

STRATEGY

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Tangled webs Security architectures in Asia

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William T Tow

William T Tow is a Professor of International Security in the Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University and a Chief Investigator for the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security. He has served on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Foreign Affairs Council and has been a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Asia/Pacific Research Center, the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London and will be a Visiting Professor at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore from July–October 2008. He was Editor of the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* from 2001–2007. He also directs the International Alliance of Research University's Security Project on rising powers and regional security architectures. He has published eighteen books or monographs and near 100 journal articles and book chapters. His most recent books include *Asia-Pacific Security: US, Australia and Japan and the New Security Triangle* (Routledge 2007) and *Asia-Pacific Strategic Relations: Seeking Convergent Security* (Cambridge 2001). He is currently finishing a manuscript on Asia–Pacific regional security order-building and power balancing.

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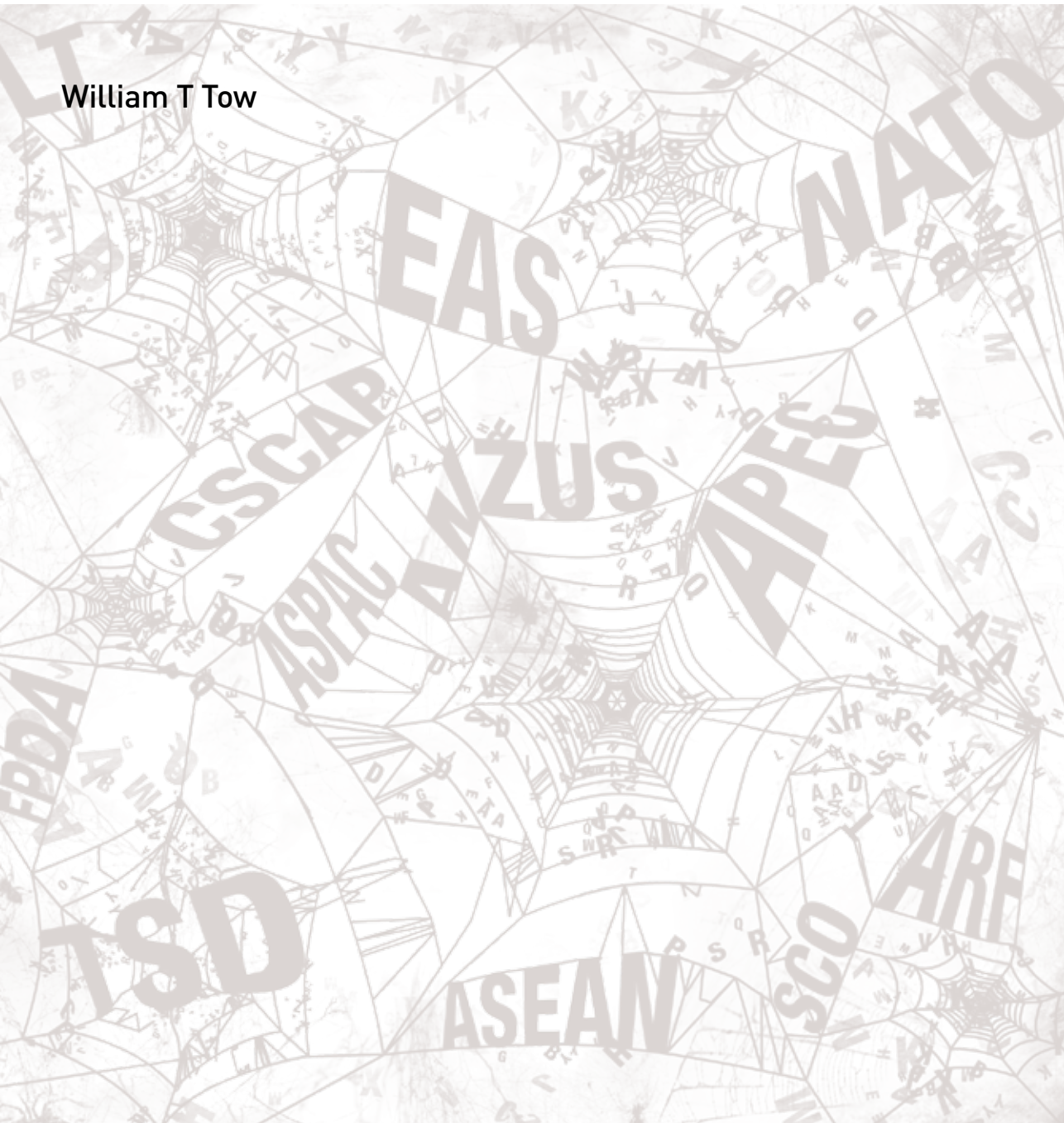
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William T Tow



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ASPI

Level 2, Arts House
40 Macquarie Street
Barton ACT 2600
Australia

Tel + 61 2 6270 5100
Fax + 61 2 6273 9566
Email enquiries@aspi.org.au
Web www.aspi.org.au

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Contents

Executive Director's introduction	1
Executive summary	2
Chapter 1:	
Australia's dual security strategy	5
Chapter 2:	
Cooperative security/competitive geometries	11
Chapter 3:	
Envisioning and implementing multilateralism	29
Chapter 4:	
Australia, multilateral security and future policy directions	39
Tables	
1 Asia–Pacific cooperative security institutions	45
2 Asia–Pacific competitive geometries	48
Acronyms	51
References and further reading	52
About ASPI	54

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SYDNEY 2007



Executive Director's introduction

ASPI had already commissioned a study on Asia–Pacific regional security architectures before the Prime Minister's proposal in early June for the establishment of an 'Asia–Pacific community' by 2020. That announcement has only added greater interest to the findings of the original research. The region is already characterised by a range of institutions, agreements and dialogues, raising the question of how we might best ensure that both existing arrangements and new ones work to greatest effect in coming years.

In this paper, Professor William Tow from the Australian National University presents a broad overview of regional security architectures, and a guide for Australian policy makers on how to advance Australia's national interests in coming years. His analysis turns upon a distinction between those institutions reinforcing cooperation and those sustaining a more competitive rivalry. The first tend to represent our hopes for what the region may become during a period of great strategic turbulence: a region where countries work cooperatively to build a stable, liberal regional security order. The second represent a set of insurance policies lest things go wrong, and the region falls into adversarial competition and power balancing. Australia, like other regional countries, hopes for the first but—with evidence of security cooperation still weak and fitful—must prepare for the second.

As the author notes, this represents the continuation of a long tradition in Australian strategic policy, a 'dual strategy' under which we both partner with the dominant Western maritime power and try to build good relationships with our Asian neighbours. But the paper suggests that keeping the dual strategy afloat is likely to prove a difficult challenge as the Asian security order shifts in coming decades.

Bill Tow has long been one of Australia's preeminent international relations analysts, as well as one of ASPI's long-term supporters. I am grateful to him for his efforts, and know readers will find value in the following analysis.

Peter Abigail

Executive Director

Photo opposite: Yachts cruise underneath Sydney's Harbour Bridge to celebrate the twenty-one world leaders attending the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation summit on 8 September 2007.
AAP/Sergio Dionisio © 2007 AAP

Executive summary

Australia has long practised a ‘dual strategy’ approach to security, seeking alliance relationships with the dominant Western maritime power while simultaneously cultivating friendly ties with its regional neighbours. Australia’s new Labor government has retained this approach, seeking to sharpen and refine the strategy at a time when the Asia–Pacific is experiencing unprecedented structural change. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s numerous declarations of support for the ANZUS alliance sit alongside his call in early June 2008 for the formation of an Asia–Pacific community ‘which can, for the first time, have a pan-regional dialogue on the question of our common security’.

But there has never been a single regional security architecture in the Asia–Pacific—only competing architectures. Together, they already represent a set of tangled webs of interconnectivity, adding vastly to the challenge of redesign. In the Asia–Pacific, security architectures are institutions or associations that shape the context and organisation of that region’s security order. Depending on their purposes and practices, security architectures can either facilitate greater stability or intensify tensions. The three general types of architecture are: collective defence relationships, security coalitions or ‘regimes’, and security communities.

Military alliances are the primary forms of collective defence organisation. They organise the defence resources of member states to compete against threats and adversaries. States form security coalitions when they cooperate formally or informally to neutralise security dilemmas or crises by applying a common set of rules or ‘norms’. Such cooperation may be through formal mechanisms or through ad hoc responses to a specific security issue. States form security communities when the coalitions they have formed to avoid conflict evolve into more permanent cooperative arrangements. Those three approaches can overlap in ways that either strengthen or undermine regional security politics.

Security communities and ongoing security coalitions tend to promote ‘cooperative security’; collective defence arrangements to reflect ‘competitive geometry’. Numerous architectures reflecting both the cooperative and competitive genres can be found in the Asia–Pacific. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), its various

partnership arrangements, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum all attest to the vigour of regional community-building processes. And the US bilateral security alliance network with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Australia, the Five Power Defence Arrangements involving Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), spearheaded by China and Russia, are major regional collective defence arrangements.

Australia faces a fundamental policy challenge in integrating its dual strategy with those architectures most likely to ensure stability in the region. While none of these groupings are entirely ‘cooperative’ or ‘competitive’ in their composition or objectives, Australia must nevertheless rank them according to its own national security interests. We need access to vital regional trading lifelines and key industrialised Asian economies. We have an interest in the gradual development of more liberal Asia–Pacific societies and in a stable and predictable regional security order—one that accommodates China and India as rising powers while encouraging the US to remain geopolitically engaged in the region. Our security requirements will continue to be best served by a judicious mix of cooperative security and competitive geometries.

Cooperative security organisations assessed in this strategy paper are the ARF, the APEC forum, and the EAS. Nearly two decades after the Cold War, cooperative security arrangements are important in keeping the US engaged and encouraging China to become a responsible stakeholder in the regional security order. Multilateral security arrangements in the Asia–Pacific have proven to be instruments for cooperation by great powers and have provided ‘hedging’ opportunities for middle and small powers to offset changing threats. The benefits to Australia in participating in broad and cooperative multilateral security arrangements are clear: middle powers can often apply meaningful leverage in such groupings. The alternatives to such active participation in multilateral security architectures could be an Asian security environment hostile to our interests or one that dilutes our influence.

Competitive geometries reviewed here include the San Francisco System of bilateral security alliances, the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), the Quadrilateral Dialogue and NATO’s incursion into Asia. Our participation in more competitive, asymmetrical geometries such as the US-led bilateral network in Asia provides us with insurance in the event that ‘multilateralism goes wrong’. It also allows us to engage with and influence the US as Washington shapes its own policies for reconciling its traditional postwar collective defence postures in the Asia–Pacific with cooperative security approaches. Australia expects that cooperative security institutions will become more important in the region. However, uncertainties surrounding the future of security dialogues in Northeast Asia, the currently weak security focus of ASEAN and issues associated with our domestic political identity and our role in the region are indicative of the complexity of the issues involved.

The paper concludes by recommending a set of ‘first steps’ that the Rudd government might take in pursuit of its regional community proposal. It should use and support both the cooperative security arrangements and competitive geometries currently functioning in the Asia–Pacific. Australia should streamline, where it can, the necessarily oscillating course between those two approaches, in part by encouraging the US to be ‘more multilateral’. It must plan how the Australian–American alliance will allow the Rudd government, and, in January 2009, a new US President to work effectively toward realising long-term Asia–Pacific stability.



AUSTRALIA'S DUAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The changing strategic landscape

Australia faces a world experiencing unprecedented strategic change. The Asia–Pacific region, which is now our major trading outlet, is contending for global economic primacy and more geopolitical clout. Our most important ally, the US, remains a global superpower but one whose resources are clearly overstretched by intractable strategic commitments and whose diplomatic and cultural appeal is challenged by rivals. Australia's traditional preference for allying with a 'great and powerful friend' to ensure its economic prosperity and national security is being tested by the growing reality that its future wealth will be determined by its position in Asia—and affected by the remarkable economic growth of China and India—even as Australian policy makers continue to assign strategic prominence to their country's American alliance.

The Australian–American alliance remains strong and has arguably become even more important as US security postures have become more 'globalised' in the aftermath of 9/11.

Those trends raise questions about the type of structural arrangements that might best ensure Australia's future prosperity and national security. Will the various multilateral security arrangements now emerging in the Asia–Pacific effectively support the regional stability

Photo opposite: President Bush and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd wave as they walk toward the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, 28 March 2008.
AP via AAP/Ron Edmonds © 2008 AP

required for this country to be secure? Or will Australia's reliance on the US alliance remain the ultimate formula for the country to remain an independent and viable part of the international system? Can the politics of multilateralism and bilateralism be combined to generate a more effective approach to achieving Australian policy objectives? These questions confront the Australian policy community and the new Labor government.

One of Australia's long-standing foreign policy challenges has been how we can reconcile our commitments to our alliances and our relationships with regional neighbours. For more than half a century, Australia has been a part of the American-led 'hub-and-spokes' bilateral security network in the Asia-Pacific. The Australian-American alliance remains strong and has arguably become even more important as US security postures have become more 'globalised' in the aftermath of 9/11. The US has relied on Australia to be a major partner in American-led 'coalitions of the willing' directed against international terrorism, newly emergent 'state-centric' threats and nontraditional security challenges such as natural disasters, energy security, climate change and pandemics that transcend national boundaries.

... the Rudd government has declared that while Australia's alliance with the US is still alive and well, it will be balanced by a less threat-centric outlook toward national security.

Some Asian states have responded to this trend by (incorrectly) viewing Australia under the conservative government of John Howard as a self-proclaimed 'deputy sheriff' that compliantly promoted US interests throughout the Asia-Pacific, and not a genuinely independent player in regional community-building. In the lead-up to the November 2007 Australian federal election, Kevin Rudd served notice that, while the US alliance would remain a core element of Australian foreign policy, a new Labor government would exercise foreign policy independence from Washington when circumstances justified and would seek new emphases in international security policy. As Prime Minister, Rudd has conferred with President Bush (in March 2008) and won the President's endorsement as an able manager of alliance politics. Yet Rudd quickly ratified the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which the Bush Administration has opposed, and served notice to the administration that the 550 Australian combat troops in southern Iraq would be withdrawn during 2008. The President has begrudgingly acknowledged that the Australian troop withdrawal became politically necessary after Rudd enshrined it as an election campaign promise.

Rudd also signalled that Australia's national security policy would be updated to encompass a broader spectrum of concerns related to 'human security' and other nontraditional security issues. Assigning priority to the 'arc of instability' of fragile South Pacific states, understanding and exploiting linkages between economics and security, and maintaining the allegiance of Australia's own, increasingly diverse, urban socioethnic groups, the Rudd government has declared that while Australia's alliance with the US is still alive and well, it will be balanced by a less threat-centric outlook toward national security. Accordingly, Australian involvement in regional community-building processes and the politics of multilateralism, which underwrites it, is bound to intensify.

Background

A 'dual strategy' typifies Australia's postwar management of national security policy. That period was beset with constant policy tensions generated by successive Australian governments attempting to square the American alliance with greater Australian involvement in various Asian regional security architectures. During the mid-to-late 1960s, Australian conservative governments viewed both the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Asian–Pacific Council (ASPAC) as potential venues for Asia–Pacific economic cooperation and democratic progress. The US was initially the driver of SEATO, hoping it could be a part of its global network to contain international communism, and it initially supported ASPAC from the sidelines. It was determined that neither of those multilateral security groupings would supplant the bilateral hub-and-spokes alliance system that enabled it to dominate the strategic planning and postures of noncommunist Asia. Well aware of Washington's scepticism, Australia's own policies towards SEATO and ASPAC became increasingly ambiguous and its support of US preferences for the tightly-defined bilateral defence commitments of the San Francisco System was reinforced. When the Whitlam Labor government came to power in December 1972 it explored a more independent approach to security in the region but simultaneously reassured Washington that ANZUS remained the cornerstone of Australia's defence posture.

The alliance component of Australia's 'dual strategy' was tested by the ANZUS rift. This dispute led to New Zealand's de facto extrication from that alliance when it dissented from the US's nuclear extended deterrence posture. Nevertheless, Australian Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke remained loyal to US policy and to ANZUS, even as his government moved to establish an independent bilateral defence relationship with New Zealand. He helped ensure that the US hub-and-spokes strategy toward Asia stayed intact by encouraging America's other regional allies to support the US's Asia–Pacific and global strategies.

As the Cold War drew to a close, Australian policy makers re-evaluated regional multilateral security. The Hawke government's 1987 Defence White Paper and a regional security statement by Foreign Minister Gareth Evans both underscored Australia's determination to shape a more independent security identity by embracing greater 'defence self-reliance' (but still with US support and alliance ties), and endorsing the concept of 'comprehensive engagement' with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The latter statement was symbolic as an acknowledgement by Canberra of the need to raise Australia's diplomatic and strategic profile in Asia by 'participating actively in the gradual development of a regional security community based on a sense of shared security interests' (Evans 1989: 44).

Subsequent Labor government policy initiatives during the early 1990s underscored Australia's determination to pursue shared security and strategic interests with its Asian neighbours, applying 'middle power diplomacy' to develop a collective Australian and ASEAN sense of security and well-being. These initiatives included playing an integral role in the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping, participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and leading efforts for a Cambodian peace settlement. In a definitive speech delivered to the Asia–Australia Institute in Sydney in March 1995, Evans observed that '(t)hinking of ourselves occasionally, as circumstances arise, as an East Asian Hemisphere nation, and having others in the region able to comfortably think of us in this way, can do nothing to harm, and much to advance, Australia's longer term efforts to engage and integrate with this part of the world...'. He warned his audience, however, that 'no one is in the business of tearing up familiar bilateral alliances, least of all Australia's with the US.'

Seeking to apply his own imprimatur on the dual strategy approach, the Foreign Minister concluded that despite Australia's continued adherence to alliance politics, 'In a region where the idea of power-balance retains considerable resonance, there may be much to be said... for working over time to unite the lesser sized countries in the region—including those of South-East Asia, Indochina and Australasia—into a more cohesive grouping of their own' (Evans 1995).

Howard ... argued that one did not need to choose between 'geography and history' when calibrating Australian interests in Asia to relationships with the US.

Although by no means rejecting Asian engagement, the Coalition government elected in March 1996, led by John Howard, assigned precedence to correcting what it viewed as an imbalanced and ineffective approach favouring Asia over the US alliance. Howard accepted the logic of dual strategy but never felt compelled to choose between its two separate components. He argued that one did not need to choose between 'geography and history' when calibrating Australian interests in Asia to relationships with the US. As a good American ally, he implied that Australia was required to be forthright in supporting American policy interests and behaviour when such support was merited. Unqualified backing of US intervention in a serious China–Taiwan crisis almost immediately after assuming office, and the release of the 'Sydney Statement' at the Australia–US Ministerial Consultations in July 1996, reaffirmed the basic *raison d'être* for ANZUS. The upgrading of the Pine Gap joint intelligence operations in December that year was another early sign of a low-key but conspicuous shift in Australian policy orientation toward closer US alliance ties. The undeniable warmth in personal relations between Howard and US President George W Bush, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington when Howard activated ANZUS to support the American 'global war on terror', later intensified this trend.

Yet the Howard government's foreign policy White Paper of August 1997 insisted that a major function of the alliance was 'to complement and reinforce Australia's policy engagement with East Asia' and to ensure 'a continuing constructive US engagement with the region' (DFAT 1997: 58). Throughout his time in office, Howard carefully avoided 'choosing' between the alliance and the region. After an initially brief period of frosty relations with a China still irritated over Australia's strong backing of US intervention in the Taiwan crisis, mutual economic interests prevailed in Beijing and Canberra. They laid the groundwork for what became a remarkable decade of growth in Sino–Australian trade and investment relations. With its signing of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)—to enable it to participate in the inaugural EAS meeting convened in December 2005—and its hosting of the September 2007 APEC summit in Sydney, the Howard government strongly signalled that it considered multilateral security cooperation increasingly important.

Sharpening and refining its dual strategy remains the core element of Australia's national security. Determining how successful that strategy will be at a time when both the Asia–Pacific and international security environments are undergoing sweeping changes is the major focus of subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 compares cooperative security and competitive geometry in the Asia–Pacific and how they may affect Australian interests. Three cooperative security organisations and four competitive geometry approaches will be briefly analysed: the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF); the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping; and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China–Japan–South Korea (ASEAN+3) approach, which has evolved into a burgeoning ‘East Asia Summit’, are the cooperative security instrumentalities to be reviewed. The US bilateral alliance system in the Asia–Pacific; the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue; the Quadrilateral Dialogue proposal; and recent inter-regional collective defence developments constitute the competitive geometries to be discussed.

As noted in this paper’s introduction, ‘cooperative security’ is a process by which states come together to identify and pursue common values to realise a mutually acceptable regional order. It is most common when states view their security as best guaranteed by collaboration rather than competition. ‘Competitive geometries’ refers to alliances, institutions or regimes created or adjusted to neutralise the power and influence of perceived rival states or groups of states.

Regional security institutions or architectures can be competitive or cooperative depending on the circumstances that generate or perpetuate their existence. They can become less competitive over time as the threat which originally mandated their founding dissipates. This was the case for the US bilateral alliance system in the Asia–Pacific following the Soviet Union’s demise in 1991. However, nearly a decade later, the commander-in-chief of the US Pacific Command and his primary strategic adviser were arguing that the US alliance network in the region could shift from underwriting a regional balance of power to one more focused on strategic reassurance and a regional ‘security community’ (Blair and Hanley 2000: 7–17). Others argued that bilateral alliances could evolve into instruments of cooperative security, integrating existing or new multilateral security arrangements, without losing their capacity to reapply their former balancing mechanisms should new threats emerge (Tow 2001). In this context, competitive geometries can combine bilateralism and multilateralism or can function on their own to either realise greater cooperative security or to hedge against unfavourable structural change.

Chapter 3 deals with the way in which multilateral security politics might develop in ways that support Australia’s dual strategy and what cooperative security organisations and competitive geometry approaches might best sustain it. Australian policy planners confront some fundamental geopolitical decisions. Can Australia, for example, play a role in influencing the actions of established and rising Asian powers? What purposes should regional multilateral security structures serve? Should our policy makers institutionalise competitive geometry approaches among the region’s large powers or facilitate cooperative security organisations? If the current array of cooperative security organisations and competitive geometries is susceptible to modification, will such modifications accommodate or challenge our dual strategy approach to national security?

The paper’s brief final chapter (Chapter 4) will offer policy recommendations for Australia’s multilateral security policies. Australia’s dual strategy must be sufficiently deft to manoeuvre successfully between cooperative security organisations and various competitive geometry models over the short-term while working to achieve a stable and enduring pan-Asian framework. This is the challenge confronting the Rudd government.



COOPERATIVE SECURITY/ COMPETITIVE GEOMETRIES

Debate about how the Asia–Pacific security order would transform after the Cold War has been widespread since that struggle ended almost two decades ago. Although no definite successor has yet emerged to the strategic bipolarity that shaped the region’s postwar geopolitics, multilateralism has become increasingly relevant as a determinant of Asia’s economic and strategic landscape. Yet bilateralism has also continued to be surprisingly resilient. Regional actors are now experimenting with converting selected bilateral and multilateral politico-economic relationships to more overt security relationships. Bilateral relationships such as that between Australia and Japan are expanding their security components. Such activity is also expanding within multilateral forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (into the ARF) and in the APEC Leaders Meeting. The strategic risk inherently associated with this transformation process is that the variants of security interests and behaviours emerging from it could, if not carefully managed, polarise rather than reinforce Asia–Pacific order-building, with commensurate negative effects on international stability.

Those ongoing processes of change will challenge Australia’s security policies. The application of a dual strategy—alliance affinity and regional engagement—will become increasingly difficult if an antagonistic multipolarity prevails in the region and great powers become wary of their allies’ economic ties with potential strategic competitors. It will become less difficult to the extent that cooperative security prevails in the region through multilateral institutions—cooperative security organisations—that contribute to regional stability and order-building.

Photo opposite: Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer *JS Yuudachi* (DD 103) leads a formation of ships 5 September 2007 during Exercise Malabar 2007 in the Bay of Bengal. More than 20,000 naval personnel from the navies of Australia, India, Japan, the Republic of Singapore, and the United States took part in the exercise, designed to increase interoperability among the navies and to develop common procedures for maritime security operations. © 2007 AFP via AAP.

The principal cooperative security processes in the region—ARF, APEC and the EAS—will be considered in the following sections. So too will recent efforts to reconstitute various components of the US bilateral ‘hub-and-spokes’ alliance network as effective competitive geometry approaches.

The application of a dual strategy—alliance affinity and regional engagement—will become increasingly difficult if an antagonistic multipolarity prevails in the region ...

Cooperative security organisations

The ASEAN Regional Forum

ARF was established in July 1994. It evolved primarily from the desire of Southeast Asian states to soften China’s confrontational positions toward ASEAN states with whom China had territorial disputes (especially in the South China Sea) and to ensure that the US remained an engaged diplomatic and strategic player in the sub-region. A ‘concept paper’ tabled at the second ARF Summit in 1995 identified confidence building and preventive diplomacy as the best means for resolving conflict .

Australia supported this initiative, seeing it as a helpful conduit for China to be part of a regional cooperative security regime. At Australia’s insistence, and that of several other participants, intersessional meetings of officials from selected member states were scheduled between the annual summits. These meetings were to focus on specific regional security issues, specifically to avoid the accusation that ARF was simply another ASEAN ‘talk shop’ which emulated the very slow processes of consultation and consensus-building associated with its host organisation. An informal process of ‘Track II’ meetings attended by diplomats in an unofficial capacity, as well as by academics and other independent experts, was created to supplement and, in some instances, to accelerate ARF deliberations. The first output of this process—the Council on Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)—met in Canberra in November 1994 to consider confidence-building and trust-building measures. That Australia would undertake such an initiative was consistent with the strong emphasis on regional engagement pursued at this time by Prime Minister Paul Keating and his foreign minister, Gareth Evans.

CSCAP’s track record has been mixed. Following its inception, it was instrumental in helping the ARF to define its approach to cooperative security. But over the past decade it has been searching, mostly in vain, for means to shape Asia–Pacific multilateral security politics. Critics point to what they view as a major flaw in the Track II consultative process: that ‘actual intra-ASEAN policy practice... remains intergovernmental and bureaucratic’, largely beyond the reach of independent analysts (Jones and Smith 2007: 159–160). Some academics and think tank leaders steering the CSCAP advisory process are perhaps too well connected to their respective national governments. They are more prone to support the policy status quo, rather than to question it or to provide advice on alternative ways to formulate and manage multilateral security policy. Other CSCAP chapters, including Australia’s, have recently talked about how to revive their purpose and agendas at a time when regional security developments seem to have outpaced their ability to anticipate and shape them.

The Howard government was less comfortable than its predecessor with the symbolic dimensions of regional security community building and more intent on measuring the actual success or failure of that process. ASEAN's consultative style, underwritten by so-called 'Asian values', illustrated what Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer regarded as cultural differences that would inevitably lead to intermittent tensions between Australia and various ASEAN states. This outlook was, in turn, viewed by at least some of the ARF's Asian member states as an Australian vote of no confidence in regional cooperative security.

The Bali bombing ... was a catalyst for Australia to revive multilateral diplomatic coordination of counter-terrorism strategy.

The Bali bombing (in October 2002), carried out by elements of the Islamist group Jemaah Islamiyah and which killed eighty-eight Australian tourists, was a catalyst for Australia to revive multilateral diplomatic coordination of counter-terrorism strategy. In February 2004, Australia and Indonesia convened the Bali Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counter-Terrorism; every ARF member state was represented. Australia has also cultivated a greater ARF role on nuclear proliferation issues. In 2003, it exerted pressure, along with Indonesia, for the ARF Chairman's Statement to criticise North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and pressured the North Korean foreign minister who was attending to accelerate negotiations with other regional powers for de-nuclearising the Korean peninsula. By maintaining formal diplomatic relations with North Korea (which the US and Japan do not), Australia has established a separate line of communications with that country that can be used to encourage the North to reach agreement within the Six-Party Talks nuclear disarmament framework. It can thus represent itself to its regional neighbours, and within ARF councils, as a nonproliferation advocate in its own right rather than merely acting on behalf of Washington's nonproliferation agendas.

In his speech on China delivered to the Brookings Institution in April 2007, Kevin Rudd, then Leader of the Opposition, linked the ARF with an opportunity to strengthen Sino–Australian relations by involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) in a 'regional counter-disaster coordination authority' (Rudd 2007). Australia had already established precedents for such a linkage. It is a member of the ARF 'Shepherds Group', set up at the ARF inter-sessional meeting on disaster relief that was convened in September 2006 at Qingdao. Australia co-chaired an ARF seminar on civil–military cooperation to address pandemics in Hanoi during the same month and scheduled an ARF desktop exercise on civil–military responses to natural disasters with Indonesia in 2008. Analysts have speculated that China has been increasing its diplomatic influence within the ARF at the US's and Australia's expense. From initially sponsoring growing economic and investment linkages and offering limited military assistance, China is pursuing a visibly effective brand of regional diplomacy. It covers a wide spectrum of economic and security concerns that compares favourably to what many Southeast Asians regard as the narrow American preoccupation with Islamist terrorism in the region.

This perception is strengthening notwithstanding impressive American efforts in coordinating disaster relief operations following the Indian Ocean tsunami, cultivation of wider educational linkages, and encouragement of US–ASEAN trading and investment ties. China’s approach could be characterised as a soft-power and region-centric strategy in comparison with the US emphasis on its largely globalist posture. Indonesia’s and Malaysia’s rejection of the US Pacific Command’s Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) in 2004 was illustrative; Australia’s Maritime Exclusion Zone, advanced in December 2004, generated a similarly hostile reception within Indonesia and other ASEAN states. (The Lombok Treaty signed by Australia and Indonesia in November 2006 partially defused frictions over maritime security between those two countries and Australian policy officials have made progress with their ASEAN counterparts in addressing this issue.) Residual Southeast Asian concerns nevertheless remain that American and Australian offshore surveillance of other countries’ ocean traffic, and the deployment of foreign military elements proximate to or even within territorial waters under the guise of carrying out counter-terrorism, would seriously compromise the sovereign rights of ASEAN states.

A major Australian ‘stake’ in shaping the ARF is to ensure US interest in remaining involved within that institution, thereby reinforcing the US’s status as Australia’s primary bilateral alliance partner. Intermittent displays of US indifference to the ASEAN and ARF style of incessant conference diplomacy, with often ambiguous short-term results, complicate this objective. In July 2005, Condoleezza Rice’s decision—a decision she repeated two years later—not to attend the ARF Ministerial Meeting (AMM) meant that for the first time since 1994 the US Secretary of State would not be present at the AMM. A continued American reluctance to regularly dispatch the highest US officials to key regional meetings will complicate Australia’s own efforts to influence regional order-building as it adheres to a strategy that couples Australia’s support of a continued American power role in Asia with its quest to be a genuinely independent regional partner.

APEC has avoided appearing to marginalise Australia or extra-regional powers ... in ways that ASEAN or its recent offshoots ... have not.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

Since APEC’s founding in Canberra in 1989, in which Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke was instrumental, Australia has assigned APEC greater precedence than other regional cooperative security organisations. As a maritime trading power, Australia’s lifeblood is international trade. APEC’s policy of promoting ‘open regionalism’ and trade liberalisation appeals to Australia. A related consideration is that by supporting a regional order that is more inclusive than an East Asian trading bloc fuelled by ‘Asian values’, APEC has avoided appearing to marginalise Australia or extra-regional powers such as the US or Russia in ways that ASEAN or its recent offshoots (the ASEAN+3 and, briefly, the EAS) have not.

The US’s membership of APEC gives that organisation a viability and weight in Australian eyes that could not be matched by ASEAN or the EAS. By including an annual heads-of-government meeting (formally known as the Leaders Meeting), APEC allows

presidents and prime ministers of the ‘Member Economies’ to interact directly and bilaterally. APEC has consistently attracted heads of government to its meetings. It also provides a more effective structure for deliberations on wide-ranging issues than does the ARF, which is dependent on painstaking consensus. The APEC format and structure is more compatible with Australia’s dual strategy of continued US involvement in Asia–Pacific affairs and simultaneous engagement with regional polities as an independent and relevant security actor.

One of APEC’s unquestionable strengths over the past decade has been the Leaders Meeting as the region’s preferred consultative forum for politico-security crises. This was clearly true in the case of the informal deliberations between Howard and US President Bill Clinton, and between those leaders and the Indonesian finance minister, on the East Timor crisis that took place on the sidelines at APEC’s September 1999 Auckland summit (Indonesian President Habibie declined to attend APEC on the grounds that the East Timor crisis was becoming so intense that he needed to remain in Jakarta). APEC provided an informal but effective setting for negotiating the application of US power in support of a major Australian military effort to coalesce a disparate group of regional peacekeepers.

Can APEC move beyond sponsoring what many observers view as relatively mundane technical security agendas to play a greater part in building a new regional security order?

That meeting set a precedent for subsequent forays into regional and international security politics. At the October 2001 Leaders Meeting, a security issue—combating terrorism in the immediate aftermath of 9/11—was for the first time formally incorporated into the APEC agenda. That China joined with the Bush Administration to condemn and oppose the forces unleashing the attacks in New York and Washington was a highly symbolic development. Actual counter-terrorism measures adopted by that summit were more routine: cutting off terrorists’ sources of finance and strengthening air and maritime security. Those measures included the Secure Trade in the APEC Region Initiative, focused on seaports, airports and other access points, coastal patrols and container security; biosecurity planning; anti-corruption; energy security; and various aspects of human security such as emergency preparedness for catastrophes.

Can APEC move beyond sponsoring what many observers view as relatively mundane technical security agendas to play a greater part in building a new regional security order? To what extent can that organisation serve Australia’s strategic objectives, which include avoiding regional marginalisation and keeping the US geopolitically involved in the Asia–Pacific? The APEC Leaders Meeting held in Sydney in early September 2007 contributed little to answering those questions. Despite his preoccupations with Iraq and Afghanistan, President Bush attended the conclave largely due to his personal loyalty toward John Howard. Soon to face a tough federal election, Howard’s own focus was on climate change. The Meeting resulted only in a fairly amorphous declaration pledging the Member Economies to pursue non-binding ‘aspirational’ goals on energy efficiency. Most of the substantive deliberations occurred at informal bilateral meetings between heads

of government and their ministers. A casual observer could not be blamed for concluding that an entirely separate APEC forum was taking place, and one that would never be mentioned in the Leaders Meeting public communiqué. As one report summarised the event: ‘The APEC meeting was almost as remarkable for what was not on the agenda as what was.’ (Johnston 2007).

Various critics of APEC have rightly observed that its mixed track record in achieving its stated economic objectives, its failure to deal effectively with the Asian Financial Crisis, and its cluttered and diffuse focus raises questions about its purpose and viability. Taiwan’s separate APEC membership complicates Australian efforts to raise APEC’s security profile. As presently constituted, APEC would appear to be of little use in mediating a potential Sino–American war over Taiwan because China systematically blocks Taiwan’s president from attending Leaders Meetings. Chinese policy may become more flexible if Taiwan’s new president, Ma Ying-jeou, is successful in establishing more positive interaction with the Chinese mainland than his predecessor, Chen Shui-bian.

Critics also point to the tendency of Member Economies to outdo each other in introducing new proposals for regional policy action to justify APEC’s continuing existence. While acknowledging that the Leaders Meetings have been at least somewhat effective as a diplomatic instrument, critics point to the danger that leaders may stay away if their role is simply to sign or ratify bland and formal policy documents (Cook and Gyngell 2005: 3; Gyngell 2007: 10).

The East Asia Summit

One other, more recent, cooperative security organisation that is relevant to Australia’s dual strategy is the East Asia Summit (EAS). EAS was spawned from the resentment of states most directly affected by the Asian Financial Crisis and countries such as Japan which resented what they saw as the inflexible, even hegemonic, behaviour of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the US in dealing with defaulted loans and financial transparency. The EAS’s critics accuse it of reflecting the exclusivist ideal of ‘Asia for Asians’. Other observers, however, note that Australia has gained membership in this body and that to conclude that the EAS will be ‘exclusivist’ is premature because it is still shaping its diplomatic and economic roles. They note also that the extent to which regional security will actually be a core element of the EAS agenda remains unclear.

Prospects for US membership in the EAS are currently low, but if that organisation eventually develops into a substantive institution the US may seek to join, with the proviso that any promise it makes to renounce the use of force against other members would be qualified by allowing dispensation for its alliance commitments currently in effect throughout the region. Australia would, consistent with its dual strategy of engagement and alliance affinity, most likely pressure other EAS members to accept the US as a member under those terms. To what extent any such Australian lobbying would be successful is, at best, uncertain.

To understand the factors underlying these observations, a brief review of EAS history is appropriate. In November 1997, ASEAN leaders invited their counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea to an ASEAN leaders summit in Kuala Lumpur to discuss possibilities for closer intra-regional economic cooperation. Over the next two years, this ‘ASEAN+3’ configuration identified common principles for economic collaboration that were ultimately embodied in the ‘Chiang Mai Initiative’, produced by the finance ministers of those thirteen states in May 2000. Those guidelines included pledges to monitor regional and international

flows of capital, to begin negotiating for the ‘swapping’ of East Asian currencies in future financial crises and to weigh the value of establishing an Asian Monetary Fund. Because of the size of China’s and Japan’s foreign exchange reserves and because of the levels of institutionalisation required to put these measures into effect, the ASEAN+3 initiative caught the attention of the world’s developed states as a process that could threaten future prospects for open regionalism.

With exclusivism more prevalent, it was a short step for the ASEAN+3 to make membership of the EAS more stringent. EAS affiliates would be required to sign and adhere to ASEAN’s 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Because signatories to TAC had renounced the use of force, members of an EAS would have to endorse a nuclear-weapon-free Zone of Amity and Cooperation. They would also have to support the vision of an ASEAN Community, spelled out at ASEAN’s Bali Summit in 2003, based on ‘three pillars’: an ASEAN security community, an ASEAN economic community, and an ASEAN socio-cultural community.

Those conditions for EAS membership required countries such as Australia and India to re-evaluate traditional extended deterrence and nuclear force postures and—if strictly applied—would have excluded the US and Australia from Asian integration. However, an important development occurred when the ASEAN foreign ministers resolved in April 2005 to broaden EAS membership beyond the ASEAN+3 countries. ASEAN states advocating such a decision, including Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam, argued that the three proposed non-East Asian members—Australia, India and New Zealand—would provide a useful counterweight to Sino–Japanese geopolitical competition. It was also seen as an effective way of precluding China from establishing regional hegemony and eroding ASEAN’s accustomed ‘pivot position’ in regional diplomacy in the process. Finally, the inclusion of US allies like Australia and Japan in the EAS would convey to Washington a strong message that ASEAN had no interest in undermining American economic or strategic interests.

Australia eventually gained entry to the EAS table, despite some eleventh-hour bumps along the way.

Australia eventually gained entry to the EAS table, despite some eleventh-hour bumps along the way. Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi’s visit to Australia in April 2005 illustrated how Australian–ASEAN tensions still simmered underneath the surface of polite bilateral diplomacy. Badawi reportedly urged Australia to sign the TAC as a precondition for Australian representation at the December 2005 EAS meeting. Howard rejected Badawi’s appeal, contending that the TAC’s adherence to a nuclear free zone in Southeast Asia might damage Australia’s alliance relationship, and that its stipulations that there be no interference in domestic affairs, would bar Australia from criticising certain Asian states’ (for example, Myanmar’s) human rights practices. Opposition’s Foreign Affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd derided Howard’s stance: ‘... blind Freddy can see that the obstacle to Australia signing the friendship treaty is Howard’s personal political pride, because signing the treaty would involve stepping back from his military pre-emption doctrine’ (Hanson 2005: 569).

Ultimately, both sides compromised. ASEAN agreed to allow Australia to participate if it signed the TAC and Australia agreed to sign after being assured by the ASEAN Secretariat

that Australia's ANZUS obligations would not be affected. In return, Australia adjusted its position on the key document justifying the 'ASEAN Way' and ASEAN's cardinal diplomatic principles. The TAC was no longer to be regarded in Canberra as an outmoded 'Cold War relic' but as an integral blueprint for community-building that would complement Australian bilateral security obligations. Two EAS summits have convened since the Kuala Lumpur founding meeting: at Cebu in January 2007 and at Singapore in November 2007. As with APEC, the EAS appears to have embraced a low-key politico-security agenda, focusing on energy security, climate change and a somewhat amorphous vision of 'comprehensive economic partnership'.

Critics have argued that the irrelevance of EAS to regional community-building was guaranteed with China's initial bid to restrict its membership by relegating the three non-ASEAN+3 participants to 'observer status', believing that Australia, in particular, would serve as a proxy for US interests in the organisation (Malik 2006: 211). When that failed, Beijing merely diluted the importance of the EAS by proposing to broaden membership to include everyone—including the US and Russia. ASEAN predictably rejected this Chinese proposal, sensing that its own role as the region's community-building 'engine' would be reduced by adopting such an inclusive membership formula. It remains to be seen if those East Asian states still supporting a more insular approach to community-building will designate the ASEAN+3 as their architecture of choice because it remains the only exclusivist mechanism now operating in the region. Barring the unlikely event that its Northeast Asian members nominate the ASEAN+3 as their preferred community-building mechanism, Australia's dual strategy of regional engagement and alliance affinity remains viable.

A major determinant of the bilateral security network's future importance will be the extent to which US regional allies remain loyal to Washington's global strategies and are willing to underwrite them through greater sharing of the defence burden.

Competitive geometry approaches

The US bilateral alliance system

Traditional international relations theory maintains that alliances between two or more states will endure only as long as the parties perceive a mutual threat to their security. Postwar US bilateral alliances in the Asia–Pacific were initially forged to protect regional allies against a communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. Against conventional expectations, these alliances currently remain operative in a region that has long moved beyond the tight bipolar security focus of Asian security politics during the Cold War. Formal US bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines and Australia, along with a de facto bilateral military coalition with Singapore, constitute the region's most conspicuous, and arguably its most viable, regional security network. It is a competitive geometry that is united by its adherents' belief that US military power is highly stabilising and by its affiliates' determination to sustain its continued presence with material and normative support.

Rationales for continuing the US hub-and-spokes alliance system have been intermittently re-evaluated by both US policy planners and the US's regional bilateral allies, and have invariably been reconfirmed. The Nye Report, released by the US Department of Defense in February 1995, Japan's 1995 National Defense Program Outline and the 1994 Australian Defence White Paper collectively argued that increased levels of alliance engagement were integral to the credibility of the hub-and-spokes network in a region confronted with rising military powers such as China and North Korea. More recently, the US Department of Defense's 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* observed that these alliances 'make manifest the strategic solidarity of free democratic states, promote shared values and facilitate the sharing of military and security burdens around the world' (US Defense Department 2006: 6). No other set of regional security relationships provides the same level of assets, political support and military coordination as that developed by those alliances over the past half century. The main long-term challenge to the relevance of this bilateral security network is the US adjusting it so that it takes a more distinctly cooperative security approach or the US adopting more isolationist or discriminate strategies towards Asia because it is preoccupied with the Persian Gulf or with the global war on terror.

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A major determinant of the bilateral security network's future importance will be the extent to which US regional allies remain loyal to Washington's global strategies and are willing to underwrite them through greater sharing of the defence burden. Recent Australian, Japanese and South Korean initiatives to deploy military forces as part of the US-led 'coalitions of the willing' in Iraq and Afghanistan bode well for the continuing strategic relevance of the San Francisco System. Also important is the uncertainty of those allies about a Chinese-led regional security order, which has led to efforts to keep the US strategically engaged in Asia. Although China's foreign policy now seems more amenable to multilateralism, its ultimate strategic intentions remain unclear and its neighbours view US power as insurance against rising Chinese power. Washington is thus inclined to link its allies' lingering uncertainties about the region's capacity to develop an indigenous cooperative security framework with greater confidence in their ability to take on more alliance responsibilities. The traditional 'spokes' of the bilateral alliance network, it is hoped, will manage their future security relations with the US as more equal allies, less dependent on prompts by an American 'hub' on how to manage and perpetuate sound alliance politics.

The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

In this situation of changing relationships and responsibilities, Japan's transition from a highly dependent ally of the US into a more 'normal' security actor was essential. Implicit also was the strengthening of the Australia–Japan security dyad, traditionally viewed as a 'weak third leg' of the Asia–Pacific's American–Australian–Japanese maritime security triangle. The policy framework for achieving this had already been established in the early

1990s with the formalisation of annual bilateral security dialogues between Australian and Japanese officials. These processes gained momentum from 1995 through 2001 with the proclamation of an Australia–Japan ‘Partnership Agenda’ (in 1997), annual prime ministerial summits, stronger intelligence collaboration and increased coordination in international peacekeeping operations. The creation of an Australia–Japan–US Trilateral Security Dialogue was announced in August 2002 when Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi visited Canberra.

The talks were initially conducted at the vice-ministerial level but were upgraded to the ministerial level and renamed the ‘Trilateral Strategic Dialogue’ (TSD), to reflect their focus on global security issues such as nuclear nonproliferation, Iraq reconstruction, counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan and nonmilitary security issues, in addition to more traditional regional security problems. Under its reconstituted format, the TSD initially convened in Sydney in March 2006. Prior to attending that session and during a stopover in Indonesia, US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice had criticised China for being insufficiently transparent about its ongoing military buildup. She clearly softened her position when subsequently discussing the evident willingness of Beijing to work cooperatively with the US and its allies in the Six-Party Talks and on other regional and international security challenges. The final TSD communiqué instead ‘welcomed China’s constructive engagement in the region’ and underscored the value of China’s ‘enhanced cooperation with other parties such as ASEAN and the Republic of Korea’ (US Department of State 2006).

The TSD’s significance cannot be considered in isolation from a second aspect: the ‘Australia–Japan leg’ in alliance relations.

Since its Sydney debut, the TSD process has proceeded in a steady, relatively modest, but not totally uncontroversial, fashion. President Bush attended an informal breakfast meeting with Japan’s Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, and John Howard at the September 2007 APEC Leaders Meeting in Sydney, discussing how they might engage India more systematically on various security issues (Fujioka 2007). This prospect had been explored a few months previously at a ‘side-talk’ session conducted between vice-ministerial ranking officials of the four countries attending an ARF Senior Officials Meeting in Manila—a discussion that elicited a formal protest by Beijing. The latest TSD senior officials meeting assembled in Canberra in December 2007, again at the vice-ministerial level, to allow US officials the opportunity for interaction with their new counterparts in the Rudd government.

The TSD’s significance cannot be considered in isolation from a second aspect: the ‘Australia–Japan leg’ in alliance relations. The March 2007 Australia–Japan Security Declaration formally signed in Tokyo by Prime Ministers Howard and Abe has been characterised as ‘marking a new phase in regional security whereby the “hub-and-spokes” mechanisms of the old [Cold War] order are being overlaid with “webs” of security relations across the spokes...’ (Bisley 2008: 39). Apart from formalising the growing number of defence cooperation linkages between the two countries, the Security Declaration reflected: (1) an increased level of coordination between the two countries on such global operations as peacekeeping and disaster relief; and (2) a desire by both Canberra and Tokyo to ‘hedge’ against rising Chinese power via diplomatic signalling to Beijing that they have the ability to mutually coordinate strategy on a regional basis and independently of the

US. Australian officials also wished to safeguard against Japan feeling ‘abandoned’ by both the US and Australia as the latter two countries explore ever-increasing economic relations with China. The Security Declaration provides an imprimatur for Australia and Japan to improve their strategic planning and material cooperation over the long-term, including the institutionalising of an annual ‘2+2’ dialogue of foreign and defence ministers, the shaping of approaches to sharing the defence burden in the wider Pacific, and policy coordination on nontraditional security challenges. Indeed, the prominence of nontraditional security issues cited in the declaration is striking.

An important question raised by both the TSD and the Security Declaration initiative is how they will either facilitate or undermine Australian and Japanese efforts to participate in and influence multilateral security politics in their region.

An important question raised by both the TSD and the Security Declaration initiative is how they will either facilitate or undermine Australian and Japanese efforts to participate in and influence multilateral security politics in their region. This relates to the broader issue of whether the logic of pursuing cooperative security while simultaneously promoting competitive geometries is viable in a highly fluid Asia–Pacific security environment. China consistently asserts that such an approach is hypocritical at best and potentially destabilising for regional security in a post–Cold War setting. It remains careful, however, to distinguish between alliances intended only to defend the territories of their signatories (which it acknowledges is legitimate) and those which entail defence commitments that stretch beyond the purview of strictly bilateral defence relations. The SCO is represented as a ‘legitimate’ response to the territorial threats confronted by China and that organisation’s other signatories. Recent moves by the US and Japan to expand the purview of their Mutual Security Treaty’s concerns to include Taiwan is regarded as encroaching upon China’s sovereign interests. ASEAN states likewise tend to adopt a critical public view of alliance politics while quietly maintaining their own bilateral security relationships with the US and Australia as a hedge against Chinese power.

Japan’s failure to reconcile its war history to the extent required to pursue more concrete security ties with its Asian neighbours leaves it little choice. It must cultivate ongoing security relationships with Washington and Canberra, who remain the two major actors most willing to interact strategically with a more ‘normal’ Japan.

The Quadrilateral Dialogue

During 2006 and much of 2007, the Bush Administration, along with its Japanese and Australian allies, discussed complementing the TSD with a quadrilateral arrangement involving India. This investigation was justified by its proponents on several grounds. US–India and Japan–India bilateral security relations had already been intensifying. Japanese Prime Minister Abe had published a book (*Toward a Beautiful Country*) before coming to office in 2006 that envisioned a natural linkage between India and Japan, Asia’s two largest democracies, and was already predisposed to incorporate India into the existing TSD framework. All of Japan’s Self-Defence Force (SDF) chiefs had visited India in 2006–07

and Indian naval vessels had visited Yokosuka naval base as a prelude for India and Japan participating in joint exercises with US naval forces off Japan's coast in April 2007. US Vice President Dick Cheney picked up on Abe's theme of incorporating India's military power, economic development and geographic location. During his visit to Sydney in March 2007, Cheney characterised the TSD as uniting democracies in the 'cause of peace and freedom throughout the region' and clearly implied that its expansion to a quadrilateral arrangement would further advance such an objective. This latest call for building what Prime Minister Abe labelled an 'axis of democracy' was quickly interpreted by Beijing to be a policy designed to constrain China's interests and influence throughout Asia.

Because China's opposition to the Quadrilateral Dialogue was swift and forceful, the Howard government qualified its support for the concept. China sent a formal note of concern to the foreign ministries of the four countries concerned in late May 2007. During the ensuing months it launched a strong campaign against the concept via Chinese academics well connected to the Chinese leadership. As one Australian commentator has since observed, '(i)t soon became nigh-on impossible to meet a Chinese foreign policy scholar without hearing a variant on why the quad was bad' (Medcalf 2008:16). In his discussions with Cheney, Howard expressed sympathy with the idea 'in principle' but pleaded for more time to consolidate the Australia–Japan Security Declaration before moving further toward quadrilateralism. Risking Chinese ire to placate Cheney, Howard concluded that while Sino–Australian economic relations were surging to unprecedented levels, China's undemocratic political system and its lack of transparency in its strategic policies made it impossible for Beijing to have the type of relationship with Australia that Canberra enjoyed with its more democratic allies. Australia's political opposition joined with Chinese spokespersons to condemn this position, arguing that an ideological approach to security alliances was reminiscent of Cold War diplomacy and inappropriate for a region intent on achieving greater stability through the pursuit of cooperative security diplomacy.

Conscious of the need to avoid further geopolitical tensions with China, both India and Australia moved during the latter part of 2007 to signal to the Chinese that a democratic containment posture directed against it was not just around the corner.

The TSD powers further explored the quadrilateral concept throughout much of the rest of 2007, sometimes with Indian participation, at various ARF sessions and at the APEC Leaders Meeting. A significant five-day joint naval exercise, Malabar 07, involving all four quadrilateral powers plus Singapore, was conducted in the Bay of Bengal in September 2007. The exercise took place just before the 'exploratory' deliberations were undertaken by the leaders of the TSD states at the APEC meeting in Sydney. Malabar was designed to send a strong signal to China's navy that had been cultivating stronger ties with Bangladesh and Myanmar to secure greater access to those areas of the Indian Ocean proximate to the Malacca Strait, through which nearly half of China's imported oil passes on a daily basis.

Malabar may also have been a response to the increasingly robust strategic posture of the SCO. That group of Central Asian states, led by Russia and China, conducted a massive ‘counter-terrorism’ military exercise in August that looked very much like a rehearsal for amphibious warfare that would characterise a future conflict in the East China Sea or in the Malacca Strait. The SCO has also projected itself as a geopolitical counterweight to the US and NATO military presence in Central Asia, as an alternative outlet for India, Iran and other rising non-Western powers to enhance their strategic influence throughout Asia without becoming too close to the West, and as a means for China to secure dominant and enduring access to Central Asia’s substantial energy resources. That organisation remains vulnerable, however, to becoming a lightning rod for the expansion of Islamic and ethnic separatist movements in Central Asia and to precipitating Sino–Russian tensions as Beijing and Moscow compete for the long-term allegiance of other SCO member states.

Conscious of the need to avoid further geopolitical tensions with China, both India and Australia moved during the latter part of 2007 to signal to the Chinese that a democratic containment posture directed against it was not just around the corner. India sent two destroyers to exercise with the China’s North Sea Fleet off China’s coastline while Defence Minister Brendan Nelson and other Australian officials insisted that any Quadrilateral Dialogue that emerged would be limited to expanding cultural and economic ties among the four states. China, for its part, moved quickly to neutralise any possible momentum in ‘quad-building’ by projecting a forceful but positive diplomatic campaign to counter balance the initiative. It came to APEC with specific proposals for an Australia–China Strategic Dialogue, thus ‘rewarding’ Australia for the engagement component of its dual strategy. Moreover, one of the Quad’s strongest proponents, Shinzo Abe, resigned as Japan’s prime minister, due to health reasons, soon after returning from APEC. His successor, Yasuo Fukuda, was disinclined to pursue a more vigorous strategic partnership with India and sought instead to initiate new diplomatic links with Beijing. Japan’s diplomatic shift coincided with the Singh government’s return to India’s traditional position of nonalignment. In part, this may be attributed to the unanticipated intensity of domestic roadblocks thrown up by both countries’ legislatures against ratification of the US–India Nuclear Cooperation Promotion Act, which may have circumvented the NPT by allowing the US to sell fuel supplies for civilian nuclear power to a non-signatory state.

How effective Australia is in reconciling its Joint Security Declaration with Japan and its mounting economic interests in India with the Asia–Pacific region’s broader diplomatic and strategic trends will be the best measure of how well it has meshed this competitive geometry with its overall dual strategy.

Further, John Howard was defeated by Kevin Rudd in the November 2007 Australian federal election. Within two months, the new government had announced it would not be participating in quadrilateral security relations involving India but would be continuing TSD activities. Critics of this decision would label it the ‘Finlandisation’ of Australian foreign policy

by Chinese pressure; proponents would view it as a belated but welcome development that eliminates a needless provocation of the PRC. One possible ramification was to heighten Japanese concerns that the Rudd government may have been too quick to relinquish the quadrilateral option at Japan's expense and too dismissive of growing Indian concerns that Australian policy is becoming overly 'Sino-centric' (Sheridan 2008). How effective Australia is in reconciling its Joint Security Declaration with Japan and its mounting economic interests in India with the Asia–Pacific region's broader diplomatic and strategic trends will be the best measure of how well it has meshed this competitive geometry with its overall dual strategy.

Australia's international security policy must be shaped by those concerns which have the greatest impact upon its national security. Among the most important determinants is its major US ally's relative international power base which, in turn, affects its capacity to exercise strategic primacy in an increasingly uncertain Asia–Pacific region.

Inter-regional competitive geometries

Australia's international security policy must be shaped by those concerns which have the greatest impact upon its national security. Among the most important determinants is its major US ally's relative international power base which, in turn, affects its capacity to exercise strategic primacy in an increasingly uncertain Asia–Pacific region. Other key factors are WMD proliferation, terrorism and an array of 'human security' issues that transcend sovereign boundaries; for example, natural disasters, pandemics, energy and the environment. The lines between multilateralism and multipolarity are often indistinct at the inter-regional level of security policy management. This has led to divisions within Australia's policy-making community over the degree to which its strategic missions and force capabilities should be tailored to support US-led 'global' coalitions and alliance operations or structured to respond primarily to regional contingencies.

This debate is illustrated by concerns over Australia's participation in the American-led multinational force in Iraq and by its ongoing involvement with NATO operations in Afghanistan. The Rudd government has served Washington notice that it will withdraw Australia's Overwatch Battle Group from what has been a largely inharmonious coalition of intervening powers since the Iraq War commenced in March 2003 but will retain other forces in a logistical or training capacity. It has endeavoured to soften this decision, however, by reassuring Washington that it will sustain consistent and substantial levels of force strength alongside US and NATO forces in the fight against Taliban and al-Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan. It does so as the largest non-NATO contributor of manpower (over 1,000 military personnel) to the International Security Force in Afghanistan.

In February 2008, Joel Fitzgibbon became the first Australian defence minister to attend a NATO ministerial meeting. Successfully calling for a more systematic exchange of intelligence and combat plans between NATO and Australia, Fitzgibbon warned that his country's future involvement in the Afghan conflict would become unsustainable without such access.

Australia had already signed a wide-ranging counter-terrorism agreement in April 2005, and another agreement on security of information, in September 2007, that were allegedly designed to form the basis for such exchange. Australian participation in 'out-of-area' alliance operations could well become more selective as the Rudd government concentrates on responding to the Pacific Island 'arc of instability' and as it assigns greater priority to sharpening its credentials as an Asian multilateralist.

Recent proposals by US presidential candidates for Australia to join a formal expanded version of NATO are unlikely to become policy reality unless the concerns articulated by Fitzgibbon are addressed effectively by US and European defence officials. More fundamentally, any move to establish NATO as the dominant military structure in Eurasia would be resisted by the SCO and most likely by Asians in general. It would not be in Australia's best interests to agree to such an initiative until it was clear that such an inter-regional competitive geometry would add value to regional stability and order.

It seems likely that Washington must accept the assumption that Australia will, for the time being, assume a greater shared defence burden only in its own neighbourhood.

It seems likely that Washington must accept the assumption that Australia will, for the time being, assume a greater shared defence burden only in its own neighbourhood. As an example, Australia's recent interventions in the Solomon Islands and East Timor are regarded in US planning circles as a critical part of its overall contribution to international security, preventing the spread of failed states in the fragile South Pacific sub-region. Future peacekeeping scenarios involving the Australian Defence Force may well be limited to regional operations but these can still be regarded as complementing US global strategy.

Conclusion

The Asia–Pacific has now reached an important turning point in shaping its future approaches to and structures for achieving greater regional security. Cooperative security tends to be open and broad while competitive geometries are more typically closed and 'exclusive'. Asia has already developed several variants of cooperative security (the ARF, APEC and, to a more qualified extent, the EAS) and they are useful for reassuring states such as Australia, India and the US about their nonmarginalisation in regional security politics. Their effectiveness is limited, however, by continued questions about their purpose and identity relative to the core policy objectives of their member states, by continued uncertainties about China's and the US's overall support for multilateral security politics, and by their still largely cumbersome decision-making mechanisms which inhibit their ability to manage the most difficult security challenges facing the region. Competitive geometries thus appear by default to be presently more effective security mechanisms. However, those cooperative elements now becoming more visible in alliance politics, such as disaster relief, military transparency and confidence building, are still not shifting rapidly enough the exclusivist orientation of those geometries to enable them to contribute decisively to longer-term Asia–Pacific stability and community-building.

It may be that realising those objectives can best be progressed by exploring how coalitions and regimes underlying such security geometries, such as the ad hoc Six-Party Talks (SPT) on North Korean denuclearisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and/or the San Francisco System, can be applied to pursuing broader, non-exclusive agendas of confidence building and cooperation. Great power support for such exploration, however, is an obvious precondition. Further discussion of specific approaches Australia could adopt to facilitate such support will be offered in Chapter 4.

As an involved and consistent player in regional security dialogues and negotiations, Australia has helped balance intensifying Chinese involvement in the Asia–Pacific’s multilateral security politics while facilitating China’s enmeshment into the regional community-building process.

To engage Asia on multilateral security issues, Australia has had to balance regional conciliation with alliance affiliation—participation in cooperative security organisations with effective competitive geometry approaches. It has established policy niches within the larger community-building process in both the traditional and nontraditional security sectors. These include promoting the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, strengthening regional approaches to counter-terrorism, and upholding various dimensions of human rights and human security. As an involved and consistent player in regional security dialogues and negotiations, Australia has helped balance intensifying Chinese involvement in the Asia–Pacific’s multilateral security politics while facilitating China’s enmeshment into the regional community-building process.

These achievements have not been realised without cost. As a Western power geographically situated on the margins of Asia, Australia has at times struggled to establish its image and role as a participant in regional affairs. The Howard government’s first years in office were particularly difficult as it was viewed by many Asians as a regional proxy of the US, overly prone to either employ military power on its own or to support the American use of force during regional crises. It faced a painful identity crisis when compelled to choose between supporting TAC or being barred from joining the EAS. It was also economically pressured at various intervals by China to disassociate its alliance politics from its regional multilateral postures.

Australia has also had occasional difficulties in fitting the rationales and development of competitive geometries into its dual strategy of engagement and alliance affinity. Such integration has been made even more challenging by China’s entry into multilateral security politics in significant ways. China has incorporated subtlety and firmness in the diplomacy it has used to blunt Australian efforts to perpetuate alliances while ensuring their adaptability. Other policy tests have also emerged. The changing domestic politics of Australia, Japan and the US, and of would-be security partners such as India, have effectively jettisoned the quadrilateral initiative. And the Rudd government, like its predecessor, will need to identify how the TSD and the upgraded Australia–Japan security dyad can strike a judicious balance

between functioning as order-building initiatives while retaining effective capabilities for responding to future regional threats.

Multilateral institution-building for cooperative security in response to specific and pressing international issues such as nuclear proliferation and natural disasters has also been, arguably, somewhat easier to manage. Those multilateral institutions, however, are not usually threat-centric in a traditional sense. They are justified and supported on the basis that if issues are not resolved they could destabilise regional security. Critics of those regimes, and of multilateral security institutions in general, are adamant that the idea of 'community' cannot be more than a misguided illusion in what is still a *realpolitik* world. Their numbers and logic will ensure that competitive geometries continue and that they will require innovative approaches to mesh them with cooperative security approaches in the Asia-Pacific and internationally for some time to come. The test for Australian policy makers is how to calibrate these two approaches until more enduring regional and global orders may finally emerge. The purpose, capabilities and relative success of multilateral instrumentalities need to be taken account of in this context. Those factors will be addressed in following chapters.



ENVISIONING AND IMPLEMENTING MULTILATERALISM

With multilateral security politics becoming ingrained as a permanent feature in the Asia–Pacific security environment, Australian policy planners need to ask what Australia wants regional multilateral ‘architectures’ to do in coming years, how much they can reasonably be expected to do, and which cooperative security arrangements might best satisfy its security needs and objectives. These questions must be answered with an analysis of how effective Australia’s dual strategy of engagement and alliance affinity can be as multilateralism assumes greater importance in the region and whether the models of cooperative security and competitive geometries can be integrated to the extent that the dual strategy remains viable.

... significant modification or consolidation of existing cooperative security organisations in the Asia–Pacific will be difficult to implement over the short term.

The basic premise of this chapter is that significant modification or consolidation of existing cooperative security organisations in the Asia–Pacific will be difficult to implement over the short term. They have too much history of support by specific factions, and too much prestige hanging on their immediate survival, for them to dissolve as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the Asia–Pacific Council (ASPAC) dissolved during the Cold War. However, the region, instead of being ‘ripe for rivalry’ as realist observers initially suspected

Photo opposite: Asian leaders arrive for signing of Framework Agreement on ASEAN–South Korea Economic Cooperation at ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, 13 December 2005. © Beawiharta/Reuters/Picture Media

has evolved to being perhaps ‘prone to partnership’ in resolving important security issues. Both China and the US, the two key players required to collaborate if cooperative security is to be successful, have recently signalled their willingness to participate more fully in such mechanisms. Chinese political officials and analysts have propagated a more active multilateralism as part of their current approach to Asia–Pacific security politics. And in an address to the Indonesian Council on World Affairs in late February 2008, US Secretary of Defense Robert M Gates observed that US security policy in the Asia–Pacific region was shifting toward developing ‘more multilateral ties than [preserving] hub-and-spokes’ (Gates 2008). If such rhetoric presages actual policy, Australia’s dual strategy of regional engagement and alliance affinity would appear to be appropriate for the predictable future.

Sceptics of multilateral security architectures remain deeply concerned that cooperative security organisations are, at best, costly diversions to shaping sensible national and international security policy and, at worst, precipitates of intensified geopolitical competition. This argument was recently encapsulated by David Martin Jones and Michael LR Smith in their vigorous critique of ASEAN and its supporters:

...those in the association among its academic enthusiasts who seek to embellish it as a framework for a more integrated ASEAN identity grounded in its distinctive norms and processes and framed by its inimical discourse only succeed in creating not a community but an illusion. Moreover, the attempt to project this illusion into a wider East Asian Community only exacerbates the confusion enveloping the behaviour of ASEAN’s more powerful neighbors in Northeast Asia toward the grouping (Smith and Jones 2007: 149).

For many of those critics, the best strategic policy for ensuring Asia–Pacific stability and prosperity is to strengthen existing competitive geometries such as the US bilateral alliance system in Asia, or to build new ‘coalitions of the willing’ for confronting what they view as a regional environment rife with strategic uncertainty for Western and pro-Western interests. Proponents of building competitive geometries are unmitigated enthusiasts for the alliance side of the dual strategy equation. Their position is summarised by the conviction that ‘so long as interests of their members remain congruent, alliances need not wither in the absence of a respectable enemy, but can be reconfigured to meet changing circumstances and infused with new meanings and goals’. This chapter will look at both these concerns and the views of cooperative security groups.

The intent of Asia–Pacific multilateralism/cooperative security

At least two major incentives underscore Australia’s desire to cultivate multilateralism in its security policy. Like ASEAN, Australia wants to leverage cooperative security organisational participation as a hedge against great power opportunism or expansionism in the region. It also wants to enmesh American power into regional security dialogues and initiatives. The weight of US trade volume with Asia, the dynamic growth of Asian regional economies and the growing concentration of military power in that region mandate that global security politics reflect the inevitability of the Asia–Pacific as a critical sphere of interest.

The great powers and cooperative security

Three major trends will impact the potential effectiveness of cooperative security in the Asia–Pacific. First, there are significant shifts in the region’s balance of power because of the economic rise of China and India, because of asymmetrical threats such as WMD proliferation, terrorism and arms buildups, and because of the intensification of various

cultural, religious and ethnic agendas. Such shifts increasingly determine Australia's strategic position. China's growing role as a predominant Australian economic partner has clearly given Beijing increasingly significant leverage over Australia notwithstanding continued apprehensions about Beijing's ultimate strategic motives. The ASEAN states, along with Australia, Japan and South Korea as the US's closest regional allies, have apprehensions about a possible Sino–American military confrontation over Taiwan or a sudden Chinese transformation from a relatively benign regional security actor into a more aggressive one. India's nonalignment diplomacy, moreover, provides no long-term guarantee that New Delhi won't find itself at odds with China over China's penetration into the Indian Ocean or the accelerated development of its strategic forces. Security dilemmas involving great powers are still fully capable of emerging and intensifying in this region.

... there are significant shifts in the region's balance of power because of the economic rise of China and India, because of asymmetrical threats such as WMD proliferation, terrorism and arms buildups, and because of the intensification of various cultural, religious and ethnic agendas.

A second trend, which will have an impact on the potential effectiveness of cooperative security organisations in the region, is inter-regional geopolitics. As noted in Chapter 2, NATO operations in Afghanistan and maritime security exercises in the Indian Ocean involve increasingly conspicuous 'Asia–Pacific' components. Although represented by the US and its regional friends and allies as innocent and logical responses to international security threats of universal concern, China, Russia and their affiliates in the SCO may view them as nothing less than geopolitical pre-emption at their expense. Applying competitive geometries across the global chessboard carries risks if they are not carefully considered and implemented with sensitivity and finesse.

A third trend linked to the great powers relates to the growth of 'minilateralism' as a hybrid of the cooperative security and competitive geometry multilateral security typologies. Minilateralism may involve, as an example, a small number of states working together to address security issues of most direct concern to themselves. The agendas of such groupings are usually less extensive than those pursued by their fully fledged cooperative security counterparts, and they are less likely to expand into inclusive multilateral institutions. Such groupings tend to encase their agendas in order-building rather than threat-centric trappings.

The TSD could be regarded as a 'minilateral' body, as Australia, Japan and the US are already bound together by precedents of bilateral alliance cooperation or by distinct politico-cultural values that distinguish them from other regional actors. But the TSD's agenda is shaped more by the issues it has in common with other regional actors on a range of mostly nontraditional security issues; for example, counter-terrorism, human security and human rights in addition to more traditional concerns related to nuclear nonproliferation and the stability of the Korean peninsula. According to their communiqués, TSD partners see China as a source of constructive engagement in those policy contexts rather than as a threat to their mutual security.

The Quadrilateral Dialogue concept also integrated norms and interests in ways consistent with minilateralism, promoting democratic values when addressing the maritime security preoccupations of maritime powers and promoting regional development when providing disaster relief and other human security initiatives. Other minilateral variants in the Asia–Pacific, however, have formed solely on the basis of current concerns rather than history and values. The SPT, for example, features China collaborating with the US and other Asia–Pacific democracies to preclude North Korean nuclear capabilities from undermining regional stability. Any grouping emerging from the SPT and leading to the creation of a Northeast Asian Security Dialogue would likewise be at least initially predicated on rationales of conflict prevention rather than on broader regional community-building.

Keeping the Americans around

Recent statements by Gates and other US policy planners indicate that the US is ready to consider projecting a more multilateralist security posture in the Asia–Pacific and to adapt its postwar bilateral alliance system to emerging and diverse security challenges in the region.

This changing American orientation fits more readily into the Rudd government’s publicly designated, multilaterally oriented, ‘three pillars’ of foreign policy—the alliance, Asian engagement and the United Nations—than would the still existing US preference for hub-and-spokes alliance politics. A new US President taking office in January 2009 could either reinforce an American willingness to support cooperative security in Asia or, alternatively, apply the politics of competitive geometries to forge new, ideologically or geopolitically based power blocs there.

... cooperative security should facilitate the realisation of US aspirations for China to become a ‘responsible stakeholder’ in Asia–Pacific order-building ...

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama has, for example, argued for a more effective security framework in Asia that goes beyond bilateral agreements, occasional summits, and ad hoc arrangements and for the establishment of a Northeast Asia security regime. His Republican counterpart, John McCain, has publicly argued that the Quadrilateral Dialogue should be part of a larger ‘League of Democracies’. But neither of those proposals appear sufficiently nuanced to meet the criterion for maintaining the type of power equilibrium between China and the US that would most appeal to a Rudd-led Australia. As Hugh White has recently observed: ‘Give Beijing too much and you risk encouraging a Chinese bid for hegemony in Asia. Give it too little and you risk undermining the old deal and being drawn into a new and bitter strategic competition with China. So far, US political leaders, distracted by the war on terror, have mostly responded to this challenge by pretending it isn’t there...’ (White 2008).

Ideally, cooperative security should facilitate the realisation of US aspirations for China to become a ‘responsible stakeholder’ in Asia–Pacific order-building, while still leaving Washington room to move if Beijing vies for primacy with the US or other regional powers. It should also facilitate effective multilateralism among other Asian powers by balancing American power projection, Chinese opportunism, revived Japanese nationalism, and Indian

nonalignment. Cooperative security must find a common strategic purpose. It can do so by seeking and identifying complementarity and rationalisation between existing cooperative security organisations without necessarily leading to the disbanding of any one of them. The region has not faced such a complex set of geopolitical requirements since Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger exploited the Sino–Soviet rift nearly four decades ago to end the Vietnam War and remove Cold War politics permanently from Asia. Australia requires a similar level of American leadership to establish multilateralism as a credible policy instrument for achieving regional stability.

Asian cooperative security: what can be reasonably expected?

As the US hub-and-spokes strategy evolves from a more traditional hierarchical, bilateral, form of alliance politics to one apparently more attuned to multilateral security, regional hedging by large and smaller powers intent on maintaining equilibrium in the region is emerging. This has involved both cooperative security instrumentalities and competitive geometries and has resulted in substantial levels of policy coordination in response to emerging and diverse forces of religious extremism, ethnic strife, natural disasters and other transnational threats in the region.

... ideological differences often prompt great powers and other states to hedge against each other even *within* multilateral consortiums.

With this background, a controversial proposition emanates: that multilateral security architectures can be shaped or reconstituted as much in response to threat-centric and power balancing rationales as by the pursuit of cooperative security politics. To adherents of traditional theories of multilateralism this observation is misplaced. They assume that the development of community-building institutions is inherently underwritten by common rules or ‘norms’ that will generate sufficient common ground among diverse member states to modify their competing interests. Multilateralists also maintain that the rules-based order that they support minimises prospects for institutional defection or cheating by one or more members. However, great powers may engage in multilateralism because they have an interest in shaping a regional or global order that may not suit their every interest but which they can accept as preferable over other likely, alternative orders.

For multilateralists, the potential costs of hegemonic behaviour seem very high: they include often self-destructive physical and financial risks, the need for constant military intervention and possibility of ‘imperial overstretch’. Over time, they assert, a hegemon incurs great risks because its ability to win compliance from weaker states will invariably decrease as more powerful counter-coalitions form. If this logic is valid, multilateralism should usually prevail over multipolarity or hegemonic competition.

In reality, however, ideological differences often prompt great powers and other states to hedge against each other even *within* multilateral consortiums. China’s recent diplomacy directed toward the EAS and the ARF, discussed in Chapter 2, is illustrative. It’s viewed by sceptics of multilateralism as evidence that power balancing tactics will be used alongside genuine multilateralism in most institutional settings.

Australia has pursued its own post–Cold War hedging strategy by pursuing affiliation with both cooperative security organisations and competitive geometries. Its preferred outcome for ongoing regional security politics includes the refinement of existing regional multilateral groupings capable of commanding adherence from the region’s larger powers and their smaller counterparts. This scenario would enable ‘middle powers’ such as Australia and various ASEAN states to exert regional influence. Some promising developments have emerged in this regard: the ASEAN Charter initiative, the prospect for scaling back North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. They are all illustrative of modest confidence-building triumphs that have been at least partially based on cooperative security foundations. But none of these developments have resolved the underlying conflicts that continue to plague their intended beneficiaries: ASEAN has still not activated its High Council to resolve a Southeast Asian dispute; the North Koreans still work to divide and eventually rule the Korean peninsula; and China still contests the sovereignty of the Spratly Islands with four ASEAN claimants.

Multilateral cooperation is not yet so viable as to induce Australia or other US regional friends and allies to eschew completely the benefits of alliance affinity with Washington—indeed, it may never be. But it is sufficiently compelling to appeal to those states. This leads to the obvious question of what type of effective Asia–Pacific architectures might be generated from combining elements of both cooperative security organisations and competitive geometries.

It is unlikely that any single, overarching multilateral security architecture will emerge anytime soon to supersede existing bilateral and multilateral instrumentalities in the Asia–Pacific.

Possible regional security structures and competitive geometries

It is unlikely that any single, overarching multilateral security architecture will emerge anytime soon to supersede existing bilateral and multilateral instrumentalities in the Asia–Pacific. Insufficient consensus exists. ASEAN states regard the ARF as the best means to retain a ‘pivot position’ in orchestrating the security dialogues and agendas that most matter in Asian security politics. The US, Japan and Australia remain partial to APEC as the best embodiment of open regionalism, allowing for maritime states located along the peripheries of Asia to nevertheless play a key role in shaping regional economics and geopolitics. If a more viable model of an inclusive EAS did not exist, China would be most likely to fine-tune its ARF diplomacy, which is intended to attract ASEAN states increasingly tied to China’s economic growth. It is adopting this approach while simultaneously pursuing a wedging strategy against an evolving US hub-and-spokes bilateral alliance network. Australia and Japan are being pulled ever more tightly into the Chinese economic orbit. This blunts US power as a major factor in defining and shaping regional order-building. It does not completely isolate Washington from the process, however, as Chinese power and growth leads other regional actors to view an American regional presence as an essential counterweight to Beijing’s strategic aspirations and conduct.

Until the dynamics of Sino–American relations—the most important factor of Asia–Pacific security in the early twenty-first century—are sorted out, the Korean peninsula becomes unified in a stable way and the politico-strategic roles of the ‘marginally positioned’ powers such as India, Japan and Russia are more precisely defined, it is improbable that existing bilateral and multilateral architectures will be supplanted. Debate has arisen over which security model might best serve regional stability and prosperity if both the bilateral and multilateral architectures remain.

A hegemonic or hierarchical system resembling the American hub-and-spokes framework during the Cold War or a possible ‘China-dominant’ system would appear flawed as regional architectures because there is no assurance that other state-centric actors would support such arrangements, as opposed to seeking ways to neutralise them. A bipolar variant of hegemony (what has been termed a ‘condominium of power’ or ‘geography of peace’) featuring Chinese–American ‘co-management’ of the region might work more readily but would be constantly subject to tension if the Taiwan dispute and major Sino–American ideological differences were not resolved.

An alliance of great powers other than the US could provide China, in particular, but also India and Russia, status to influence Asia–Pacific security trends.

An alliance of great powers other than the US could provide China, in particular, but also India and Russia, status to influence Asia–Pacific security trends. But two preconditions would need to be present for this type of architecture to work:

- at least a rough symmetry in military and economic power between the participants
- a sufficiently compatible set of interests and values shared by participants to facilitate strategic cooperation and minimise prospects for strategic competition.

At present, the continued preponderance of US military power combines with the significantly divergent strategic interests and political values of Russia, India and China to preclude a strategic *modus vivendi*. Minilateral variants of the alliance could be employed to resolve specific issues (the SPT is a case in point) but the emergence of a more permanent small structure to manage the region’s overall security order would be problematic.

Discussion has also focused on what many view as a pressing need for Northeast Asia to create a cooperative security architecture, similar to that of ASEAN’s, for dialogue, negotiation and conflict resolution. During a visit to Japan in November 2007, US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill observed that once the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula was achieved, the SPT should be used as a catalyst to build a Northeast Asia peace and security forum. While observing that such a grouping should ‘... (i)n no way [be] designed to replace the very key bilateral relationships, the bilateral alliances that the US has and is very proud to have with a number of countries in Asia’, it could represent ‘a long-term project building a sense of neighbourhood in Northeast Asia’ (Hill 2007).

Northeast Asia's spectacular growth in intraregional trade and investment has combined with a recognition that its long-standing security dilemmas in Korea and Taiwan and the potential standoff between China and Japan must be resolved ...

Northeast Asia's spectacular growth in intraregional trade and investment has combined with a recognition that its long-standing security dilemmas in Korea and Taiwan and the potential standoff between China and Japan must be resolved if Chinese economic growth, continued Japanese prosperity and Asia's overall geopolitical leverage are to be sustained and strengthened. A cooperative regional identity in Northeast Asia is an obvious precondition for a peaceful Asia-Pacific community. Unfortunately, China still harbours irredentist grievances; Japan is exploring 'normalcy' more than sixty years after its wartime defeat; Russia is attempting to avoid marginalisation from Northeast Asian marketplaces and geopolitics; and the US intermittently shifts between strategies that appear threatening and contemplation of strategic retrenchment to offshore positions. Over the past decade, ASEAN, along with Australia, has been largely reactive rather than innovative in providing assistance to resolve Northeast Asian security dilemmas.

It's a daunting task interpreting the confusing mosaic of alternative cooperative security organisations and competitive geometries which constitute the Asia-Pacific security environment. Implementing a proactive policy within that environment is even more challenging for the Rudd government. Australia's future security is dependent upon whatever forms of Asia-Pacific order-building eventually prevail. In filling its long-standing and self-acclaimed role as an entrepreneurial middle power, Australia requires its policy planners to plan objectively and systematically. In this context, Chapter 4 offers some observations and policy recommendations.

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AUSTRALIA, MULTILATERAL SECURITY AND FUTURE POLICY DIRECTIONS

Australia's new Labor government has reaffirmed its strong support for the US alliance as a fundamental component of Australian foreign policy. However, as Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, reiterated in a February 2008 press interview, the government intends 'to take much more of a multilateral approach' than its predecessor and 'put the shoulder much more effectively to the wheel in the Asia-Pacific region' (Smith 2008). The dual strategy is thus alive and well as the primary Australian approach to foreign policy and national security in an increasingly complex regional and international security environment. Over the past decade, Australian foreign and security policies have been dominated by Australian support for and participation in American-led military interventions and by the politics of regional trade. The next few years may be increasingly shaped by constrained domestic and international economic growth and a need for attention to near neighbours situated within the 'arc of instability', and sustained diplomacy to resolve conflict within the Asia-Pacific and globally. The challenges of terrorism, nuclear nonproliferation and human security will still remain.

Multilateralism will be complicated, however, by a requirement for the region's great powers to avoid the most damaging ramifications of regional multipolarity. As the US becomes more discriminating about the type of influences and resources it will apply to the region and as both China and India continue 'growing strong', Australia, along with ASEAN and South Korea, will need to formulate and apply a collective

Photo opposite: The representatives from the countries involved in six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program hold hands as the meeting officially begins in Beijing 26 July 2005. (L-R) US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhao Xing, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alexeyev, South Korea's Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and Director-General of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Kenichiro Sasae. © Elizabeth Dalziel/Reuters/Picture Media

middle power 'grand strategy' to promote community-building in an increasingly uncertain regional security environment.

The Rudd government has already signalled its determination to undertake a number of measures to strengthen Australia's multilateral credentials and to project entrepreneurial leadership in such key policy areas as climate change, the development politics of Pacific Island states and disarmament and arms control. In a speech to the Asia Society in early June, the Prime Minister proposed the creation of a new Asia–Pacific 'community' that would include all the region's major powers and would facilitate sustained dialogue on economic, political and security issues. Insisting that Australia must be 'thinking big' about how to form and manage regional institutions and architectures, Rudd announced the appointment of a high-level envoy, former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Richard Woolcott, to consult with regional policy elites on how to move forward with this vision.

The Rudd government has already signalled its determination to undertake a number of measures to strengthen Australia's multilateral credentials and to project entrepreneurial leadership ...

Rudd argued that the European Union, although 'not...an identikit model of what we would seek to develop in the Asia–Pacific', nevertheless contained a valuable set of lessons for regional architects. The principal lesson, he argued, was the necessity of taking the first step. The proposal touched off a lively media debate. Critics argued that the European Union's postwar experience (referred to by the Prime Minister when introducing his proposal) could not be a model for an Asia far more culturally and politically diverse than were those European states spearheading their continent's integration fifty years ago. And a former prime minister, Paul Keating, argued that the new proposal risked diluting the influence of the APEC leaders' meeting, something he saw as 'a jewel in Australian foreign policy.'

It is true that growing new institutions in the Asia–Pacific will be difficult. But what might 'first steps' towards closer regional integration look like in this region? In particular, what might they look like given Australia's wish to sustain its dual strategy approach to balancing regional engagement with its alliance commitments?

Four broad strategies will be advanced here as preliminary steps for Australia to effectively apply cooperative security politics while achieving such calibration. They are:

- (1) using and supporting existing regional cooperative security organisations and competitive geometries
- (2) working with other Asian actors to streamline and consolidate regional community-building processes by eliminating 'mission overlap' between different architectures
- (3) negotiating with its US ally a formula for further movement beyond the hub-and-spokes model of regional security management
- (4) making a concerted effort to join Canada, Japan, the Scandinavian states and selected non-governmental organisations to draw up long-term, cohesive blueprints for human security objectives.

The first strategy is the most difficult of the four. David Shambaugh has correctly observed that what is emerging in the Asian region—‘stretching from Afghanistan in the southwest to Russia in the north to Japan in the northeast to Australia in the southeast’—is a ‘multitextured and multilayered hybrid system’ of: (1) residual US-led bilateralism; (2) a latent, multipolar balance-of-power system that is spearheaded by an intensifying Sino–American rivalry; and (3) the early trappings of a security community constituting ‘... a dense web of economic, technological and other ties’ (Shambaugh 2005: 15–17). The Rudd government will need to strike a balance between regional engagement and alliance affinity on such key issues as Taiwan, regional arms control, maritime and energy security, human rights and international terrorism. Australia must be skilled enough to use existing instrumentalities in ways that unite and reassure its neighbours rather than divide and alienate them.

Policy options for implementing this strategic posture abound but all of their ramifications must be carefully weighed. On Taiwan, for example, Australia could be more explicit than its American ally who still clings to the posture of ‘strategic ambiguity’. Unprovoked Chinese aggression against that island would qualify as a contingency for Australia to support an American defence of Taipei with limited military assistance. Any other scenario, however, would not be regarded as sufficient grounds to justify Australian military involvement. Sustained Australian consultations with its American ally on Taiwan modelled on those conducted by the Rudd government with the Bush Administration over the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq could be employed to ensure intra-alliance transparency in the event a future Taiwan crisis intensified to critical levels.

On maritime security, Australia and the US could mutually explore more effective ways to interact with ASEAN states ...

On maritime security, Australia and the US could mutually explore more effective ways to interact with ASEAN states, applying greater policy sensitivity to such issues as sovereignty and naval patrolling. Otherwise, ASEAN’s recent rejection of the US Pacific Command’s (PACOM’s) March 2004 Regional Maritime Security Initiative and Southeast Asian resentment over Australia’s unilateral declaration of a 1,000-nautical-mile maritime security zone in December 2004, are bound to be repeated. PACOM and the Australian defence establishment could work together to be better attuned to the broader Asian community, consulting with regional actors more frequently and more systematically. This would involve changing long-standing hierarchical styles of decision-making often reflected in traditional hub-and-spokes bilateralism to more consensus-oriented styles found within the ARF and other multilateral architectures. Greater sea-lane security, for example, could probably be achieved by winning greater regional support for such measures via upgraded consultation, negotiation and compromise with intended ASEAN and South Pacific beneficiaries.

Similar initiatives could be applied to discussion of nuclear arms control in the Asia–Pacific within the ARF or the TSD to encourage US–China bilateral negotiations on this issue. Arms control negotiations have no real substantive legacy in the region despite existing declaratory opposition to nuclear weapons by the TAC and the Southeast Asian Nuclear Free Zone (SEANFZ). Australia must take care, however, not to lock itself into rigid and uncompromising positions. The Rudd government’s decision in January 2008 to reverse

its predecessor's willingness to consider selling Australian uranium to India on the basis of propping up a fragile Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime is illustrative. It may well be the case, after considered deliberations and negotiations, that the NPT regime's preservation outweighs the commercial and strategic advantages of selling uranium to India. However, the timing and context of the announcement to reverse policy in this case seemed predicated more on fulfilling an election campaign promise than on the basis of a genuinely thorough review of Australian–Indian relations. If such was the case, neither the NPT nor the Australian–Indian bilateral relationship was particularly well served.

Second, unease over the cumbersome labyrinth of regional security architectures in the Asia–Pacific remains pronounced within many regional capitals. At times it seems that each major security issue generates compelling reasons for creating a new multilateral instrument in its wake. The Six-Party Talks exemplifies this tendency with speculation about the creation of a Northeast Asian Security Dialogue. This is an important development for Australia which depends on Northeast Asia for sustaining a substantial portion of its overall trade volume. But the precise basis for how this Dialogue would operate relative to other Asian security architectures remains unclear. And the risks are substantial that such a grouping would exacerbate already significant Southeast Asian apprehensions about great power politics in Northeast Asia overwhelming their own influence on regional affairs. Even existing architectures sometimes behave more as rivals for policy turf than as organisations able to complement each other's agendas. Latent nationalism, competing cultures and unresolved historical grievances all combine to make Asia very different from postwar Europe.

Australia must therefore intensify its involvement with its regional counterparts in planning how to streamline the cooperative security infrastructure in Asia to make it work better.

Providing tangible leadership for security community-building is clearly a difficult task. This does not, however, alleviate the need for Australia and other regional actors to explore ways to better organise and apply multilateral frameworks to the resolution of Asia–Pacific security problems. Australia must therefore intensify its involvement with its regional counterparts in planning how to streamline the cooperative security infrastructure in Asia to make it work better. Some hard questions need to be confronted honestly and some major decisions about the region's multilateral security framework need to be made soon. Has the ARF become so top-heavy that it now has little chance to truly embrace preventive diplomacy or to realise its vision of comprehensive security? If ARF's current lethargy means that ASEAN's vision of community-building is obsolete, how should the region's existing security framework be utilised—without creating yet another new cooperative security organisation? Could the APEC Leaders Meeting, for example, be transformed into a separate security body where only the heads of government of key Asia–Pacific powers (China, Japan, India, the US, and Russia) meet annually with the South Korean and North Korean presidents, their Pakistani correspondent, a single ASEAN representative and a single representative from the Pacific Island states to negotiate regional security in a 'concert-plus' setting (Gyngell 2007)?

The hierarchical version of order-building that this approach would inevitably entail may, however, actually be more destabilising than allowing current architectures to ‘muddle through’ until better solutions are found. A key assignment for this Australian government is to weigh systematically and un sentimentally which approach to regional order-building best suits Australia’s own national interests, and how to implement that approach.

There is a third and no less daunting task: carefully but steadfastly advising the US on how its affection for the politics of competitive geometries must ultimately morph to a hybrid of alliance and multilateral institution-based cooperative security. The ideological underpinnings driving the Quadrilateral Initiative proved to be unpalatable not only to those such as China who believed it was targeted against their interests but, to various degrees, its designated participants. Convincing a new American Administration that takes office in January 2009 that it must seriously re-examine its Asia–Pacific security infrastructure at a time when Iraq, international terrorism and WMD proliferation will dominate its agenda is a challenge. For Washington not to do so, however, only postpones the time when it will face the hard inevitability that it must share power in the Asia–Pacific in ways not previously required. A first step to initiating this process in the context of bilateral alliance deliberations may be for the Rudd government and its impending US counterpart to jointly commission a Track II mechanism, such as the Australian–American Dialogue, to address this issue.

... Australia needs to ensure that existing and future multilateral security structures provide it with the opportunities to practice a range of ‘good citizenship’ tasks.

Finally, Australia needs to ensure that existing and future multilateral security structures provide it with the opportunities to practice a range of ‘good citizenship’ tasks. Australia’s image and influence is enhanced when it is viewed by its neighbours and by other developing states as practising good international citizenship. In 2005, Australian participation in the post-tsunami rescue and rebuilding efforts, significantly assisted in overcoming Indonesian hostility to Australia. Similarly, Australia’s recent ratification of the Kyoto accord on climate change drew plaudits from other delegates who attended the global warming conference held in Bali at the end of 2007. Substance must accompany policy style, and meticulous calculations of Australia’s best policy interest must precede any public expressions. Carefully orchestrated human security politics, however, can offer important diplomatic gains for a middle power.

The timing may be right for Australian policy makers to host a forum where it can exchange views and ideas with designated and proven human security actors drawn from the ranks of other states and from selected NGOs on how best to advance this form of multilateral security politics in the years ahead. It can employ its agenda of ‘alternative security’ activities already pursued within regional institutions and international regimes as a foundation for forum discussion and debate, and might even consider creating a special human security office within the independent National Security Office that the Rudd government is now forming.

Those four initial steps might help build a stronger foundation for Rudd's vision of an overarching regional community. But we should not underestimate the enormity of that larger challenge. History and geography have placed Australia's Western heritage at the edge of the world's most complex montage of differing cultures and races—the Asia–Pacific region. Constrained by cultural differences, hampered by residual memories of Western colonialism, traditionally protected by Anglo–American allies in an increasingly complicated and dangerous world, Australia's foreign policy has been necessarily sophisticated and commendably effective. Our policy makers and diplomats have largely mastered the nuances of Asia–Pacific politics and adroitly managed the limited resources available to a middle power in Australia's relationships with its greater power protectors and trading partners.

Now, however, Australia is facing a crossroads on how it will restructure and effectively implement its dual strategy to meet the rapidly changing conditions and imperatives that are determining the future of Asia–Pacific security. A critical challenge for the new government's foreign policy will be how to work successfully with its regional partners to utilise, simplify and improve the organisation of the Asia–Pacific's security framework while simultaneously assisting the US to become more involved with that framework. The future relevance of its dual strategy and the long-term viability of its national security may well depend on how well this challenge is met.

Tables

Table 1: Asia–Pacific cooperative security institutions

ASEAN Regional Forum (1994)

Brunei (Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN Member)

Burma [Myanmar] (ASEAN Member)

Cambodia (ASEAN Member)

Indonesia (ASEAN Member)

Laos (ASEAN Member)

Malaysia (ASEAN Member)

Philippines (ASEAN Member)

Singapore (ASEAN Member)

Thailand (ASEAN member)

Vietnam (ASEAN Member)

Papua New Guinea (ASEAN Observer but an ARF Member)

Australia (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

Canada (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

The European Union (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

India (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

Japan (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

New Zealand (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

People's Republic of China (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

Republic of Korea (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

Russia (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

United States (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Mongolia

Pakistan

Timor-Leste

Bangladesh

Sri Lanka

Note: In August 2007, the 14th ASEAN Regional Forum stipulated that 'applications to participate in the ARF would be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the established criteria. In this connection, they agreed on the need to consolidate ARF activities for the time being and to consider applications at a later period'

Table 1: Asia–Pacific cooperative security institutions (continued)

Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Member Economies (1989)

Australia
Brunei Darussalam
Canada
Chile
People’s Republic of China
Hong Kong, China
Indonesia
Japan
Republic of Korea
Malaysia
Mexico
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea
Peru
Philippines
Russia
Singapore
Chinese Taipei
Thailand
United States
Viet Nam

Note: No additional members will be allowed until 2010.

Table 1: Asia–Pacific cooperative security institutions (continued)**East Asia Summit (2005)**

Brunei (Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN Member)

Burma [Myanmar] (ASEAN Member)

Cambodia (ASEAN Member)

Indonesia (ASEAN Member)

Laos (ASEAN Member)

Malaysia (ASEAN Member)

Philippines (ASEAN Member)

Singapore (ASEAN Member)

Thailand (ASEAN member)

Vietnam (ASEAN Member)

Japan (ASEAN + 3 Member)

People's Republic of China (ASEAN + 3 Member)

Republic of Korea (ASEAN + 3 Member)

Australia (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

India (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

New Zealand (ASEAN Dialogue Partner)

Note: Three criteria for membership exist: (1) the country must already be a dialogue partner of ASEAN; (2) it must subscribe to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation or TAC; and (3) it must have substantive relations with the grouping. Russia desires entry but has not been deemed as yet meeting the third condition. The European Union has requested observer status but there is no such category of membership. Based on ASEAN countries' current fears that broadening the EAS membership substantially would dilute its 'East Asian identity', membership was frozen in May 2006 for two years.

Table 2: Asia–Pacific competitive geometries**San Francisco System (US Bilateral Alliances)**

ANZUS (Australia–New Zealand–US, 1952)¹

US–Republic of Korea (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1954)

US–Republic of the Philippines (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1952)²

South East Asia Collective Defense (US–France–Australia–New Zealand–Thailand–Philippines, 1955)³

US–Japan (Mutual Defense Treaty, 1951/ revised in 1960)

US–Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty (1955)⁴

US–Singapore Strategic Framework Agreement (2005)⁵

Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

Australia–Japan and the United States

- A ‘Trilateral Security Dialogue’ commenced between these three states in August 2002 at the vice-ministerial level.
- In March 2006, the ‘Trilateral Security Dialogue’ became the ‘Trilateral Strategic Dialogue’ when US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice travelled to Sydney to meet with Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso.
- TSD deliberations are now usually conducted at the vice-ministerial level on a broad range of global issues, including developments in the Asia–Pacific region and the Middle East, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. To date, the TSD does not normally include defence officials from the three countries. In June 2007, however, the three countries’ defence ministers met on the ‘sidelines’ of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore to discuss TSD-related issues. The three countries’ heads-of-state met in a similar context at the September 2007 APEC meeting in Sydney.
- TSD currently has no secretariat or other central coordinating institutional mechanism. Joint military exercises are under discussion but thus far Japanese and Australian military units have drilled *collectively* with their US counterparts only as part of larger multilateral configurations: i.e. the biennial RIMPAC exercises or the recent *Malabar 2007* manoeuvres with India and Singapore.

1 The United States suspended its defence obligations to New Zealand under the ANZUS accord in February 1985 and does not interact with New Zealand in a formal alliance context. Australia and New Zealand do continue defence cooperation under ANZUS but Australia observes US restrictions on the transfer of American defence intelligence, technology and other assets to New Zealand.

2 US basing operations and the withdrawal of permanently stationed US military forces occurred in 1991 after the Philippines Senate failed to ratify extensions to US basing agreements.

3 The Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation was discontinued in June 1977 but the United States still recognises the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty or ‘Manila Pact’ as a formally binding US defense commitment to Thailand. This bilateral commitment was reiterated in March 1962 Rusk–Thanat Communique.

4 This treaty was terminated by the United States in January 1980 one year after it normalised relations with the People’s Republic of China. The Taiwan Relations Act was passed by the United States Congress to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means as a matter of ‘grave concern’ to the United States but does not explicitly commit the US to defend Taiwan.

5 Building on an earlier Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1990 that authorised intermittent US defence forces’ access to Singapore’s ports and airfields, the Strategic Framework Agreement focused on counter-terrorism and joint force interoperability. The US and Singapore, however, have not entered into a formal bilateral security treaty.

Table 2: Asia–Pacific competitive geometries (continued)**Quadrilateral Dialogue (Australia, India, Japan and the United States)**

- There is presently no formal alliance or coalition grouping of these four countries although informal discussions between them on various aspects of defence cooperation occurred during 2007.
- The concept stemmed from effective disaster relief cooperation between the four countries following the Indian Ocean tsunami and the interest in pursuing closer avenues of quadrilateral cooperation by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US Vice President Dick Cheney.
- China has opposed any such grouping as a containment-oriented potential ‘axis of democracies’ directed against itself.
- Both the Indian and Australian prime ministers have recently denied any plans for their countries to enter into a quadrilateral defence alliance.
- US presidential candidate John McCain supports the concept.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO): A Pacific Dimension?

- Australia, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and New Zealand are formally designated ‘Contact Countries’ that ‘share similar strategic concerns and key Alliance values’.
- Japan has conducted a biannual strategic dialogue with NATO officials since 1990.
- Australian troops are deployed in Afghanistan under NATO command.
- The US Ambassador to NATO designated Australia, Japan and other contact countries as part of an ‘expanded political global alliance’ in a January 2006 press interview that would operate ‘well beyond transatlantic geography’. That vision has been resisted by NATO European members who are apprehensive about NATO becoming a ‘global policeman’. The April 2008 NATO Summit’s Bucharest Declaration, however, welcomed ‘the significant contribution by Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Singapore to NATO-led efforts in Afghanistan ... [and] ... the valuable contributions by the Republic of Korea to efforts which support the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan.’ The Declaration noted that ‘... recognising that each of these countries wishes to pursue a unique degree of relations with NATO, and that other countries may wish to pursue dialogue and cooperation with NATO as well, we (the NATO member-states) reiterate our willingness to further develop existing, and openness to new, individual relationships, subject to the approval of the North Atlantic Council, and at a pace that respects mutual interests in so doing’.

Table 2: Asia–Pacific competitive geometries (continued)

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- Evolved from the ‘Shanghai Five’ that initially convened in 1996 and formally created in June 2001.
- The People’s Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are formal members.
- India, Iran, Pakistan and Mongolia are observer states.
- It has formal linkages with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) that evolved out of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) network of ‘Soviet successor states’ following the Soviet Union’s demise in 1991.
- The SCO is formally represented as an organisation designed to counter terrorism, separatism and extremism in Central Asia. Various Western analysts believe it is actually intended to counterbalance NATO expansion and NATO’s military presence in Afghanistan.
- It conducts a major biennial military exercise (*Peace Mission*) in which some of the latest Russian and Chinese weapons systems are trialled. Russia has advocated future Indian participation in these exercises as a means of balancing the recent upgrading of Indian military ties with the United States.
- Expansion of formal SCO membership is currently frozen until ongoing studies within the organisation’s secretariat about future missions and directions are completed.

Acronyms

AMM	ARF Ministerial Meeting
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN+3	Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China–Japan–South Korea
ASPAC	Asian–Pacific Council
CSCAP	Council on Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
EAS	East Asia Summit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
PACOM	US Pacific Command
PRC	People’s Republic of China
RMSI	US Pacific Command’s Regional Maritime Security Initiative
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDF	Japan’s Self-Defence Force
SEANFZ	Southeast Asian Nuclear Free Zone
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SPT	Six-Party Talks
TAC	ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
TSD	Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

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Tangled webs

Security architectures in Asia

Asia is undergoing a deep and dynamic transformation. One effect of that transformation is to place new pressures on the regional security order, which must adjust to a set of shifting strategic relativities and relationships. Nowhere are those pressures more likely to be felt than in the shape of the region's security architectures: those structures that bound security cooperation and competition amongst the regional players. Around the region, security thinkers have begun to reexamine the principal multilateral structures which exist and to anticipate new structures which might emerge. With Australia's recent change of government, we too are re-examining a key but delicate piece of Australian strategic policy: how to calibrate our alliance with the United States with our engagement in the emerging security architectures in the Asia-Pacific.

In this paper, William Tow surveys Australia's long-standing 'dual strategy' of alliance affinity and regional engagement. He argues that Australia should continue to pursue that strategy. But in the rapidly-changing Asian security environment, Australia needs to achieve a better policy balance between the two approaches. Part of the solution is to minimize the 'gap' inherent in the strategy, by inducing the US to adopt a more accommodating approach towards the region's multilateral security structures. The impending election of a new American presidential administration makes such an approach timely. But we also need to put more work into shaping the regional structures, to enhance the prospects for great power cooperation, confidence-building and conflict avoidance.

The study offers specific proposals for implementing that strategy. It envisions Australia working with its ASEAN neighbours and other Asian states to implement a middle-power 'grand strategy' designed to secure stronger levels of great power support for better integration of the existing architectures. Any such strategy will need to reduce 'mission overlap' between existing cooperative security institutions in the Asia-Pacific and gradually embrace a significant human security agenda. The Rudd government's challenge will be to pursue its vision of an Asia-Pacific community in tandem with the equally difficult task of persuading US policy makers to accept cooperative security institutions as more conducive to their national interests than is now the case.