Security in Asia Pacific: The Dynamics of Alignment

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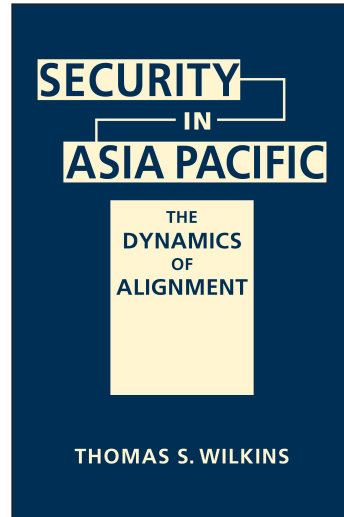
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Security Alignment in Asia Pacific: A New Approach

The Asia Pacific region is increasingly becoming the primary locus of world geopolitics and geo-economics.[1] Indeed, a recent Chinese white paper declared that "it has become the most dynamic region with the strongest potential in the world."[2] As a consequence, Robert Ayson claims that "no region matters more than Asia to the world's security."[3] Given the region's tumultuous past, combined with the huge advances made in terms of economic, political, and military power in recent decades, an accurate appreciation of its fundamental security dynamics is therefore a crucial undertaking.[4] Yet, analysts are sharply divided over the prospects for peace and stability in this pivotal region. While liberal international relations (IR) scholars point to the extraordinary level of "complex economic interdependence" and the plenitude of multilateral security institutions as a brake on conflict, realists take a dimmer view of the rapid military buildup that is occurring against a backdrop of simmering maritime, territorial, and historical disputes.[5] The extraordinary pace at which developments unfold leads Rémy Davison to add that the "Asia-Pacific is such a fluid and dynamic region that it demands constant reappraisal and reconsideration."[6] Indeed, the dynamism of the region can catch policymakers and analysts off guard, making improved understanding of these perplexing regional security structures of paramount importance. Hence, according to Mark Beeson, the "Asia-Pacific is arguably the most important, but also the most complex and contested, region on the planet."[7]

As this book neared completion in 2017–2018, a series of ostensibly ground-shaking events initiated by the new Republican administration of Donald Trump testified to the volatility of the region's politics and threatened to upend many long-held assumptions about the United States' future

role. The inconsequential summit meeting in Singapore with North Korea in June 2018, following a war of words in the Twitter-sphere and the announcement of an incipient trade war with China, has grabbed the attention of policymakers and analysts. Indeed, Trump has done serious damage to US credibility in the Asia Pacific by disparaging Asian allies and withdrawing from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).[8] As a result, commentators have signaled that the Barack Obama–era policy of restoring US power and purpose in Asia under the "pivot"/"rebalance" is now "dead."[9] Yet for all the *Sturm und Drang* of recent events, actual policy documents such as the US National Security Strategy[10] have conservatively upheld the core precepts of US engagement with Asia Pacific security, and analysts have consoled themselves that despite the unguarded rhetoric, real departures from these precepts have yet to be actually realized.[11] Fundamentally, strategic decisionmakers in the US bureaucracy remain committed to upholding US primacy in the Asia Pacific in the teeth of ever-rising Chinese power and assertiveness, only drawing into sharper relief the intensification of Sino-American rivalry and the competition for power and influence in the Asia Pacific that continues to unfold.[12]

Beijing of course has profited from the reign of political chaos in the White House to further advance its own strategic interests in the region.[13] The 2017 XIX Party Congress enshrined "Xi Jinping thought" as its guiding light, while the 2018 National People's Congress appointed him as apparent president-for-life.[14] Under this strong leadership, Beijing has moved rapidly to fill the vacuum left by US disarray, pushing ahead with its "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative and consolidating the projection of its power both globally and regionally, particularly in Eurasia and the contested South China Sea. In the space between this spiraling great power competition, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has sought to uphold its claim to "centrality" via its extended pan-regional organs, particularly the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), while having to struggle harder to remain relevant as power politics intensify, and as new Beijing-based initiatives, such as Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), threaten to displace some of its traditional roles. Though the "Trump factor" may be a novel and disruptive element in regional politics, in terms of underlying strategic dynamics, *plus ça change* seems an appropriate motif. Given that current times are as ever cloaked in uncertainty, instability, and unpredictability, it is perhaps wiser to take a step back from the focus on "eventism" that marks the age we now live in and undertake a rigorous examination of the deeper structural trends and dynamics, eschewing punditry and future-casting since such efforts have often resulted in little more than a departure into quasi-fiction.[15]

Thus, in line with this injunction and in order to assist in the process of understanding regional security, it is essential to select and deploy the appropriate analytical tools, based upon the relevant theoretical foundations within the discipline of IR as well as extradisciplinary approaches, to make sense of this diverse, unpredictable, and complicated security environment. Indeed, many concepts and theories are competing in the intellectual marketplace to gain analytical purchase on both the pan-regional "macroprocesses" and the more narrowly defined issues ("microprocesses") across the Asia Pacific region. In addition to the principal application of the core research traditions of IR, namely, realism, liberalism, and constructivism, much of the literature applies notions of security "order" or "architecture" as framing concepts to interpret security relations in the region, as discussed further below.[16] All of these theoretical/conceptual instruments serve a useful purpose by enhancing our comprehension of the region's security trends, but they also entail some limitations, which will be illustrated in due course. These valuable efforts notwithstanding, serious lacunae in our knowledge persist, with Beeson maintaining that "of all the world's regions, the Asia-Pacific is arguably the least well understood."[17]
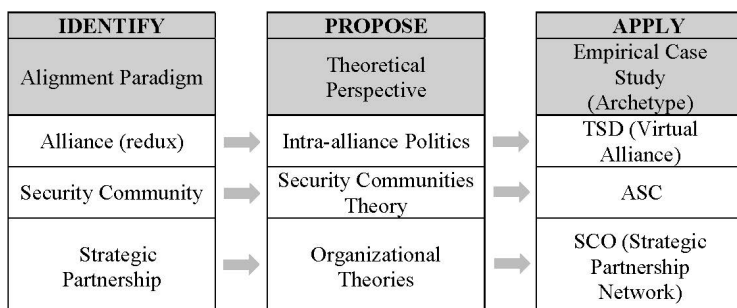
In this book, I present a new approach to conceptualizing security in the Asia Pacific region through the perspective of alignment. Though the term will be further extrapolated in detail below, it is sufficient now to indicate that by *alignment* I basically refer to "agreements between two or more states to undertake defense-related security cooperation."[18] This approach is designed to facilitate an understanding of the complex patterns of regional interaction and broader security directions from a new and different angle. Indeed, the alignment choices made by both major and minor states have a profound impact on regional security trends and the prospects for peace and conflict. As George Liska attests, "Alignments are always instrumental in structuring the state system, sometimes transforming it."[19] Anchored in the main research traditions of IR, and in some ways subsuming related framing concepts such as security order and architecture, this volume provides an alternate and novel approach using alignment theories to capture the key security dynamics of this pivotal region.

However, as the pages that follow demonstrate, our understanding of alignment theory itself is also long overdue for revision and improvement in order to better accommodate the non-alliance or "new" alliance forms of security cooperation that have risen to prominence in recent years. This is a pressing task given the wide proliferation of these new forms of alignment in the post–Cold War era, which are especially conspicuous in Asia Pacific. The region encompasses a range of bilateral strategic partnerships, minilateral groupings, issue-specific alignments and hybrid organizations, as well as the representative case studies examined in this

volume.[20] Thus, to remedy the situation requires the aggregation of diverse bodies of conceptual literature pertaining to alignment and their reformulation into a comprehensive, cohesive, and structured format. This book therefore serves two purposes: presenting a reconstituted approach to alignment theory and applying the resulting frameworks to the key security groupings in the Asia Pacific region in order to gain a fresh appreciation of their workings.

To achieve this dual purpose, I first outline the three prominent patterns of alignment as they obtain in contemporary international politics: the alliance (redux), the security community, and the strategic partnership. This is followed by their corresponding conceptual and theoretical bases: intra-alliance politics, security community theory, and organizational theories. Through this exercise, an overarching analytical framework can be derived to structure a holistic understanding of such macroprocesses in regional security (see Figure 1.1). It is my aim to render a service to scholars and analysts by providing a comprehensive analytical tool kit that may be applied to a variety of alignment case studies, past and present. It is also a sine qua non that such a combined framework acknowledges the major transformation in the empirical nature and conceptual understanding of alignments that has occurred since the end of the Cold War. As will become quickly evident through the following discussion, much of the IR scholarship has neglected to keep pace with the transformation of alignment paradigms since that time. A failure to appreciate the changed nature and purpose of alignments in the twenty-first century potentially leads to the misapplication of obsolete paradigms and frameworks and, consequently, threatens to skew our understandings.

Figure 1.1 Methodological Approach

IDENTIFY	PROPOSE	APPLY
Alignment Paradigm	Theoretical Perspective	Empirical Case Study (Archetype)
Alliance (redux)	Intra-alliance Politics	TSD (Virtual Alliance)
Security Community	Security Communities Theory	ASC
Strategic Partnership	Organizational Theories	SCO (Strategic Partnership Network)

Note: TSD is the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue; ASC is the ASEAN Security Community; and SCO is the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

In order to illuminate regional security trends from a new perspective, the core of my analysis focuses on the three most prominent examples of such differing alignments in Asia Pacific: the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD)—a virtual trilateral alliance; the ASEAN Security Community (ASC)—a security community; and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)—a strategic partnership network. These "archetypes" serve as case studies against which the foregoing conceptual apparatus may be tested, and taken together, they constitute the key poles of security alignment in Asia Pacific. In this way, the analysis covers competing empirical archetypes across the region and matches them with specific alignment paradigms rooted in IR theory. Each paradigm, with its accompanying analytical framework, acts as a conceptual lens for understanding the relevant case study, while being specifically calibrated for understanding different archetypes of alignment. Though the theoretical and empirical terrain may be exceedingly complex, this book aims to show that it can be usefully structured in such a way as to facilitate an improved and systemic understanding of the security dynamics in the Asia Pacific region using alignment perspectives.

In the process of formulating and applying alignment paradigms to case study archetypes in Asia Pacific, I seek to shed light on the following issues: What are the key instruments of security cooperation, how can they be characterized, and how can their behavior be understood? What kinds of security challenges/threats do these alignments anticipate and how are they responding to them? What kind of "vision" does each of the alignment archetypes champion in Asia, and what will be the likely outcome of the contest between such competing visions for the future of the region? Along the way, I consider how existing approaches to framing regional security, as well as conventional alliance/alignment theory, may be supplemented and updated.

Security in the Asia Pacific Region: Background

The Asia Pacific Region

The definition of *Asia Pacific* is more of a debate than a fixture. As Joanne Wallis and Andrew Carr point out: "This debate over terminology reflects the fact that, as power shifts, so do regional identities and geographic boundaries. It also reflects the direction and attention of state power and diplomacy."[21] Before embarking upon any study of the Asia Pacific region it is therefore necessary to unpack the complex definitional problems that accompany the term and seek to arrive at a satisfactory working definition

to support this study (including setting some boundaries to its empirical coverage). Indeed, this "definitional minefield" continues to vex scholars and policymakers alike and therefore cannot be avoided.[22]

Though it may at first appear a simple matter for geographers or cartographers, establishing a precisely demarcated definition of a given "region" is seldom straightforward in practice, and Asia Pacific is no exception. The United Nations has produced a "geoscheme" by which it assigns countries a subregional category, but it does not delineate Asia Pacific itself as a region.[23] To fashion a serviceable Asia Pacific descriptor would require the aggregation of subregional building blocks defined by the geoscheme as Northeast and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and Oceania. But even this would be inadequate to properly capture what most IR scholars would perceive as "Asia Pacific" since it does not account for the major role played by the United States. In some cases, these descriptors match some of the institutional apparatus, such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and EAS that form the region's security "architecture." Moreover, in addition to sometimes arbitrary geographical markers, Beeson advises us that a region "can also be conceived geopolitically, culturally, ideologically, and economically."[24] Thus, as Björn Hettne notes, "it is how political actors perceive and interpret the idea of region and notions of 'regionness' that is critical: all regions are socially constructed and hence politically contested."[25] This is of no small consequence for the study of regional security politics, as we shall discover. For example, different actors at different times have used or misused regional appellations, frequently for political or ideological purposes, such as the "Pacific Basin," the "Pacific Rim," "Pacific Asia," and most recently, the "Indo Pacific," while seldom supplying concrete definitions to accompany or justify these constructs.[26]

The best acceptable solution to this conundrum is to assume an appropriate understanding of a region based upon the specific task to be undertaken. Hettne, after all, argues that "there are no 'natural' regions: definitions of a 'region' vary according to the problem or question under investigation."[27] For example, Barry Buzan and others have sought to highlight their notion of a "regional security complex" (RSC) based upon an intermediate "level of analysis" between the international system and the state (unit) levels.[28] This, according to Buzan and Ole Wæver, is "a set of units whose major ['macro'] processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both, are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one and another."[29] Buzan himself subsequently demarcates what he calls an "Asian super complex" comprising three subcomplexes.[30] These subcomplexes are closely allied to the descriptors enumerated above, with the "North East Asian" and "South East Asian" subcomplexes identical to the UN geoscheme, except for the inclusion of Australia in the South East Asian

sub-complex instead of "Oceania." These together form the "East Asian Regional Security Complex." The addition of the South Asian RSC makes up the "Asian super complex." The United States is considered an "extraregional actor," while Central Asia was excluded from his study at the time. However, T. J. Pempel notes that "many of the countries of Central Asia have explicit claims to regional importance particularly on security grounds."[31] Perhaps a more succinct, though still unavoidably qualified, demarcation is that provided by Robert Ayson in his dedicated study *Asia's Security*, which consists of "core" components such as "East Asia" and "borderlands" stretching into Russia/Central Asia, Australia, and of course, the United States.[32]

Using the UN geographical definition as a starting cartographical template and then adjusting it with the functional notion of RSC from a security perspective gets us closer to the approach adopted in this book. Although in basic conformity with Ayson's interpretation of Asia and its borderlands, as Ajin Choi and William Tow propose, "the concept of 'region' in this context is understood no more as predetermined but instead as porous. Beyond geographic proximity, the region can be reconstituted by *reflecting patterns of states' interaction and power*."[33] In identifying subregional groupings based on the alignment of certain states, the definition of the region acts as a stage upon which the actors (states and alignments of states) act out their respective roles and through which we can ascertain the macroprocesses at work. As David Shambaugh notes:

> its traditional geographic subcomponents—North East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and Oceania—are no longer useful intellectual constructs for dividing and distinguishing the macro-processes occurring throughout the region. In the twenty-first century, these five subregions are all interconnected and interdependent at numerous levels.[34]

What matters most then is not a precise demarcation of the region or RSC as initially stated above, since these simply provide the stage upon which macroprocesses involving regional/cross-regional alignment groupings form and interact. In this study, the focus is therefore upon the member states (and affiliated states) of the three core alignments identified in the case studies, set against the definitional backdrop that Buzan and Ayson have provided.

As a brief aside, some limitations to this study require notation, given that the Asia Pacific security landscape presents an "intimidatingly broad canvas."[35] There are some selective omissions of states that are important stakeholders and contributors to the regional security environment but do not yet form a fully integrated part of the three case studies examined. The main one is India, which proves a highly problematic fit for this study.[36] New Delhi is increasingly a major player in the strategic struggles to be

played out in the wider Asia Pacific region; however, it is not yet fully aligned with any of the three main groupings, while retaining connections with each of them.[37] As David Envall and Ian Hall argue, "India's ability to shape regional order is inhibited by inherited, but still influential, attitudes in New Delhi that are skeptical about alliances."[38] This is a consequence of India's continued adhesion to its Nehruvian policy of "nonalignment," a concept discussed later. India, which will appear on the margins of each case study, thus presents us with an interesting conceptual and empirical conundrum: what is nonalignment; how can it be explained; to what degree does Indian interaction with each of the three case alignments influence them? Even more problematic, at the time of writing (in 2017), India was in the process of acceding to the SCO as a full member, the ramifications of which could substantially change the nature of this alignment.[39] Perhaps adding to the mystery of Indian strategic policy was its interest in closer affiliation with the TSD to form a "Quad" in 2007, a prospect that was revived in 2018. These decisions potentially raise questions of bewildering complexity in our understanding of Indian (non-)alignment policy going forward, and its effect upon the established alignments treated here.

Also, other states that are peripheral actors in the three security alignments considered here are not given direct detailed coverage in this study. South Korea, as a result of its "North Korea–locked" condition, and Taiwan, as a result of its "abnormal" international status, are treated here as "issues" that influence the behavior of certain alignments (i.e., as "flashpoints" mentioned below) rather than fully autonomous security actors in their own right.[40] I acknowledge these countries can and do contribute to regional security discourses and they are important in any consideration of the US "hub-and-spoke" alliance system, but they are not *core* members, since they are not "networked" (as are the TSD partners). Likewise, due to its distancing from the Australia–New Zealand–United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), New Zealand is not fully engaged with the TSD alignment.[41] They will, however, make reappearance, along with India, under the discussion of the "TSD-plus" notion.

The Rise of Asia Pacific and Its Security Implications

The Asia Pacific region is the most dynamic area of the world, having undergone a profound transformation over the past half century.[42] This transformation occurred in two distinct phases. In the first phase, Japan, with the assistance of the United States, not only recovered from its postwar devastation, but became a leading economic power by the 1970s.[43] A decade later it had been joined by the newly industrialized countries (NICs) or "Asian Tigers" of Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore.[44]

Toward the end of this first phase, commentators had begun to speak of a "Pacific Century," indicating a shift in geo-economic power away from the Euro-Atlantic region to the countries of the Pacific Rim, spearheaded by Japan, with the Tigers and the United States also in the van.[45] This phase came to an end with the burst of the Japanese "bubble economy" in the early-1990s and the subsequent Asian Financial Crash of 1997–1998.[46] However, while Japan and the Tigers held the world's attention, a new phase had already surreptitiously begun whereby economic reforms in China, and a decade later in India, paved the way for their meteoric rise to economic primacy in Asia, accompanied now by the "Little Dragons" of Asia: Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia.[47]

The second phase, defined more narrowly as "Asia rising," or even just "China rising," was dubbed by Kevin Rudd, former Australian prime minister, as an "Asia-Pacific Century."[48] This subtle rebranding to shift the accent to the *Asian* component of this phenomenon also reflects how the main "Pacific" elements of Australia, Japan, and the United States are no longer playing the driving role in this process, notwithstanding recent US policy under the Obama administration to "rebalance" and to enjoy another "Pacific Century," as previously articulated by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton.[49] Indeed, the focus of the new Asia Pacific Century is squarely on China, India, and the fast-developing parts of Southeast Asia.

As Daniel Baldino and his coauthors posit, "it is likely that an emerging global power shift in favor of Asia, particularly China and India, will continue" in the twenty-first century.[50] These remarkable and rapid changes mean we now face an international environment of extraordinary complexity and potential volatility. This metamorphosis of the geo-economic landscape has significant ramifications in the geopolitical and geostrategic arenas. The rise of China and India is triggering new rivalries and shifts in the regional balance of power.[51] Historically, according to realist theorist John Mearsheimer, the incorporation of rising great powers into the prevailing international order, such as that of Germany and Japan in the first half of the twentieth century, has been highly problematic and has repeatedly been accompanied by a devastating conflict.[52] Such powers are often seen as "revisionist" for their intentions to acquire greater geopolitical space, play a larger role in established institutions, or even a desire to overturn the preexisting security order.[53] It follows that "if Mearsheimer's logic is correct, the US and China will have no choice but to behave aggressively—the rise of China will not therefore be peaceful."[54]

Over the past half century, regional order was predicated on a US-led hegemonic system underpinned by a portfolio of regional alliances and known as the "hub-and-spoke" or "San Francisco" system.[55] The relative decline of the United States has potentially weakened this system, and recent

policies under the Trump administration appear to be undermining it still further. This has made it increasingly vulnerable to challenges from external powers such as China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and others.[56] The economic advancement of the rising Asian powers has translated into increased military budgets, expanded and modernized military establishments, and a greater willingness to wield them as a guarantee of national interests.[57] Naturally, the status quo powers—Japan, the United States, Australia—are forced to respond to potential challenges to their security interests, possibly sparking "security dilemmas" and a resultant region-wide arms race. This has the potential to ignite conflict between the various competing constituencies of the region. Areas such as the South China Sea and East China Sea, as well as other contested maritime territories, are often singled out as the most dangerous flashpoints, alongside the perennial unresolved disputes over the status of Taiwan and North Korea.[58]

In addition, there is widespread recognition that these orthodox security threats are accompanied by a plethora of what have been dubbed "nontraditional security" (NTS) threats. NTS issues such as environmental dangers or natural disasters, financial crises, demographic shifts, pandemic diseases, and transnational criminal organizations, as well as terrorism and proliferation, multiply the security agendas of all the powers, both major and minor.[59] Mely Caballero-Anthony argues that these "NTS issues increasingly define states' security agendas" and that this is spurring "the emergence of new cooperative mechanisms and the recalibration of existing institutions to address these challenges."[60] Indeed, as will become apparent in the course of the case studies in this book, each of the key alignments makes claims to be founded on, or calibrated toward, combating such nontraditional threats: a fact that is little taken into account in so-called traditional alliance/alignment theory. For example, Beijing has identified that "nontraditional security threats such as terrorism, natural disasters and transnational crimes have become more prominent."[61] The emphasis on the NTS credentials of the alignments covered in this book not only reflects an empirical shift in policymaking and the security agendas in the case studies but also indicates how conceptualization of contemporary alignment needs adjusting to better account for such developments.

Framing Concepts for Understanding Asia Pacific Security

As alluded to above, analysts have regularly employed one of two alternative macroconcepts to frame their analyses of Asia Pacific security: *order* and *architecture*. Though these are sometimes conflated with alignment, and more often with one another, they are actually quite distinct. First, security order is defined, according to David Morgan, as "dominant pat-

terns of security management within [regional] security complexes."[62] The idea of security order is closely affiliated with notions of an "international society" formulated by Hedley Bull.[63] According to Muthiah Alagappa, this entails "rule governed interaction among states in their pursuit of private and public security goals."[64] Though substantial literature has grown up around this concept, it has either remained rather abstract for practical application or otherwise devolved back to the basic explanatory apparatus of realism, liberalism, and constructivism, with each of these traditions emphasizing instrumental, normative-contractual, or solidarist paths to achieving security order, respectively.[65] But this concept entails serious limitations, as Emanuel Adler and Patricia Greve testify:

> arguments about the varieties of international order abound in International Relations. These disputes include arguments about the security mechanisms, institutions, and practices that sustain international orders, including balance of power and alliances, hegemony, security regimes based on regional or global institutions, public, private, and hybrid security networks, as well as different kinds of security communities.[66]

Others argue that we cannot meaningfully speak of a regional security order in Asia Pacific at all. Michael Yahuda asserts that

> the diversity within the region and the fluidity of the security arrangements are indicative of the absence of what might be called a regional order. There is as yet no basis for the establishment of a regional order, if that is taken to mean the existence of stable relationships based upon accepted rules of conduct between states, of shared views about legitimacy of governments within states and of common assumptions about the interrelationships among regional and external states.[67]

Instead, what is more apparent is the existence of "divergent visions of regional order"[68] insomuch as they are championed by the three respective alignment blocs investigated here. Even as their rival visions of desired security order collide, we are left with coexistent elements of the former Cold War order and its evolution as well as a newly emergent order based upon rising powers: a situation best described by Nick Bisley as a "hybrid order."[69]

Second is the related concept of security architecture. William Tow and Brendan Taylor define the term *regional security architecture* 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."[70] In practice, this security structure is largely predicated upon institutions: these may be formal multilateral security dialogue forums, as in the case of APEC or the EAS, or on the basis of alliance treaties, such as the US-Japan security treaty.

However, there is a vital distinction between inclusive institutional forums, such as APEC and EAS, and tighter institutional components, such as a US-Japan alliance. For example, the TSD, ASC, SCO, and Five Power Defense Arrangement (FPDA) are *exclusive* alignments as well as constituents of the broader regional architecture. When such identifiable alignments operate within larger inclusive regional institutional forums designed to facilitate security dialogue like the APEC or EAS, consensus can fall victim to the rivalry between alignments within them, rendering them little more than "talk shops." In other words, "Not far beneath the veneer of diplomatic common cause represented by cooperative mechanisms national rivalries remain."[71] Not only this, but analysts discern "'competing geometries' between 'exclusivist' bilateral and overly 'inclusivist' multilateral pathways" toward achieving security for the region.[72] As a consequence, instead of the kind of ideal form of security structure that Tow and Taylor allude to above, the majority of analysts consider Asia Pacific architecture "nascent," "fractured," "partial," or otherwise ineffective.[73] Architecture in the empirical sense is therefore makeshift enterprise that, according to Victor Cha, consists of "networks and patchworks of differently configured and overlapping bilaterals, trilaterals, quadrilaterals, and other multilateral groupings that stitched together define the regional architecture."[74] This results both in major practical impediments as well as conceptual drawbacks, since no dedicated body of theoretical literature to date has comprehensively and effectively grappled with the conceptual operation or application of security architecture as a distinctive macroprocess, though relevant elements of IR theory have been applied on an ad hoc basis.

As a consequence of these limitations, this book argues that alignment may serve as an alternative frame for better understanding the security dynamics of the Asia Pacific. Indeed, alignment is a crucially important facet of international politics and demands greater investigation among the IR scholarly community than it presently receives. All our great strategic thinkers, contemporary and historical—Kautilya, Sun Zi, Machiavelli, to name but a sample—have extolled the practice of alignment for political or military advantage.[75] Alignments are an integral part of the current international system and reach back as far as recorded history. Indeed, one scholarly project has chronicled every alignment of substance in the modern era, from 1848 to 2008.[76] But one can go back further into the annals to confirm that alignments are a perennial fixture of international politics. One only has to think of the fluctuating alignments among Greek city-states forged and broken continuously throughout the course of the Peloponnesian Wars (431–401 B.C.E.), to cite one example.[77] Indeed, the IR research tradition of realism, with alignment/alliance theorizing at its core, dates from this conflict, and recent scholarship has revived its lessons for application to Asia Pacific.[78]

"Alignment" in international politics is the process or condition of cooperating on an agreed issue, or spectrum of issues, between two or more states in the system, either within or outside a formal institutional context. Though economic alignment is perforce possible (e.g., free trade agreements; the Maastricht Treaty, 1993; or the Cairns Group, 1986), it is seldom, if ever, classified as such. Thus the phenomenon of alignment is considered first and foremost one of political "security cooperation." But as Bisley warns us, "'security cooperation' covers everything from large-scale and high-cost alliances to low key and commitment-free discussions."[79] Therefore, the best stand-alone definition of the term is supplied by Steven David: "Alignment occurs when a state brings its policies into close cooperation with another state to achieve mutual security goals."[80] This is the definition accepted in this book, and a fuller picture of all its nuances will be gained through the course of the theoretical chapters that follow.

However, in order to make our study of alignment fit for purpose, we must recognize that both empirically and theoretically we need to overcome conventional applications and understandings of alignment that often subsume it under the "alliance" label, which is but one (common) paradigm representing a wider phenomenon. Ward posits

> "Alignment" is a more extensive concept than alliance since it does not focus solely upon the military dimension of international politics. Degrees of alignments in political, economic, military, and cultural spheres present a multifaceted sculpture of national and supranational postures.[81]

Moreover, it should be recognized that twenty-first-century Asia Pacific is not nineteenth- or twentieth-century Europe.[82] Alyson Bailes et al. comment that "old-style alliances with a defined opponent are now rare, and most groups address themselves to the reduction of conflict (internally of externally) and to transnational challenges such as terrorism."[83] As a consequence, Tow notes that "alliances, alignments and coalitions need to be reconsidered theoretically in terms of how much they fit into this new environment."[84] This being the case, it is necessary to break free of the "alliance-locked" discourse and the theory that encumbers our extant knowledge of alignment in IR to rethink and retool our understanding of the phenomenon to fit the contemporary context, which includes revising our understanding of contemporary alliances themselves.

A New Constellation of Alignments in the Asia Pacific

As a corollary of the multiplication of security challenges faced by regional states, Hugh White claims that we are currently seeing a "rebalancing of

strategic alignments" in the Asia Pacific.[85] Bruno Tertrais adds that new challenges "have strengthened many old alliances and have fostered the creation of new alignments."[86] I argue that this is largely centered on the three emerging, but as yet not fully crystallized, "poles" of alignment. Tow indicates that, in addition to the long-established presence of the ASC, the security environment in the Asia Pacific is characterized by "competing geometries" consisting of the "intensification of the SCO as a 'de facto' anti-Western grouping and the further development of US-led trilateral or other multilateral security dialogues as tacit instruments of containment against growing Chinese power."[87] These three alignments are correctly recognized as the main feature of the "regional security framework" by a Chinese white paper, which states: "In this region there are ASEAN-led security cooperation mechanisms and platforms such as the SCO . . . as well as [US] military alliances formed in history."[88]

Although each of the alignments operates within a larger context of grand strategic competition, it is particularly notable, officially at least, that each has strongly emphasized its intention to focus on NTS challenges. This foregrounding of alignments designed to combat NTS threats is a marked departure from previous military-defense-focused alliances/alignments of the past. Indeed, China and the SCO have explicitly derided Cold War–style traditional alliances, instead proffering their own preference for the strategic partnerships, which emphasize NTS cooperation and comprehensive security.[89] This distinction colors both the alignments and the theoretical approach employed here, which is designed to bring such novel developments into sharper relief.

In this book, I introduce the conceptual underpinnings of three of the most prolific paradigms of security alignment and those that dominate the Asia Pacific security landscape in various guises: alliance (redux), security community, and strategic partnership. In advancing new or revised models of these three security alignments, I seek to address shortfalls in our conceptual understanding within the discipline of IR and security studies. The book thus contributes toward compiling a comprehensive metaframework through which alignments may be systematically interrogated. Informed by this conceptual taxonomy of alignment, I then subject three case studies of TSD, ASC, and SCO to empirical scrutiny and evaluation, demonstrating how the analytical frameworks can enlighten us as to the purpose, structure, and prospects of the three principal security groupings in the region. It should be noted that though the case studies presented here appertain to the Asia Pacific region, the theoretical paradigms/frameworks themselves are equally transferable to the analysis of other regions. Having adopted alignment as an alternative to typical order- or architecture-based studies, this introduction now ends by briefly

outlining the alignment paradigms and case studies to be investigated in the chapters that follow.

Structure of the book

Alliances

Chapters 2 and 3 are focused upon the most prominent form of security alignment—the alliance paradigm—particularly the ways in which it has metamorphosed. Chapter 2 introduces this paradigm of alignment and the debates as to its use and misuse in IR and policy discourse, and why it is in urgent need of updating (hence: redux). This is followed by the relevant analytical framework based upon an "intra-alliance politics" perspective, designed to account for allied behavior within the compact. Armed with this framework, Chapter 3 then applies these tools to the case study of the TSD "virtual alliance" to assess the analytical utility of the framework and its effectiveness in revealing the behavioral dynamics of this archetype. Reflecting US policy of "strengthening alliances as we attract new partners," the TSD is an alignment of maritime democracies based around a nucleus of cooperation between the US, Japan, and Australia, within the broader US hub-and-spoke alliance system.[90] This trilateral grouping represents intensified cooperation under the earlier banner of "rebalancing" between the United States and its two "core" allies, the so-called northern and southern "anchors" of the Pacific: Japan and Australia. Established as a senior official dialogue in 2002 and upgraded to the ministerial level in 2006, the regularization of trilateral cooperation complements and reinforces individual bilateral ties between the allies, including the new bilateral security declaration between Tokyo and Canberra.[91]

Though it is embedded in the familiar traditional alliance paradigm of the twentieth century, the TSD is rather different from the former bilateral hub-and-spoke security alliances between the United States and its partners.[92] First, it can be considered a good example of Ralph Cossa's "virtual" alliance archetype, in that it lacks a formal treaty and partially exists under the cover of other multilateral initiatives, such as coordination in APEC and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and historical bilateral treaties. Second, it officially assigns equal priority to NTS threats such as weapons of mass destructions (WMD), terrorism, and natural disasters, while "hedging" against incipient strategic threats from China and the DPRK.[93] As Cossa argues, alliances "remain indispensable for managing traditional security challenges and provide the basis for dealing effectively with new non-traditional security issues."[94] This alignment, led by the current

regional hegemon, therefore represents one of the three "poles" around which the regional security order revolves. If additional spokes of the US-bilateral "San Francisco" system (e.g., Republic of Korea) are added as well as tacit members (e.g., India, Taiwan), this would represent a "TSD-plus" model. Again, this reflects US determination to "strengthen and evolve our alliances and partnerships into an extended network."[95] Nevertheless, as the TSD remains a relatively understudied alignment formation, with most of the extant literature concentrating on bilateral relations, adding the minilateral/trilateral element here is therefore a valuable contribution.[96] As Tow reminds us, "Theoretical work on minilateral security remains sparse, and this is certainly the case with its trilateral component."[97]

Security Communities

Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to conceptualizing the security community paradigm of alignment with the so-called ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), or just ASEAN Security Community (ASC), as the test case.[98] Formed in 1967, ASEAN is a well-established grouping of both continental and maritime states spanning the lower part of East Asia down toward Oceania. Essentially, ASEAN in its various guises, the ASC in particular, represents a combination of geographically contiguous small and middle-sized states aimed at protecting their security interests and avoiding domination by the leading powers of the region such as the United States and China. The institution is based upon a variety of foundational documents such as the 1967 ASEAN Declaration, 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), and ASEAN Charter (2007), for example, and its official commitments to achieve the condition of a political and security community as well as socio-cultural and economic communities.[99] Its core purposes are to ensure intra-mural collaboration among its membership, which has expanded incrementally to encompass the whole Southeast Asian region, and to serve as a generator of regional stability extending across the whole Asia Pacific.

ASEAN has been widely studied before, and analyses of this security community to date have mainly presupposed the ASC to be an institution or a component of security architecture. In contrast to the other more novel case studies (TSD and SCO) presented in this volume, the ASC case relies more heavily upon existing research material. What is new about the approach employed in this book is the specific conception of the ASC as an *alignment*. As will be demonstrated in the analysis that follows, the ASC qualifies as an alignment of member states pursuing mutual security objectives. What is particularly notable is that since its inception, according to Davison, ASEAN "eschewed the structure of a traditional military alliance" and instead adopted a functionalist approach inspired by the European

Union (EU) to provide for its intramural security.[100] Strongly influenced by academic perspectives and Track II initiatives such as Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS, Asia), it is also exemplary of an alignment calibrated toward NTS issues.[101]

In addition, this alignment of Southeast Asian powers has sought to export its security model on a wider regional plane. The ARF and EAS aim to create a pan-regional security dialogue, while the ASEAN+3 mechanism seeks to bind the major Asian powers to its own security model, founded upon the "ASEAN way" (or "ASEAN Consensus"). Thus, we see "ASEAN-plus" as a way for this alignment to secure the interests of its members through manipulating the wider security order. Although the ASEAN countries individually maintain significant military capabilities, they seek to employ more of a soft power approach in maintaining regional security. The challenge for the ASC is how to maneuver to defend its collective interests between the maritime and continental power blocs—namely, the TSD and SCO—that vastly exceed the economic and military power of Southeast Asia, and in the teeth of division between internal member states on how to respond to security challenges such as territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which potentially threaten its cohesion. This collective action problem indicates the difficulty of such a diverse group of states maintaining their unity as an identifiable alignment and undermines their effectiveness as a regional security provider on the broader pan-regional plane.

Strategic Partnerships

Chapters 6 and 7 introduce the most novel form of alignment, the strategic partnership, and proceed to apply the interdisciplinary analytical framework to the exemplary SCO case study.[102] The SCO strategic partnership (network) began with the establishment of the Shanghai Five in 1996, which was originally designed to resolve border disputes between the powers. Since its official foundation in 2001, the SCO has steadily expanded its remit and attracted outside parties as observers just as it has deepened and broadened its institutional structure, with India and Pakistan acceding to membership in 2017.[103] Formed around the nucleus of the bilateral Beijing-Moscow "strategic partnership," the SCO is an institutional umbrella for a diverse network of interlocking strategic partnerships between the two leading powers and their Central Asian neighbors. Overseen by regular summit meetings and governed by a burgeoning bureaucratic apparatus, the SCO concerns itself with security cooperation across a broad spectrum of traditional and NTS threats, with particular concern for terrorism, separatism, and religious fundamentalism (the "three evils").

While it prioritizes NTS cooperation, its activities extend to joint military exercises, economic integration, and efforts at cultural exchange. Beyond this, with Chinese and Russian leadership, the SCO advocates a new model of security relations for the Asia Pacific based on the "Shanghai spirit," representing an emergent "pole" of power in the region, in contrast to the previous more-established blocs.

I intimate throughout that this is a Beijing-led project since "it is certainly plausible to argue that the Chinese leadership sets the tone for the SCO."[104] But this should not be taken to exclude Russia as a major partner in the enterprise. As Stephen Aris contends, "Russia and China are often depicted as alternative power centers within the international system. Therefore the formation of a regional organization comprising both Russia and China has important connotations for global politics, security and economics."[105] As its influence extends to peripheral "observers" and "dialogue partners," we may also conceive of an "SCO-plus" model. As in the first case study, the SCO as a minilateral (or "plurilateral") alignment is understudied, with much of the literature concentrating on the Sino-Russian bilateral "core."[106] Conceiving of the SCO explicitly as an alignment is a valuable undertaking in allowing us to gain a more holistic appreciation of its workings.

In the final chapter of the book, I conclude that alignment offers a new perspective that can be either an alternative or a complement to existing perspectives aimed at enhancing our understanding of the Asia Pacific security environment. I also stress that our understanding of alignment in the twenty-first century and in Asia Pacific needs rethinking. Because each different paradigm is designed to capture a distinct form of alignment and supply the necessary framework through which it may be appropriately analyzed, I seek to advance alignment theorizing beyond its traditional roots in structural balance of power/threat literature.[107] The book therefore concludes with a review of the strengths of the analytical frameworks in appraising the Asia Pacific case studies, followed by brief examination of the connections between alignments (interalignment dynamics) and final reflections on how synergies between the analytical frameworks suggest potential advances toward a more unified body of alignment theory.

In sum, the book is designed to offer a theoretically sophisticated yet practically relevant framing device for understanding Asia Pacific security dynamics from the new perspective of alignment. For the first time, to the best of my knowledge, it gathers a full set of the major theoretical paradigms/frameworks and three pan-regional case studies in one volume to offer a comprehensive picture of security dynamics in the Asia Pacific. In this respect, it takes a "loftier" academic vantage point that focuses more on deeper structural trends and reproducible dynamics rather than more

immediate policy fluctuations. It is hoped that the theoretical approaches taken will withstand inevitable empirical developments in the case studies and be flexible enough to accommodate them over the *longue durée*.

The Asia Pacific is increasingly viewed as both the engine of global prosperity and the likely location for the eruption of major power conflict, making an understanding of the macroprocess of security alignment of fundamental importance. As Davison attests, "That the region is of critical global significance, both strategically and economically, is beyond contestation."[108] Explaining the microprocesses within individual alignment cases (the TSD, ASC, and SCO) further deepens our understanding of their purpose, modus operandi, and prospects. This task is all the more pressing given that the twenty-first-century security landscape, including the new prominence of NTS issues, bears little resemblance to the Cold War bipolar era and the theoretical approaches for explaining alignments and their behavioral dynamics are long overdue for updating to reflect current empirical realities. With this book, I aspire to rectify some of these shortcomings and contribute to the progression of serious debates upon regional security and alignment behavior.

Notes

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