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Conceptualising the Three-Tier Approach to Analyse the Security Arrangements in the Asia-Pacific

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APC	Asia Pacific Community
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APT	ASEAN plus Three
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
EAS	East Asia Summit
IGO	international governmental organisation
JSDF	Japanese Self-Defense Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NTS	non-traditional security
SPT	Six-Party Talks
TCOG	Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group
TSD	Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

Conceptualising the Three-Tier Approach to Analyse the Security Arrangements in the Asia-Pacific

Ryo Sahashi

Introduction: Setting the Context

During the Eisenhower Administration, the United States championed regional security postures underscored by 'pacto-mania'. Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, was instrumental in negotiating numerous (and mostly bilateral) alliances between the United States and various Asian allies—a network which has become known as the 'hub-and-spokes' system. Unlike America's European allies who preferred a multilateral alliance framework in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Washington's security partners in Asia generally eschewed multilateral security arrangements in their own region. This has been attributed to the generally weak material capabilities of Asian newly-decolonised countries, a regional mistrust toward Japan, and the United States' own prejudices to Asia as a politically underdeveloped region compared to long-time European collaborators, many of whom became NATO partners.¹

Throughout the Cold War, moreover, the United States relied primarily on its own military capabilities to deter the 'forces of international communism', making use of forward bases on allied territory. Asian allies and friends were expected by successive US administrations to keep anti-communist regimes intact domestically and, for South Korea and Taiwan, to contain their aspirations for *reconquista* vis-à-vis North Korea and the People's Republic of China (China), respectively. In reality, Asian 'regional actors were able to exploit Soviet-American attentiveness to overall [global] balance of power in order to advance their own interests, including those that might entail the use of force', and Seoul and Taipei frustrated US policy planners repeatedly with their hard-line demands for the Washington to confront Beijing.²

In this historical context, bilateralism, featuring asymmetrical power relations between the United States (as the 'senior ally') and its designated Asian security partners, was enough for the United States to sustain a favourable regional balance of power and to control its weaker regional allies. Attempts among some of these allies to form autonomous security coalitions amongst themselves were not supported by Washington. America's Asian allies invariably accepted such hierarchic authority due to their continued dependence on US power and security guarantees. Indeed, sustained political, economic and military support from the United States provided external legitimacy for these regimes' continued domestic political survival.

Hence, multilateralism had 'no space' to flourish in Asia during the Cold War. Japan, which had recovered economically with surprising speed during the postwar era, provided economic assistance to non-communist Asian countries, clearly facilitating US strategic objectives and policies in the region. Japan's restrained military policy and capabilities, however, along with its historical legacies, made it an unlikely strategic guardian for these countries. Even after the Nixon (Guam) doctrine, which compelled American allies to achieve more independent capabilities to deter regional threats, bilateralism, and the hub-and-spokes system underwriting it, continued to prevail at the expense of generating any Asian multilateral counterpart to NATO.

Over the past decade and a half, however, Asia's security environment has experienced significant change. The nature of military and non-military cooperation has been particularly transformed. After the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, the United States gradually moved toward 'globalising' the strategic missions and roles for its Asian allies and friends.³ Japan, South Korea and Australia all embarked on new military activities in response to the George W. Bush Administration's so-called global 'war on terror', while the Philippines and Thailand, as Washington's two other formal allies in the region, also contributed to US anti-terrorism operations. Their participation in American-led international 'coalitions of the willing' provided their militaries the opportunity to work with dozens of counterparts outside the tightly controlled orbit of US alliance politics represented by traditional regional bilateral frameworks. Independent intra-alliance bilateral arrangements (i.e. between Australia and Japan as well as Australia and South Korea) began to mature, while 'minilateral' arrangements (such as the Australia-Japan-US Trilateral Security Dialogue) also materialised.⁴ Emerging non-traditional security (NTS) challenges, such as piracy, terrorism, peace building, human trafficking and pandemics also called for more diversified regional cooperation. These pressing challenges combined with the weakness of the one multilateral indigenous regional grouping to outlast the Cold War—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—to generate greater urgency for such diverse mechanisms. These might include new international governmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private foundations as key players within the Asia-Pacific security milieu.

That Washington now feels the necessity of giving more opportunities to regional allies and friends in the management of key regional security issues is a highly significant development in Asian security politics. Ongoing developments on the Korean peninsula are particularly illustrative. The United States joined Japan and South Korea in forming the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) in 1999 as part of the Clinton Administration's effort to gain those two countries' support for broadening US approaches to confidence-building on the Korean peninsula. The TCOG lost its momentum after several years, but Japan and South Korea also became integrally involved in the Six-Party Talks (SPT), initiated in August 2003, as an *ad hoc* government-level framework to discuss with the delegations from Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).⁵ Another episode of the United States and its regional allies employing minilateralism in response to the Asia-Pacific region's shifting security environment was the founding of the Trilateral Security Dialogue in August 2002 (upgraded to become the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) in early 2006 and involving foreign ministerial-level consultations). Australia, Japan and the United States shaped this initiative to generate more coordinated alliance policy responses to power shifts in the region (especially reflected by the rise of China and India) and to respond more effectively to a growing array of both traditional and NTS challenges, including disaster relief, maritime and energy security and nuclear proliferation.⁶ Supplementing various

bilateral security negotiations and often stagnated region-wide institutions, minilateralism appears primed to expand its role as an important component of Asian security politics.

Previous constraints preventing the United States and Asian states from forming multilateral security arrangements are dissipating. American concerns about the weak material capabilities of Asian allies, lingering mistrust of Japan among other Asian countries and past prejudices directed by the West toward Asian cultures are giving way to 'needs-based security arrangements'. To date, most of these have been *ad hoc* in nature, but their potential for becoming more formalised is intensifying. Accordingly, the hub-and-spokes system no longer reflects the realities of today's security politics as it applies to US allies and friends in the region.

Research Questions and Argument

This paper endeavours to answer several key questions. First, how can we grasp the emerging structural dynamics in Asia-Pacific security politics? Second, why is minilateralism or other variants of needs-based security cooperation intensifying? What actual roles and impact do such emerging security arrangements have? Third, how are such structural developments affecting the nature of the traditional hub-and-spokes alliance system?

To answer these questions, this paper argues that a new conceptualisation of regional security arrangements is necessary. A **three-tier approach** is developed here which adjudicates between the limitations inherently grounded in bilateral strategic interactions (the 1st tier), weak region-wide and/or global arrangements (the 3rd tier)—a process that leads to an increase of 2nd tier needs-based functional security arrangements in contemporary Asia-Pacific security politics. This working paper, then, is organised along the following lines: the next section deals with how bilateralism and multilateralism are increasingly interacting in Asia—a process that has led that region's governments to create more needs-based functional security groupings. The paper then discusses and categorises second-tier security arrangements that have been generated by such bilateral-multilateralism. In the last section, theoretical and policy implications of the three-tier approach are weighed in more depth. This paper's argument that persistent hub-and-spokes bilateral alliances are now giving way to a more complex, yet increasingly effective, web of needs-based grouping or minilateral networks will be examined by applying the 'three-tier approach' as outlined above.

To characterise Asia-Pacific security arrangements by incorporating different levels of analysis is not uncommon. Similar distinctions have been applied by various analysts. Evan Medeiros, for example, has argued that 'U.S. policymaking could include three elements: broadening the scope of bilateral diplomatic assurances; enhancing coordination between bilateral security cooperation and multilateral organizations; and developing a Northeast Asian security organization to manage great power relations among the United States, China, Russia, Japan, Korea, and possibly India'.⁷ Tsutomu Kawasaki has likewise observed that 'post-Cold War Japan's policy toward various Asia-Pacific security institutions is best characterised as a strategy of layered institutions'. He places the US-Japan alliance at the core of alliance strategy, and assigns security instruments such as the TCOG and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) as complementary policy instruments.⁸ This paper applies such a layered approach to analyse major dynamics of security arrangements in the Asia-Pacific and draws implications about their effects.

The first tier of strategic interaction as designated here is *bilateral security relations*. In the Asia-Pacific region, the distribution of power is diffuse. Japan, China and India are generally

regarded as 'regional great powers', and the United States and Russia as outlying powers that nevertheless have a critical strategic impact on this region's balance of power. Underlying this configuration are critical dyadic interactions and negotiations that constantly occur in the regional security arena. Complicating this process is the reality that dyadic arrangements between great powers often fluctuate, predicated on the shifting interests of great powers and on the threat perceptions or sense of marginalisation such shifts often generate. Paradoxically, bilateral ties often generate a sense of 'exclusivity' which emanates from maximum security cooperation between two countries involved in a dyad, but which simultaneously intensifies feelings of marginalisation by other powers outside the dyad but observing its possible negative strategic implications for their own interests. China, for example, views the US bilateral security network as inherently threatening to its own national security because that network's original purpose of containing the United States' Cold War rivals (the Soviet Union and China) has not totally been supplanted by Washington explicitly developing more 'order-building' rationales for that network's continuation.

Multilateral security arrangements constitute the third tier of interaction to be considered here. Middle and small powers in the region may regard this approach as an effective means to relieve or manoeuvre between pressures generated by great powers and directed specifically or tacitly toward them. Region-wide institutions are viewed as often diffusing power in ways that enhance middle and small power diplomacy and security. In the context of asymmetrical power relations, smaller powers may well prefer to coalesce and collaborate in ways that reinforce their own power disparities relative to great powers and that allow them to avoid dyadic negotiations with larger security actors. However, regional institutions have not really functioned very well in the Asia-Pacific security realm. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping founded in 1989, ARF (formed in 1994) and ASEAN plus Three (APT) and East Asia Summit (EAS) formed at the outset of this decade have been unsuccessful in satisfying emerging security imperatives in the region. Some would argue that their 'socialisation effects' on China through diplomatic and military exchanges have been significant.⁹ In general, however, these institutions have not been successful in laying the groundwork for an overarching and viable security architecture able to secure more credible and enduring regional security cooperation. This may well be due to a lack of great-power leadership, particularly that which could otherwise emanate from Washington, Tokyo or Beijing, as well as a tendency for the region's middle and small powers to engage in strategic hedging vis-à-vis these two great powers.

Hence, we are now observing the increase of numerous *needs-based functional security arrangements* in the Asia-Pacific, which constitute the second tier assessed in this paper. To supplement the limitations evident in both bilateral security arrangements and region-wide institutions, more specific groups of countries, sometimes in conjunction with IGOs and private organisations and sometimes on an *ad hoc* basis, collaborate in response to a particular issue-area. Straddling between the first (bilateral) and third (multilateral) tiers, these second-tier arrangements are intended to fill the gap in contemporary regional security cooperation. This paper categorises two specific processes inherent to such second-tier cooperation: (1) networking or pooling security capabilities specifically relevant to addressing a designated issue area; and (2) building security dialogues as an integral precondition for matching such capabilities to policy initiative or approaches. Both processes directly relate to fulfilling 'functional' or task-oriented areas of policy. It is still unclear to what extent second-tier processes will supersede (or complement significantly) first- and third-tier structural approaches in Asia-Pacific security politics. It is clearer that the role of second-tier processes must be acknowledged and increasingly factored into the region's security dynamics.

The First Tier: Bilateral Security Relations in Asia

To analyse the regional security environment more meaningfully, great-power strategic relations in a bilateral context need to be considered. To what extent such relations work by themselves to stabilise the Asia-Pacific strategic environment is by no means certain.

During the Cold War, surely in Asia, some Asian dyads were far more important than others, as seen in the cases of Soviet-American relations, Sino-Soviet relations and, toward the end of that period, intensifying Sino-American relations.¹⁰ Simply put, it was crucially significant for the United States, the Soviet Union, and China to avoid going to war with each other if global conflict was to be avoided. As seen in the cases of the Korean War (commencing in 1950) and the Sino-Soviet border dispute which led the Soviet Union and China to the brink of a general military conflict in 1969, escalating crises and conflicts incurred serious military and political costs for the parties concerned. It was fortunate for both Washington and Beijing that they were able to avoid a direct military conflict in Vietnam during the 1960s. Their subsequent rapprochement over the following two decades paved the way for greater stability in Southeast Asia and for the broader region after the Soviet Union's demise in 1990. Accordingly, these security dyads between the major powers operating in this region's Cold War environment were crucial to the intensification or moderation of regional tensions in Asia for nearly half a century after the Second World War.

However, if Asia's contemporary politico-security environment in Asia is considered, it is unlikely that great-power dyads predominantly contribute to regional stability. Certainly no concerted bilateral system has yet to emerge along the lines envisioned by proponents of a China-US G-2 arrangement.¹¹ There are several compelling reasons for this. First, today's security challenges differ from those in the Cold War era insofar as major powers are not always the major culprits in generating regional tensions. Second, the very nature of threats in the contemporary setting differs from the relatively narrow, state-centric problems that dominated early postwar security relations in Asia. Regional leaders now must contend with such challenges as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism, energy security, piracy and pandemics. These new security challenges are often indiscriminate in nature, posing threats on many states simultaneously. Weapons of mass destruction technology and international terrorism are pervasive and confront all Asia-Pacific populaces, notwithstanding within which borders they may happen to reside. Importantly, these problems cannot be solved by managing them only through bilateral channels. More comprehensive approaches are needed to cope with more wide-ranging threats. Bilateral arrangements are important, of course, for shaping responses to certain kinds of security tasks such as policing coordination, information sharing and capacity building. In a more complicated and fluid international system, however, multilateral frameworks must also be developed if effective problem-solving is to be achieved.

In this context, it is worth reiterating that bilateral initiatives that may be intended to increase effective cooperation and interoperability in this more complex environment may unintentionally spawn instability in their own right. A particular bilateral arrangement has potential to create concerns from the third party which is excluded. Chinese concerns over the extent of the furthering of Japan-US relations in response to global security threats (in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 the terrorist attacks) is an obvious case in point.¹²

Such uncertainty, if not recognised and managed early on, results in creating great-power tensions and this is particularly true when rising states such as China and India are prone to develop their new-found material capabilities in ways that trigger intensified strategic competition. In the absence of consensus on how global and regional governance should be implemented and sustained, great powers may opt to enter into direct bilateral negotiations with their potential adversaries. Often, however, misperception and mistrust prevails. Even if one party pursues accommodation with a potential rival, the fruits of such bilateral interaction are spoiled by third party concerns that a powerful dyadic coalition may be forming that will threaten those not involved. In such circumstances, fears about relative gains working against those parties that are excluded by whatever bilateral arrangement is being negotiated often prevail.¹³ This is not just true in the cases of powers and states who are competitors. Either too much mutual interdependence or excessive strategic dependence have the potential to seed intensifying doubts between allies. This is because a senior ally in a bilateral security relationship could be regarded as being unable to be tough and keep alliance commitment when its economic vital stakes are interdependent on the rising powers which alliance is expected to work.¹⁴

As will be discussed more fully below, the so-called G-2 proposal, envisioning closer economic and strategic collaboration between Washington and Beijing, has surely created such fears among traditional US allies (such as Japan) and newer US strategic friends (such as India). Conversely, recent speculation by the Prime Minister of Japan—a country still highly dependent on US extended deterrence guarantees—that his country ‘could turn more toward Asia’ (a strategy underpinned by closer Sino-Japanese relations) has proven to be equally capable of elevating concerns by the dominant (US) ally that the US-Japan alliance may no longer be regarded in Tokyo as the ‘linchpin’ for regional security that Washington customarily regards it to be.¹⁵ Greater cooperation between particular dyads may thus cause greater anxiety within other dyads. The enhancement of allied dyads (i.e. more Japanese-American strategic cooperation after 11 September 2001) may create fears of encirclement by non-allied states (such as China). Yet, stronger bilateral relations between potential rivals can easily lead smaller allies to weigh the advantage of becoming less aligned or dependent on their traditional senior partners (i.e. Japan turning toward Asia and away from the United States). This is paradoxical phenomena, but the recent evolution of trilateral relations among China, Japan and the United States support this hypothesis.¹⁶ A more detailed examination of how the US-Japan alliance dyad has been affected by Chinese responses to its evolution and by the concurrent development of Sino-American ties is warranted.

Enhanced Japan-US Alliance Relations and the Chinese Response

Washington has recently ‘globalised’ its bilateral security alliances in Asia by requesting that those allies provide both military and non-military assistance to Iraq, Afghanistan and other ‘out-of-area’ nation-building operations. This trend represents a significant change in US burden-sharing expectations directed toward these countries—from the Cold War-type contributions to an American-led regional balance of power to those directed more toward fulfilling missions of democratisation and international stability.¹⁷ In Japan, the Koizumi Government, which took office from January 2001, responded quickly to the Bush Administration’s global agendas derived after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. It supported US operations in Afghanistan, participated in the Operation *Enduring Freedom* Maritime Interdiction Operation (the ongoing international operations campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda) for refueling US and allied ships operating as part of the ‘coalition of

the willing' in that combat zone, and dispatched a reconstruction unit and C-130 transport aircraft to postwar Iraq.

Yet the Japanese Government also needed to cope with ongoing North Korean nuclear and missile developments and to hedge against the rise of China. In this context, the US-Japan alliance was still regarded in Tokyo as the paramount tool and compelled it to offer strong support for the Bush Administration's global security agenda. Japan thus supported the US attack against Iraq when other great powers still insisted that solutions other than war could be pursued against Saddam Hussein.¹⁸ Japanese support for the US global posture constituted an instance when third-tier (internationally-based institutional) security politics became intertwined with first-tier interaction. In return for such support, the United States continued its willingness to ensure that the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) and US military forces upgraded their interoperability, to finesse a base relocation plan for Okinawa and cooperate to strengthen both deterrence and defence capabilities against an intensified North Korean threat. Overall, there emerged two 'pillars' of security cooperation—one to underwrite regional security based on a Japan-US security treaty and the other to contribute to American-led global missions based on special legislation passed by the Japanese Diet. Many politicians and practitioners in Japan regard these two pillars to be highly integrated and the previous demarcations between bilateral and multilateral security issues to be increasingly blurred.¹⁹

To support these two policy components Japan has expanded its JSDF missions and capabilities since the early 1990s. In particular, the JSDF has shifted its focus toward accelerating procurement of more capable weapons systems. The deployment of missile defence systems on *Aegis* destroyers and helicopter carrier destroyers (*DDH Hyuga*-type) are illustrative. It is clear that these procurements are defensive in nature and geared toward such missions as disaster relief and peace-building. Perceptions, however, are often more powerful than reality and alarmists from abroad interpret such modernisation initiatives, in conjunction with the increase of JSDF missions in more distant locales, as Japanese re-militarisation.²⁰

Unsurprisingly, enhanced Japanese bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation with the United States and other allies causes the most concern in China.²¹ As intimated previously, analysis emanating from various Chinese think tanks and media sources often reflects suspicions that Japan's true intention lies in strengthening its bilateral military cooperation with the United States, Australia and other traditional regional allies to check rising Chinese power. China was opposed to the Australia-India-Japan-US 'quadrilateral framework' proposal, advanced after those four countries constituted the 'core powers' for managing rescue and reconstruction efforts following the Indian Ocean tsunami in late December 2004. After a change of national leaders in Australia and Japan, the initiative was quietly dropped. Various Chinese policy specialists, however, still entertain their doubts on the TSD, viewing it as nothing more than an effort to contain China's own strategic influence.²²

At the bilateral level, they are worried that the United States is no longer prone to view its alliance with Japan as 'capping the bottle' or restraining Japan's own defence policies at a time of major structural change in the Asian power balance. The underlying problem, these analysts fear, is that minilateral instruments such as the TSD lack the mechanisms needed to ensure that any such Japanese tendencies to accelerate their own country's rearmament are moderated. As one Chinese observer has concluded, ongoing Sino-Japanese tensions combine with a more relaxed Japanese-American security relationship to intensify Beijing's concerns about '[t]he state of U.S.-Chinese-Japanese trilateral relations' and thus 'informs

Beijing's perceptions of and attitude toward the alliance', in ways that deepen Chinese concerns.²³

Sino-American Relations and Problems of a G-2

In early 2009, the former National Security Advisor to US President Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, visited Beijing and proposed that the United States and China form a 'G-2 condominium' to jointly manage key for regional and global issues. He argued that '(t)he relationship between the U.S. and China has to be a comprehensive partnership ... Our top leaders should therefore meet informally on a regular schedule for personal in-depth discussions not just about our bilateral relations but about the world in general'.²⁴

Brzezinski's initiative was regarded as significant by both Chinese policymakers and independent observers as he had served as a top advisor to Barack Obama's presidential election campaign. It signalled to many Asian governments and opinion leaders that the shift of American perceptions concerning China's growing power was genuine and that China was increasingly viewed by Washington as a key actor to share responsibilities for global security. The new Obama Administration was determined to establish new and definitive bilateral dialogues between US and Chinese top leaders.²⁵ This resulted in an upgrading of the already established Sino-American Strategic Economic Dialogue to the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, co-chaired by of the US Secretaries of State and Treasury and their Chinese counterparts. The overriding need for a Chinese contribution to ending the global financial crisis, coupled with a sense of growing US vulnerability to the Chinese holding of US Government-issued bonds, compelled the new American Administration to strengthen the framework of cooperation with Beijing.

American allies and friends, especially Japan and India, expressed concerns that their interests and universal values would be at risk if Sino-American relations were to become too intimate. Indian analyst Raja Mohan pointed out that 'India will have to find ways to cope with the potential consequences of a G2'. In a speech delivered in New Delhi Ambassador Shyam Saran (the special envoy of India's the prime minister) used the term 'condominium' to describe what he regarded as a highly-discomforting scenario resulting from a deepening Sino-US partnership in global affairs.²⁶ Dennis Wilder, a former senior director for Asian affairs at the US National Security Council, speculated that 'China's neighbours would interpret a US-Chinese G-2 as the most important strategic realignment since the end of the Cold War, and it would jeopardise our relationships with those countries'.²⁷

To counter such perceptions and to maintain its partnerships with allies and friends, Washington will need to observe limitations to any strategic partnership with Beijing and reassure them that it recognises the necessity for caution and restraint. However, the Asia-Pacific's regional security system is no longer that which prevailed during the Cold War and China's cooperation will be critical to achieving any meaningful breakthroughs for still outstanding regional security dilemmas. In this context, striking a policy balance between Sino-American collaboration and alliance politics is absolutely critical. While any diplomatic solution to the ongoing crisis on the Korean peninsula will need to be largely brokered between China and the United States, for example, Tokyo's and Seoul's vital interests would clearly be affected by such an outcome and would necessitate constant and intense consultations between the United States and its two traditional Northeast Asian allies. What is clear is that the changing character of regional security challenges and responsibilities is ushering in an era where the United States will need to move 'beyond bilateralism' to

manage its own diplomatic and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific. In this context, relying on a G-2 formula alone is insufficient.

The ramifications of an increasingly powerful Chinese military also negate any regional security approach that relies predominantly on a Sino-American coalition for maintaining stability and prosperity in the region. China's visibly accelerating defence budgets and its development of maritime, air, and space technology is a common concern for its regional neighbours and US strategic planners. Such a threat perception is unlikely be solved solely by a Sino-American bilateral dialogue. Military exchanges between Washington and Beijing are often suspended, partly because of intermittent American arms sales to Taiwan, and, as seen recently in the USNS *Impeccable* incident, where American military surveillance units are caught operating in China's Exclusive Economic Zones, Chinese and US officials have not yet derived satisfactory mechanisms to regulate their military interactions.²⁸

Moreover, it is also doubtful that upgrading the bilateral Sino-American framework would allow China to always satisfy the expectations of the United States and other advanced economies. A respected American expert on China, Elizabeth Economy, argues that 'the current lack of US-Chinese cooperation of does not stem from a failure on Washington's part to recognise how much China matters, nor is it the result of leaders ignoring the bilateral relationship. It derives from mismatched interests, values, and capabilities'. Pointing out the shared foreign policy goals and over sixty governmental dialogue frameworks, she continues, '[e]ven after 30 years of engagement, the United States and China still disagree about how the world should work'.²⁹

To sum up, while acknowledging the importance of US-China bilateral dialogues and China's growing acceptance of a 'responsible stakeholder' role in the United Nations and other regional and international frameworks, the 'G-2' idea still exemplifies a possible overreliance on dyadic mechanisms to address all issues on East Asian regional stability and economic prosperity. This notion also risks creating a backlash from those countries outside of but largely affected by any Sino-American condominium. This concern is reflected in recent analysis offered by Australian analyst Hugh White:

As China's power grows, its relationships with the US and Japan will change, and that will change the way Asia works. China has so far been very patient in pushing those changes, but that may only make the adjustments all the harder to manage when they come. As China's economic power grows to approach America's, and as its strategic power begins to impinge on US maritime primacy, the US will face a momentous choice: does it treat China as an equal, or does it contest China's challenge to American primacy? And Japan too faces momentous choices: can it feel secure as US-China relations move towards equality, and if not what can it do?³⁰

Another dimension of Sino-American bilateralism which must be considered is if and when the United States feels increasingly insecure when its allies display more accommodating postures toward China. Just prior to the George W. Bush Administration assuming office, for example, Richard Armitage—destined to become that administration's Deputy Secretary of State—visited Australia and warned that country's Labor Government that Washington would expect Australian support in any future Sino-American confrontation over Taiwan if the Australian-American alliance was to remain viable.³¹ More recently, in October 2009 US diplomats made clear to Japan's newly-elected government (of the Democratic Party of Japan) that it would not renegotiate its basing arrangements in Japan

following Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's speculation in the *New York Times* that the US-Japan alliance could co-exist with a new Japanese diplomatic posture that considered East Asia to be his country's 'basic sphere of being'.³² US relations with South Korea cooled visibly when efforts were made by the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments to engineer rapprochement with North Korea and to move closer to China during 1998–2008. The bilateral tensions emanating from these episodes reveal that the days of unchallenged asymmetrical relations that previously marked the US bilateral alliance network in the region are quickly waning. Given this situation, rationales for pursuing third-tier regional security approaches strengthen commensurately.

The Third Tier: Regional Security Cooperation

If bilateralism remains problematic as an approach to regional stabilisation, can the exclusive pursuit of multilateralism and institution-building be regarded as a more promising alternative? Recent trends indicate that such is not the case. Problems undermining security community-building in the Asia-Pacific include an intermittent reluctance by the United States to remain strategically engaged in the region, ASEAN member-state identity issues in reconciling institutional obligations with more traditional sovereign-based prerogatives, that organisation's concerns about independent middle-power diplomacy trumping its own diplomatic leverage in the region, and China's hardline outlooks directed toward various multilateral initiatives and regime building. Each of these factors will be discussed briefly in this subsection.

America as a Reluctant Multilateral Player

With the end of the Cold War, Asian countries realised that an American strategic withdrawal from the region was not desirable when they faced a 'rising China'. However, the US retrenchment from Indochina in the early 1970s, foreshadowed by the August 1969 Nixon (Guam) doctrine, had generated uncertainty among Washington's traditional regional allies about the US presence in Asia. As Evelyn Goh has observed, Southeast Asian states 'saw their existing policy of bandwagoning with the United States as unsustainable, and chose to band together in a diplomatic community to help ensure their autonomy and security'.³³ Indeed, the rise of China had already been anticipated and this only strengthened the incentive for the ASEAN states to induce the United States to remain geopolitically active in their region's balance of power.³⁴ To shape this equilibrium, ASEAN opted to pursue both an engagement policy with China and to encourage continued US strategic primacy in the region.³⁵

Complicating ASEAN's quest to keep America interested in Southeast Asia was Washington's determination to conduct business there largely on the terms of sustaining an asymmetrical security relationship with its traditional regional friends and allies. US policymakers had little desire to incur the costs and risks they felt could be entailed in compromising with numerous regional security actors in multilateral settings and contexts. They were unconvinced that multilateralism really presented a viable alternative to the hub-and-spokes arrangements that had yielded predictable and continuous strategic gains for American strategic interests over the past four or five decades.³⁶

The United States viewed regional institutions as useful only when they could address regional security challenges that were less easily managed bilaterally. In this context, it did

regard such multilateral fora as ARF or APEC as useful for engaging and socialising China into becoming a more cordial security actor. But it expected these institutions to only supplement its bilateral alliance system rather than to replace it and to preclude its traditional regional security allies to strike separate bilateral deals with Beijing. However, when George W. Bush assumed the US presidency in early 2001, it was evident that this Administration—disillusioned by the Four Party Talks failing to curb North Korean nuclear ambitions and stunned by the APT's resentment to the International Monetary Fund's management of the Asian Financial Crisis—was no closer to embracing multilateralism in Asia than any of its predecessors. Indeed, Bush and his advisers embraced what many came to regard as a highly unilateral US foreign policy posture in Asia and internationally. This pattern was only reinforced by the events of 11 September 2001 and by American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. US global preoccupations relegated Asian multilateralism largely insignificant in the larger framework of US foreign policy priorities.

Washington's response to the birth of the ARF is best understood in this context. Southeast Asian states viewed this new mechanism as an institutional tool to keep the United States active in the region. Japan was supportive of this mechanism for the same reason—as a means of reassuring ASEAN that there would be no East Asia power vacuum for Beijing to exploit. Tokyo quietly encouraged US policy planners to endorse and participate in the ARF at a time when the latter were still concerned about Asian multilateral security arrangements. The first ARF session was convened in July 1994 with American participation.³⁷

Gradually, the ARF developed and implemented credible measures toward achieving confidence-building and preventive diplomacy on a region-wide basis. It has been visibly successful in realising collaboration in NTS areas, including disaster relief, transnational crime, counter-terrorism and maritime security.³⁸ It is still unclear, however, whether such cooperation 'spills over' in ways that will facilitate more intensified ARF cooperation in the traditional security sector. American scepticism remained strong that it would. Ralph Cossa, a respected American observer of Asian security politics, observed that the ARF's 'contribution to regional security remains somewhat constrained. ... Few expect the ARF to solve the region's problems or even to move rapidly or proactively to undertake that mission'.³⁹ Citing an authoritative concept paper released by the US Department of State, Cossa noted that US officials saw the future evolution of ARF to be 'a long and difficult one'.⁴⁰

Elusive Regional Leadership

A core problem in Asia-Pacific multilateral security politics is a lack of leadership underwriting its development. Neither China nor Japan is ready to assume strong leadership on regional multilateralism. China still equates multilateral security politics with the promotion of its own doctrine that emphasises the marginalisation of American (and, by extension, Japanese) power in East Asia. Japan's latest advance of a relatively amorphous 'East Asia Community' concept is the latest in a long line of Japanese proposals (emanating back to Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama's premature call for an ASEAN-Post Ministerial Conference regional security apparatus).

Perhaps most problematic, however, is that while ASEAN countries occupy the 'pivot position' in the development of region-wide multilateral mechanisms they still cannot overcome their own preoccupations with sovereign prerogatives, notwithstanding the rhetoric and language of the newly-ratified ASEAN Charter. Illustrative is ASEAN's still relatively weak position on human rights in Myanmar, as opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains

under house arrest in that country and international society pressures the ruling military junta toward exercising greater liberalisation. ASEAN states, of course, will always coalesce when confronting larger regional powers if they feel that by doing so they are better able to manoeuvre within and exploit asymmetrical power relations to their own advantage. But they also know they are inherently limited in what they can do to shape the region's overall power balance in terms of pursuing strategies of hedging and balancing.

The Middle Power Problem

Nor are the ASEAN states keen to relinquish their pivot position to other middle powers. When Australia launched its Asia Pacific Community (APC) initiative, most ASEAN states projected strong scepticism about its workability and demonstrated annoyance over what they felt was the Rudd Government's inadequate efforts to consult them in advance of its initiative being publicly introduced. In remarks delivered at the Asia Society in June 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd proposed that an APC be realised by 2020. He argued that, 'there is a brittleness in a foreign policy based only on bilateral relations. To remove some of that brittleness, we need strong and effective regional institutions'. Pointing to what he deemed to be unfulfilled aspirations and incomplete functions underpinning the ASEAN experience, he presented the APC as an alternative 'regional institution which spans the entire Asia-Pacific region—including the United States, Japan, China India, Indonesia and the other states of the region'. Such a mechanism, he asserted, could better 'engage in the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action on economic and political matters and future challenges related to security'.⁴¹

Without more effective coordination between the region's middle and small powers, it appears unlikely that they can exercise genuine leadership in building future multilateral architectures in the region. Even within the ranks of ASEAN, we are now seeing a more independent and assertive style of middle-power diplomacy. Indonesia, confident in its unique status as the *primus inter pares* of the ASEAN configuration, began to project its own vision of regional security community building. In early 2009, Rizal Sukma, Executive Director of Center for Strategic and International Studies Indonesia, proposed the concept of E-8 '(China, Japan, India, Russia, Korea, Australia, USA, and Indonesia) as an informal forum to connect Asian multilateralism with the G-20 global economic grouping'.⁴² This was a clear sign of the Southeast Asian sub-region's most significant power over the slow pace of ASEAN development. Jusuf Wanandi, Vice Chairman in Sukma's institution, had already argued that the EAS should be converted to a concert of power for managing regional security that would eventually supersede ASEAN's ongoing pivot role.⁴³ Both the Australian and Indonesian proposals reflect a continuing lack of great-power leadership in Asia and, as will now be discussed, a rising awareness that China's opportunistic diplomacy directed toward its neighbours incorporates an institutional dimension that, if unchecked, could render multilateralism in the region more a relative gains process than one where all could benefit in a more cooperative environment.

Multilateralism and The China Factor

Until recently, the view that China has 'difficulties translating economic ties into direct influence over other nations' foreign policy or military affairs' held sway among most American analysts of Chinese foreign policy.⁴⁴ Increasingly, however, China's burgeoning wealth and growing diplomatic influence has increased expectations that China will play an increasingly proactive role in shaping Asia-Pacific security cooperation. This is the case notwithstanding the reality that China does not assign high priority to Asian-based regional

institutionalism as a means of solving its own vital security interests in Asia. Indeed, Chinese foreign policy analyst Li Mingjiang sees China's policy pragmatism as actually hindering Chinese leadership in regional institution building.⁴⁵ China has clearly been enthusiastic about reaching economic agreements with ASEAN countries. Yet in the security realm it has been more reticent toward endorsing multilateral approaches. It does endorse regional NTS cooperation but has been reluctant, until very recently, to extend this support to more 'traditional' security sectors such as conflict management and preventive diplomacy. It has characterised the ARF as comprised of 'too many members from different regions',⁴⁶ and 'China's unwillingness to move towards a more overt stance favoring preventive diplomacy in the ARF is a reflection of its concern that any future crisis in the South China Sea or in the Taiwan Strait could allow international interference over what it considers to be its legitimate sovereign claims to control these sectors'.⁴⁷ Taiwan is considered to be a strictly irredentist issue, while China has preferred to engage in bilateral negotiations with other claimants to the Spratly Islands and other South China Sea points of contention for fear of becoming isolated against other claimant coalitions directed against China.⁴⁸

China has also avoided taking the lead or even participating in other multilateral security initiatives that affect Asia. The American-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and a Global Maritime Partnership which the US Navy recently proposed are illustrative. Chinese analysts have criticised the latter arrangement as being nothing more than a smokescreen to allow the US Navy access to foreign ports, bases and logistics in ways that are designed to constrain Chinese and Russian military power.⁴⁹ Critics of this Chinese position argue that China has not properly evaluated the merits of these security initiatives relative to the costs it pays by rejecting them (e.g. encouraging either state-centric or sub-state proliferators such as various terrorist factions to develop nuclear weapons capabilities). China's scepticism directed toward these types of regimes or arrangements solely on the basis of questioning the legitimacy of their US, Japanese or other allied roles or behaviour within their parameters appears to be relatively myopic and disproportionate to the advantages China would enjoy by helping to shape their agendas and procedures.⁵⁰ Beijing's resistance to Japanese efforts to promote a 'pan-Asian' version of the EAS during 2004 and 2005 underscore this point. China did not oppose Japanese policy proposals for greater regional collaboration on energy and environmental issues within the APT framework prior to the inaugural EAS meeting in December 2005. But China opted to assign more emphasis on APT than on EAS because of Japan's active EAS diplomacy.⁵¹

The Emerging Second Tier: Needs-based Functional Security Arrangements

Regional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region has been relatively weak in the postwar era. Without great-power leadership, regional security institutions have primarily served as dialogue mechanisms rather than as actual policy managers. Increasingly, however, security issues are emerging which need to be managed via multilateral mechanisms. These challenges include the following items.

- Counter terrorism
- Counter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- Maritime security and piracy
- Disaster relief
- Pandemics

- Climate change
- Peacekeeping and state-building
- Other NTS issues, including transnational crime, stateless people, and natural resource management.

Since these challenges are transnational in nature and constitute largely shared security concerns, Asia-Pacific governments have increasingly recognised the need for greater cooperation in such areas as information sharing, capacity building and high-level policy coordination.

This policy agenda has led to the creation of 'needs-based' security arrangements in the region. Participants in such arrangements, moreover, are hardly restricted to Asia-Pacific governments but also entail IGOs such as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, a variety of NGOs such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Oxfam, and various epistemic communities. Much of this cooperation is based on very issue-specific collaboration. International cooperation on disaster relief following the Indian Ocean tsunami was a clear example.

It is also notable that bilateral negotiations are becoming increasingly supplemented by multilateral initiatives in the areas of 'traditional security'. The SPT on North Korea has been one of the most visible examples of this trend. Another has been the recent expansion of informal multilateral politico-security dialogues and military confidence-building measures within the region.⁵² Therefore, the recent increase of needs-based arrangements (not restricted to just small groupings) demonstrates a momentum for establishing wider regional security frameworks. In such needs-based regional security cooperation, the role of great and middle powers who can spare resources for managing specific security problems is increasing; conversely, the strategic role of smaller powers (that often entails them being beneficiaries of traditional bilateral security guarantees by a great-power benefactor) is decreasing.

Networking Non-Traditional Regional Security Cooperation

The aforementioned tsunami, which engulfed much of Southeast and South Asia in late December 2004, is a benchmark for intensifying regional cooperation in NTS contingencies. This disaster caused over 230,000 deaths and countless injuries while rendering millions homeless. It was a graphic illustration of how critical 'needs-based' security arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region have become, and of how traditional instruments of power (such as military capabilities) could be transformed into effective peace-building components. Indeed, the US Seventh Fleet in Pacific operating under the US Pacific Command became the core mechanism for disaster relief operations in this contingency and, at first glance, appeared to support the wry observation of one analyst that the tsunami case underscored the reality that 'no major regional capital is going to call the ARF asking for help', but 'they will call Washington'.⁵³

In retrospect, however, this is probably an exaggeration. Humanitarian assistance for the areas hit by the tsunami was jointly shared among many IGOs, over thirty countries' military forces, and about four hundred NGOs. While it is clear that US Government bodies such as the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance at the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development were among the quickest entities to respond to this disaster, an *ad hoc*, needs-based multilateral regional core group was quickly formed

among Australia, India, Japan and the United States to coordinate overall operations. US Pacific Command designated core group activities *Operation of Unified Assistance* and this grouping worked as the leading actor to organise what became known as 'Combined Support Force 536' (CSF536). With its civilian counterpart, the Combined Coordination Center, CSF536 was stationed in Utaapao, Thailand. The two components worked together to coordinate numerous assistance activities and civil-military cooperation.⁵⁴ This multilateral approach to disaster relief 'spilled over' from the core group into ASEAN itself. In January 2005, that organisation convened the 'Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on the Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami' in Jakarta to coordinate further response to the disaster. Leaders from 26 countries and IGOs gathered as participants and worked to coordinate the high levels of financial aid that were by then flowing into the region from international community.⁵⁵

Australia-Japan-US trilateral security cooperation provides a further example of multilateral needs-based security cooperation. The Japanese and Australian Governments have enhanced their bilateral security cooperation through their shared peace-building experiences in Cambodia, East Timor, the Indian Ocean tsunami, and Iraq. In March 2007, they signed a formal declaration for bilateral security cooperation, but simultaneously upgraded their collaboration through the aforementioned TSD. Most recently the Australian Defense Force and the JSDF have strengthened their interoperability with US forces to carry out coordinated emergency missions of disaster relief, maritime security and related NTS functions. Of course, officials from these three allied countries discuss traditional security issues as well (for instance, a rising China and North Korean nuclear issues), but significantly the general TSD focus has undoubtedly shifted toward a broader and largely NTS focus.⁵⁶ It is therefore transforming what was a hierarchical hub-and-spokes alliance system into a more complex web-type structure, with the former Australian and Japanese 'spokes' increasingly sharing leadership with the United States in TSD development. This grouping is striving to achieve a distinct 'balance' between traditional and NTS, even though a recent and definitive report prepared in Japan and delivered to its prime minister suggests that networking with the traditional US allies is still regarded as the best means for strengthening cooperation within nascent regional security institutions.⁵⁷

The TSD experience could serve as a constructive precedent for other regional institutions to shape their own 'broader' regional security agendas. Both the ARF and APEC have discussed implementing specific measures for disaster relief cooperation following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Mely Caballero-Anthony might be right, however, in arguing 'the [most pressing] task at hand is to draw up a mechanism that is able to coordinate all these initiatives at the ASEAN, ARF, and APEC level into a more coherent and effective regional response system'.⁵⁸ In this context, the United Nations could play a key role, jointly working with major regional security actors and sanctioning the use of military forces as well as selected civilian assets to complement or support intra-regional institutional initiatives for responding to future NTS challenges. Yet this process could also be implemented by various regional institutions working with each other to rationalise and implement priority tasks. This aspect of needs-based multilateralism will be discussed more fully below.

Non-Traditional Security Cooperation Supplementing Regional Institutions

The imperative to increase cooperation in NTS policy areas stems from a current paucity of strong regional overarching institutions with capabilities to coordinate authority. To address such challenges as climate change and energy security, pandemics and piracy, more distinct instruments of function-based cooperation need to be created in order to fill the gap between

existing region-wide institutional capabilities and the intensifying demands of broader regional security cooperation.

Energy and climate change are now regarded to be among the most important NTS issues. The APT, EAS and APEC have all intensified their policy cooperation and coordination in this area, but other multilateral initiatives are even more distinctive in addressing this problem. The Asia Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate, for example, was launched in 2005 and emanated from an American initiative to impose a 'sectoral approach' to energy and environmental challenges. Its seven members—Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Korea and the United States—are now responsible for 54 per cent of the world's total CO₂ emissions. How it will fare has become more important as it is now apparent that the UN Conference on Climate Change, scheduled to convene in Copenhagen during December 2009, will fall short of original expectations in mandating enforceable emission levels.

As shown by the SARS crisis in 2003 and more recently by the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak, the threat of regional and worldwide pandemics is now requiring all countries in the Asia-Pacific region to prepare for future episodes of massive outbreaks of communicable and infectious diseases. Yet, major countries in the region lack sufficient resources to cope with this problem. As Mely Caballero-Anthony has observed, 'the nature of pandemic threats, however, has compelled countries outside the region to get involved'.⁵⁹ It is apparent that the involvement of the US Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization will need to supplement any regional multilateral initiatives launched by the EAS, APEC and the ARF to combat this problem. So too will other IGOs and NGOs, who can supply additional funding and resources to manage an increasingly urgent problem of Asian-based pandemic threats. The Asia-Pacific Regional UN Team for Avian and Pandemic Influenza was created in February 2006 and includes representatives from regional offices of the UN system and affiliated agencies. It is designed to ensure that various parts of that system work together effectively to coordinate responses to avian and pandemic influenza outbreaks and to enhance pandemic preparedness within APEC, ASEAN and other regional institutions.⁶⁰

Piracy has been a common concern for Asian governments and, since the late 1990s, the increase of piracy has forced them to upgrade their policy coordination. The *Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships* (ReCAAP) was signed in 2004 by sixteen parties, including the ASEAN countries, Bangladesh, India, Japan, South Korea and Sri Lanka, and became effective in September 2006. A ReCAAP Information Sharing Center has been established in Singapore. Enhancing capacity building is a major goal of this scheme which operates independently of APT or EAS but regularly and systematically communicates with those groupings. This multilateral initiative works in tandem with increasing efforts by the region's littoral states to step up air-surveillance and maritime patrols to reduce piracy.⁶¹ Functional cooperation among regional coast guards has been especially prominent in this regard. The North Pacific Coast Guard Forum was established in 2000 as a Japanese Coast Guard initiative, and it has representation from Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States. It has recently led joint exercises for disaster relief. Japan also took a lead in founding the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting in 2004. Most ASEAN countries, Bangladesh, China (and Hong Kong), India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and South Korea participate in this multilateral initiative. Moreover, to improve the capacity of South Pacific island states for coast guarding, Australia, Japan and the United States sponsor bilateral and function-based multilateral schemes in that sub-region. The Nippon Foundation and Sasakawa Peace Foundation—private foundations in Japan—have recently taken the lead in funding coast guard capacities in the Micronesian states. The ASEAN region and Pacific Island countries are significant for

tackling new security challenges, such as counter-terrorism, securing sea lines of communication, and combating transnational crime. It should be noted that the development and enhancement of rules of law in the littoral areas are absolutely critical to resolving the piracy issue.⁶²

Traditional Security and Small Groupings

The United States and its alliance partners have also enhanced regional security cooperation by incorporating the use of small, *ad hoc* groupings. The evolution of the TSD has already been addressed. Another recent example is the TCOG involving South Korea, Japan and the United States and designed to shape a coordinated policy approach towards North Korea. After the Agreed Framework in 1994 was signed between North Korea and the United States in the aftermath of the first North Korean nuclear crisis, officials from South Korea, Japan and the United States conducted a series of *ad hoc*, high-level meetings. According to James Schoff, such trilateral meetings initially revealed different policy priorities held by Seoul, Tokyo and Washington toward the North Koreans. However, 'the [North Korean] *Taepo-dong* missile launch [in August 1998] subsequently helped launch the so-called "Perry Process", which in turn led to the establishment of the TCOG'.⁶³ That grouping was formally inaugurated in 1999 and was the primary means by which these three allies were to manage North Korean policy over the ensuing 3–4 years. TCOG languished when the SPT process was established in August 2003 and as the George W. Bush Administration realised how divergent its own policy preferences for settling the North Korean nuclear crisis was relative to South Korea. More recently, following the inauguration of a conservative South Korean president in 2008, calls have been made to reinvigorate the TCOG in some form.⁶⁴ It remains to be seen to what extent the Hatoyama Government in Japan would support any such initiative given its greater orientation toward East Asian community-building. It is clear, however, that, given the continued mistrust between South Korea and Japan, a TCOG arrangement would facilitate US efforts to work as an alliance stabiliser or 'broker' vis-à-vis its two Northeast Asian allies.

The SPT has prompted intermittent speculation about the eventual transformation of the current Track Two Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue into a more permanent Track One Northeast Asia Security Framework. The failure of intra-Asian trade flows and the absence of a 'natural leader' (although China may be capable of assuming this role as the United States increasingly acknowledges and defers to China's growing economic and strategic power) have been inhibitors to date for realising greater institutionalisation in the Northeast Asian subregion. The September 2005 US-South Korean 'Joint Statement of Principles', largely fashioned by the efforts of US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill to engage the United States in bilateral security talks with the North Koreans, was viewed by some observers as a potential benchmark for the shaping of a nascent 'security community' in Northeast Asia. But subsequent North Korean behaviour, including its involvement in an international money laundering scandal, its conduct of a nuclear weapons test in October 2006 and its intense hostility toward President Lee Myung-bak all worked to undermine any momentum created by earlier South Korean encouragement of multilateralism via the East Asian Vision Group and the Presidential Commission on Northeast Asian Cooperation.⁶⁵ The latest North Korean overtures to 'kick-start' a new round of bilateral negotiations with the United States remain intertwined with Northeast Asian multilateralism as the Obama Administration continues to endorse the SPT as the most appropriate instrument for addressing North Korean security issues.

Indeed, the overall role of small groupings addressing traditional security issues in the Asia-Pacific will remain one that is tailored from a myriad of bilateral and multilateral security approaches for some time to come. There is still resistance to multilateralism in both American and Chinese policy circles, but both of these states (along with most other regional security actors) have gradually become more accepting of its value as a means to pursue regional confidence-building. The US Navy, for example, has now proposed a 'One Thousand Ship Navy' concept, which has since morphed into the 'Global Maritime Partnership' initiative. Bates Gill and Michael Green insist that '[t]he U.S. Pacific Command has a clear interest in strengthening interoperability and coalition operations to share the burden in providing these public goods and simultaneously to promote confidence and transparency'.⁶⁶ China has also become increasingly comfortable in engaging in multilateral security dialogues and in joint exercises with its regional neighbours in ways that dovetail with revised US military policy.⁶⁷ Reportedly, the US and Australian Governments and their respective forces are planning to propose joint military exercises with the People's Liberation Army.⁶⁸

Confidence-building and transparency should continue to grow through the ARF and similar region-wide processes. Surely, the ARF has been the preferred framework for what multilateral security dialogues have thus far developed in the Asia-Pacific security arena. With its somewhat qualified mandate, however, that other attempts to supplement ARF mechanisms for confidence-building and transparency have been attempted is understandable. For example, the International Institute for Strategic Studies' 'Shangri-la Dialogue' was initiated in 2002 as an effort to gather chief of defence officials and defence ministers in the Asia-Pacific region. Since it is regarded as dominated by Western policy circles, however, the Dialogue has not achieved as positive a reputation from Chinese and ASEAN policy officials as its organisers had hoped.⁶⁹ What these initiatives do show is that there is a sense of shared urgency or necessity to create broader mechanisms to initially supplement and perhaps eventually supplant the slow development of the ARF. The changing of balance of power in the region, leading to increased uncertainty, can only intensify such sentiments.

Conclusion

Bilateral security relationships are relatively easy to forge, easier to manage and quicker to produce specific strategic objectives for their two participants than multilateral arrangements. Yet they often do little to resolve regional security dilemmas or modify anarchy in international relations, instead generating crisis between allies who fear either entanglement in their security partners' disputes or abandonment by that partner when their own strategic interests are at stake.⁷⁰ Bilateral dyads, often couched as 'strategic partnerships' between rivals looking for direct ways to neutralise each others' power bases, are usually short-lived and often prone to numerous miscalculations or misunderstandings between their participants (as discussed, frequent efforts by China and the United States to forge a strategic partnership have been undermined by enduring differences over Taiwan, ideological disputes over human rights and other impediments). Multilateral security arrangements offer greater long-term benefits or gains for their affiliates but, as Asia-Pacific states continue to discover, they are far more elusive to realise and sustain than their bilateral counterparts.

This paper has argued that the bilateral dyad between the United States and China is insufficient to make peace in this region since it offers little substantive means for coping with an ascending China that is of increased concern to the region's other major powers (aside from the United States). Historical tensions in Japan-China relations are hardly resolved and India, as another rising power and natural competitor with China, will not accept marginalisation in any future regional security arrangements. 'Middle powers' such as Australia, India and South Korea likewise are becoming increasingly active in pressing for region-wide versions of an Asia-Pacific security order. The changing nature of security politics and, in particular, the intensification of NTS challenges, further complicates the processes of power balancing and confidence-building which have been the foundation for traditional security policies and behaviour.

A third layer of security interaction that encompasses both bilateral and multilateral approaches is the most desirable approach for operationalising contemporary Asia-Pacific security politics, because it retains familiar mechanisms or instrumentalities for realising security objectives while buying time for regional actors to experiment with those multilateral arrangements or architectures that might best endure the forces of change in the region and within the international system. Shaping third layer initiatives and instrumentalities can be pursued by ascribing to a 'needs-based' formula for implementing functional security ties and mechanisms. This functional approach is gradually superceding the hub-and-spokes architectural logic that prevailed in the region throughout most of the postwar era. In many cases, needs-based cooperation is composed of only those member states that most require support as security beneficiaries or that are willing to provide support as security benefactors. Such arrangements—based on a judicious combination of needs and interests—are the basis for the most effective modes of contemporary security cooperation.⁷¹

In this context, a recent report submitted to the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific steering committee is prescient. While proposing the establishment of an enduring multilateral framework in Northeast Asia, it concludes this can be done only by taking the best offered by a number of existing arrangements. Therefore, 'how to link institutions (whether bilateral, multilateral, regional or global) is critical for developing a security multilateralism, rather than establishing a single multilateral institution' is the key concern and ... '(m)utually coordinated or interlinked institutions create *de facto* security multilateralism'. It also recognises the necessity of a 'comprehensive multilateral forum or umbrella framework' for such coordination.⁷² In this context, it is also reasonable to surmise that alliance networking can become more interconnected to minilateralism (or the creation of 'small groupings' while realising that each security actor remains wedded to a particular type of 'minilateral style'): Japan might participate in the TSD as a means of legitimising its image as a bona fide member of whatever form of Asia-Pacific security community eventuates, while still observing the US-Japan alliance as an ultimate strategic lifeline. South Korea and Australia have relatively less historical baggage with which to contend than Japan and thus more propensity to exercise middle-power leadership and diplomacy toward multilateral security architecture-building. The United States and China may both prefer to hedge against surrendering too many prerogatives of material power while still gently encouraging multilateral solutions to specific (especially non-traditional) areas of security activity while the ASEAN states may prefer to sustain a more clear-cut hedging posture toward both Beijing and Washington as a means to retain their accustomed pivot position in the region's multilateral security politics via the ARF or EAS. Yet future developments may transpire in ways that could see these expectations of security behaviour grounded in 'common wisdom' change swiftly and radically.

The ultimate challenge posited by a 'needs-based' approach to regional security is to cultivate sufficient flexibility and creativity in the collective security behaviour of the region's actors so that their future efforts to adjust to unexpected structural changes or behavioural anomalies will not be doomed to failure before they even undertake the necessary policy adjustments. Avoiding such a fate constitutes the most fundamental rationale for adopting a third layer approach now.

Notes

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- ² Avery Goldstein, 'Balance of Power Politics', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Asian Security Order*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2005. See also John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, Penguin Books, London, 2005.
- ³ Kurt M. Campbell, 'The End of Alliances? Not So Fast', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2004, pp. 151-63; and Bruno Tertrais, 'The Changing Nature of Military Alliances', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2004, pp. 135-50.
- ⁴ 'Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation', 13 March 2007, available at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0703.html>>, accessed 6 December 2009; 'Joint Statement on Enhanced Global and Security Cooperation between Australia and the Republic of Korea', 5 March 2009, available at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/rok/fta/090305_joint_statement.html>, accessed 6 December 2009; and 'Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement Australia-Japan-United States', 18 March 2006, available at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0603-2.html>>, accessed 6 December 2009.
- ⁵ James L. Schoff, *Tools for Trilateralism: Improving U.S.-Japan-Korea Cooperation to Manage Complex Contingencies*, Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis, Boston, 2005.
- ⁶ William T. Tow, Mark J. Thomson, Yoshinobu Yamamoto, and Satu P. Limaye (eds), *Asia-Pacific Security: US, Australia and Japan and the New Security Triangle*, Routledge, New York, 2007.
- ⁷ Evans S. Medeiros, 'Strategic Hedging in the Asia-Pacific', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2005, pp. 145-67.
- ⁸ Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, 'Layering Institutions: the Logic of Japan's Institutional Strategy for Regional Security', in G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds), *The Uses of Institutions: the U.S., Japan, and Governance in East Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, pp. 77-102.
- ⁹ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2008.
- ¹⁰ Gordon H. Chang, *Friends or Enemies: the United State, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1990; and Goldstein, 'Balance of Power Politics'.
- ¹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'The Group of Two that could change the world', *Financial Times*, 13 January 2009. On the concept of concerted bilateral system, see Yamamoto Yoshinobu, 'Toward a Neo-Westphalian System: A View on the Future of East Asia', working paper sent to the author and cited here with Yamamoto's permission.
- ¹² Wu, Xinbo, 'The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the U.S.-Japanese Alliance', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2005, pp. 119-30.
- ¹³ Needless to say, relative gains matter in multilateralism as John Mearsheimer suggests, but this paper points out that if some bilateral arrangements proceed to others, it could create the relative gain gap for others who are excluded from these bilateral arrangements. (Rising powers such as China sometimes differentiate the level of compromise among a number of bilateral mechanisms, causing concerns over who gets less.)
- ¹⁴ Michael O'Hanlon, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, recently shared this point at his remarks at Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney: 'Australia could not only prove reluctant to fight against China in a future war, for example, but even prove unwilling to contemplate severe multilateral economic sanctions should China attack Taiwan. But as long as Australians are careful to avoid complete economic dependency on China and other possible paths to a Pacific version of Finlandisation, we should be okay.' Michael O'Hanlon and Michael Fullilove, 'Barack Obama, Kevin Rudd and the Alliance: American and Australian Perspectives', Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, August 2009.

- 15 See Ryo Sahashi, 'Hatoyama's New Path and Washington Anxiety', *East Asian Forum*, 6 September 2009, available at <<http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2009/09/06/hatoyamas-new-path-and-washingtons-anxiety/>> accessed 30 November 2009. Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's visit to Beijing in September 1972 was a clear example of the US preference. Tanaka's victory in the ruling party presidential election and his promised visit to Beijing caused concern for the Nixon Administration, which had already finished their presidential visit in February. The recently-elected Japanese Government was devoted to persuading Washington on its alliance commitment, which the Nixon-Sato communiqué had assured in 1969. The Honolulu summit in August was a climax, where the Japanese Government repeated its alliance commitment and explained its 'one China policy' formula. Although Washington welcomes the stable and prosperous relationship between Tokyo and Beijing as long as it merits their interests and initiatives, it is also clear that Washington may suspect that Japan might risk its alliance commitment for its Asia policy. The Japanese initiative led by the Ministry of Finance on creating the Asian Monetary Fund in 1997 encountered serious opposition from Washington, which finally forced Japan to drop the idea. There might also be US uneasiness over Japan's Asia policy. Yet, this opposition might have come from an anxiety that such an initiative might hinder global governance and possibly lead to American exclusion from regional mechanisms. The cases of Tanaka in 1972 and Yukio Hatoyama in 2009 received consternation from Washington due to their impact on the alliance commitment. The 'Hatoyama article' (*New York Times* Global Edition) cast doubts on his willingness on alliance commitment by Japan's accommodating posture toward China and Asia, and also implied American exclusion by proposing an Asian common currency, where the presence of the Renminbi would be very significant. This approach reinforced negative impressions in Washington.
- 16 The credibility problems may be caused by the dyadic negotiations, if they are the countries the alliance is expected to check. The anxiety of both Seoul and Tokyo as to the direct bilateral talks between Pyongyang and Washington is an ongoing example that tempts South Korea and Japan to stick to multilateral fora such as the SPT and the TCOG.
- 17 Campbell, 'The End of Alliances? Not So Fast'.
- 18 The JSDF was dispatched in the post-conflict stage for 'humanitarian' missions.
- 19 Tsuyoshi Sunohara, *Alliance Transformation (Domei Henbo: Nichibei Domei no Hikari to Kage)*, Nikkei Shimbun Press, Tokyo, 2007 (in Japanese).
- 20 Christopher W. Hughes, 'Japan's Remilitarization', *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 48, no. 403, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2008.
- 21 China started to recognise the importance of international cooperation on disaster relief and the non-traditional security agenda, and recently dispatched its military ships to assist in Somalia anti-piracy operations, but it is still unclear whether it would understand multilateral policy coordination and operations for these purposes. Masayuki Masuda, 'Logic and Development of Chinese Security Policy: Diplomacy and Military Policy on Non-Traditional Security', *International Affairs* (Japan Institute of International Affairs), vol. 581, pp. 42–51.
- 22 Zhu Feng, 'TSD—Euphemism for Multiple Alliance?', in William Tow, Michael Auslin, Rory Medcalf, Akihiko Tanaka, Zhu Feng and Sheldon Simon, *Assessing the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue*, *NBR Special Report*, 2008, pp. 41–49.
- 23 Zhu, 'TSD—Euphemism for Multiple Alliance?'.
- 24 Brzezinski, 'The Group of Two that could change the world'. Fred Bergstein, Director of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, also insists in the previous summer issue of *Foreign Affairs*: 'Washington should make a subtle but basic change to its economic policy strategy toward Beijing. Instead of focusing on narrow bilateral problems, it should seek to develop a true partnership with Beijing so as to provide joint leadership of the global economic system. Only such a "G-2" approach will do justice, and be seen to do justice, to China's new role as a global economic superpower and hence as a legitimate architect and steward of the international economic order.' C. Fred Bergstein, 'A Partnership of Equals: How Washington Should Respond to China's Economic Challenge', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2008.
- 25 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2 February 2009. It was reported that Vice President would attend from the US side.
- 26 Raja C. Mohan, 'American Embrace', *Indian Express*, 18 March 2009. See also Chanda Nayan, 'An Unlikely Marriage: There may be fancy talks of a new world order run by a China-US combo. But it is an idea whose time is yet to come', *Businessworld*, 20 August 2009.
- 27 Dennis Wilder, 'How a 'G-2' Would Hurt', *Washington Post*, 2 April 2009.
- 28 *China Security*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2009.
- 29 Elizabeth C. Economy and Adams Segel, 'The G-2 Mirage', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 3, 2009, pp. 14–23.
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- 31 *Australian*, 10 March 2000.
- 32 *New York Times*, Global Edition, 26 August 2009.

- 33 Evelyn Goh, 'Hierarchy and the role of the United States in the East Asian security order', *International Relations of Asia-Pacific*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2008, p. 365.
- 34 Goh, 'Hierarchy and the role of the United States in the East Asian security order'.
- 35 Evelyn Goh defines the concept of hedging and it clearly shows the dilemma Asian lesser powers face in front of the United States and a rising China. Goh regards the hedging as 'a set of strategies aimed at avoiding (or planning for contingencies in) a situation in which states cannot decide upon more straightforward alternatives such as balancing, bandwagoning, or neutrality. Instead they cultivate a middle position that forestalls or avoids having to choose one side [or one straightforward policy stance] at the obvious expense of another'. See Evelyn Goh, 'Understanding "hedging" in Asia-Pacific security', *PacNet* no. 43, 31 August 2006.
- 36 James A. Baker III, 'America in Asia: Emerging Architecture for a Pacific Community', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 5, pp. 1–18.
- 37 Paul Midford, 'Japan's Leadership Role in East Asia security multilateralism: Nakayama Proposal and the logic of reassurance', *Pacific Review*, vol 13, no. 3, 2000, pp. 367–97. Charles E. Morrison, 'The United States and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific'. *Australian Journal of International Relations*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1994.
- 38 Barry Desker, 'Is the ARF Obsolete?: Three Moves to Avoid Irreverence', *IDSS Commentaries*, 20 July 2006.
- 39 Ralph Cossa, 'Evolving U.S. Views on Asia's Future Institutional Architecture', in Bates Gill and Michael J. Green (eds), *Asia's New Multilateralism: Cooperation, Competition, and the Search for Community*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 33–54.
- 40 Cossa, 'Evolving U.S. Views on Asia's Future Institutional Architecture'.
- 41 See remarks by Kevin Rudd, Asia Society Sydney, 4 June 2008. It is noted that this proposal shows Australia's continued appetite to get involved in the Asia Pacific and East Asia institution-building process and also its strong preference to get membership both in the political and economic realms. The Australian Government has been excluded by the Chiang Mai initiative (a recently-arranged initiative under the APT framework which aims to create a network of Bilateral Swap Arrangements among APT members), and is concerned by the parallel study on a region-wide free trade agreement with APT and EAS membership. The Asia Pacific Community thus is designed as an overarching mechanism 'on economic and political matters' and 'security' matters.
- 42 Jonas Parelló-Plesner, 'KIA: Asia's middle powers on the rise?', *East Asia Forum Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2009, pp. 26–28.
- 43 Jusuf Wanandi, 'East Asian Regionalism and Global Governance', in Jusuf Wanandi and Tadashi Yamamoto (eds), *East Asia at a Crossroads*, Japan Center for International Exchange, Tokyo, 2008, pp. 19–37.
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- 45 Li Mingjiang, *China and Asian Regionalism: Pragmatism Hinders Leadership*, RSIS Working Paper, no. 179.
- 46 Wu Xinbo, 'Chinese Perspectives on Building an East Asian Community in the Twenty-first Century', in Bates Gill and Michael J. Green (eds) *Asia's New Multilateralism: Cooperation, Competition, and the Search for Community*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 55–77.
- 47 Li, 'China and Asian Regionalism'.
- 48 Wu, 'Chinese Perspectives on Building an East Asian Community in the Twenty-first Century'.
- 49 Li, 'China and Asian Regionalism'.
- 50 Goh, 'Hierarchy and the role of the United States in the East Asian security order'.
- 51 Wu, 'Chinese Perspectives on Building an East Asian Community in the Twenty-first Century'.
- 52 China, Japan and the United States were scheduled to initiate a 'track one' trilateral dialogue in July 2009, which has been postponed thus far.
- 53 Bates Gill and Michael J. Green, 'Unbundling Asia's New Multilateralism', in Bates Gill and Michael J. Green (eds) *Asia's New Multilateralism: Cooperation, Competition, and the Search for Community*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, p.18.
- 54 Schoff, *Tools for Trilateralism*.
- 55 While providing much financial assistance, China was unable to join CSF536 and failed to show its visibility well. According to Masayuki Masuda's interview with the official from the People's Liberation Army, this taught it the necessity of developing and maintaining a rapid reaction capability. The Sichuan earthquake also showed that aerial transportation is responding significantly to an increased number of missions involving the military forces. Masayuki Masuda, 'Logic and Development of Chinese Security Policy'. 'Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement', June 27, 2008, available at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0806-2.html>>, accessed 22 November 2009.

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- 58 Mely Caballero-Anthony, 'Nontraditional Security and Multilateralism in Asia: Reshaping the Contours of Regional Security Architecture', in Bates Gill and Michael J. Green (eds) *Asia's New Multilateralism: Cooperation, Competition, and the Search for Community*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 306–28.
- 59 Caballero-Anthony, 'Nontraditional Security and Multilateralism in Asia: Reshaping the Contours of Regional Security Architecture'.
- 60 'Asian Influenza and the Pandemic Threat', available at <<http://un-influenza.org/regions/asia>>, accessed 21 November 2009.
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- 62 Roderick Chia, Pau Khan Khup Hangzo and Kevin Punzalan, 'Maritime Predations in the Malacca Straits: Trading New Waters', *NTS Insight*, 1 August 2009.
- 63 Schoff, *Tools for Trilateralism*.
- 64 Christopher Griffin and Michael Auslin, 'Times for Trilateralism?', *Asian Outlook* (American Enterprise Institute), no. 2, 2008; and 'North Korea: Getting Back to Talks', *International Crisis Group Asia Report* no. 169, 18 June 2009, available at <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6163&l=1>>, accessed 22 November 2009. On the topic of a trilateral framework, see also Yasuyo Sakata, 'Adapting Alliances to New Realities: A Japanese Perspective', *Issue and Insights*, vol. 7, no. 5, pp. 47–53.
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- 66 Gill and Green, 'Unbundling Asia's New Multilateralism'.
- 67 See, for example, 'China actively promotes military exchanges and cooperation with its neighbors', *Chinese Military: Open and Transparent*, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/site2/special-reports/2009-03/20/content_1695731.htm>, accessed 22 November 2009.
- 68 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 2009.
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- 70 Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1997.
- 71 See also Michael Mastanduno, 'Institutions of Convenience: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Pragmatic Use of International Institutions', in G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds), *The Uses of Institutions: the U.S., Japan, and Governance in East Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007; and Thomas Wright, 'Toward Effective Multilateralism: Why Bigger May Not Be Better', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 3.
- 72 CSCAP's Multilateral Security Governance in Northeast Asia/ North Pacific: From the Six Party Talks to More Enduring Northeast Asian/ North Pacific Security Multilateralism. Report to the CSCAP Steering Committee, Bangkok, 22 January 2009. See also Nick Bisley, 'The Real Pacific Solution: A NATO for Asia', *Austral Policy Forum* 06-20A, 15 June 2006.

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