

The Emergence of a 2nd Order Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific

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INTRODUCTION

The traditional Asia-Pacific¹ security architecture comprises bilateral and predominantly formal defence alliances between the United States (US) and its allies in the region. Barack Obama's Pivot to Asia has brought about a strengthening of already existing bilateral military alliances, the establishment of defence cooperation with new partners, and the deepening of relations between the US and East Asia's security institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus)², and the East Asia Summit (EAS).³ One component of the Pivot that is frequently overlooked is the stimulation of security linkages between US allies, such as Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Thailand, and Taiwan, and the quasi-ally Singapore. In fact, an array of intra-Asian defence agreements has been established in recent years. It turns out that a vast number of these agreements encompass linkages between formal US allies (spoke-to-spoke cooperation) such as Japan's defence cooperation with the Philippines, Australia, South Korea, Thailand, and Singapore. Equally relevant in this regard are Australia's defence partnerships with Japan, South Korea (Republic of Korea), and the Philippines but also linkages of US allies

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¹ Due to the fact that Australia is an ally of the US and India a possible strategic partner, it makes sense to use the geographically wide concept "Asia-Pacific", which encompasses South Asia, East Asia (Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia) and Oceania in order to account for the variety of security linkages in the region.

² The ADMM-Plus includes the ten ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries. These are Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, and the United States.

³ The current president of the US supports the bilateral security relationships while weakening his support for multilateral economic cooperation with East Asia. Thus the security side of the US Pivot to Asia remains largely intact.

with possible new partner countries or strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific, like Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India with which most of the US allies have defence relationships.

How can we account for the establishment, design, and effects of these intra-Asia-Pacific defence linkages? The main argument of this chapter is that intra-Asian defence agreements can be seen as the “2nd order” of the Asia-Pacific security architecture. While the “1st order security architecture” consists of bilateral and multilateral security linkages between the US and Asia-Pacific states as well as regional defence institutions in East Asia, the 2nd order security architecture contains recent intra-Asia-Pacific defence agreements. It is specifically argued that in contrast to the 1st order alliances which have been established due to the suspected expansion of communist regimes in Cold War Asia and have been maintained owing to the economic rise of China, the 2nd order architecture is causally linked to apprehensions of East Asian allies and other possible strategic partners of the US in the region over China’s growing assertiveness and a possible strategic retreat of the US from the region. The current US administration and its foreign policy could result in an increased importance of this 2nd order architecture. All the security actors involved in the 1st and 2nd security architecture of the Asia-Pacific have formal or at least informal security linkages to the United States.

The design of the intra-Asian defence arrangements takes mainly bilateral shapes; some assume trilateral formats and only a few are multilateral. They differ significantly from the formal 1st order institutions as they are mostly informal defence institutions. The main security actors in the 2nd order architecture are the US’ closest allies in the Asia-Pacific, namely Japan and Australia⁴. They are the emerging nodes in the current intra-Asian defence network since they have the political will and the capabilities to meet other states’ security demands in the architecture and project power onto the region. Regarding the effect on the overall Asia-Pacific security architecture it is argued that the intra-Asian defence agreements have initiated a turn away from mainly regional economic cooperation to significant regional security cooperation that is beginning to outweigh the former. Beyond a higher degree of defence diplomacy, spoke-to-spoke arms sales and the number of joint exercises and military trainings have risen significantly. Consequently, without having to rely on US capabilities, hard power exchanges among US allies and strategic partners have increased within the 2nd order security architecture of the Asia-Pacific.

⁴ South Korea might become a defence hub in the future. Although it has the capabilities to assume the status of a node, it lacks the political will to act accordingly.

EMPIRICAL AND ANALYTICAL SETTING

A security architecture can be conceived of as “an overarching, coherent and comprehensive security structure for a geographically-defined area, which facilitates the resolution of that region’s policy concerns and achieves its security objectives” (Tow and Taylor 2010). Based on this definition this chapter will firstly describe two relevant manifestations of this architecture in the Asia-Pacific region, namely the 1st and 2nd order security architecture. In a second step a simple model is derived that allows for the analysis of causes, forms, and effects of the 2nd order security architecture.

1st order security architecture: Traditional security alliances and multilateral cooperation

The traditional Asia-Pacific security architecture or 1st order security architecture consists of a number of mainly bilateral and formal security alliances between the United States of America and specific states in the region. Security alliances such as those between the US and Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia were all established during the Cold War as a means to contain the alleged spread of communism in the Asia-Pacific. This strategy went along the logic of the Truman doctrine, a US foreign policy strategy during the Cold War. As systemic bipolarity waned with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, so did the danger of Asia becoming communist. Yet, the bilateral alliances still persisted. They did not become obsolete simply because their main purpose was customised to changes in the international system, similar to the reorganisation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) after the demise of the Warsaw Pact. The new function of the security architecture was to make sure that China’s rise would be controlled by the US by means of projecting military power onto the region. This enabled small and middle-sized Asian countries to pursue a mixed foreign policy strategy, namely hedging: bandwagoning with China economically and balancing against China with the help of the US if the need to do so arises.

The strategic Pivot to Asia had been initiated by the Obama Administration. It is basically a foreign policy strategy aimed at pivoting or rebalancing away from Southwest Asia to the Asia-Pacific region. The main goals are the strengthening of existing bilateral alliances, putting an extended focus on emerging partners, fostering multilateral relations with the region, and advancing economic and military cooperation. With regard to the first goal, which is key to the Pivot strategy, the US tries to deepen and adapt its already existing alliances with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, and its strategic partner Singapore to new security realities such as the rise of China and the challenge of non-traditional security issues like human trafficking, or illegal migration. Another focus of the rebalance

is to foster cooperation with emerging partners like Vietnam, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Malaysia, thus enlarging the network of possible security partner countries in the region. The third part of the strategy aims at strengthening the US' presence and diplomatic activities in East Asian multilateral institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, obtaining membership to the East Asia Summit – which eventually happened in 2011 – and intensifying US-ASEAN relations. These three targets form the basis for the fourth aim of advancing military and economic relationships with Asia-Pacific countries (Campbell and Andrews 2013).

2nd order security architecture: Intra-Asian defence cooperation

An essential part of the Pivot, which often tends to be ignored, is the promotion of security and defence cooperation between the “spokes” of the US-dominated security architecture. As it happens, a large number of intra-Asian defence institutions have been initiated in recent years. Most of these agreements entail links between formal US allies in the Asia-Pacific region. The respective spoke-to-spoke cooperation involves for instance Japan's defence cooperation with the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, and Singapore. Another US ally that has established considerable defence links to other allies or strategic US partners is Australia. This Pacific state keeps defence partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and the Philippines. It is also noteworthy that the “new” security nodes in the Asia-Pacific security architecture, Japan and Australia, have also established defence partnerships with possible strategic partners of the US, like Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. Beyond the bilateral cooperation layer, trilateral cooperation between the United States, Australia, and Japan has proven to be vital for strengthening the defence and security capabilities of ASEAN countries. In addition, it is possible that the so-called quadrilateral initiative, an unsuccessful security framework initiated by Japanese Prime Minister Abe in 2006 comprising Australia, Japan, India and the US, could be revived. Finally, another example of trilateral cooperation in the 2nd order is the Japan-Singapore-India maritime partnership.

Cause, design, and effects of the 2nd order security architecture

What are the reasons for the establishment of these intra-Asia-Pacific defence agreements? How are they designed? What are their possible effects on the general security architecture in the Asia-Pacific? As stated above, both 1st and 2nd order can be seen as two different, yet complementing layers of the Asia-Pacific security architecture. While the first order security architecture dates back to the Cold War era, the second order security architecture contains relatively new intra-Asian defence institutions.

The *causes* for the rise of defence cooperation in the 1st and 2nd order security architecture differ. The first order had been initiated as a means to balance the feared spread of communist states in the Asia-Pacific during Cold War times. In contrast, the US' allies and their strategic partners in the 2nd order architecture basically worry about the growing Chinese assertiveness, especially in the South and East China Sea. Equally important in this respect are concerns over the US' defence budget cuts and US domestic politics that could have a negative impact on the US' willingness and capability to project power onto the region. The rather diffuse Asia policy of the Trump administration does not really help to mitigate these misgivings.

With regard to the *design* of the intra-Asia-Pacific defence arrangements it is obvious that most of them feature formal or at least informal relations with the United States. There is also a clear tendency of these intra-Asian defence regimes towards bilateralism. Only a few are of trilateral nature or have multilateral characteristics. These second order institutions are mostly informal and thus rank below the formal alliance level. They are mainly established by the new Asian security actors and providers beyond the United States – Japan, Australia, and South Korea. They are the closest US allies in the region, and have the political will as well as capabilities to project power and function as nodes or hub-states in this 2nd order security architecture.

As to the *effects* of the intra-Asia-Pacific defence arrangements on the overall architecture it is argued that we firstly see a significant shift away from economic cooperation to security cooperation. There is however not a zero-sum game relationship between economic and security cooperation in the region: The management of economic interdependence is still a very important factor in the foreign policies of the states in the region, but security has become such a concern to all states, that they are willing to fill a possible vacuum left by the US with their own intra-regional defence cooperation agreements. Three specific aspects of 2nd order security cooperation are of importance here: a high degree of defence diplomacy or respective institution building, spoke-to-spoke arms sales, and a significant increase in joint military exercises as well as military training in the region.

THE 2ND ORDER SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

This chapter first focuses on Japan's and Australia's recent defence arrangements in the Asia-Pacific. In the following section, we will take a look at trilateral security cooperation between the US and regional partners. These two developments constitute the main elements of the 2nd order and largely determine the current dynamics of the overall security architecture in the region.

Japan's defence linkages in the Asia-Pacific

In the recent Japanese Defence White Paper concerns about the security situation in the Asia-Pacific are stated and possible respective defence cooperation proposed. With regard to security issues relevant to Japan's security environment, factors like the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the threat of international terrorism, and risks relating to global commons such as the oceans and cyberspace are mentioned. Japan seems to be specifically worried about unilateral actions in the South China Sea aimed at changing the status quo by coercive means. As these are being executed without respect for the United Nations Law of the Sea, freedom of navigation, and freedom of flight over the high seas, Japan sees its basic normative goals violated, especially by China's behaviour (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 311).

Since the mentioned issues have an impact on regional stability, Japan tries to ensure the latter by promoting bilateral and multilateral security cooperation. Since trust-building between relevant countries and partners in the region is of particular relevance in this strategy, bilateralism looms large in Japan's current foreign defence policy. In recent years Japan has intensified its security cooperation with US allies and (strategic) partners in the Asia-Pacific region who share its strategic interests, like Australia, India, South Korea, and selected ASEAN countries.

Japan-Australia

With Australia, Japan has established one of its closest defence relationships. What binds these two countries are their status as US allies and shared values including democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. With regard to defence Japan and Australia have based their security cooperation on several agreements like the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (2007), the Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (2010), Japan-Australia Information Security Agreement (2013), as well as several Japan-Australia "2+2" meetings to foster defence cooperation. Recently, at the occasion of the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting in 2014, Japanese Prime Minister Abe labelled the Japan-Australia partnership as a "special strategic" linkage for the 21st century (Prime Minister Abbott and Prime Minister Abe Joint Statement "Special Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century" 2014). Moreover both sides signed an agreement concerning the transfer of defence equipment and technology. In May 2015 both countries agreed to deepen their defence cooperation through joint exercises and other programmes. In June 2015, at the Defence Ministerial talks in Tokyo, both sides reiterated their consensus by strongly opposing unilateral strategies to alter the status quo in the South China Sea. Instead solutions should be found in accordance with international law. The close partnership between Japan and Australia was further strengthened when in December 2015 both countries confirmed their

“Special Strategic Relationship” with regard to military cooperation by conducting joint exercises which took place in Japanese coastal waters in 2015 and in Australian coastal waters in 2016. Additionally, the two countries have engaged in activities involving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 323-324).

Japan-South Korea

Beyond some dissonances relating to Japan’s militaristic past and how it deals with it, South Korea (ROK) and Japan share very important strategic interests as neighbouring countries but also as US allies in the Asia-Pacific region. Both countries hold similar views on the North Korean nuclear and missile programme, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, anti-piracy measures, as well as maritime security. These shared strategic preferences manifest themselves in defence cooperation initiatives that, as in the case of Japan-Australia cooperation, have also significantly intensified in recent years. Cases in point are the Japan-ROK security dialogue at the foreign and defence working level that was held in April 2015, on the occasion of which the two countries’ defence policy overlaps were discussed. In May 2015 Japanese Defence Minister Nakatani organised the first Japan-ROK defence dialogue in four years. At the defence ministers’ meeting in Seoul in October 2015 both sides underlined the importance of bilateral defence cooperation as well as trilateral cooperation between the United States, South Korea, and Japan. In January 2016, at the sidelines of the 15th Shangri-La Dialogue, a Ministerial Dialogue between the two sides took place at which the ministers affirmed the further deepening of bilateral defence cooperation. Practical exercises were already held in October 2015 when the Japan Self-Defence Forces and the Republic of Korea Armed Forces conducted search and rescue exercises. Since then visits and military-based exchanges have increased significantly (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 324-325).

Japan-India

Japan views India not only as a future economic power but also as an important strategic partner as it is located near sea lanes that are vital for Japan’s economy. Similar to Australia and South Korea, Japan shares important values and norms with India like democracy and freedom of the seas. Both moreover share an interest in Asia’s peace, stability, and prosperity. The two countries increased their defence diplomacy and have established a Special Strategic and Global Partnership which is inter alia based on a number of important defence agreements. One of these is the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation that was signed in October 2008. India is only the third country besides the United States and Australia with which Japan has established such an agreement. One year later the prime ministers of both countries finalised an Action Plan to foster security cooperation. Against this background

numerous defence interactions like service-to-service exchanges, including bilateral and multilateral exercises, were initiated and primarily located in the areas of maritime security and anti-piracy operations. In September 2014 the Memorandum of Japan-India Defence Cooperation and Exchanges was signed. It aims at deepening the partnership on the regional and global level of the international system (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 326).

Recent developments in the defence partnership between Japan and India hint at its further consolidation. In September 2014 steps were taken to upgrade the Japan-India partnership to a “special strategic global partnership”. This partnership treaty included inter alia the participation of Japan Maritime Self-Defence Forces (MSDF) in the long-standing India-US naval Malabar exercises. At the occasion of the India-Japan Ministerial Meeting in March 2015 discussions with respect to defence equipment exchanges were initiated. It was further agreed to continue bilateral maritime training and cooperation of ground and air forces. Defence cooperation was further deepened at the bilateral summit meeting in December 2015, on the occasion of which the prime ministers agreed to elevate Japan-India cooperation to an “action-oriented” partnership. In this respect agreements on the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology and the General Security of Military Information were signed. Based on these agreements Japan and India were able to consolidate their defence equipment cooperation and information exchange measures (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 327).

Japan-ASEAN countries

Japan has sound diplomatic relations with most of the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as well as with ASEAN itself. Yet, defence relations are pronounced with US allies like the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore and US-friendly states and possible defence partners Indonesia and Vietnam. What unite these countries are concerns over China’s growing assertiveness especially in the South China Sea. This connects to Japan’s strategic interest in the region which revolves around the Malacca Straits and the South China Sea, both of which are important sea lanes for maritime traffic heading for and emanating from Japanese harbours.

As US allies, the *Philippines* and Japan share fundamental interests and also specific preferences regarding China and its growing assertiveness in the South China Sea issue. This is why the strategic partnership agreement between the two countries, initially established as an economic pact in 2011, was complemented with defence elements in 2013 which have a specific focus on maritime affairs. Other defence agreements, which followed, were the Memorandum on Defence Cooperation and Exchanges in 2015 that underlined the goal of the two countries to cooperate in maritime security particularly through training and exercises. Moreover, Japan

and the Philippines agreed upon the Defence Equipment and Technology Transfer Agreement in February 2016 (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 331-332). The latter was of utmost importance for the Philippines as it suited the strategy of Philippine President Aquino III to modernise the country's military. Important elements of this strategy are the diversification of defence equipment sources and the establishment of defence relationships with Asia-Pacific actors such as Japan and Australia. It is no wonder then that in addition to American vessels, Japanese destroyers and submarines have recently been allowed to dock in the Philippine harbour Subic Bay.

Thailand and Japan have good diplomatic relations due to long-standing development and economic relationships which also include defence elements. These were already considerably strengthened in 2005 when the Thai and Japanese armed forces for the first time participated in the Cobra Gold exercise conducted by Thailand and the United States. Beyond defence capacity-building assistance both countries decided to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation and exchanges in June 2016 (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 332).

Since 2009, *Singapore* and Japan have been cooperating in defence issues. In the same year both countries issued a memorandum on defence cooperation and exchange. There is a long history of defence discussions and high-level exchanges on regional security issues. Port calls are legion and both countries work together in United Nations peacekeeping operations, anti-piracy programmes, and service-to-service exchanges (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 331).

Due to the fact that *Vietnam* is a riparian state of the South China Sea and faces similar issues with regard to China, Japan has been able to develop defence cooperation with the Southeast Asian state. Against this background both countries established an Extensive Strategic Partnership in 2014. One year later, in the course of a Defence Ministerial Meeting, the two ministers agreed to deepen defence cooperation. This process resulted in port calls by the MSDF at the Cam Ranh Bay port in Vietnam. Furthermore high-level talks regarding defence equipment and technology cooperation have been initiated. In 2015 both countries agreed to foster service-to-service exchanges. These defence exchanges increased significantly in 2016 through multiple activities such as search and rescue operations involving MSDF patrol aircraft and Vietnamese People's Navy and Air force (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 330-331).

As *Indonesia* is the largest nation in Southeast Asia with considerable economic and increasingly military weight, Japan has established close defence relations with it. Due to a normative consensus that is based on the fact that both states are democracies and sea powers, Indonesia and Japan agreed in 2015 to strengthen their strategic partnership. At the respective Japan-Indonesia Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultation both sides agreed upon the transfer of defence equipment

and technologies, to participate in the maritime exercise Komodo, as well as to conduct security and rescue exercises (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 330).

Australia's defence linkages in the Asia-Pacific

Australia is, next to Japan, the strategically most important US ally in the Asia-Pacific. Similar to Japan, Australia assumes the role of a regional security provider or hub without questioning the role of the US as the supreme security guarantor. Australia has established important intra-regional defence relationships with Japan, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea and the Philippines.

Australia-India

Australia regards India as a rising regional power and it supports its growing strategic visibility in the Asia-Pacific. Both countries share values such as democracy, freedom of the seas and respect for international law, preferences regarding maritime security in the Indian Ocean, regional stability, and counter-terrorism measures. India is also a security partner of the United States. Against this background both countries agreed on a bilateral defence cooperation framework in 2014. In this institutional context Australia and India engage in a regular strategic dialogue, bilateral training, and exercises. Specific fields of defence cooperation include maritime security, counter-terrorism, capacity enhancement, as well as defence science and technology (Australia Defence Paper 2016 134).

Australia-Southeast Asia

With regard to Southeast Asia, Australia has distinct security and economic interests. There are two reasons for this: Firstly, geographic proximity renders Southeast Asian security issues such as overlapping and competing territorial claims, growth in military capabilities, and terrorism as relevant for Australia's regional threat perception. Secondly, almost two thirds of Australian trade exports pass through the South China Sea. This implies that possible regional instabilities in Southeast Asia would have a significant effect on Australia's security situation. As a result, Australia has established important defence agreements with states from Southeast Asia like Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Besides Japan, *Indonesia* is the most important security partner in the region owing to shared maritime borders and respective interests. These are stability of shared maritime domains, free movement of trade and investment, as well as combating terrorism and human trafficking. The main focus of both countries' defence policies lies in the field of maritime affairs. Against this background a number of bilateral defence agreements have been established. The institutional foundation of the defence relations consists of the 2006 Lombok Treaty, the 2012

Defence Cooperation Agreement, and the 2014 Joint Understanding on Intelligence Cooperation. In addition, the Indonesia-Australia Defence Strategic Dialogue has been launched, in which defence and foreign affairs ministers as well as navy and armed forces personnel interact and exchange views. The main areas for cooperation encompass counter-terrorism, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping, and intelligence. A military education partnership covers areas like staff college exchanges, mobile training teams, and English language courses. Finally, Australia will help Indonesia to modernise its military forces (Australian Defence White Paper 2016: 59).

Australia values *Singapore* as an important security partner because of its shared interest in a secure maritime trading environment and its advanced military equipment. Institutionally the bilateral cooperation rests on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in June 2015. According to this agreement both countries will cooperate in five areas: exchanges of military and civilian personnel, greater cooperation on combating terrorism and cybercrime, enhanced intelligence and information sharing, science and technology cooperation, as well as co-development of training areas and new training initiatives (Australian Defence White Paper 2016: 129-130).

Malaysia and Australia are both members of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FDPA)⁵ and share the same strategic interests. As an FDPA-member Malaysia accommodates the Integrated Area Defence System which operates as a coordinating node for FDPA activities. Furthermore, Malaysia facilitates Australia's military presence at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base Butterworth as part of its FDPA commitment. In November 2015 both countries signed the Australia-Malaysia Joint Declaration of Strategic Partnership in which the continuation and deepening of the Malaysia-Australia Joint Defence Programme and their contribution to the FDPA is affirmed (Australian Defence White Paper 2016: 130-131).

Australia and *Thailand* have shared a long history of defence cooperation since 1945. In 1972 a formal "Defence Cooperation Programme" was initiated. Today bilateral defence cooperation comprises inter alia counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, maritime security, logistics, capability development, and aviation safety. Yet, Australia links its continuous defence support for Thailand's military to progress being made in Thailand's fragile democratisation process (Australian Defence White Paper 2016: 130-131).

Trilateral cooperation involving the US

Regarding the design of intra-Asia-Pacific defence arrangements in the 2nd order security architecture we have so far taken a closer look at the obvious dominant

⁵ Singapore is also a member of the FDPA.

pattern of defence bilateralism between the regional hubs Japan and Australia and their defence partners. There are only a few trilateral or minilateral cooperation schemes in the 2nd order security architecture, albeit relevant since they involve the dominant security provider of the 1st order security architecture, the US, and its closest and most capable allies and partners. The respective defence triads are firstly, Japan, the US, and South Korea; secondly, Japan, the US, and Australia; and thirdly, Japan, the US, and India.

Japan, the US, and South Korea

As US allies, Japan and the Republic of Korea share fundamental strategic interests with each other and with the United States of America. Against this background policy dialogues between the defence ministries of the three countries have taken place since 1994. This agreement was strengthened with the signing of the Information Sharing Arrangement between the defence authorities from Japan, the US, and the ROK in December 2014. This specific defence arrangement resulted actually from the continued exchange of information on North Korea's nuclear and missile programme. Another trilateral meeting was held in March 2016. It resulted in the further consolidation of this defence cooperation scheme. The Japan-US-ROK Defence Trilateral Talks (DTT) fostered a continuous defence dialogue at the working and director generals' level. Important trilateral meetings were held in 2016 with regard to the North Korean nuclear weapons tests and ballistic missile launches. At the level of service-to-service cooperation, the American, Japanese, and South Korean chiefs of staff held their first meeting in July 2014. Among the topics discussed were again North Korea and the issue of how to deepen the trilateral defence cooperation between the three countries. While political tensions between Japan and South Korea regarding Japan's militaristic past and how it deals with it poses an obstacle to significant security cooperation between the two US allies and thus for the triad, this is clearly not the case for the trilateral defence relationship between Japan, the US, and Australia (Japanese Defence White Paper 2016: 325-326).

Japan, the US, and Australia

Probably the trilateral defence arrangement with the highest diplomatic density is the one between the US, Japan, and Australia. As US allies both Australia and Japan share the same norms, values, and interests with regard to democracy, freedom of the seas, and the willingness to apply international norms such as the United Nations Law of the Sea to regional maritime issues. These common denominators gave rise to the "Trilateral Security Dialogue" (TSD), which has been conducted since 2006, and the establishment of the "Security and Defence Cooperation Forum" (SDCF) in 2007. These regular and institutionalised defence dialogues between Australia, Japan, and the United States intensified in recent years. They also fostered training

exercises like Talisman Sabre, which is a significant Australia and United States military training exercise aimed at planning and conducting defence operations. The Japan Self-Defence Forces took part in this exercise for the first time in July 2015. The main reason for the intensification of this cooperation is the perceived growing assertiveness of China in the South and the East China Sea (Schoff 2015).

Japan, the US, and India

The US, Japan, and India conduct military exercises on a regular basis. The Malabar exercise which initially had been an exclusive bilateral exercise between the US and India became more inclusive and thus allowed for the participation of Australia and Japan in recent years, thus allowing for the potential reactivation of the quadrilateral initiative. Apart from these trilateral exercises all three countries have been engaging in defence dialogues since 2011 at the director generals' level. In 2015 it was decided to elevate the trilateral dialogue to the foreign ministers level. This diplomatic upgrade was done in order to further consolidate the strategic partnership between the three states. At the inaugural meeting all three foreign ministers stated their common support for democracy, peace, and a rules-based international order. With regard to the South China Sea the three ministers emphasised the need to maintain maritime security through peacefully settling conflicts on the basis of international law and to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight (Rajagopalan and Sylvia Mishra 2015).

CONCLUSION

Intra-Asia-Pacific defence cooperation matters in the current security architecture. The respective agreements have increased due to insecurities linked to the growing assertiveness of China and a possible downsizing of American strategic influence in the region. The numerous intra-Asia-Pacific institutions are mainly bilateral, informal, and emanate from the willingness and capabilities of (new) security hubs such as Japan, Australia, and possibly India in the future to share defence expertise and hard power with likeminded partners in the region. All these intra-Asia-Pacific defence agreements form what can be called the 2nd order security architecture. While the 1st order consists of the formal bilateral US-led alliances with specific states in the Asia-Pacific as well as multilateral relations, the US is not out of the strategic game in the 2nd order. This is obvious when considering the fact that the most important trilateral or minilateral defence agreements are steered by the United States. Moreover, all of the 2nd order agreements are concluded between spoke-countries of the 1st order and partner countries of the US. Yet, with uncertainties in US home politics and insecurity rising in the Asia-Pacific the demand for intra-regional security cooperation is likely to rise even further. The 2nd order

satisfies this need and remains open to new demands due to the open and informal design of the respective defence agreements. The high degree of defence diplomacy, the significant increase in joint military exercises and training, as well as increasing spoke-to-spoke arms sales are all features and consequences of the rise of 2nd order defence cooperation or institutions. These have already challenged the dominance of economic cooperation over defence cooperation in the region. Most probably high politics will become more important than low politics in a region that needs more security or defence cooperation than ever before to ensure stability.

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