

NETWORKING ASIAN SECURITY

An Integrated Approach to Order in the Pacific

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Executive Summary

American security strategy in the Asia-Pacific has for decades been built on a “hub and spokes” model of bilateral, exclusive alliance relationships. Japan, Australia, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand each share mutual defense treaties with the United States—but not with any other countries, and not with one another. In recent years, this atomized approach to regional security has begun to change. Political and economic integration has provided the foundation upon which deeper intra-Asian defense and security ties have organically emerged. Hedging against critical uncertainties surrounding China’s rise and America’s enduring presence in the region, U.S. allies and other countries are strengthening their security ties with one another.

This report argues that the emergence of a more networked security architecture in the Asia-Pacific is not only a positive development, but a critical one that Washington should further encourage and cultivate. Moving beyond isolated hub-and-spoke ties toward a more densely connected security network is a cost-effective way for the United States to advance its interests and uphold the regional rules-based order. It is also fully consistent with a strategy of encouraging U.S. allies and partners to assume a greater share of the burden for their security.

Japan and Australia, two of Asia’s most capable powers and close U.S. allies, represent natural “nodes” around which a security network might converge. Each has established an array of ties with Asian countries ranging from high-end defense interoperability to information sharing to building military capacity. This paper, while not excluding the importance of other potential nodes in a regional network, focuses attention on the promise and limitations inherent in Japan’s and Australia’s approaches.

The role and response of China to networking efforts is of obvious importance. A properly constructed Asian security networking should be organized around deterring specific behaviors, rather than containing particular countries. The United States, Australia, Japan, and other partners must manage both perceptions and reality to prevent a “containment” narrative from taking hold, lest their networking elicit the very Chinese behaviors that it seeks to prevent. At the same time, the United States must work to dissuade potential partners from enlisting in an effort that will incur Beijing’s outright hostility. Both initiatives should include creating opportunities for China to participate in security activities, even if at first in highly circumscribed ways.

Networking efforts do not start from scratch, and this report highlights the existing structures and institutions that should be expanded and adapted for modern challenges—from deepening trilateral information sharing to expanding standing drills and exercises. The report proposes new endeavors aimed at strengthening formal alliance linkages and bilateral partnerships as well as new activities and configurations in multilateral formats. The paper concludes with a roadmap for networking Asian security.

Networking Asian security is and should be integral to the next phase of the U.S. approach to the region. The United States will not be the sole beneficiary of such an arrangement. American allies will be able to do more, and in more places, with spoke-to-spoke connections as well as with new regional partners. Despite downside risks associated with such an Asian security network—including the possibility that the United States could be drawn into adventurism and regional rivalries—this effort, backed by an increasing commitment of U.S. defense, diplomatic, and economic resources, is the best insurance against instability and coercion.

01

Introduction

The United States faces a dilemma in Asia. It wishes to preserve a balance of power, reinforce the rules-based regional order, avoid conflict, and maintain stable economic relations with China, all at the same time, and all at acceptable cost. While carrying off such a balancing act would be a challenge even in a region of strategic stability, today numerous drivers complicate the effort. Beijing couples rising assertiveness with a military modernization effort that directly affects U.S. and allied defense capabilities. North Korea is ever-erratic, routinely testing missiles and nuclear weapons, and terrorism is an ever-present challenge across the region. When the trafficking of narcotics is added to this mix, along with piracy in the maritime domain, the rising proliferation of cyberattacks, and the need to respond to large-scale natural disasters, it becomes clear that all of this increases the demand for U.S. attention and resources at precisely the same time as defense expenditures in the United States have been falling. It adds up to an ends-means mismatch in which U.S. objectives increasingly outstrip available resources. Managed security networking counteracts the problem.

The next phase of U.S. strategy toward Asia should focus on embedding America’s alliances and nascent security relationships into a broader network of security partnerships.

The challenge posed by Beijing is foremost in this array. Its investment in long-range, precision strike forces and a blue-water navy hold at risk U.S. forces operating in the Western Pacific; its land reclamation and militarization activities in the South China Sea challenge regional rules and project power far from Chinese shores; the region’s increasing economic dependence, and Beijing’s coercive employment of economic tools for foreign policy ends, threaten the independence of key U.S. partners; and China’s acquisition and employment of high-end cyber, anti-satellite and other capabilities challenge traditional U.S. military advantages. In the long run, China appears to seek a regional order less dominated by the United States and more favorable to Beijing’s interests and leadership ambitions.

Already the previously privileged position of the United States is under new pressure. A congressionally mandated review of U.S. defense strategy in the Pacific concluded: “Actions by countries in the region routinely challenge the credibility of U.S. security commitments, and U.S. capability development is not keeping pace with challenges by

potential competitors, resulting in the regional balance of military power shifting against the United States.”¹

Yet other regional developments are more encouraging. Driven by a desire to hedge against critical uncertainties associated with China’s rise and the future role of the United States in the region, many Asian countries are increasing their own defense budgets and engaging with regional institutions in new ways.

They are also developing new intra-Asian security ties. The region has seen a significant increase in high-level defense visits, bilateral security agreements, joint operations and military exercises, arms sales, and military education programs.² In particular, Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam have deepened their bilateral security engagements throughout Asia in recent years, and other nations are making more modest moves. While most of the new or strengthened security ties remain bilateral in nature, interest in “minilateral” configurations of three or more countries (such as India-Australia-Japan) is rising.

Herein lies opportunity, as these countries are also seeking to boost security ties with the United States. Strategists often note that America must overcome the “tyranny of distance” to uphold its place in Asia, and yet the geographic locations of its allies and partners confer significant advantage as China expands its reach. As a result, the next phase of U.S. strategy toward Asia should focus on embedding America’s alliances and nascent security relationships into a broader network of security partnerships. Building out a regional security network is a cost-effective way for the United States to advance its interests and uphold the rules-based order—not as a substitute for the alliance system, but as a necessary supplement to it. This approach is also fully consistent with one that encourages allies and partners to bear more of the burden for their own security.

This paper examines the evolution from a hub-and-spokes alliance system in Asia toward a growing network of intra-Asian security ties, and then explores alternative regional network models. While a number of countries, including India and Singapore, represent important nodes in such a network, this report focuses on Japan and Australia as two natural hubs. Both are close allies of the United States, possess capable militaries, and have been at the forefront of enhancing bilateral security ties with other nations in the region and each other. The paper provides a baseline understanding of Japanese and Australian approaches to regional security, and then examines the networking possibilities while accounting for Japan’s and Australia’s political and economic constraints. Ways in which China is likely to respond to the network effect in Asia are examined, and a roadmap for the new U.S. administration is proposed as it charts regional policy.

02

Historical Background

The argument that 21st century geopolitics calls for networking in Asia naturally begs a prior question: Why were U.S. Asian alliances constructed in a bilateral, hub-and-spokes structure in the first place, while Washington chose a multilateral structure for Europe? In the past 70 years, numerous factors have changed in Asia, enhancing the argument for networked ties in a region that has not traditionally been defined by them.

The most obvious driver behind the U.S. preference for individual, bilateral pacts in Asia as opposed to one multilateral organization pertains to geography and threat perception.³ Unlike in Europe, where numerous partners worried about Soviet tanks rolling across a shared border, Asian allies were (and still are) geographically dispersed across thousands of miles and lacked a single shared adversary. In Europe, by contrast, the common Soviet military threat became pronounced over just a few short years, boosting Washington's willingness to cede some of its sovereignty and freedom of action to a multilateral NATO structure.⁴

The most obvious driver behind the U.S. preference for individual, bilateral pacts in Asia as opposed to one multilateral organization pertains to geography and threat perception.

Second, in the immediate postwar period, many U.S. partners in Asia embraced some form of authoritarianism.⁵ Because democratic institutions promote transparency and trust, the United States was more willing to opt for multilateralism in Europe. But in Asia, Washington was simply less inclined to trust its nondemocratic allies; it worried that some allied leaders would take reckless actions that could entangle the United States in war.⁶

Third, a multilateral alliance structure for Asia was not seriously considered in the immediate postwar period

because of regional rivalries among potential partners. At the end of World War II, numerous countries in Asia remained deeply suspicious of Japan, and Tokyo was distrusted in countries where it had been a colonizer.⁷ A similar distrust pervaded Germany's relationships with other European powers; as a result, it was not a founding member of NATO. Because of its unique geography, Japan was relatively easier to defend, despite its decision to renounce war entirely, and assistance from other powers in Asia would not necessarily be required. Japan therefore sought to reassure the region of its benign postwar intentions by ceding sovereignty to the United States alone.⁸ Rivalries also abounded among countries in Southeast Asia.

Fourth and finally, the hub-and-spokes system of bilateral pacts in Asia was in part the product of historical contingency. Domestic ratification debates over NATO were highly contentious, and at the time U.S. policymakers did not have similar designs for an alliance system in Asia. Indeed, throughout the Cold War, Asia was often thought of as a theater of secondary importance, following Europe. As the Cold War descended on the region, the United States considered security guarantees as the demand arose from individual partners, but did not proactively seek to craft that structure, or to take on another burdensome multilateral negotiation.

It is striking how little of this alliance logic remains true in the 21st century. Regional allies may view threats with different levels of intensity, but nearly all share concerns about China's military modernization and assertiveness, and about North Korea's nuclear and missile threat. Through democratization, economic growth, and 70 years of alliance history, the United States and its allies have developed shared values and identities. Japan is now a regional leader, and has arguably done more than any other country to encourage security networking among U.S. partners. And in the 21st century, most U.S. policymakers understand that Asia is not a secondary theater, but rather is the region of greatest strategic and economic importance to the United States—as well as the locus of greatest geopolitical competition.

03

Models for Security Networking in Asia

In light of these changes, the United States over recent years has come increasingly to embrace a concept of networked security in Asia as a supplement to its five bilateral treaty alliances.⁹ The fullest explication of Washington’s approach was given by then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter in 2016. In his and other descriptions, Asian security networking is premised on the notion that U.S. allies themselves are increasingly capable; networking seeks to link them with each other and with non-allied partners. The aim of this approach is to create new economies of scale and encourage partners to cooperate on mutual security interests at a time of relatively scarce resources and in an era of potentially increasing threats. While several countries have been the focus of U.S. attention, Japan and Australia have emerged as the most natural nodes in this incipient network.

Neither the Obama administration nor the Trump administration has defined in much detail how such a network might be configured, or the benefits of alternative models. In fact, the approach to networked security may vary significantly based on its participants, objectives, and strategic context. Beyond general aspirations to forge more connections, U.S. policymakers should examine the underlying conceptual options as they flesh out their approach to Asia. To this end, a brief examination of the theoretical underpinnings of security networking and its real-world application can shed light on the choices that the new administration has.

Networked Security in Theory and Practice

In recent decades, an emerging field of research has focused on ways to network security ties among countries. This work suggests that multilateral security arrangements, despite their potential drawbacks, may offer benefits beyond those provided by a traditional alliance system of atomized, bilateral relationships. The foundational assumption of network analysis as applied to international affairs holds that state power is no longer solely—or even primarily—defined by its individual material attributes. Instead, actors are best thought of as nodes in a web of entities, defined by others to which they are persistently connected, and by the number of such connections they maintain. The power of this connectedness lies in the access to scarce information and resources that are transferred from one actor to another within the networks.¹⁰

Consequently, the more central a node—that is, the more connections it has to other actors—the more network-derived power that node can be said to possess.¹¹ Yet this connectedness constrains as well as empowers.

The flow of information and resources in networks carries influence; actors who grow into close proximity with others may find themselves drawn toward conflicts they would prefer to avoid, may become enmeshed in economic ties that prove vulnerable to disruption or sanction, or may be pulled into normative bonds that expose them to public pressure should they deviate from those norms.¹²

Translated into more concrete terms, Japan and Australia, for instance, are each attracted to interconnected security because the approach offers a relatively non-controversial way of enhancing their defensive and deterrent capabilities. Yet their approach heretofore has also been a two-sided coin: on one side, it is flexible and non-binding, ensuring a relatively low-profile and informal way of dealing with rising security challenges in Asia. But at the same time, Japan’s and Australia’s new partnerships—with each other and with third countries—are a far cry from mutual defense agreements. As a result, Tokyo and Canberra cannot expect their non-allied partners to protect their vital national interests in a crisis. While networks represent a useful overlay on the existing U.S. treaty system in Asia, their appeal also comes with inherent limits.

All three modes share some characteristics: they represent flexible approaches to partnership that build upon existing alliances or institutions, and they seek to pool resources or collaborate on shared security interests.

Structures for Networked Security

In several 2016 speeches and articles, Secretary Carter identified three different modes for security networking, and he indicated—both explicitly and implicitly—why they equip the United States to better deal with 21st century challenges than alliances alone.¹³ The first of these is the “trilateralization” of existing security relationships, U.S. treaty allies in particular. The United States, South Korea, and Japan have expanded their trilateral security and intelligence cooperation in recent years, as have United States, Japan, and Australia.¹⁴ Second, regional states have expanded security cooperation with one another (spoke-to-spoke), independent of the United States. Examples include Japanese and Australian efforts to

build the Philippines' maritime capacity, joint Japan-Vietnam military exercises, and Japan-Australia-India trilateral meetings.¹⁵ Third, security networking has taken place through the region's existing multilateral architecture, as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) institutions such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) attempt to generate practical cooperation.

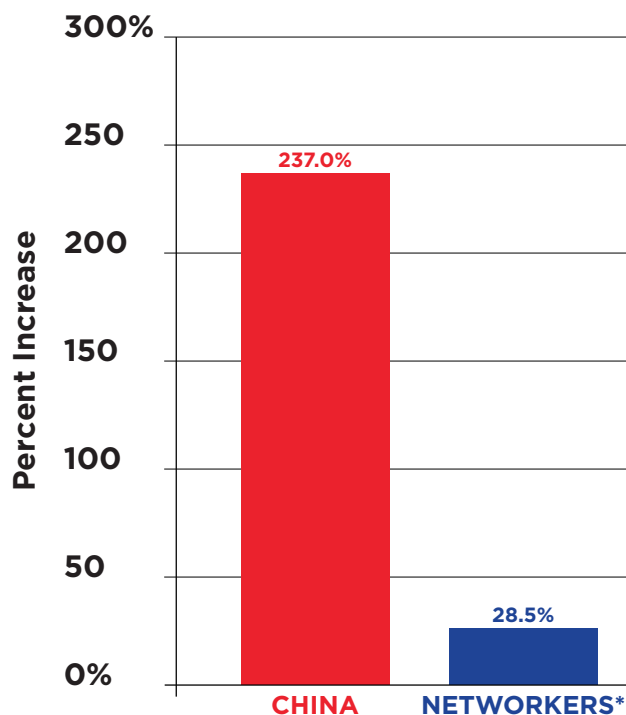
All three modes share some characteristics: they represent flexible approaches to partnership that build upon existing alliances or institutions, and they seek to pool resources or collaborate on shared security interests. They do not require the founding of new institutions or even the formalization of prevailing relationships. The existing modes do not replace or erode mutual defense commitments that are already active. Indeed, they implicitly acknowledge that formalization may not be desirable or necessary.

Describing the three modes is a useful start in distinguishing between varying approaches to networking in Asia. A deeper analysis should look at the options available and then tailor them to particular participants and objectives. This process begins by noting that partnerships in Asia may be bilateral or multilateral, and they may consist of formal alliance arrangements and less formal cooperation. These attributes result in four different types of relationships: bilateral alliances, multilateral alliances, bilateral partnerships, and multilateral partnerships. Each type of configuration may be especially useful for discrete mission sets and tasks.

Formal *bilateral and multilateral alliances*, for instance, are most appropriate for collective defense and for establishing deterrence around shared vital interests. Formal alliances send strong signals of commitment to shared adversaries, increase the likelihood that allies will join each other in wartime, and can reduce costs to individual states through defense cooperation.

Where multiple, formal allies share defense objectives, a *federated defense* model may be appropriate. In this approach, the United States and its partners would develop and maintain shared defense capabilities upon which all could draw. This could include shared facilities, equipment stockpiles, and logistics hubs. Shared capabilities would be used toward participants' predetermined common mission areas. Because participating states would need to mutually consent to these goals, they would be likely to focus on less-controversial mission sets such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), peacekeeping, and counterpiracy, rather than on higher-end warfighting activities such as antisubmarine warfare.¹⁶

Percent Increase in Real Regional Defense Spending, 2006-2016



Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2017 and The Military Balance 2007*. Prices adjusted to 2016 dollars. Networkers include: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, India.

Because it involves the pooling of capabilities toward specified missions, a federated defense approach has the advantage of relatively low cost and small footprint. Participating partners will contribute capabilities that they wish to develop regardless of the existence of the consortium, and the federated approach will allow partners to avoid duplicating capabilities. A federated defense model also allows partners to cooperate on the development of shared defense technology, as the United States and Japan have done on ballistic missile defense.

It also has drawbacks. The more partners that are included in such a federation, the more likely it is to take on a "lowest common denominator" character. If capabilities pooling is limited to the United States and Japan, for example, Washington and Tokyo may find it very easy to agree on mission sets and contributions from which both can draw. By adding Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines to the mix, however, the group is likely to settle upon less-controversial mission sets and pool capabilities that are of relatively less military consequence. A wider consortium may also result in information leaks and make it harder to make needed decisions. The wider the federation, the less it may be able to send powerful messages of deterrence and assurance.



The time is ripe for enhancing security networking in Asia. One reason is Beijing's increasing political, military, and foreign policy assertiveness. (Feng Li/Getty Images)

Layered bilateral and multilateral security agreements could bring states together to forge strategic partnerships, share intelligence or defense information, or coordinate security assistance efforts short of formal alliances. Layered agreements could be concluded bilaterally between American allies, for example an intelligence-sharing pact between Australia and Japan. Such agreements could also take a multilateral format and include the United States, as would occur if, for instance, Washington, Canberra, and Tokyo established a formal mechanism for coordinating partner capacity building in Southeast Asia.

A layered agreement approach has the benefit of being easily tailored to participants' security needs. Under this model, states need not predetermine the operational mission sets on which they will collaborate or allocate capabilities in advance. Rather, they invest politically in different forms of defense cooperation as they see fit. This, in turn, may be relatively easy to achieve from a domestic perspective, as new security agreements will flow naturally from manifest interests, but it need not be broader or more binding than participants wish. Layered agreements also have their limits: because they do not require formal commitment mechanisms, they may leave partners with a security approach that lacks focus and coherence.

If crises or conflicts do break out, regional partners may choose to join *coalitions of the willing*.

Coalitions of the willing have several benefits, whether in peacetime or conflict. By waiting for a threat to present itself, partners need not invest in capabilities or mission sets that are of lower-order concern or that do not

materialize. In a resource-constrained environment, this may strike regional partners as wise. Because cooperation follows the threat, moreover, ad hoc coalitions may be the easiest form of cooperation to sell to a domestic population. The drawbacks of coalition networks also follow from their ad hoc nature. By definition, if coalitions follow the threat, they fail to deter that threat from emerging, and they will be able to produce little advanced assurance among partners. Moreover, if a coalition emerges only once a threat is present, it will not be able to provide for interoperability among partners, and its formation may cause miscalculation and crisis instability. Coalitions of the willing may, therefore, maximize political palatability but realize far fewer of the benefits of predictable and sustained defense cooperation.

It is worth noting that the configurations described here are not strict alternatives, but may be mutually complementary. In Asia today, the formal alliance structure is the context in which broader networking is taking place. Federated defense cooperation would help allies address capabilities shortfalls, and layered security agreements would focus efforts in particular areas. Coalitions of the willing would enable flexible, voluntary responses to crises in the region.

Why Network Now?

Regardless of which conceptual approach is favored for security networking in Asia, several trends are today coinciding that make its employment more attractive than in the past.

China's rapid rise, military modernization, and foreign policy assertiveness have begun to create regional security challenges that incentivize cooperation and counterbalancing.¹⁷ While in recent years U.S. officials have been careful to avoid naming China as the motivation for a more robust security network, the effect of its recent behavior is unmistakable. In inviting the United States and regional countries into a tighter security embrace, Asian officials routinely cite their concern about Beijing's activity in the South China Sea, its imposition of an air defense identification zone in the East China Sea, its employment of economic instruments as a tool of political coercion, and its sense of regional dominance—all backed by an ever more capable military. Striking trade deals and taking a more conciliatory posture toward Beijing offers a degree of regional stability, but U.S. national security planners must hedge against the possibility of an assertive and capable peer competitor.

At the same time, worries about America's future role in the region have induced Asian countries to bolster

ties not just with Washington but one other. The sense that the regional military balance is shifting away from the United States has combined with concern that Washington remains unduly focused on security in the Middle East—and with managing events at home. While Asian debate over U.S. declinism has a long pedigree, it may be observed, without engaging it here, that, the combination of open-ended conflicts in the greater Middle East, the resurgence of Russia as a geopolitical competitor, domestic political dysfunction and defense budget uncertainty have together prompted doubts about America’s long-term staying power.¹⁸

Fundamental shifts in the Asian power balance; changes in the relative military capabilities of the United States, its allies, and potential adversaries; and the proliferation of new regional security threats together make security networking increasingly attractive.

The relative decline question is not focused exclusively on the United States—indeed, America’s partners are asking themselves about their own declining power and influence. At the end of the Cold War, for instance, the United States and its allies commanded a combined 71 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) and some 75 percent of global military spending. By 2015, those numbers had dropped to 61 percent of GDP and 59 percent of military spending.¹⁹ U.S. allies’ global share of economic and military power has eroded as Russia’s and China’s have grown.²⁰ Unipolarity made for a formidable set of relatively strong alliances and relatively weak adversaries and, while the additive effects of U.S. alliances remain considerable, they are not what they once were. Networking can, to some extent, help offset these trends.

Asia’s complex threat environment, in which partners can and do rank their security concerns in different priority order, add additional weight to the networking imperative. Potential security partners fret not just about a rising China, but also about the specters of nuclear conflict, terrorism and political violence, crime, piracy, cyberattacks, illegal migration, pandemic disease, and natural disasters. Flexible security arrangements enable regional states to cooperate in particular threat domains or toward specific goals, making interest-based alignments particularly appropriate.²¹

In short, fundamental shifts in the Asian power balance; changes in the relative military capabilities of the United States, its allies, and potential adversaries; and the proliferation of new regional security threats together make security networking increasingly attractive. In addition, the network effect can aid the problem of burden sharing during a time of relative resource scarcity, and it can do so in informal ways that are reasonably flexible and therefore politically viable. Japan, for example, need not revise its constitution to work more closely with Australia, India, and the Philippines. Australia does not need to produce one answer to the “China question” in order to build closer ties with Singapore, Indonesia, and South Korea. And security networking does not fundamentally threaten the five treaty U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific. Indeed, embedded in this approach is an acknowledgement that U.S. alliances are resilient—so much so that they have outlasted the geopolitical environment that justified their formation, survived substantial economic changes, and endured to be repurposed for entirely new threat environments—and are now bolstered by new, non-treaty security partnerships.

04

The Chinese Perspective

For Beijing, any Asia-Pacific security network that excludes China may appear as little more than an attempt at encirclement. No matter how meticulously designed, any security network will offer its detractors cause to highlight a hidden, malicious agenda. As a result, network architects must acknowledge that their efforts are likely to raise alarm bells in Beijing—and possibly elicit concrete responses. They must also work to mitigate this perception problem, and to anticipate possible reactions from China and plan for them. Indeed, to the extent that U.S. and regional security considerations allow, Beijing should even be included in network activities where possible.

Countering Cries of ‘Containment’

Over the past 30 years, China has made great strides in returning to its historical position as Asia’s preeminent economic and military power. Its sustained growth has supported markets all over the world, and its modern military espouses a doctrine of non-interference. On paper, China sees itself as the ideal partner for any nation in the Asia-Pacific. Therefore, its omission from any regional grouping would be perceived as deliberate—why exclude a rising power if the purpose is not to contain its rise?

Countries interested in greater security networking will need to make a series of judgment calls, but on balance engagement with some of the key Chinese economic initiatives can demonstrate that their approach is not simply zero-sum.

Containment was a strategy that had particular meaning in the context of U.S.-Soviet competition, but it is an ill-fitting descriptor of U.S.-China relations or the American approach to managing China’s rising power.²² The mutually dependent economic relationship between the United States and China (as well as between regional states and China) and the opportunities for Beijing to play a constructive role in some regional security arrangements are a far cry from the strategies of containment that Washington employed during the Cold War. That said, assurances by NATO to Russia did little to relieve its fear of encirclement, and Moscow has routinely pointed to NATO expansion as evidence of the West’s malign intent. Similarly, one should expect Beijing to continue to

protest any upgrading of regional security ties as a form of soft containment, and to express its displeasure in a variety of ways. As they enhance defense relations with one another, members of the emerging network can take steps to mitigate negative fallout in their relations with China.

The first opportunity arises in the working relationships that numerous countries have established with China, both bilaterally and in multilateral arrangements. This means not withdrawing from or opposing China-led initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructural Investment Bank, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or China’s One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. The Trump administration nodded in this direction by dispatching the top Asian policy official on the National Security Council staff to attend Beijing’s OBOR summit in mid-May.²³ By decoupling a new security network from ongoing cooperative actions with China, the nodes can demonstrate that their overall approach is not one aimed at militarily, economically, and diplomatically isolating Beijing. At the same time, however, countries that become more involved in the China-led economic order render themselves more vulnerable to Beijing-driven coercion. In this instance, closer economic ties with China could make networking less likely. As a result, countries interested in greater security networking will need to make a series of judgment calls, but on balance engagement with some of the key Chinese economic initiatives can demonstrate that their approach is not simply zero-sum.

Second, the nodes should share with China some of the spoils of a networked security system. For example, nations that are conducting counterterrorism or anti-piracy operations should consider protecting Chinese assets in the region and sharing some relevant information. It should be clear to Chinese leaders (and third-party countries wary of upsetting them) that, for all of their strategic mistrust of an emerging Asian security network, this model nevertheless generates benefits for all in some areas.

Third, when appropriate, China should be given opportunities to integrate into elements of the security network under a clear and transparent set of conditions. The United States and its partners could encourage Beijing to become involved in collective efforts, such as when the PLA Navy aided the search for a lost Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared midflight in March 2014. Such opportunities would have to be carefully designed to focus on shared regional goals such as humanitarian assistance, counterpiracy, or peacekeeping, while being careful not to otherwise improve the PLA’s



China often responds negatively to efforts to improve regional security partnerships, such as the increased defense ties pursued by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, pictured here. Yet Beijing has rarely paired its protestations with concrete actions. (Office of the Prime Minister of Japan)

warfighting capacity. Even if such opportunities were limited to drills tailor-made for potential Chinese participation, they would make it harder for Beijing to frame the network—to itself or to sympathetic third-party countries—as intrinsically anti-Chinese in nature.

Anticipating Chinese Skepticism—and Hostility

Even with proactive efforts at reassurance, Beijing is unlikely to acquiesce quietly to a new security structure forming outside of its control and off its shores. Network participants should seek to anticipate China’s reaction—and likely forms of pushback—and plan for prudent counter-responses.

The first task is to assess China’s will to obstruct, as opposed to merely protest. China frequently voices its displeasure on a raft of issues, but no two issues carry the same weight. Jeremiads from the *Global Times*, warnings from the *People’s Daily*, and denunciations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs send different messages, only some of which necessitate action. Early efforts and signals around security networking in the Asia-Pacific region have been met with angry criticism, but they have as yet elicited little direct response. When Secretary Carter made his call for a “principled security network” at the 2016 Shangri-La Dialogue, Chinese diplomats accused the United States of sowing discord and engaging in “thoughtless remarks.”²⁴ Japanese sales

of search and rescue aircraft to India later that year were derided as “very disgraceful” and a guise under which anti-Chinese pressure was being coordinated.²⁵ Similarly, when Prime Minister Abe in early 2017 visited Australia to sign a new deal deepening defense cooperation between Tokyo and Canberra, Beijing accused him of “going to extremes to sow discord and play up regional tension.”²⁶ Yet while Chinese rhetoric around regional security network-building has been vehement, direct actions in response have thus far remained muted.

This relative restraint should not be mistaken for complacency. Beijing has sought to drive wedges between potential network participants and to prevent coalitions of shared interests from cohering. Thus far, the Philippines may represent China’s greatest such success. Beijing did not create the anti-Washington pivot pursued by Manila’s mercurial President Rodrigo Duterte, but it certainly seized an opportunity. China offered the domestic investments that Duterte promised during his campaign, implicitly accepting a quid pro quo offered by the then-candidate himself.²⁷ In so doing, Beijing circumvented anti-Chinese sentiment among the Philippine public while still managing to target what was previously the most important link in a regional coalition against Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea. Although Duterte has not made good on his most extreme alliance threats, the Philippines has backed away from some regional security cooperation, despite a renewed interest in its treaty alliance with the United States only a few years ago.²⁸ This strategy may not last beyond Duterte’s term, but it has certainly bought Beijing time in its effort to prevent a counter-coercion coalition from emerging in the South China Sea.

China has developed a track record of wielding economic carrots and sticks that could be put in the service of weakening a security network. In 2010, for instance, China banned the export of rare earth metals to Japan in response to an incident between a Chinese fisherman and the Japan Coast Guard.²⁹ The effort may have backfired—other countries increased their output of rare earth metals and diluted China’s overall market share—but it was a harbinger of things to come.³⁰ In 2012, China refused to buy Philippine bananas after tensions around Scarborough Shoal, leaving the produce to rot on the docks.³¹ Similarly, in 2016 Beijing promised trade and commercial benefits to Seoul if it rejected Washington’s proposed deployment of theater missile defenses.³²

Australia represents a potential case in point. As discussed later in this paper, a degree of economic dependence on China—and the political perception that this dependence is very significant—could reduce the

Australian public's appetite for tensions with that nation. Public opinion has already shifted in a more China-friendly direction, a move that could grow stronger if Australians' affinity for the United States wanes.³³

Australia's relationship with Japan could serve as one canary in the coal mine. Owing to significant historical rivalry, Japan is perhaps among the countries least susceptible to Chinese economic coercion. Australian-Japanese security cooperation, as discussed in detail later in this report, represents a bright spot in regional security networking and a likely example for the future. But if Australia at some point begins to see its deepening ties with Japan as harming its broader economic interests, there will be strong reason to believe China's anti-networking strategy is succeeding.

Beyond the economic dimension, there are other Chinese elements that could complicate the attempt to network Asian security. Many countries have complicated relationships with Beijing, and have full agendas that include issues such as cybersecurity, North Korea, climate change, and Iran diplomacy. In the end, participants may have less agency than China in establishing the contours of productive relations, and the success of an Asia-Pacific security network depends in part on how well the network's individual participants are able to maintain relatively good relations with China, at least in the economic sphere. Dealing with this challenge requires, among other steps, moves by member countries to insulate themselves from Chinese economic coercion.



China could apply economic coercion to disincentive countries from further engaging and cooperating with one another. Beijing refused to buy Philippine bananas following a flareup over Scarborough Shoal. (Jes Aznar/Getty Images)

05

The Northern Node: Japan

No Asian country has internalized the drivers, as well as the pros and cons, of security networking as seriously as Japan. The leader of America’s cornerstone northeast Asian ally is determined to rebrand Japan’s postwar identity from that of a civil power to a more “normal” one. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pegged his legacy to the “generational challenge” of rewriting his country’s constitution to legitimize its Self-Defense Force.³⁴ How successful Japan is in fleshing out an array of security partnerships from what he once dubbed the “democratic diamond” of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India will go a long way toward shaping and realizing a more effective regional security network. This section focuses on the evolution of Japan’s thinking about security relationships, highlights its active pursuit of various levels of cooperation with other countries, and suggests a general framework for thinking about its priorities in building out the network.

Alliance Backbone

Vanquished in war, occupied in war’s aftermath, Japan comprehensively demilitarized. The outbreak of the Korean War, which in turn militarized containment, led directly to the signing of both the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1951.³⁵ The so-called San Francisco system, which built alliances on the then-prevailing distribution of power, remains the backbone of the U.S. security posture in the Asia-Pacific region.³⁶ At first Japan remained largely a civilian power, providing U.S. forces bases in exchange for American protection, which allowed Japan to focus on economic development. But the first stage of normalization, with Japan taking on larger responsibilities for its own self-defense, took shape in the revised bilateral treaty signed in January 1960. Under Article 5 of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, both parties recognized “that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes.”³⁷ Subsequently, the U.S.-Japan alliance has become a more capable military and security pillar, and Japan has taken incremental steps toward reestablishing its role in regional and international security. At moments when many were convinced the alliance might lose influence—after the Vietnam War, the Cold War, or 9/11, for instance—it has instead been strengthened.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President-elect Donald Trump shake hands shortly after the U.S. election in November 2016. (Government of Japan/Wikimedia Commons)

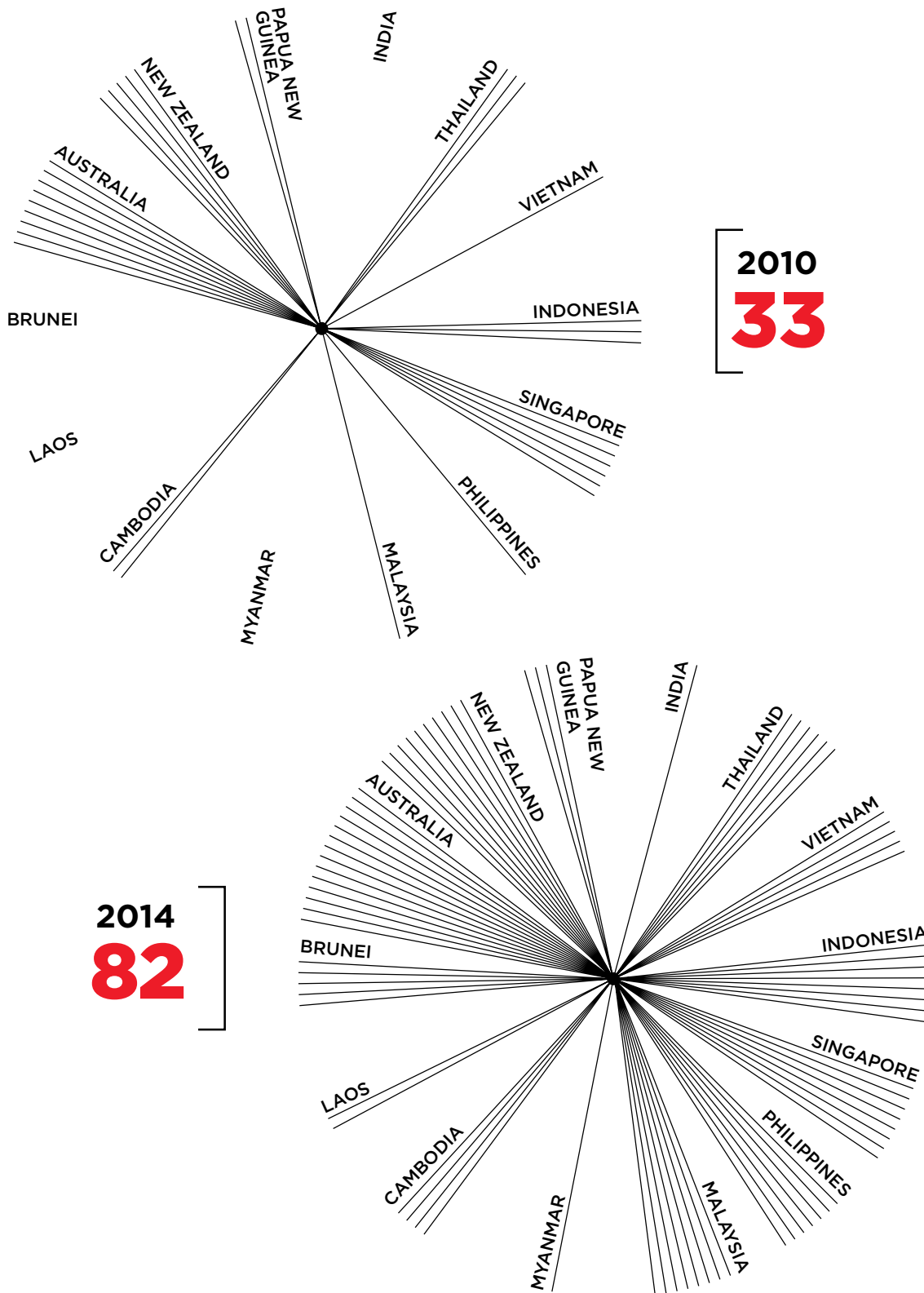
From Alliance to Networking

Today the U.S.-Japan alliance has a critical role to play in deterring North Korean aggression, competing with China’s creeping assertions of sovereignty in so-called gray-zone situations, and retaining a competitive military and national security posture to hedge against future Chinese intentions of becoming more bellicose. More generally, the alliance remains a bulwark in favor of the existing postwar rules-based order and supportive of democratic values and human rights.

In all of these matters, the U.S.-Japan alliance virtually mirrors the interests and values of the U.S.-Australian relationship, a fact that has opened up growing cooperation between Tokyo and Canberra and among the three countries. At the same time, Japan has actively embraced networked security in the Asia-Pacific region, for several reasons.

Several factors are driving Japan’s increasing push to develop an array of security relationships short of full-blown alliances. These factors relate to a deteriorating threat assessment, the complementarity of networked

Strengthening Security Network Densities: Japanese Joint Partner Drills (2010, 2014)



Sources:
2014 Data: Government of Japan, Ministry of Defense, "Defense of Japan 2016," http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_reference_web.pdf.
2010 Data: Government of Japan, Ministry of Defense, "Defense of Japan 2011," http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2011/35Part3_Chapter3_Sec1.pdf.

security with Japan's existing national capabilities and the U.S.-Japan alliance, the limits of the United Nations system in providing national security, and the feasibility of networked security within Japan's political and legally constrained environment.

Networked security provides Japan with an agile but effective counterweight to a deteriorating security situation that includes North Korea, which is armed with nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them, and an assertive China seeking maritime and air control within the First Island Chain. While the threats have grown in the past decade or so, they are hardly new. In the 1990s, for instance, the U.S. concern about whether Japan would respond in a timely and effective fashion to the potential outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula provided a stimulus to rejuvenate the bilateral alliance—several years after the glue of the Cold War had evaporated.³⁸

Sino-Japanese tensions and competition are also nothing new. Indeed, they have a long history dating back as far as the seventh century, marked by “the unwillingness of either China or Japan to accept the other as an equal, and the refusal of either to accept a position of inferiority to the other.”³⁹ China-Japan rivalry takes shape in frequent and increasing maritime tensions and negative societal views of the other.⁴⁰ In recent years the People's Liberation Army Navy has conducted patrols ever closer to the Japanese islands, and Beijing's claim to the Senkaku Islands (which China calls the Diaoyu Islands) continues to represent a potential flashpoint.

The foundations for Japan's expanded security network remain greater national capabilities and the maintenance of a strong U.S.-Japan alliance. Prime Minister Abe's administration has taken more steps more quickly than any other postwar prime minister, including introducing a first national security strategy; relaxing arms-export restrictions by agreeing to a third revision of U.S.-Japan defense guidelines, which call for tighter integration and pushing into new domains such as cyber and outer space; and passing legislation to allow for the right of collective self-defense. This may all be prelude to proposing a historic revision to Japan's constitution. But even without leaping over that difficult political hurdle, the nation can continue to reinterpret what self-defense means in a deteriorating security environment.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's council on defense policy is pushing for more intensified discussion of new defense capabilities. In response to North Korea's mounting nuclear and missile capabilities, for instance, the council urged the Abe administration to strengthen Japan's ballistic missile defense capabilities, possibly



At a joint press conference in February 2017, U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Japanese Defense Minister Tomomi Inada discuss the future of their security partnership. (Army Sgt. Amber I. Smith/U.S. Department of Defense)

including a Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system and a shore-based Aegis missile defense system. The council also pressed the government to upgrade existing SM-3 interceptor missiles and PAC-3 ground-based missile defense systems. While China will surely object to all of these improvements, missile defense decisions in Japan are more likely to be made on the basis of military cost-effectiveness and alliance interoperability than protestations from Beijing.

One type of national capability bound to spark debate in Japan would be the acquisition of any serious strike capacity. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) defense policy council has urged not just investments in missile defense but also the possible acquisition of cruise missiles capable of holding would-be adversary bases at risk, in order to reinforce deterrence and allow for a response should Japan be attacked. The country has sought to interpret its constitution as including the right to strike a foreign base in case of an imminent attack—a preventive capability designed for intra-crisis deterrence. As former defense minister Itsunori Onodera explains, the LDP defense policy council “proposal is about how we can fight back and stop the other party from firing a second missile, instead of making a preemptive strike.”⁴¹

Constraints on Japan's Security Profile

Security networks require less political commitment than do formal defense alliances. In Japan, domestic politics favors alignment rather than alliance, because



Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force sailors participate in the 2014 Fortune Guard counterproliferation exercise, highlighting their security concerns in the region. (Mass Communication Specialist 1st class Amanda Dunford/U.S. Navy)

since World War II the country has not exercised its international right to collective self-defense in light of constitutional restrictions. Japan's inability to reciprocate when it comes to defense has called into question the basic fairness of the U.S.-Japan mutual security treaty. The Abe administration, believing that constitutional intent was focused on proscribing aggressive (rather than defensive) action, has sought to build a legal framework from which to permit both clear individual self-defense and collective self-defense. On July 1, 2014, Prime Minister Abe's cabinet sanctioned a reinterpretation of the constitution's Article 9 to include the limited right to collective self-defense.⁴²

In April 2015, the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee issued, for only the third time, new defense guidelines for alliance cooperation that widen the aperture through which Japan can contribute to international security cooperation, not just with the United States but also with other countries "in a close relationship with Japan"—including Australia, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and India. Under the latest guidelines, the Self-Defense Forces can use force to "respond to situations where an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result, threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to overturn fundamentally its people's right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, to ensure Japan's survival, and to protect its people." Prime Minister Abe took the additional step of working with the Diet to pass a series of security bills on September 19, 2015, that codify the language in the defense guidelines.⁴³

Japan's Tiered Network of Security Partners

Japan's steadily mounting investment in a robust set of security partners can be classified by the type of activity and the level of effort involved. This section frames the partners in three categories, even if Tokyo would not necessarily make these sharp distinctions. Admittedly, Japan engages some states across all three levels, but each level is meant to offer a sense of the strategic effect and Japan's expectation among its security partners. The section excludes Australia, whose relationship with Japan is discussed at length later in this paper.

The first category aspires for *interoperability* among the most capable regional powers. The second focuses on *capacity building* to shore up the ability of regional states to patrol and protect their air, sea, and land borders. The third category covers a range of other political, military, and economic benefits, running the gamut from prospective arms sales to blocking China from exercising undue influence over its neighbors.

DIRECT MILITARY INTEROPERABILITY

South Korea

America's Asian allies with advanced weaponry offer Japan the potential for military interoperability in the event of crises, and South Korea has been a catalyst for Japan's security networking. Today, nearly a quarter-century after the 1993 nuclear crisis first seriously exposed Japan's lack of preparation for Korean contingencies, Japan is far better prepared to work with the ROK and the United States in the event of various scenarios that could develop on the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁴

Japan's bilateral security cooperation with the ROK and trilaterally with the United States is almost exclusively focused on the North Korea problem. Intelligence sharing, maritime domain awareness and antisubmarine warfare, contingency planning, and possible cooperation on ballistic missiles make this a serious defense relationship, even if it continues to be hampered by vicissitudes of domestic politics within the two countries. While the ROK could, over time, start to exercise more middle-power clout in maritime Asian disputes, Seoul remains wary of challenging China given the vital role that Beijing plays on the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁵

India

Japan's burgeoning relationship with India has been more than a decade in the making and yet is expanding quickly into a more operational and comprehensive relationship under the leadership of Prime Ministers Abe and Narendra Modi. It has helped that the United

States and India have flourishing security ties, too—from regular defense-secretary visits since 2008 to a 2012 Defense Technology and Trade Initiative that led to, among other things, a 2015 Indian Rapid Reaction Cell to identify pathfinder projects for co-development. Emblematic of how the two sets of ties are moving in tandem is the fact that both the United States and Japan elevated security relations with India in 2015: New Delhi and Washington agreed upon a strategic vision for the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean in which freedom of the seas was a top priority; and New Delhi and Tokyo agreed on a Special Strategic and Global Partnership outlined in the India and Japan Vision 2025. For Tokyo the strategic global partnership with India can be dated back to at least 2006 and has included bilateral exercises, occasional minilateral ones (such as joining the U.S.-India-centered Malabar exercises), a civil nuclear deal in 2016, and the agreement to sell 12 amphibious search and rescue and maritime surveillance aircraft (Japan's first major arms sale since loosening export restrictions).⁴⁶

Singapore

Singapore, the most developed military of any Southeast Asia nation, and a country that seeks to preserve a stable regional balance of power, provides critical anchorage for the U.S. Navy but mostly hews to economic cooperation with Japan. Japan and Singapore celebrated the half-century mark of relations last December, and they are focused on trade and transportation accords. Importantly, however, they have also embarked on a tri-lateral maritime partnership that includes India.

PARTNER CAPACITY BUILDING

Japan's regional partner capacity building has focused on supporting mostly Southeast Asian nations' defenses, from coast guards and maritime domain awareness to other measures designed to provide partners with a credible, even if minimal, defense capability.

Maritime capacity has been at the forefront of cooperation with front-line South China Sea claimant states Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia. At the same time, Japan has stepped up cooperation with Indonesia, which has major maritime interests at stake around the Natuna Islands and is Southeast Asia's largest economy and most populous country.

Vietnam

Building partner capacity is governed largely by political will on the part of the recipient and secondly by its ability to absorb assistance. Hanoi has both will and considerable capacity. The political will is evident, as Hanoi



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit, one of many areas in which they share vital security interests. (NarendraModiOfficial/Flickr)

in recent years has sought increasing security ties with major and middle powers on the one hand, while keeping relations with China and the United States in balance on the other. In recent years Vietnam has been the world's eighth-largest importer of armament, with purchases of submarines, frigates, aircraft, missiles, air defense systems, sensors, and engines.⁴⁷ Clearly Hanoi is looking to improve its undersea, surface, and air defenses well off its shores.

Japan's security assistance to Vietnam encompasses diplomacy, development assistance, training, presence, and hardware. The level of support appears broadly calibrated to Chinese assertiveness. After China deployed an oil rig into disputed seas near the Paracel Islands, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida visited Hanoi, offering six used Coast Guard patrol vessels. Bilateral defense exchanges accelerated, and Japanese development assistance has financed both patrol boats and defense industry-related vocational training. In April 2016, just prior to the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling that would be handed down in July, two Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyers made their first-ever port call Cam Ranh Bay. Five months later, Japan pledged to provide six new Coast Guard patrol boats. Importantly, Japan's capacity-building efforts in Vietnam appear to be complementary with those of Australia.⁴⁸



At an early meeting in Japan in October 2016, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe discussed economic and defense concerns. (Philippine Information Agency/Wikimedia Commons)

The Philippines

Ever since the 2012 standoff at Scarborough Shoal that ended up with China muscling effective control over fishing-rich grounds, the Philippines remained the focal point of tensions in the South China Sea. The eventual tribunal ruling in July 2016 almost universally sided with the Philippines and against China and, during its lengthy deliberations, Japan moved to consolidate security ties with Manila.⁴⁹ Building on a security partnership announced in 2011, officials in Tokyo and Manila have moved several times to further upgrade relations. In early 2015, the two countries signed a capacity-building accord to include cooperation on defense equipment and technology.⁵⁰ In January 2016, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited the Philippines, the first Southeast Asian country to receive the imperial couple. Ship visits notably increased, with the April port call of a JMSDF submarine and two destroyers at Subic Bay.⁵¹ Japan agreed to its first transfer of defense equipment with a Southeast Asian country last year, when Tokyo agreed to lease five surveillance planes and provide high-speed patrol boats.⁵² Manila and Tokyo have also reached a memorandum of cooperation on coast guards, as well as agreement to augment Joint Maritime Law Enforcement Exercises and naval ship visits. The two nations conducted a maritime exercise at the time of the announcement of the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling.⁵³

Despite the election of Rodrigo Duterte, who put some distance between Manila and Washington, Japan-Philippine security cooperation has remained steadfast. Regular vice-ministerial meetings have built on cooperation set in motion under former President Benigno

Aquino III, and the two nations continue to explore a possible visiting forces agreement.⁵⁴

Malaysia

While Vietnam and the Philippines have sparred the most with China in recent years over maritime disputes in the South China Sea, Beijing's expansive nine-dash line and periodic maritime operations into Malaysian waters have opened the door for security networking with Japan and others. China's intrusions have included swarms of fishing boats and the presence of both naval and coast guard vessels near Luconia Shoals and James Shoal.⁵⁵ This stepped-up Chinese maritime activity in the past few years has created a window of opportunity for Tokyo to advance its ties with Kuala Lumpur. Since 2010, Japan and Malaysia have enjoyed an "enhanced partnership" that was upgraded to a "strategic partnership" in 2015.⁵⁶ In 2016, Japan gifted a pair of used patrol boats to Malaysia's Maritime Enforcement Agency. Malaysia, ever careful to balance ties with China, at the same time announced it would purchase four Chinese patrol boats.⁵⁷

Despite the election of Rodrigo Duterte, who put some distance between Manila and Washington, Japan-Philippine security cooperation has remained steadfast.

Indonesia

Early in 2013, under former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Japan and Indonesia announced a new era in defense cooperation.⁵⁸ Security ties focused on training and exercises, but the memorandum of understanding led to further cooperation between Prime Minister Abe and President Joko Widodo when, last December, the two agreed to push forward with a bilateral Maritime Forum focused on maritime security and safety, education and training, and economic and infrastructure issues.⁵⁹

Thailand

U.S. relations with its ally in Bangkok have suffered since the 2012 military coup d'état by Commander of the Royal Thai Army General Pravut Chan-o-cha, who has continued to rule without any clear roadmap for a return to civilian democratic government. During this period, China has actively wooed Thailand by, inter alia, selling three submarines.⁶⁰ Japan has helped to pick up some of

the slack in defense relations. This has included bilateral defense talks that would have Japan provide Thailand an air defense radar system and diplomatic coordination in the ADMM+ process.⁶¹ Both nations have also participated in multilateral exercises involving the United States, including this year's annual Cobra Gold exercise. The Japan Self-Defense Force used the multilateral exercise to practice for the first time an overseas, armed rescue mission.⁶² Further cooperation between Thailand and Japan can be expected this year, which marks the 130th anniversary since the pair signed a Declaration of Amity and Commerce.⁶³

Myanmar

Japan has complemented its intensive economic investment in Myanmar with a variety of defense educational exchanges and capacity building programs, including maritime security.⁶⁴ Tokyo has also sought to coordinate its assistance to Naypyidaw with helping other burgeoning security partners such as India.⁶⁵ In addition to long-term capacity building for a Myanmar in political transition, Japan's cooperation and investments provide strategic influence in a growing, mid-size continental Southeast Asian neighbor of China.

OTHER POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS ASEAN

Japan's security partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations affords political legitimacy and economic opportunity, including opening doors to stronger defense ties with individual member countries. Japan announced its Vientiane Vision of defense cooperation with ASEAN at a time when China-friend Laos was in the chair. China managed to avoid being singled out for criticism by ASEAN and thus largely neutralized regional pressure despite the July 12, 2016, ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration over excessive claims in the South China Sea. But the declaration of a partnership with the organization of ASEAN opened new vistas of security cooperation with Japan, too.

There are constraints on Japan's security networking in Asia, just as there have been significant barriers on Japan's national-security posture since the end of

World War II. These constraints can be summarized as opposition from historic rivals (especially China, but also North and even South Korea), the lack of domestic consensus within Japan, and the ambivalence of other Asian and international partners leery of being dragged into Japan's historic and territorial disputes with its immediate neighbors, especially China. All three of these limitations are likely to intensify as Japan pursues a more normal security posture that will include revising the so-called Article 9 "peace clause" of the Constitution. At a minimum, Tokyo will have to enhance its active diplomacy and domestic dialogue to counteract the various strands of pushback that may limit the fulfillment of a more capable network of security partners.

Further cooperation between Thailand and Japan can be expected this year, which marks the 130th anniversary since the pair signed a Declaration of Amity and Commerce.

In combination, Tokyo's incremental, often tactical and opportunistic moves to strengthen a network of security partners adds a new pillar of protection for a country that has since the end of World War II been heavily dependent on the United States for security. While the bilateral alliance remains strong today, there have been periods in the past (especially after the Vietnam War and the breakup of the Soviet Union) when many Japanese have wondered about the reliability of the United States as an ally. Recent comments during the 2016 presidential election and President Trump's desire to remain unpredictable and look for greater allied contributions have reinforced some of the lingering doubts about U.S. political willingness to defend Japan in the event of local aggression.

06

The Southern Node: Australia

Alliance Backbone

Formalized in the 1951 Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) Security Treaty, the U.S.-Australia alliance was established on a half-century foundation of military, economic, and cultural ties. It is often remarked that only Australia has fought alongside the United States in every major U.S. conflict during the past century, and today the two governments enjoy extraordinarily close defense and intelligence ties. Their militaries are highly interoperable, with shared technology and experience in training and exercising together. Both countries are members of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing relationship, and they share an enormous range of information and assessments. U.S. Marines have a rotational presence in Darwin, U.S. military aircraft use Australian bases, and the two nations' naval vessels use each other's ports. In an exceptional demonstration of allied ties, a two-star Australian army general, based in Hawaii, today has direct command of U.S. troops.

Canberra enjoys access to cutting-edge defense technology and unparalleled intelligence information and assessments, as well as a direct line to high-level U.S. policymakers.

The rationale for the alliance on the American side is straightforward. Ties with Australia anchor the U.S. presence in the southern Pacific and Indian Ocean, areas of increasing strategic competition and interest to Washington. Australia offers territory for training and repositioning that is close enough to Asia to be geographically relevant but still out of range of most Chinese anti-access and area denial capabilities. And Australia is a highly reliable ally, joining U.S. efforts in countless military contingencies and diplomatic efforts, as noted.

The Australian rationale is different but similarly clear. The alliance provides a security guarantee from the world's most powerful military, and as a result reduces not only the degree of threat facing Australia but also the defense spending that would otherwise be required to deal with it.⁶⁶ Canberra enjoys access to cutting-edge defense technology and unparalleled intelligence information and assessments, as well as a direct line to high-level U.S. policymakers.⁶⁷



In 2011, then-U.S. President Barack Obama spoke at an event in Darwin, Australia, commemorating 60 years of the U.S.-Australian alliance. Prime Minister Julia Gillard joined him in celebrating the alliance's past, present and future (Official White House Photo/Wikimedia Commons)

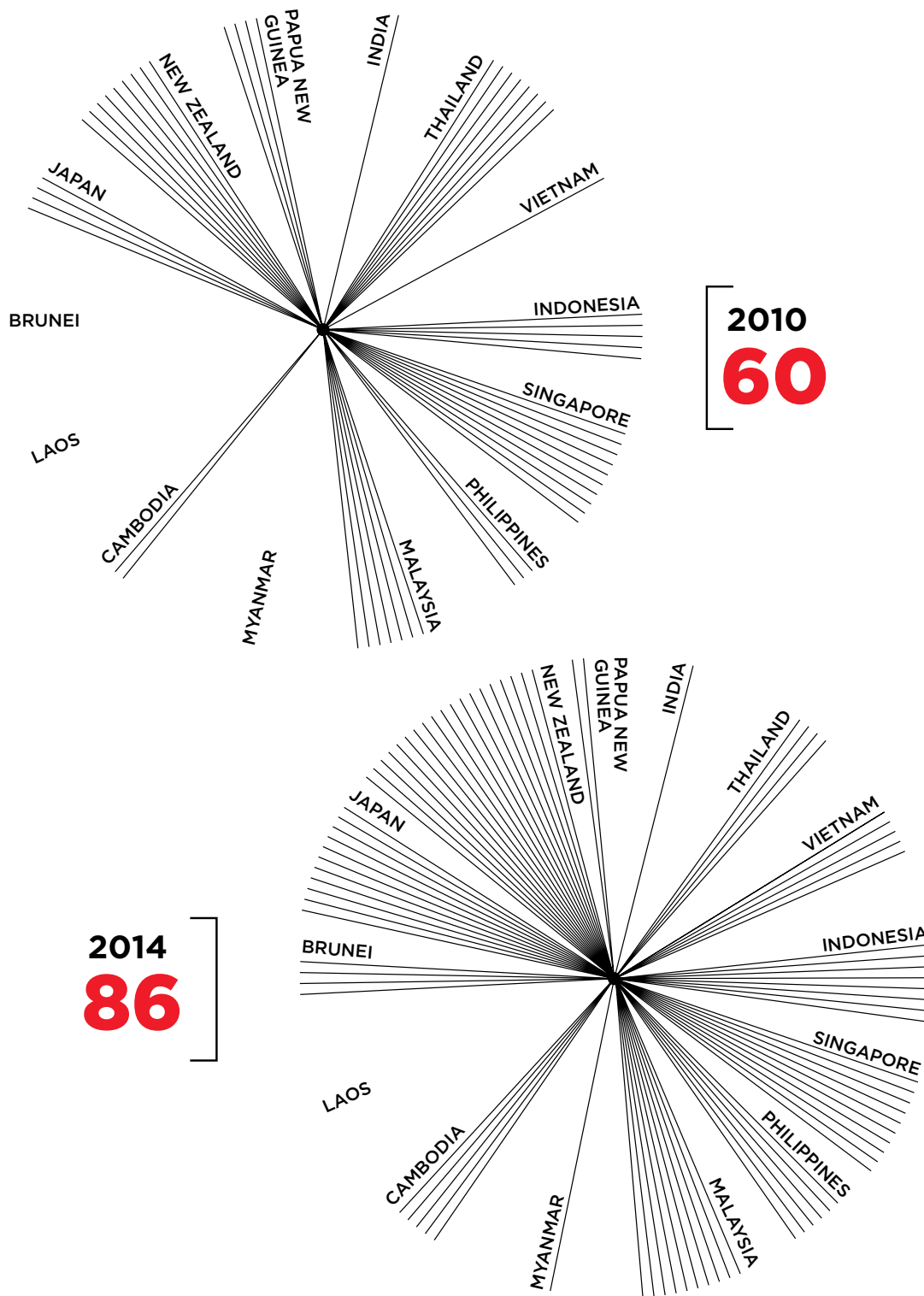
Since the Vietnam War, the alliance has focused mostly outside of the Pacific, and the past 15 years have seen a particularly intense tempo of allied operations in the greater Middle East. Yet discrete, operational cooperation in the greater Middle East is far different from deterring and potentially acting against a peer adversary in Australia's home region. Both Washington and Canberra are increasingly focused on threats and opportunities across the Indo-Pacific region, and both have taken significant steps to build new security partnerships and to increase the activity in existing ones.

From Alliance to Networking

Australia has the world's 12th largest economy (larger than Russia's) and the 13th largest military budget. It couples an ability to project power abroad with a broad definition of its national interest.⁶⁸ More than 50,000 military personnel serve in its army, navy and air force, and its defense forces have both an expeditionary and a growing amphibious capability.⁶⁹ The Royal Australian Navy has 53 commissioned naval vessels and ambitious plans for procuring submarines, frigates, and offshore patrol vessels, while the highly capable Royal Australian Air Force will add to its high-end capabilities by acquiring 72 F-35 joint strike fighters.⁷⁰

Australia currently spends approximately 1.95 percent of GDP on defense, a figure that has risen from 1.7 percent in 2012–13, and the government has promised to raise it to 2 percent by 2021.⁷¹ The 2016 Defence White Paper projects a major increase in the annual defense budget from \$31.5 billion (in Australian dollars) in 2016–17 to A\$51.5B in 2025–26, with significant

Strengthening Security Network Densities: Australian Joint Partner Drills (2010, 2014)



Sources:
 2014 Data: Australian Government, Department of Defense, "Annual Report 2013-14," <http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/13-14/part-two/program-1-11.asp>; and Australian Government, Department of Defense, "Annual Report 2014-15," <http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/14-15/downloads/web-tables/web-tableschapter-3-5.xls>.
 2010 Data: Australian Government, Department of Defense, "Annual Report 2009-2010," http://www.defence.gov.au/AnnualReports/09-10/dar_0910_v1_s2.pdf#nameddest=c4; and Australian Government, Department of Defense, "Annual Report 2010-2011," http://www.defence.gov.au/AnnualReports/10-11/dar_1011_v1_s2.pdf#nameddest=c4.

investments in cutting-edge air and undersea platforms.⁷² Following the Trump administration's emphasis on alliance burden-sharing, Australia's Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne declared that his country would not be "strategic bludgers" and suggested that defense spending would likely rise above 2 percent of GDP over the next decade.⁷³

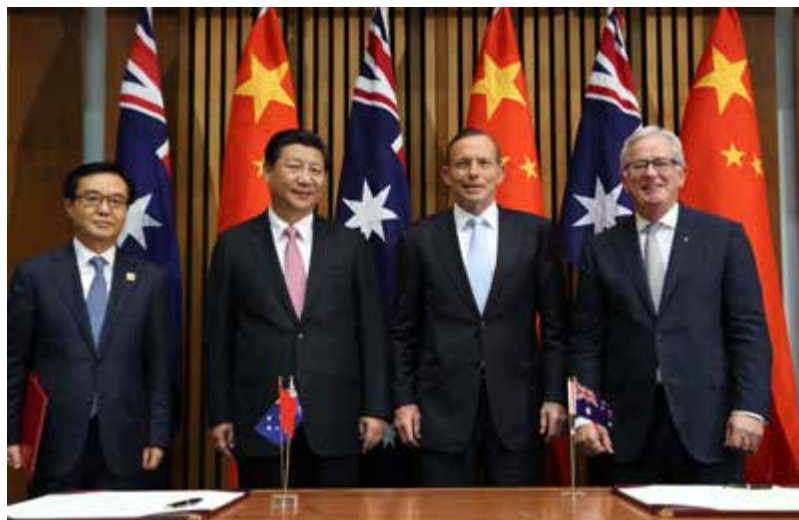
Less concrete but still important, Australia is an attractive security partner for many Asian countries that have complicated relations with one another. With the exception of testy diplomatic ties with Indonesia and, in the past, with India, Australia has broadly good relationships with most countries in the Indo-Pacific. It lacks the historical baggage that Japan brings to the table, and its lack of hegemonic ambition ensures that there is little regional worry about an over-militarized Australia. As a result, Canberra has emerged as a key partner of choice for many nations seeking a security hedge in Asia.

The alliance is quickly taking on a new mission set. In addition to its security cooperation in the greater Middle East and its bilateral collaboration in Asia, Australia and the United States are increasingly examining new ways that each—in parallel and in combination—can partner with regional militaries on joint exercises, information sharing, military exchanges, and more. In this way, the alliance has the potential to become greater than the sum of its two constituent parts.

Constraints on Australia's Security Profile

As Australia emerges as a node in the expanding Asian security network, several factors may constrain its ability or willingness to take on a greater profile. *Economic ties with China, domestic politics, and fiscal challenges* will each impact Australia's defense capacity, the strength of its alliance with the United States, and the degree to which it creates new security linkages across the Indo-Pacific region.

The first possible constraint on Australia's defense profile arises from its close and growing *economic ties with China*, which have fueled domestic prosperity but created a strong perception of asymmetric vulnerabilities. A third of Australian exports go to China, a higher percentage than any other G20 country, and China buys more than half of its exported iron ore.⁷⁴ Chinese investment in Australia is on the rise, including in infrastructure projects—recently prompting the government to reject, on national security grounds, a Chinese bid for a major electricity grid in New South Wales. Nearly 50,000 Chinese students started courses in Australian universities and schools during the past year, boosting the country's "education export" industry.⁷⁵ China is



Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Chinese President Xi Jinping, along with their trade and commerce ministers respectively, sign the 2014 Australia-China Free Trade Agreement. Australia is increasingly forced to balance growing economic ties with China with its own national security interests (Australian Prime Minister for Trade/Wikimedia Commons)

the largest buyer of Australian government debt,⁷⁶ and a million Chinese tourists visited Australia in 2015.⁷⁷ While recent work suggests that many commentators overstate Australia's economic dependence on China, and that Beijing has less leverage than is widely assumed, Australians currently perceive a pattern of asymmetric economic dependence.⁷⁸

The tension among Australia's U.S. alliance, its budding security linkages in Asia, and its Chinese economic ties poses a genuine set of dilemmas. Like other U.S. allies in the region, it will face not an overarching and binary "China choice," but rather numerous China choices in which Australia will have to decide where to accept risk. This balancing act requires a strong, active, and regionally connected Australia that is simultaneously engaging and hedging—both reaping the benefits of extensive economic relations with China and enhancing its security relationships with the United States and like-minded regional partners.⁷⁹

A second possible constraint on Australian security networking stems from potential changes in its *domestic politics*. New linkages with countries such as Japan, India, and Singapore are seen by Australian policymakers and others as supplements to the all-important alliance with the United States. While support for ANZUS is today strong in both the Liberal and Labor parties, it is not inexorably so. Particularly when it comes to questions of involvement in armed conflict alongside the United States, the otherwise-steady alliance can become more controversial.

The reality today is that the U.S. alliance remains very popular among Australians in the abstract, but support falls off when the public is queried about concrete policy choices, such as joining the United States in Japan’s defense or pushing China from militarized sea features. There are also disquieting signs of equivalence among the Australian public in its views of China and the United States. Asked whether America and China are helping or harming Asia, for example, Australians in a 2016 U.S. Studies Centre poll gave the same grade to both. In the same survey, respondents were considerably more likely to say that they sought a stronger relationship with China than with the United States. Eighty percent said that America’s “best years” were in the past, signaling a belief in the relative decline of the United States.⁸⁰

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Such sentiments illustrate the widening gap between national security elites and the broader public on questions related to the alliance, to Australia’s role in Asia, and especially to China. In a 2015 poll, the percentage of Australians saying China was likely be a military threat to Australia in 20 years fell by 9 points from the previous year—at the very time that China’s rising assertiveness in the South China Sea was generating heightened concern in Canberra.⁸¹ Most Australians now list China as their country’s “best friend in Asia,” a higher percentage than in Japan, the country with which Australia is building a deepening security relationship, and more than in India, Singapore, Indonesia, or South Korea—all key countries with which Australia is pursuing enhanced security ties.⁸²

The contrast between public views and the aims of government policy is particularly stark. A variety of recent surveys suggests that a significant proportion of Australians believe U.S. power is declining in the region; China will replace the United States as the world’s superpower; and the United States and China are roughly

equivalent when it comes to their behavior in Asia. At the same time, the government elected by the same population that holds such views is increasingly concerned about China’s threat to regional rules and its ability to project power; investing significantly in its own defense capabilities; boosting security ties with non-Chinese partners; and doubling down on the U.S. alliance. The same government overflies and collects intelligence in Chinese-claimed regions of the South China Sea despite Beijing’s protestations, reserves the right to conduct freedom-of-navigation exercises in the future, and exhorts China to abide by existing rules.

This gap could simultaneously impose limits on the Australian government’s ability to grow closer still to the United States and give it more reason to bolster its ties to other regional partners. If Australia hopes to remain committed to the alliance but continues to harbor doubts about its staying power and does not want to be exclusively dependent on Washington, it will do well to diversify its security relationships and take on a regional leadership role in some areas. Whether it is because the government is worried about the vicissitudes of U.S. domestic politics or wary of alienating Beijing, networked security may provide Canberra with more flexible means to pursue some of the same ends.

Fiscal challenges account for a third possible constraint on Australia’s regional defense activism. Officials stress that the government’s 10-year defense plan is fully costed, but they do not claim that it is fully funded. On the contrary, the plan appears to be predicated on positive domestic economic growth, which is perhaps natural in a country that has gone longer than 24 years without a recession. A downturn in the economy, however, should it occur, would almost certainly wreak havoc on Australia’s carefully thought-out defense buildup.

In most democracies, a recession that impels budget-tightening nearly always puts downward pressure on discretionary defense spending. Public support in Australia for defense spending has been on the decline in recent decades, driven by increased support for social spending and a decreasing sense of external threat—indeed, fewer Australians sense a threat to their country today than at any point since the 1960s.⁸³ And social spending in Australia is projected to outpace revenues over the coming years.⁸⁴

An Australian economic downturn could have several negative implications for the alliance and its efforts to enhance security networks. Canberra could choose not to continue its purchases of pricey F-35s, French-built submarines, and other high-end platforms that

have been so welcomed by U.S. defense planners. It might lead to greater parochialism in Australian foreign policy—already, half of Australians say that their country should “mind its own business in international affairs and concentrate more on our national problems.”⁸⁵ And a recession could be linked to a Chinese downturn that would mean fewer purchases of Australian exports. Should this occur, the reduction in Australian military capability could conceivably take place at precisely the moment that Beijing became more externally assertive in order to compensate for its own economic troubles.

Australia’s Tiered Network of Security Partners

As set out in its 2016 Defence White Paper, Australia’s alliance with the United States and enhanced security ties with key powers represent two pillars of its approach to regional security. The white paper, which was the first to feature a separate chapter on international engagement, stated Canberra’s aim “to mature and deepen practical engagement with partners across the Indo-Pacific,” singling out Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, India, and China for special mention.⁸⁶ It also pledges to double the amount of training in Australia for international military students over the next 15 years, to increase the number of multinational exercises that include the Australian Defence Forces (ADF), and to boost the number of Defence personnel serving overseas in liaison capacities as well as the number of liaison personnel from other countries in Australia.⁸⁷ The goal of such efforts is, among others, to enable the ADF quickly to deploy in the Indo-Pacific region, sustain its operations, and support partners operating together with the ADF. Deepening international security linkages also aim to support a rules-based order, including a strong regional security architecture, and to minimize Australia’s risk of coercion or conflict.⁸⁸

To these ends, Australia has moved in recent years to initiate new security partnerships across the Indo-Pacific region and to deepen existing ones. This section reviews recent developments with several key countries, excluding Japan, which is discussed in a later section.

DIRECT MILITARY INTEROPERABILITY

Singapore

Australia in 2015 agreed with Singapore on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), which built on a foundation of existing defense cooperation.⁸⁹ Australia has for several decades provided Singapore with extensive training ranges in the Northern Territory and elsewhere, and the two militaries exercise together bilaterally and in the context of the Five Power Defence



During the 2012 Australian Army Skills at Arms Meeting, service members from Australia, the United States, and Singapore fire at targets in Puckapunyal. These events highlight the emphasis on military-to-military connections across the Asia-Pacific region. (TSgt Michael Holzworth/Wikimedia Commons)

Arrangement.⁹⁰ The CSP identifies five areas of security cooperation, including increased Singaporean access to Australian military facilities, exchanges of military personnel, improved cooperation in counterterrorism and cybersecurity, intelligence sharing, and new cooperation in defense technology.⁹¹ Australia’s 2016 Defence White Paper refers to Singapore as Australia’s most advanced defense partner, and former Prime Minister Tony Abbott has called the two countries “natural partners.”⁹²

Indonesia

Australia has quietly enhanced its security ties with Indonesia in recent years, focused primarily on counterterrorism and the sharing of threat information. The two countries signed a first security agreement in 1995 and a binding security treaty in 2006. The Defence Cooperation Agreement, inked in 2012, provided for a number of joint drills, HA/DR capability building, and counterterror training exercises, as well as a Joint Understanding on intelligence cooperation in 2014 that repaired and deepened ties after a flap over surveillance policies.⁹³ A strategic dialogue has also been established that brings together respective foreign and defense ministers as well as a committee led by the two chiefs of defense.⁹⁴ While these and other new security links hold particular promise due to Indonesia’s size and proximity, the possibilities have been constrained in recent years by public spats over espionage and illegal immigration.

Malaysia

The Australian Defence Forces have for decades conducted maritime surveillance flights out of RMAF Butterworth in Malaysia, and in November 2015 the two countries inked a Joint Declaration of Strategic Partnership.⁹⁵ In addition, Australia plays a role in the air defense of Malaysia (and Singapore) under the Integrated Air Defence System. Counterterrorism has been a major focus for Canberra's and Kuala Lumpur's joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and military-to-military relations. Many expect that as ISIS declines in the Middle East, it will seek new recruits and targets in the Asia-Pacific; both Australia and Malaysia have foiled domestic plots by the group, and it has been a recurring topic of ministerial-level talks.⁹⁶

India

In 2009, Canberra and New Delhi issued a bilateral security declaration, and in 2014 they inked a Framework for Security Cooperation and established a new defense and foreign policy dialogue.⁹⁷ Australia and India possess the two most powerful navies among Indian Ocean states, and the Australia India Maritime Exercises (AUSINDEX) in the Bay of Bengal in 2015 represented their first bilateral naval exercises in five decades.⁹⁸ Australia and India established a trilateral dialogue with Japan the same year, and they have established linkages between India's Coast Guard and Australia's Maritime Board Command.⁹⁹ Australian and Indian armies conducted special forces exercises in 2016 as well.¹⁰⁰

Officials on both sides remain somewhat skeptical about the budding partnership's practical utility, and obstacles remain. Washington has unsuccessfully pushed, for instance, for Australia's inclusion in the Indian-led Malabar naval exercise. Yet there is no mistaking its significant growth in just a few years, and Canberra's interest in doing more with India is high.¹⁰¹

PARTNER CAPACITY BUILDING

Philippines

The Philippines and Australia signed a Status of Visiting Forces Agreement in 2007 (the Philippines ratified it in 2012) and a comprehensive partnership agreement in November 2015. Following years of warming ties punctuated by Australia's support of South China Sea arbitration efforts and Canberra's participation in Philippines-U.S. Balikatan exercises, the new agreement committed the two to cooperation on maritime security, counterterrorism, economic development, and law enforcement.¹⁰² Australia is boosting Philippine maritime capability by providing training to its armed forces, gifting two amphibious vessels, and offering three other amphibys for sale.¹⁰³ The relationship has come under some stress following the election of President Rodrigo Duterte and his subsequent courtship of China and distancing from the United States. Duterte's geopolitical affinities appear to be in significant flux, but Australian discomfort will rise if the Philippines sustains a tilt away from Washington and toward Beijing.

Vietnam

Australia enjoys defense and security cooperation ties with Vietnam that date back to 1998, including a Comprehensive Partnership agreement that governs the exchange of defense personnel, joint training exercises, ship visits, and regular dialogues between diplomats and defense officials. While Vietnam may want relations with Canberra to develop more quickly—Australia has twice declined a formal Strategic Partnership—the two countries have nonetheless steadily deepened their bilateral cooperation.¹⁰⁴

More broadly, Australia has become “a venue of choice” for notable instances of multilateral defense collaboration. Australia in 2013 hosted the first naval drills of the 18-nation ADMM+, and in 2015 the Bersama Lima maritime security exercise with Malaysia and Singapore.¹⁰⁵ Canberra also co-chairs with Singapore the ADMM+ Counter Terrorism Experts' Working Group. Some patterns of cooperation build on the Five Power Defence Arrangement, which links Australia with Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United



Rear Admiral Jonathan Mead of Australia and Rear Admiral A. B. Singh of India meet during AUSINDEX-15 in 2015. The exercise has transitioned to a regular drill between the two countries. (Indian Navy/Wikimedia Commons)

Kingdom. Established in 1971, the agreement provides a framework for defense consultations, an institutionalized platform for annual training exercises, and it continues to attract regularized, close diplomatic collaboration.¹⁰⁶

In total, Australia is boosting its defense spending, reorienting its geographic focus closer to home, strengthening its alliance with the United States, and establishing new security connections with countries across the Indo-Pacific. Together these moves help mitigate the longstanding fear of Australian abandonment, while creating connections that are flexible enough to avoid becoming entrapped in partners' conflicts. This pattern of activity has created new opportunities for the United States to build on its close alliance with Australia by bringing like-minded countries into a budding security network.



Australian and U.S. officers participate in ADMM+, a major multilateral operation that promotes maritime cooperation and information sharing in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. Australia is increasingly taking a more active and expanded role in multilateral drills in the Asia-Pacific. (Ensign Peter Walz/Wikimedia Commons)

07

Linking the Nodes

Aside from the United States, Australia and Japan are now each other's leading security partners. While the United States has been supportive of their growing warmth, Canberra and Tokyo have come to this relationship very much of their own initiative. Australia has welcomed Japan's efforts to return to a more "normal" defense posture and take on a greater security leadership role in Asia, while acknowledging that Japan's constitution continues to impose limits on the scope of its activities.¹⁰⁷ Japan has sought to cooperate with Australia across a spectrum of military and information-sharing activities.

At the heart of this alignment is a shared interest in continued regional engagement from the United States and a desire to see its security guarantees remain credible. Japan and Australia also share democratic values and are strong advocates for international law, institutions, and other aspects of international order.¹⁰⁸ Policymakers in both countries worry openly about Beijing's actions in the South and East China Seas and its economic inroads in Southeast Asia. As North Korea has continued its pursuit of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, Australia has grown more concerned and is increasingly expressing interest in supporting Japan's approach to the quandary.¹⁰⁹ Their deepest shared security interest, however, may lie in managing Asia's shifting power dynamics. The closer Japan-Australia partnership is a balancing response to China's growing strength, and it simultaneously reinforces the existing U.S. alliance system while hedging against the prospect of U.S. decline or withdrawal.¹¹⁰

While the United States has been supportive of their growing warmth, Canberra and Tokyo have come to this relationship very much of their own initiative.

There are limits to the relationship. Despite shared worry about Chinese intentions, for example, analysts in both Japan and Australia often note a "China gap" between the two countries. Because of their contentious history and contemporary security concerns, Japanese policymakers and strategists view China as their most significant challenger, while their Australian counterparts perceive a far less acute threat. Australia is also more sensitive to maintaining its economic relationship with China than is Japan. Among other factors, these



Australian Minister of Defence John Faulkner and Japan Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa met in Tokyo in 2010, one of many defense dialogues between the two countries during the past decade. (Australian Government Department of Defence/Wikimedia Common)

differences in perception makes it unlikely that the two will conclude a formal bilateral defense treaty.

Short of an alliance, however, Australia and Japan can and do engage in significant security cooperation. Their burgeoning teamwork thus far has taken several different forms.

Australia-Japan Cooperation

Security cooperation between Japan and Australia has increased dramatically over the past decade. The effort began in 2007 with a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation and an agreement to hold regular 2+2 meetings with foreign and defense ministers. At the time, Tokyo and Canberra agreed to pursue cooperation on law enforcement, border security, counterterrorism, disarmament and counterproliferation, peace operations, strategic assessments, maritime and aviation security, humanitarian and disaster relief, and contingency planning.¹¹¹ They also began regular military exchanges. In 2010 the two countries adopted an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ASCA) that allows their militaries to share supplies and services with each other.¹¹² The ASCA has, in turn, permitted easier defense cooperation with the United States (see below). In 2012, Australia and Japan concluded an Information Security Agreement to allow for the exchange of classified intelligence.¹¹³ By 2014, the two countries' leaders had made sufficient progress to label their ties a New Special Relationship and a Special Strategic Partnership.¹¹⁴ The same year, they inked an agreement to facilitate joint



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida before a trilateral security dialogue in 2013. This meeting is now in a series of annual consultations among the countries' ministries of foreign affairs and defense. (East Asia and Pacific Media Hub U.S. Department of State/Wikimedia Commons)

access to defense technology and cooperative defense technological research.¹¹⁵ Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper called for expanded security cooperation with Japan, and Japan's most recent National Defense Program Guidelines endorsed the same.¹¹⁶

Trilateral Cooperation with the United States

As early as the 1970s, regional security analysts saw virtue in the idea of connecting the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Australia alliances, with some calling for a "JANZUS" alliance to balance against growing Soviet maritime power in Asia—an idea that never took off.¹¹⁷ In recent years, however, trilateral cooperation has taken great strides. Since 2011, the three countries have held annual trilateral dialogues at the foreign minister and defense minister levels, focused largely but not exclusively on regional maritime security.¹¹⁸

Australia, the United States, and Japan have also expanded their defense cooperation through trilateral military exercises. For the past several years, the three have held aerial and naval exercises to improve interoperability, conducted the Cope North Guam air combat and surveillance drills, run the Southern Jackaroo field exercises, and held multiple trilateral HA/DR exercises, including Michinoku Alert and Northern Rescue. Australia and Japan have also joined existing exercises that do not traditionally include them. In 2015, for instance, Japan joined the U.S.-Australia Talisman Sabre exercise, and in 2014, Japan and Australia joined New Zealand in an aerial exercise.¹¹⁹ Trilateral cooperation has moved beyond training exercises and extended to actual contingencies: in 2011, following Japan's

devastating earthquake and tsunami, Australia supported the U.S. Operation Tomodachi relief effort with its own Operation Pacific Assist.¹²⁰

Multilateral Cooperation

Australia and Japan have become increasingly involved in Asian multilateral security efforts as well. Canberra and Tokyo have provided security assistance to Southeast Asian countries, notably the Philippines and Vietnam. While these efforts have proceeded bilaterally, they have included dialogues to coordinate third-country efforts.¹²¹ At the same time, the region has seen a proliferation of multilateral exercises that include both Australia and Japan. Regular exercises have included the Australian Army Skills at Arms Meeting shooting drill, the Komodo naval readiness drill in the Indian Ocean, the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise, the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) comprehensive maritime exercise, several drills focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and the Cobra Gold comprehensive naval exercise. Through these multilateral engagements, Australia and Japan have begun to demonstrate that they are not only deepening their own defense relationship, but increasingly acting as regional leaders in broader security configurations.

There is no doubt that in the past decade, Australia and Japan have transformed their relationship from an alignment by association into a security partnership in its own right. Regional risks are growing just as fast as their defense collaboration has, however, so their future defense efforts will need to be structured and strategic if they are to keep pace. They will also have to consider and prepare for China's reactions.



U.S. vessels take part in a replenishment-at-sea exercise during the multilateral naval exercise Komodo 2016. Interoperability is a key component of any security network in the vast Asia-Pacific region. (Grady Fontana/Wikimedia Commons)

08

A Roadmap for Networking Asian Security

The U.S. goal in increasing Asian security connectivity should be to ensure a stable and more prosperous region, protective of longstanding rules and norms and consonant with American strategic interests. The five bilateral alliances the United States maintains in the region will and should remain the strategic backbone of American engagement in Asia. Yet they should be supplemented by establishing new security partnerships, enhancing older ones, and encouraging intra-regional ties that do not include the United States. This section offers several policy prescriptions to that end.

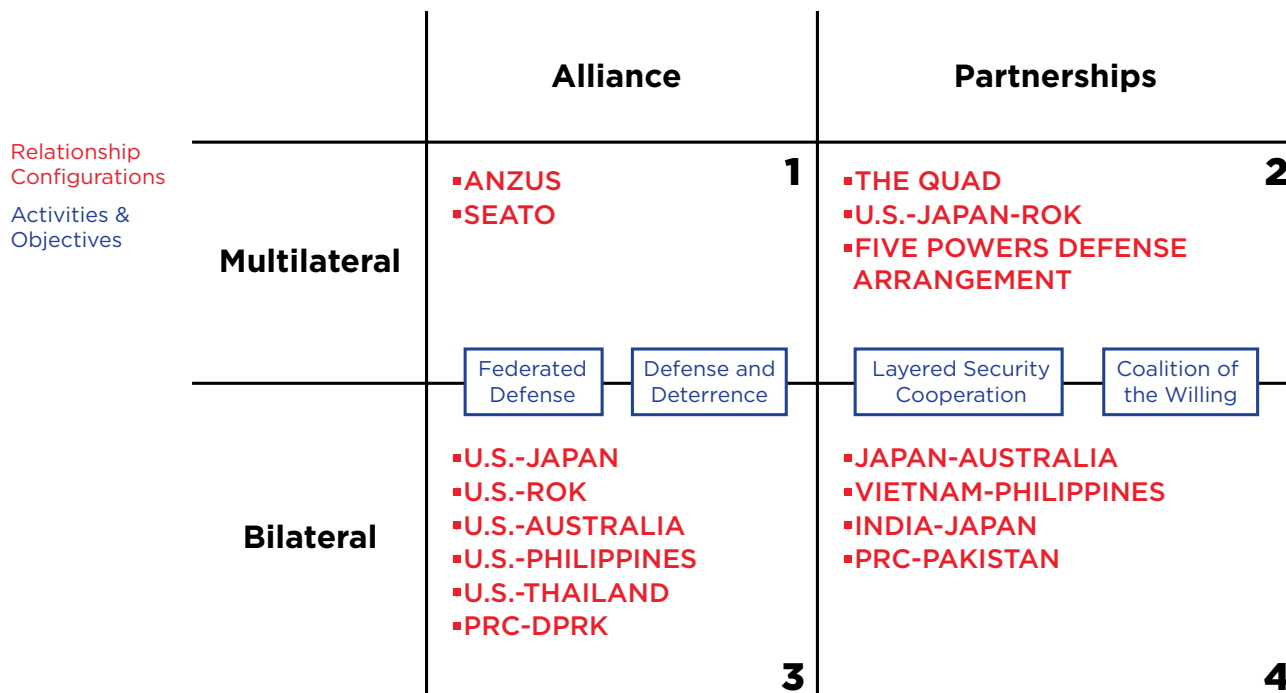
Security networking can take several forms. It may consist of closer ties inside of existing formal alliances (Quadrants 1 and 2 in the matrix above); stronger bilateral partnerships (Quadrant 4); and more robust multilateral or minilateral groupings (Quadrant 3). Where the United States and its allies seek to make formal defense preparations or deter a challenger, formal alliances remain the most appropriate configuration. In cases where missions and objectives can be accomplished in peacetime through layered security agreements or, during crises or conflicts, through coalitions of the willing, bilateral and multilateral partnerships present flexible and more inclusive alternatives.

 **Strengthen Formal Alliance Links (Quads 1 and 3)**

The United States has made important strides in recent years in strengthening its bilateral alliances with Japan and Australia, and yet there remain areas where Washington should look to boost its ties with each country.

- **Adapt the U.S.-Japan Alliance Management Meeting (AMM) to advance a security web with other partners.** The two sides should use the AMM, which brings together mid-level alliance managers on a quarterly basis to discuss the full range of alliance issues, as a platform for more systematic cooperation on security networking. A great deal of this effort can focus on improving security within the First Island Chain, but allies should also coordinate more broadly on long-range challenges. This could eventually include the deployment of additional Marines to U.S. territory in Guam and the Marianas, as well as countering the pressure that neighboring island chains face from outside powers.
- **Expand amphibious exercises.** Australia is in the process of acquiring significant new amphibious capabilities, including landing helicopter dock ships that have been described as a “quantum leap in capability” for the Australian Defence Forces.¹²² These

Networked Security Structures



advances will enable the Australian Army to conduct full-spectrum expeditionary operations, and Japan is standing up a new amphibious rapid deployment brigade and acquiring new platforms.¹²³ The United States and Australia should join the Self-Defence Forces in trilateral amphibious exercises aimed at ensuring maximum interoperability among the three forces.

- **Establish a long-term strategy mechanism with Australia.** The annual Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) provide a useful forum for high-level discussions and an action-forcing mechanism. To supplement this meeting, the United States and Australia should establish a mid-level officials' mechanism for identifying new long-term initiatives for the alliance and driving them forward. Rather than preparing AUSMIN action items, a strategy mechanism of this kind should focus on long-term security challenges in the Indo-Pacific and the alliance's response to them.
- **Establish foreign investment dialogues with Japan and Australia.** In light of the surge of Chinese investment into Japan, Australia, and the United States, Washington should establish bilateral dialogues on inbound foreign direct investment, with an emphasis on China. The participants should aim to share information on existing and potential investments, operations of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, Japan's Ministry of Finance, and Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board, lessons learned on each side, and ways in which to limit potential vulnerabilities to infrastructure, critical technologies, and democratic politics.



Strengthen Bilateral Partnerships (Quad 4)

Moves by Japan, Australia, and other countries to enhance security linkages have turned primarily on the vision and activism of leaders in each country. Among the numerous bilateral security relationships in Asia, the United States can play a particular role in fostering several that are key.

- **Encourage further Japan-Australia security linkages.** Canberra's 2016 decision to procure submarines from France rather than Japan shocked the Tokyo security establishment and raised doubts there about the geopolitical importance that Australia attaches to closer ties with its northeast Asian partner. This difficulty is deeply understood among Australian policymakers, who have reassured Tokyo of their continuing commitment to

deepening ties. Nevertheless, Washington can play a quiet "marriage counselor" role, encouraging both capitals to maintain the forward momentum. An early opportunity to do this would be to push Tokyo and Canberra to approve a reciprocal access agreement on defense services and supplies that would facilitate bilateral military cooperation. The United States should also encourage both sides to deepen cooperation in key areas such as undersea warfare and amphibious operations.¹²⁴

- **Boost Australia-India security ties.** For all the recent warmth between the two, defense ties between Australia and India remain underwhelming. Washington should support the efforts of Canberra and New Delhi to conclude a logistics sharing arrangement like the ones India has signed with the United States and Japan.¹²⁵ The two could also boost air force cooperation and work together in maritime domain awareness. One intriguing proposal would have Australia and India make facilities on Indian Ocean territories available to one another (Cocos Island on the Australian side and Andaman/Nicobar on the Indian side).¹²⁶

An early opportunity to do this would be to push Tokyo and Canberra to approve a reciprocal access agreement on defense services and supplies that would facilitate bilateral military cooperation.

- **Urge closer Australian-Indonesian ties.** Washington should encourage Canberra and Jakarta to move beyond robust counterterrorism cooperation to establish a maritime surveillance effort focused on strategically important straits.¹²⁷
- **Promote India as a meaningful network node.** After Japan and Australia, India is the logical third node in an Asian security network. The past three U.S. administrations have overseen a transformation of U.S.-India security ties, which now include joint exercises, logistics sharing, military exchanges, joint military research and development, and more. As India enhances its defense capabilities and becomes more active in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific, the United States should seek every opportunity to tighten bonds with New Delhi and encourage its allies and partners to do the same.



With India's naval capabilities increasing, it is all the more important to integrate the Indian Navy into a regional security network along with Japan and Australia. (Vranitzky/Wikimedia Commons)

Strengthen Multilateral Partnerships (Quad 2)

A properly engineered security network would comprise more than a series of bilateral relationships in Asia. There is both defensive and diplomatic value in bolstering some of the nascent minilateral groupings.

- **Establish a trilateral national security advisors' coordination process among the United States, Japan, and Australia.** This process should further empower and help guide the already successful trilateral cooperation led by the U.S. Secretaries of Defense and State and their counterparts.
- **Continue to advance quiet but serious defense cooperation among Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States.** Some cooperation is currently occurring, though progress has been slow. The three should build on recent breakthroughs in sharing military intelligence and in other areas, and engage in broader intelligence sharing, contingency planning, and cooperation on missions such as shared maritime domain awareness and ballistic missile defense. They should do all of this with little fanfare.
- **Reenergize quadrilateral cooperation or at least parallel trilateral arrangements.** The promising Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which included Japan and India, met a somewhat ignominious death when Canberra ceased participation in 2008,

reportedly over concerns about China's reaction to it.¹²⁸ A resuscitation should include a regular ministerial-level dialogue as well as active defense cooperation in areas such as maritime domain awareness. To the extent formal quadrilateral cooperation is unattainable, improving coordination between and among existing trilateral security arrangements (U.S.-Japan-Australia and U.S.-Japan-India) may be able to achieve much the same benefit.

Explore New Configurations for Multilateral Partnerships (Quad 2)

In addition to existing formats for security cooperation, the United States should explore new configurations and tailor them for particular activities.

- **Lead on partner capacity coordination.** In addition to the United States, Japan and Australia, India and South Korea have also been providing partner capacity aid to Southeast Asia. Washington should propose an annual regional dialogue (possibly co-chaired by India and South Korea) that would deconflict and coordinate partner capacity building efforts.
- **Add new partners to standing exercises.** Among the opportunities to broaden existing exercises, Washington should push for Australian inclusion in the next Indian-led Malabar naval exercise and, similarly, for India's inclusion in the Talisman Sabre exercises in northern Australia.
- **Bring together like-minded cyber powers.** The United States should establish an annual cyber forum among the computer emergency response teams from the United States, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. The forum would bring together experts to share threat assessments and policies for network protection.¹²⁹
- **Bring Indonesia into cooperative arrangements.** Washington should propose an annual Indonesia-U.S.-Australia trilateral meeting, in which common security agendas could be developed. A first element may be trilateral (or quadrilateral with India) defense cooperation in the Cocos Islands.¹³⁰ This Australian territory, which stands in strategic proximity to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, could become the locus for a consortium of unmanned surveillance platforms to provide enhanced maritime domain awareness to the participating parties.

Create Opportunities for Chinese Participation

As discussed in this paper, Beijing's reaction to the emerging security network in Asia is critical to regional stability and will affect the willingness of participant countries to become active.

- **Establish a new HA/DR exercise involving China.**

Instead of inviting China to participate in standing exercises, the United States should seek to integrate China with a new effort focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Such an exercise, which could involve Japan, the United States, Australia, China, and other countries, would provide opportunities for military-to-military contact and communication while avoiding the security risks that would attend Chinese participation in more higher-end versions.

Instead of inviting China to participate in standing exercises, the United States should seek to integrate China with a new effort focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

- **Manage communications.** Affirmatively endorsing the Asian network concept differs from publicly trumpeting it at every opportunity. Indeed, Washington should avoid the appearance that the phenomenon is U.S.-driven, rather than springing indigenously from a region whose interests compel it. Injecting the United States into every new security relationship in Asia, or too-publicly suggesting the potential for new arrangements to balance China, risks repelling would-be partners in the region and arming Beijing with evidence to charge participants with containment.



Chinese and Norwegian vessels get in formation for the 2014 RIMPAC exercise. Encouraging Beijing to continue its participation in these drills will greatly enhance stability in the region. (RIMPAC/Wikimedia Commons)

Conclusion

Networking Asian security is and should be integral to the next phase of America's approach to the region. The United States will not be the sole beneficiary of such an arrangement. By forging spoke-to-spoke connections and ties with new partners, American allies will be able to do more, and in more places. Non-allies will be able to forge security ties that will have the effect of extending their reach and capability. Despite downside risks associated with such an Asian security network—including the possibility that the United States could be drawn into adventurism and regional rivalries—such an effort, backed by an increasing commitment of U.S. defense and diplomatic and economic resources, is the best insurance against instability and coercion.

Ultimately the success or failure of a networked security architecture will depend on the degree to which the United States remains committed to Asia. A stable, peaceful Asia-Pacific governed by a rules-based order remains critical to U.S. security and economic interests. Its long-term success will require a self-sustaining security network built on intra-Asian defense ties that can stand apart from the United States—but will still need U.S. commitment and leadership to get there. Those ties have in recent years emerged organically. Now is the time to move from evolution to serious planning and execution.

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