, and land-based testing.<sup>22</sup> Andrews emphasized both in the statement and in his press conference that interoperability with the United States “will also be a fundamental consideration.”<sup>23</sup> The competitive evaluation of the proposals, which will be overseen by a panel of experts to be appointed by the Australian government, is expected to take approximately ten months before Australia selects an international partner for the program.<sup>24</sup>

Should Australia select Japan as an international partner for its Future Submarine Program, this is the first time that the three governments could cooperate in a large-scale defense equipment program from the developmental stage.

## Conclusion

Defense equipment cooperation has largely been unexplored in the context of US-Japan-Australia security cooperation to date. Given the fiscal and political drivers within the three countries for greater international cooperation in its defense equipment development and production, Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra all have reasons to be proactively pursuing such cooperation.

There are challenges to be overcome. First and foremost, each government will continue to face domestic pressure to preserve its indigenous industrial base. Particularly in Japan and Australia, a great deal of apprehension exists that their industries will become mere subsidiaries of major US defense firms in international joint development and production of defense equipment, supplying parts and components rather than developing high-value technology. The way in which Australia’s Future Submarine Program has been evolving — from near-certainty that Australia would choose to partner with Japan to inviting an additional two countries to submit proposals for competitive evaluation, with considerable emphasis on the “creation of at least 500 new high-skill jobs in Australia for the life of program” — is illustrative of the pressure that exists in ensuring that the indigenous defense industry has a meaningful role in international cooperation.<sup>25</sup>



In the case of F-35 development as well, it has been important for both Australia and Japan that their indigenous defense industries receive sufficient shares of the build and follow-on works for the life of the program.

The United States has its own challenges in facilitating international cooperation in defense equipment, even with trusted allies such as Japan and Australia. There is an overall reluctance in the United States against sharing its most advanced technology with foreign countries. For instance, during the 1980s, the US Congress adamantly opposed the DOD transferring technology in its F-16 fighter jet program to Japan as it developed its first indigenous fighter jets (today's F-2). When DOD developed the F-22 Raptor, Congress attached what is known as the "Obey amendment," in which DOD was prohibited from exporting the F-22 and related technology to foreign countries. The US export controls system, including the time-consuming interagency process that the US defense industry has to undergo to obtain approval to transfer sensitive defense-related technology to foreign potential partners, can also be prohibitive, discouraging technology cooperation between US defense firms and their foreign counterparts.

Finally, there is a formidable challenge in harmonizing the three countries' export controls frameworks for defense trade in order for the three countries to utilize the possible opportunities for defense equipment cooperation. In particular, if the three countries seek to pursue more dynamic and extensive defense equipment cooperation, a trilateral DTCT-type framework will be essential. The lack of such an agreement among the United States, Japan, and Australia will continue to present difficulties as the three governments seek greater defense equipment cooperation.

The most realistic option for the three countries for the time being may be to seek such cooperation in an ad hoc, case-by-case manner. As a way of cooperation, there are two possible ways. One is for Japan and Australia to shoulder a considerable share of the work in a US-led multinational development program, as in the case for the post-production maintenance of the F-35 Lightning II. The other is for the United States, Japan, and Australia to work together in developing capabilities that benefit the militaries of each of the three countries. Should Australia choose Japan as its international partner for its Future Submarines Program, it will be the first opportunity for the three countries to cooperatively work on defense equipment development. The most realistic approach for the three countries is to build positive precedents by taking maximum advantage of the opportunities to cooperate in frameworks similar to that of the F-35 MRO&U sharing arrangement. Building "habits of cooperation" among the three countries in defense equipment over time will enable deeper defense industrial cooperation among them.



In addition, the three countries can continue their efforts to pursue greater cooperation even in the absence of a formal treaty framework. For instance, the MOD and US DOD have a bilateral Science and Technology Forum (S&TF) as a venue for their governments' engineers and scientists to engage in technical discussions about R&D efforts. It may be worth considering holding a trilateral S&TF, inviting representatives from Australia's Defence Material Organization. In addition, the defense industries of the three countries may consider meeting regularly to discuss trends in their countries' defense acquisition practices, R&D, or relevant regulatory issues. Currently, the United State and Japan share regularized meetings between the two industrial associations, the National Defense Industry Association in the United States and the Society of Japanese Aerospace Companies in Japan. Inviting representatives from the Australian defense industry to participate in these meetings is another opportunity for trilateral cooperation in this regard.

Given the political sensitivities about defense acquisitions from foreign companies and the imperative for countries to protect their own defense industrial bases, defense equipment cooperation among the United States, Japan, and Australia will not be easy. Still, Japan and Australia are logical partners for the United States to expand defense equipment cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, given their strong bilateral alliances with the United States. A high degree of institutionalization in the security relationship between Canberra and Tokyo, and the eagerness in their defense industries to participate in international defense equipment development efforts that are often initiated and led by the United States, suggest that cooperation in defense equipment is worth the challenges.

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## Australia, Japan, and US Trilateral Cooperation in the Regional Security Architecture

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Political and security cooperation among Australia, Japan, and the United States has grown over the last decade. The United States has long maintained formal bilateral alliances with both Japan and Australia, along with the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. It has also recently strengthened its security partnerships with Singapore and India, among others. But the quality of trilateral cooperation with its allies Australia and Japan is particularly noteworthy. Top leaders from Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington now regularly gather to shape and implement common goals and policy stances on key regional and international security issues, allowing the three countries to play an increasingly central role in security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. While Australia and Japan do not have a formal alliance relationship, their alignment has grown so strong that their leaders can claim a “special relationship.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, the relationship between Australia, Japan, and the United States is now based on three key components: (1) the Australia-US and Japan-US formal bilateral alliances, (2) the intensifying Australia-Japan “special relationship,” and (3) the expanding trilateral security relationship. The trilateral security relationship among Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington is now shaping the regional security architecture in important ways, across political, economic, and military policy sectors.

The preceding articles in this report have already described the concepts and history underlying the development of this trilateral relationship, emphasizing its importance through key case studies. This shorter essay positions trilateral cooperation among Australia, Japan, and the United States in the broader context of the Asia-Pacific security architecture-building process.

## Shaping the Regional Security Architecture

In the last decade in the Asia-Pacific region, the range of security cooperation within the US alliance network has expanded and deepened. The “hub-and-spokes” principle that constituted the fundamental basis for creating the San Francisco System of US bilateral alliances in the region was born during the Cold War and survived its demise. While past dependency theory is attractive in explaining the longevity of the bilateral alliances, the re-emergence of traditional security challenges since the 1990s by North Korean nuclear and missile development and Chinese growth and military buildup provides what is perhaps the most persuasive rationale in explaining the longevity of the San Francisco System.<sup>2</sup>

Simultaneously, however, multilateral security institutions in the region have expanded their memberships and scope of cooperation during the last two decades. This has occurred most notably within ASEAN-centered institutions, not only ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) but also the expanded East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus. State memberships constituting the community-building process, even in the political and security realms, have multiplied beyond the indigenous members of East Asia to include the United States, Russia, and in some cases (e.g. ARF, Asia-Europe Meeting), the European Union.

In addition to reaffirming the durability of the US bilateral alliance system and the viability of regional institutions, the last decade has also witnessed the emergence of a new type of security cooperation among non-allied dyads or “minilateral” groups. These groups are sometimes formed for functional cooperation, the coordination of aid programs, the institution of various policies, and discussions on other serious regional security matters, such as the Six Party Talks concerning the Korean peninsula. In the Asia-Pacific region, three tiers of security interactions are in flux but also impact one another: alliance-based relationships, function-based relationships, and regional institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Australia, Japan, and the United States have shaped each of these layers of the regional architecture by incorporating various individual, bilateral, and trilateral approaches. The three countries each provide their own political-security assets in the region while also increasingly sharing goals and coordinating security policy actions. They have not only enhanced functional cooperation with some regional countries on select “non-traditional” security challenges such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) and coordination of pandemic responses, but have also increasingly formed a core gravity for traditional alliance networking and regional institution building.

## Diplomatic, Operational, and Cooperative Roles

The functions of this trilateral cooperation are composed of *diplomatic, operational and cooperative* roles.

Australia, Japan, and the United States share a normative vision of regional and global security issues and have repeatedly declared their shared perceptions. The joint media release from their last trilateral summit meeting in November 2014 is illustrative. It stipulates that the three countries resolved to:

...tackle pressing issues such as: degrading and ultimately defeating the threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and countering the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters; ending the deadly Ebola virus disease epidemic in West Africa; and opposing Russia's purported annexation of Crimea and its actions to destabilize eastern Ukraine, and bringing to justice those responsible for the downing of Flight MH17.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, they reaffirmed their commitment to regional security concerns, such as freedom of navigation and the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes. In their defense ministers meetings convened in 2013 and 2014, the three countries encouraged China to work with ASEAN toward establishing a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.<sup>5</sup> Australia, Japan, and the United States share political goals based on common values, and they stand united on some particularly sensitive policy areas, such as nuclear non-proliferation and radical Islamic jihad. As such, the three countries can together create a stronger and more coherent diplomatic message than any other trilateral combination of states in the region.

Australia, Japan, and the United States also have operational advantages in the security realm because their military systems, structures, experiences, and norms have remained similar throughout much of the postwar era. The question is which scenarios the three countries most envisage for military cooperation and to what extent they would operate in trilateral form. Precedents for trilateral cooperation provide important indicators in this regard. Australia, Japan, and the United States have succeeded in forming the core for disaster relief operations, as witnessed in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 2011 Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami, and 2013 Typhoon Haiyan.<sup>6</sup> In addition, as James Schoff explained, "less HA/DR-focused trilateral exercises have seemed to surface," and the scope of exercise now includes anti-submarine warfare, maritime interdiction operations, and maritime operations.<sup>7</sup> Changes in Japan's legal platform with regard to its security policy would also expand the scope of trilateral exercises. Reportedly,



to-be-revised Japanese defense laws could enable Japan to protect Australian Defence Force (ADF) weapons deployed to Japan and to also provide logistical support for the ADF under the right to collective self-defense. Japan might further envision trilateral participation in the protection of its own military assets relating to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations. Trilateral intelligence exchanges on situational awareness in space, command and control, and cyber operations are also firm prospects. This deepening integration of trilateral cooperation is an effective supplement to the traditional US regional alliance network.

Contemporary security cooperation in East Asia includes activities such as educational exchanges, sustained dialogues between high officials, and port visits, as well as multilateral drills and training, technology transfer, intelligence sharing, and the cultivation of greater expertise on both traditional and non-traditional security challenges. “Capacity building” has become a popular term in recent US and allied defense documents. Australia, Japan, and the United States play a key role in engaging in such activities throughout the Asia-Pacific region, since capacity building is naturally limited to countries with advanced military experience and technology. American officials have called this trilateral engagement in capacity building a “force multiplier,” emphasizing the collaborative and burden-sharing elements. They have also invited other potential partners such as South Korea and New Zealand to accelerate their own participation in this process. As Ken Jimbo emphasized, Australia, Japan, and the United States have similar long-term interests in stabilizing the maritime order in Asia. There is great potential for collaboration in building and financing a third party’s capacity for maritime domain awareness and in drawing up common operational approaches.<sup>8</sup> Other potential projects for collaboration might include strengthening military transportation infrastructure and related aspects of disaster management, as well as responding to other non-traditional security challenges. Functional security cooperation throughout East Asia can take a variety of forms, and ASEAN-based mechanisms provide important opportunities for related drills and exchanges. However, the quality and quantity of force assets and logistical expertise from a combined Australia-Japan-US effort can play a uniquely substantive role for such multilateral initiatives.

## Political Foundations and Critiques

The strength of this trilateral security cooperation is rooted in each country's own sense of political positioning in Asia as a Pacific power. As noted above, the three countries share a sense of responsibility and interdependence of interests because of their proximity to the region compared with nations positioned farther away. Yet they are also peripheral, rather than geographically-central, actors in Asian community building. They must therefore consistently strive to introduce innovative and effective measures to enhance the community-building process, in order to justify their memberships in the regional order-building dynamic. This shared perspective among Australia, Japan, and the United States has existed for many decades, but each country's behavior in recent years has particularly reflected a keen sensitivity to this reality. China's growing influence has prompted a debate among trilateral policy planners and observers alike on how best to reorganize the Asia-Pacific security order, compelling the three countries to better coordinate their security-policy planning as the 21st century evolves. Most notably, policymakers in Canberra and Tokyo seem to share the perception that trilateral political and security cooperation toward the Asia-Pacific region would help legitimize US presence and underpin its preeminence in the region.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, bipartisan support for trilateral security cooperation has continued both in Canberra and Tokyo. Regardless of the changes that have occurred in their top leadership over the last decade, both countries have sustained momentum for bilateral security cooperation and pursued trilateral security cooperation with Washington at frequent intervals. The dramatic shift of power from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took place in the summer of 2009, but the three DPJ prime ministers continued to pursue their predecessors' interest in security partnerships with Asian neighbors.

However, it must be noted that especially in Australia, there has been some criticism over the country's cooperation with Japan, on the basis that Japan might "entrap" Australia in any great power competition that plays out in Northeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> Many Chinese scholars and journalists today criticize the security partnerships between America and its allies and friends, and have attacked US President Barack Obama's rebalancing strategy as an effort to contain China. Yet trilateral cooperation, while a significant and historic security development, is not designed to deny the creation of an inclusive regional order with China; it merely provides an instrument for operationalizing regional stability and security at a time when the Asia-Pacific region's power balance is undergoing obvious structural change. Trilateral

cooperation cannot, whether alone or within the rebalancing context, check the growing power of China. It is instead meant to reinforce effective security diplomacy and cooperation throughout the region at no other actor's (including China's) expense. The question that must be considered is whether bilateral and trilateral security cooperation could be restrained by domestic criticism within the three countries. As stated above, Australia and Japan enjoyed deepening cooperation regardless of which political party is in power, but there is no assurance that this will continue in the future.

## Conclusion

The three countries' bilateral and trilateral cooperation has the potential to become an important catalyst for overall regional security architecture building. Functional approaches and ASEAN-based mechanisms still suffer from the possibility that they may succumb to incessant and largely directionless discourse, instead of developing the will and capacity to act on their commitments. The three countries have the capacity-building assets needed for facilitating regional stability and for realizing their shared sense of identity and mission. The trilateral relationship can become a core component for a larger regional cooperative security framework. It is time to recognize the importance of trilateralism as an asset for regional architecture building.

The rapid transformation of Japan's security behavior in the legal and policy realms also demands greater attention. This transformation could be a catalyst for changing the nature of security interactions among states in East Asia. Over time, Australia-Japan-US operational cooperation may be substantially widened and deepened to incorporate ASEAN, India, South Korea, and other security allies and partners. Within this framework, a greater Japanese security role would be more acceptable to Japan's neighbors.

To realize this vision of mitigating geopolitical rivalries in East Asia, Australia, Japan, and the United States must ensure that their trilateral cooperation fits logically within the bigger picture of a more inclusive and flexible regional security order and architecture. This trilateral relationship should not aim to merely apply pressure on certain third countries, but rather to facilitate cooperation by providing public goods and facilitating peace and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Ideally, trilateral security cooperation among the three countries should enhance all three tiers of security cooperation in ways that increase positive interactions with China and other emerging powers. In other words, the three countries should share an understanding that the rise of new powers is welcome as long as it is peaceful and just.

## Endnotes

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## Final Thoughts

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*Ken Jimbo, Yuki Tatsumi, and William T. Tow*

This report examines the evolving US-Japan-Australia security triad theoretically as well as empirically. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the security relationship among Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington represents one of the most promising policy initiatives currently operating in the Asia-Pacific region. While its development and impact to date have already exceeded the expectations of its skeptics, the longevity and ultimate effectiveness of this form of security cooperation remains to be seen.

Chapters One and Six each address this trilateral relationship from the perspective of general international relations theory, in the context of the evolving scholarly debate on the emerging multilateral security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. In Chapter One, William Tow discusses the emergence of trilateralism and minilateralism in the Asia-Pacific region. He focuses on the functional role of trilateral security cooperation as a “bridging” framework to generate an arrangement that compensates for the inability of broader multinational cooperative frameworks (such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)) to nimbly respond to regional crises. Trilateral security cooperation can also potentially overcome the exclusivism of interests and inherent power asymmetry that has sometimes impeded US regional bilateral alliances from serving as a mechanism for broader regional security cooperation. In Chapter Six, Ryo Sahashi envisions the US-Japan-Australia security relationship as a potential mechanism for spearheading the effort to establish an Asia-Pacific region-wide multinational security framework. Sahashi argues that Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington can work together to encourage a good, stable regional security order by setting cooperative security precedents that are consistent with international rules and norms.

Chapters Two through Five examine specific policy dimensions of the trilateral security relationship among the United States, Japan, and Australia. These chapters provide detailed accounts about the evolution of the relationship, assess their specific deliberative and material components, and highlight cooperation in three specific areas:(1) humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR),

(2) maritime capacity building vis-à-vis third countries (and particularly those located in Southeast Asia), and (3) defense technology. Compared with the early phase of the trilateral security relationship, US-Japan-Australia cooperation has evolved to develop specific agendas and joint actions to synergize respective security engagement in the Asia-Pacific region. We have highlighted these three to be most significant issue areas for future evolution of the relationship.

Through these analyses, at least two major factors that have contributed to the current robust state in US-Japan-Australia security cooperation can be identified. One is the confluence of regional security developments and the trajectories of the three countries' security policies. As James L. Schoff demonstrates in Chapter Two, US-Japan-Australia security relations have evolved into a concrete arrangement that is designed to promote a rule-based international order. It is interesting to note that, as Tow and Sahashi argue in their respective chapters, the emphasis on "order preservation" and "order building" has allowed the three countries' governments to suggest that their collaboration is a cooperative arrangement that stands *for* something rather than *against* specific national security challenges.

Secondly, notwithstanding its initial success, it is clear that US-Japan-Australia trilateral security cooperation does not seek to replace the US-Japan and US-Australia bilateral alliances. Rather, the observations developed in Chapters Two through Four confirm that practical security cooperation has often been leveraged by the complementarity between the US-Japan alliance, which focuses on Northeast Asia, and the US-Australia alliance, which covers the South Pacific to the Indian Ocean. The concept of a "quasi-alliance" or "virtual alliance" (initially used to explain US-Japan-ROK policy coordination vis-à-vis North Korea) seems applicable here.<sup>1</sup> In particular, as Chapters Three and Four demonstrate, trilateral cooperation has often been most effective when it evolves out of the bilateral relationships that the US military has already developed with Japan and Australia.

This has been especially true since the Obama administration introduced its "rebalancing" strategy of strengthening Asia-Pacific security by relying more on allied and partner "capacity building." Australia's hosting of US Marine rotational deployments and Japan's move toward adopting a more proactive defense posture both seek to complement the US rebalancing initiative. This dynamic also extends, as illustrated by Ken Jimbo in Chapter Four, to their contribution to the capacity building of maritime security in Southeast Asia littoral states. Such synergy at the policy level is significant as it suggests the three governments' commitment to pursuing deeper security relations at both the bilateral and trilateral levels among Washington and its two Pacific allies. How much this arrangement will focus on coordinated response to common



security challenges relative to order building will largely depend on how other key regional security actors (e.g. China) respond to the trilateral arrangement's development over the next few years.

Thirdly, and in this context, the acceleration of US-Japan-Australia security relations would not have been possible without a commensurate and rapidly-growing security relationship between Japan and Australia. Compared with the US-Japan-ROK security relationship that has stymied in recent years due to tensions between Tokyo and Seoul, close security relations between Tokyo and Canberra have visibly contributed to the evolution of US-Japan-Australia security relations. In particular, as Schoff and H. D. P. Envall trace in Chapters Two and Three, the institutionalization of Japan-Australia security cooperation through the signing of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in the last few years has facilitated cooperation among the US military, Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF), and Australian Defence Force (ADF), illustrated by the greater frequency with which they conduct joint military exercises.

At the same time, the analyses in this report also suggest some challenges facing the trilateral arrangement moving forward. One is the management of the increasing number of stakeholders in the relationship. As Tow discusses in Chapter One, a notable strength of the US-Japan-Australia security relationship lies in its informality — after all, it is not a formal trilateral alliance. Because of its informality, trilateral security relations among the three countries have been able to gradually shift from a diplomatic initiative primarily focused on policy consultation (the name “Trilateral Strategic *Dialogue*” (TSD) is indicative of the initial purpose of the arrangement) to a framework for concrete security cooperation over a broad range of security issues beyond the existing bilateral alliance mechanisms. These include HA/DR and maritime capacity building, as addressed in Chapters Three and Four respectively. On the other hand, its very informality has also limited the scope of this triad's security cooperation to activities that focus largely on peacetime activities that do not involve the use of force. Its informality — perhaps most notably underscored by the lack of a formal command and control structure similar to what exists in NATO — makes it difficult, if not impossible, for Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra to address more tangible security challenges in a direct manner.

A second challenge relates to one of the two key “catalysts” for security collaboration beyond bilateral alliances, as Tow discusses in Chapter One. This pertains to the existence of shared values or mutual interests among the three countries that can be applied in response to a specific security challenge. Ultimately, the sustainability of shared values and mutual security interests may

actually posit a considerable challenge to the three countries. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, the TSD was not exactly robust when its first foreign minister-level meeting took place in March 2006, due to the divergence of views that Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra held with regards to China. Should the outlook for the Asia-Pacific regional or international security environments held by the three countries noticeably diverge in the future, it will be difficult to sustain today's positive momentum in the trilateral security relationship. Also, as Tatsumi discusses in Chapter Five, potential trilateral cooperation in defense equipment could become more complicated in areas where there are domestic political interests or commercial groups vying against it. Strong resistance among South Australian naval construction interests against the prospective sale of the Soryu submarine to the ADF is illustrative. So too is the ponderous history of unravelling US military export control licensing regulations as they may apply to both Australian and Japanese defense procurement priorities (although there has been progress in this area, as evidenced by the Australia-US Defense Trade Cooperation Treaty).

Finally, leadership matters. Although Japan-Australia security relations have by and large enjoyed bipartisan support in both countries despite the frequent change of leadership in the last several years, it is undeniable that bilateral security ties have evolved dynamically in recent years largely due to a close personal relationship between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Over the next two years, two of the three countries (United States and Australia) will undergo national elections, with at least the US experiencing a change in administration. In Japan, even though Prime Minister Abe technically does not have to face elections until 2018, he may be pressured to go to the polls should his domestic popularity decline. No one knows how leadership fluctuations in the three countries will impact the momentum of trilateral security cooperation.

Clearly, the US-Japan-Australia trilateral relationship is the most successful example of an informal security arrangement in the Asia-Pacific region that goes beyond the traditional "hub-and-spokes" US alliance system. While the relationship is firmly grounded in the solid alliance that Australia and Japan each holds with the United States, the arrangement has created a distinct habit of minilateral cooperation among the three countries, particularly among the three countries' militaries. Although such cooperation has so far focused on peacetime activities, in which the three militaries function as the core in providing assistance to third countries, their shared accumulation of experiences in joint operations will contribute to improving mutual capacity to respond to various emergencies and other circumstances. If the three countries

can sustain positive momentum, this framework has the potential to evolve into a key component of an emerging multi-layered security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region.

Perhaps the most formidable challenge confronting these three security partners will emerge as a result of their success in shaping such a cooperative framework. Specifically, the three countries must strike a judicious balance between assuring China that their cooperation is not meant to contain Beijing and acquiescing too much to such Chinese concerns, diluting the effectiveness of trilateral security cooperation in the process. Without establishing a good balance between these two scenarios, this trilateral cooperation can be undermined, should divergence in China policy among Washington, Tokyo, and Canberra become noticeable.

It is important, therefore, that the United States, Japan, and Australia coordinate their China policy regularly and systematically. Ultimately, the long-term efficacy of US-Japan-Australia trilateral security cooperation may depend on the ability of the three countries' policymakers to continue to engage China, individually and collectively, in ways that encourage Beijing to participate in distinct regional order-building measures, such as HA/DR exercises. Cultivating Chinese understanding — if not its outright support — of the benefit of trilateral security cooperation will be critical to achieving confidence building with China in a way that benefits the overall stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

## Endnotes

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## About

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# US-Japan-Australia SECURITY COOPERATION

## Prospects and Challenges

As the Asia-Pacific region undergoes dynamic power shifts and witnesses new and emerging security threats in the process, the United States has discovered the potential that “minilateral” security cooperation offers in complementing the existing bilateral alliances and multilateral organizations in the region. In particular, the trilateral security relationship among the United States, Japan, and Australia has quickly emerged as one of the most robust minilateral relationships to facilitate regional stability and peace. *US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges* focuses on the US-Japan-Australia trilateral security relationship and seeks to explore the evolving and dynamic trilateral security relations among Washington, Canberra, and Tokyo. This collaboration represents the diverse perspectives of American, Japanese, and Australian scholars, addressing the theoretical debates regarding minilateral cooperation, the evolution of the trilateral relationship, aspects of US-Japan-Australia security cooperation — particularly, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, maritime capacity building, and defense equipment cooperation — and the impact of the trilateral relationship for the Asia-Pacific regional security architecture.