

# Optimizing the Indo-Pacific: A Multilateral Net for the Future

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

Optimizing the Indo-Pacific: A Multilateral Net for the Future, by CDR Christopher M. Miller, 61 pages.

USINDOPACOM encompasses half the world's surface, with 375,000 US military and civilian personnel assigned to the area. The area encompasses more than half the world's population. Additionally, three of the five largest world economies reside in the region, with vital implications for global markets and international stability. The United States has pivoted to the Pacific, making the region a national priority. A long-term strategy for cooperation across the vast region is needed to continue stability and the rules-based international order in the region. Although the future is unknown, globalization and transregional impacts are expected to continue, greatly affecting the strategic environment. Determining the optimal type of cooperative system for protecting America's interests for the future of the Indo-Pacific region will be vital to the long-term security of the world. A more robust and cooperative multifaceted multilateral network is optimal for protecting America's interests in the future Indo-Pacific. With the rise of China and the return to long-term strategic competition, a more robust cooperative network in the Indo-Pacific is necessary for long-term stability. Additionally, the rise of transregional threats forces a more cooperative arrangement in the region. Bilateral, or hub-and-spoke alliance strategies, no longer provide the needed cooperation in the region. Thucydides's Trap is not inevitable for a rising China and a transitioning United States. Increased effects from new global threats (e.g., climate change, pandemic, information, globalization, extremism) may provide additional existential threat impetus for enhanced cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

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## Abbreviations

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank
ANZUS	Australia-New Zealand-United States
APCL	Asian People's Anti-Communist League
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BECA	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement
BDN	Blue Dot Network
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BECA	Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
EU	European Union
INDOPACOM	Indo-Pacific Command
IPSR	Indo-Pacific Strategy Report
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MDT	Mutual Defense Treaty
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SCO	Shanghai Security Organisation
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SET	Social Exchange Theory

SNA	Social Network Analysis
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republics
WWII	World War II
5G	Fifth Generation Mobile Network

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## Introduction: A Changing Region

Is the United States ready or willing to live with another country with a very different culture, a very different political and economic system ... in peace and cooperate on so many and still growing global challenges?

— Cui Tiankai, China's Ambassador to the United States, *CNN*, 19 July 2020

The alliance system for the Indo-Pacific region is significantly different from other systems, notably an institutionalized collective defense organization like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was a collective defense organization from 1954 to 1977. Unlike NATO, SEATO ended in 1977. From 1977 to present, bilateral agreements were made between the United States and Asian countries, sometimes labeled a hub-and-spoke system. The most prominent modern regional organization in the region is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

An institutionalized collective defense organization like NATO is the standard for deterring a great power with revisionist intentions. While the United States has pivoted to the Pacific, the Indo-Pacific region lacks an institutionalized collective defense alliance system, despite China's rise into great power status. After the global recession of 2009, China moved beyond the policy of "Peaceful Rise" to a more aspirational nationalistic strategy. Furthermore, new global challenges face the region, including pandemics, climate change, information, globalization, and extremism.

Due to the complexity of the modern world, and the recent changes in the global environment, it is necessary to determine which type of alliance system would be optimal for protecting America's interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Both NATO and SEATO were envisioned and created after World War II (WWII). NATO has persevered, with new but similar challenges from a revisionist Russia. Conversely, SEATO was disbanded, while the region has

dramatically changed. A rising China and increasing transregional threats necessitate new thinking and analysis of the cooperation structure in the Indo-Pacific.

It is important to understand the background and history of the region. The internal and external factors influencing the region, the United States, and China are pivotal for a baseline understanding. China's role in the region has changed and is increasingly important. It is crucial to understand the role of alliances and cooperation in the region. Finally, it is necessary to understand the roles of major regional nations.

To determine which type of alliance system would be optimal in protecting America's interests for the future of the Indo-Pacific region, the following methodology is used. First, this research describes a scenario planning assessment of the future Indo-Pacific. The modern strategic environment and the rise of transregional threats is considered in the scenario planning assessment, presenting a robust view of the changing strategic environment. In this way, the assessment is based on a number of current issues/trends and expected as a likely future. Next, this research provides a cost-benefit analysis of different types of cooperation theories and alliance structures. An alliance typology provides insights into the dynamics, benefits, risks, and opportunities inherent in different theories and structures.

This analysis provides constructive recommendations for strategy in the Indo-Pacific. With the region changing and the strategic environment evolving, now is the ideal time to analyze and refine the US policy in the Indo-Pacific. The rise of China and increasing transregional global challenges, combined with the disruptive innovation of the information age and globalization, offer challenges and opportunities. Increased multilateralism, both in type, quantity, and cooperative subject, can provide a robust net, mesh, web, or multi-tiered lattice to pair specific agreements across a diverse region. The recommended structure is illustrated through a net, like a fisherman's net. This multifaceted, multilateral net of political and defense institutions will enhance US efforts to cooperate where it can, stand where it must, and shore up defenses.

## Background: A Complex History

USINDOPACOM encompasses half the world's surface, with 375,000 US military and civilian personnel assigned to the area. The area encompasses more than half the world's population. Additionally, three of the five largest world economies reside in the region, with vital implications for global markets and international stability. The United States has pivoted to the Pacific, making the region a national priority. China has gained prominence in the region and has become a major regional and global power.

### Avoiding the Trap of War

Recently, scholars and national security experts have linked the relationship of the United States and China to the Athenian historian Thucydides's account of Athens and Sparta. Thucydides's Trap relates the history of Athens and Sparta, told by the historian Thucydides in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*.<sup>1</sup> Martin Cook summarized the trap, saying, "while there were many smaller incidents and provocations leading to the war, its great chronicler, Thucydides, reduced them to one: 'The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable.'"<sup>2</sup> In this way, the rise of China is an alarming event for the United States, one that could make conflict inevitable. Is conflict the only possible future for China and the United States? Can the United States influence foreign policy and cooperation to counter a rising China? These questions offer key insights for understanding the future of US cooperation policy in the Indo-Pacific, while helping both the United States and China avoid costly conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Allison, "The Thucydides Trap," *Foreign Policy*, June 9, 2017, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/09/the-thucydides-trap/>.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Cook, *The Moral Warrior* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 3.

Key historical lessons from Thucydides are applicable to similar situations between an established power and rising power. In particular, alliance dominance, failure to understand the nature of the strategic environment, adversarial policies, domestic affairs, and imperialistic policies in international relations relate the main reasons for Athens's failure.<sup>3</sup> These lessons are applicable to the relationship between the United States and China and offer important considerations for examining the region.

In order for an alliance to be strong, one nation cannot overbear other nations by taking too prominent a role. A factor for Athens's failure was a unilateral security mindset.<sup>4</sup> For Athens, the "pursuit of unilateral military dominance and economic self-sufficiency, inevitably was perceived as aggressive, and as a threat to other states' vested economic and strategic interests."<sup>5</sup> In this manner, Athens miscalculated its own security and vulnerability.<sup>6</sup> Too little vulnerability and too much emphasis on security made friends turn foe. Strong nations must strive for modesty and humility, striving to be "imperial without being imperialistic."<sup>7</sup> This lesson applies more to modern China than the United States, as China's growth and aspirations push it into the "paradoxical logic of strategy," where one reaction causes another action, in this case the international and regional communities responding to China's growth.<sup>8</sup> Nations should use instruments of power to shape the international environment to support national interests, use resources sparingly and judiciously, and focus on building political strength to meet military alliance might.<sup>9</sup> The United States and China are required to play under the international rules

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>8</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Cook, *The Moral Warrior*.

and norms of other nations.<sup>10</sup> In many ways, although a superpower, the United States is especially bound and limited by the international order, due to its co-aligned values.

Nations must also fully understand the nature of the strategic environment, avoiding Athenian-type overreach and miscalculation of regional relationships.<sup>11</sup> A refined view of strategic threat is necessary in order to navigate Thucydides' Trap. Gray relates that there is "considerable real (political and cultural) discretion about the particular identification and definition of threat."<sup>12</sup> Too often, threats are easily defined and identified. A more nuanced view, considering political and cultural analysis, is needed for improved threat identification, and subsequent adversarial policy.<sup>13</sup>

From threat identification, smart adversarial policies and strategies can be developed. When considering the future, "prudence is recommended as the guiding light in the face of an irreducible ignorance about the future."<sup>14</sup> Strategies must be sensible and resilient. Moreover, the Thucydides's Trap analogy, as a prediction of modern threat is imperfect, better understood as a parallel.<sup>15</sup> This sentiment also applies to analogies between the current United States-China relationship and the Germany-United Kingdom relationship prior to World War I, highlighted by Luttwak's quote that "historical analogies are notoriously false friends and poor teachers" but "not always entirely useless."<sup>16</sup> In this manner, history can provide some insights, but more analysis is needed in applying parallel references with modern contexts.<sup>17</sup> It is vital to have a

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Thucydides Was Right: Defining the Future Threat* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2015), ix.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*, 56.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

long-term strategy that is able to cope and evolve to meet the evolving environment and future with accurate threat identification, similar to the gradual development of containment, as the Cold War emerged.<sup>18</sup>

Domestic affairs are vital for stability and strength. Nations should understand the linkage between domestic and foreign affairs. As shown by the USSR's fractured domestic situation in the Cold War, domestic affairs have a pivotal role in determining the overall strength of a power.<sup>19</sup> In this way, the domestic situation of the United States, becoming more tribal and divided, and China, under pressure from the middle-income trap and demographic challenges, plays a significant role in the future positions of each nation.

Applying the modern strategic environment to research on how to avoid Thucydides's Trap provides some insight into parallel policy and strategy recommendations for the United States and China. Importantly, there have been 16 cases of this trap in the last 500 years.<sup>20</sup> Notably, 12 resulted in conflict, while four avoided conflict.<sup>21</sup> These historical examples provide some insights into dealing with the trap. Like the United States and United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during the Cold War, China and the United States are nuclear superpowers.<sup>22</sup> Any conflict between the United States and China could quickly escalate to a nuclear conflict, one in which mutual destruction is assured. As such, leaders must be prepared to risk war, even if loss is expected.<sup>23</sup> Thereby, the risk of war, even if unlikely to be winnable, offers a credible threat when seeking to advance national interests in competition. In many aspects, Chinese

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<sup>18</sup> Graham Allison, "The Thucydides Trap."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

leaders are even more dependent on domestic affairs, as they govern a large diverse, and often chaotic region without direct representation.<sup>24</sup>

The lessons of Thucydides's Trap mirror the significant research of Weitsman on alliance formation: "different levels of threat produce different alliance behaviors."<sup>25</sup> Carefully applying the lessons of Thucydides's Trap to cooperative cognition and structures in the region can help further determine regional stability. In this manner, the United States can further rely on its partnerships and alliances as "shields of the republic."<sup>26</sup>

## The Importance of China

China presents the largest nation in the region, and potentially the largest regional threat. China has seen massive change, developing into a strong country. For most of its transition, China focused on domestic growth and economic prosperity. After the global recession of 2009, China moved beyond the policy of "Peaceful Rise" to a more aspirational nationalistic strategy, "National Renaissance." China seeks to establish itself as the center of the region, with commensurate authority, respect, and responsibility. As such, many of China's policies are adversarial to the established international order and to the United States. Importantly, some key aspects of China are important in considering the region: the history of China in the region, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the current leader, Xi Jinping.

China's long history plays a significant role in its modern policy and strategy. The country has a long diverse history. It has transitioned between empire, colony, revolution, and communism. The communal memory of the greatness of China at its peak is a great source of pride, demonstrated in the reverence given to the reigns of the Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and

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<sup>24</sup> Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*.

<sup>25</sup> Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 165.

<sup>26</sup> Mira Rapp-Hooper, *Shields of the Republic: The Triumph and Peril of America's Alliances* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 14.

Qing.<sup>27</sup> From these dynasties comes the historical concept of China as the Middle Kingdom, with ethnic, cultural, and religious superiority. European imperialism left a terrible stain on China and is considered a period of misery and humiliation. During the Opium Wars, the British atrocities and the constant threat of external powers largely pushed China to revolution. The end of the 100 years of humiliation between 1839-1939 resulted in a push towards revolution. Mao Zedong led the effort, culminating in the establishment of Communist Chinese Party (CCP) rule in 1949.

The CCP has had a lasting impact on modern China. After Mao's Great Leap Forward to his Cultural Revolution, the Party, under Deng Xiaoping, introduced reforms to benefit from the capitalist international system while maintaining CCP authoritarianism. Deng's efforts helped to move China into a more prominent regional position. Throughout China's modern growth, power has remained anchored in a communist government, the CCP. The Party views its colonial history with disdain and seeks to reestablish China as a prominent, respected power. The Party looks at the history of colonization and humiliation and uses these points to reinforce the distrust of outside forces and traditional geographic defensive postures. Moving forward, as Luttwak highlights, many future regional security scenarios and the potential international responses are based on the CCP's implementation of its own policy and strategy.<sup>28</sup> As such, the United States must remain aware, but cautious of CCP actions.

Xi Jinping, the current leader of China, has played a pivotal role in developing modern China. Importantly, Xi has consolidated power and pushed policies that make him the most influential leader since Mao.<sup>29</sup> Xi seeks a return to the respect and admiration of the dynasties,

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<sup>27</sup> Kevin Rudd, "Understanding China's Rise Under Xi Jinping" (speech, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, March 5, 2018), Kevin Rudd, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://kevinrudd.com/portfolio-item/kevin-rudd-speaks-to-the-us-military-academy-west-point-understanding-chinas-rise-under-xi-jinping/>.

<sup>28</sup> Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*.

<sup>29</sup> Rudd, "Understanding China's Rise Under Xi Jinping."

through his National Renaissance program.<sup>30</sup> Xi has boosted the economic growth of China, while moving beyond Deng's Peaceful Rise. Xi supports seven core priorities for China: the party, national unity, economic and environmental sustainability, securing China's Eurasian periphery, securing China's maritime periphery, establishing China's role with the developing world, and shaping the global rules-based order to favor China..<sup>31</sup>

China is increasingly seeking to boost domestic growth and stability through outward looking programs and policies. The largest external project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), seeks to expand global Chinese influence by bolstering the domestic situation with expanded international economic and infrastructure projects. The BRI offers an alternative model of development for many nations, juxtaposed against traditional Western relief efforts. The BRI presents nations with a development option that comes without human rights guarantees and is structurally supportive of authoritarian regimes. Notably, the United States, Japan, and Australian Blue Dot Network (BDN) seeks to responsibly develop infrastructure as a counter to the BRI.

China's system of surveillance, information operations, and influence operations permeates China, and is spreading through the world..<sup>32</sup> The systems are entwined with surveillance, social credit scores, overseas work and education, manufacturing, research and industrial espionage in order to foster the CCP's power through robust monitoring..<sup>33</sup> This network is vast and consists of many elements. Some of the most prominent include the Thousand Talents Plan, Confucius Institutes, United Work Program Abroad, and Fifth Generation Mobile

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Adam Lowther and Brooke Mitchell, "China's Virtual Bamboo Curtain," *Real Clear Defense*, May 5, 2020, accessed January 4, 2021, [https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/05/05/chinas\\_virtual\\_bamboo\\_curtain\\_115249.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/05/05/chinas_virtual_bamboo_curtain_115249.html).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Networks (5G).<sup>34</sup> The Thousand Talents Plan seeks to expand Chinese innovation and technology through selective placement of top talent in Western schools, boosting Chinese research and development knowledge.<sup>35</sup> Confucius Institutes serve as venues for messaging on American universities while also contributing to Party monitoring efforts.<sup>36</sup> The United Work Abroad Program allows for monitoring of Chinese nationals working abroad.<sup>37</sup> 5G networks provide the robust network required to monitor the population.<sup>38</sup> Chinese surveillance efforts present malign tactics, but also an opportunity for cooperative messaging against corrosive efforts.

China often prefers bilateral agreements, as it has more power to shape the cooperative agreement in favor of China.<sup>39</sup> The most prominent of these is seen through the BRI, but aspects are also seen in the Shanghai Security Organisation (SCO) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).<sup>40</sup> Often these Chinese organizations are not truly multilateral, but rather are structured to appear multilateral.<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, China is using three tools to increase its international influence through international organizations: creating alternative institutions, working with existing institutions, and the BRI.<sup>42</sup> The goal for many of these Chinese organizations is to reorder the international systems, but there are significant challenges. China's

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan E. Hillman, "A 'China Model?' Beijing's Promotion of Alternative Global Norms and Standards," *CSIS*, March 13, 2020, accessed January 9, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/china-model-beijings-promotion-alternative-global-norms-and-standards>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

reluctance for true multilateralism offers an opportunity for more US influence through inclusivity in sincere multilateralism.

China is also rapidly developing advanced technologies to strip traditional American military dominance while strengthening Chinese ability to project power. Advanced missiles have been created to counter US force projection, offering a robust Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD) tool for China. Additionally, advances in hypersonics, space, cyber, and maritime warfare have strengthened China's indigenous ability for offensive force projection. Overall, China's investment in advanced military capability offers one pillar to a multi-pillar use of all elements of Chinese national power for gaining competitive regional and global advantage in strategic competition.

## Alliances and Cooperation

The modern alliance structures of the United States in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific were established after WWII, and developed in different ways. Although Europe presents a strong multilateral framework through NATO, there is a basis for a different type of multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific. In the Indo-Pacific, multilateralism is much more multifaceted and complex, a tangled net of history, networks, nationalism, and regionalism.

In general, when determining structures for cooperation, multilateralism and bilateralism are the two main options. Multilateralism means cooperation between many actors. In the creation of NATO, the United States pursued multilateralism. In particular, the "common bureaucratic apparatus, integrated military planning, and command structure" forged the alliance.<sup>43</sup> Conversely, bilateralism is cooperation only between two actors. For example, the United States security arrangement with the Philippines is a bilateral agreement. The benefits of multilateralism include: "transparency, reduced transaction costs, economies of scale, credible

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<sup>43</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009-2010): 161.

commitments, rules, and information.”<sup>44</sup> Unilateral action is taken by a single state and does not represent a cooperative structure. Unilateral action increases the costs significantly for the nation taking the action, as the action can be seen as threatening, imperialistic, or destabilizing.

Much of the history of alliance structure in the Indo-Pacific can be tied to the end of WWII and the US post-war strategy. The model for much of Asia was a hub-and-spoke system, with the United States at the center, and little connection between spokes.<sup>45</sup> There were some limited attempts at multilateralism in Asia, specifically, the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) alliance of 1951 and SEATO of 1954.<sup>46</sup> Geographic limitations and history played a more prominent role in the Asian system. For example, the countries were largely maritime nations, with no defined adversary border.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, the United States lacked historical friendly relations with many Asian countries.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, political differences, cultural differences, social differences, and trade relations hindered multilateralism in Asia, as opposed to where these issues were less salient in Europe.<sup>49</sup>

The United States played a pivotal role in the formation of NATO. NATO was established to counter broad challenges: state actors, ideologies, and political cooperation. By “deterring Soviet expansionism, forbidding the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent, and encouraging European political integration,” NATO addressed broad regional challenges through unity.<sup>50</sup> Prior to WWII, the United States pursued a less prominent foreign policy. However, after the war, the United States

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> NATO, “A Short History of NATO,” NATO, accessed December 15, 2020, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified\\_139339.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm).

met the challenges of post-war Europe through the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). The Marshall Plan sought to assist Europe with the massive undertaking of moving past the war, rebuilding the region. Together, the efforts of recovery through the Marshall Plan and security through NATO provided room for Europe to stabilize and grow.<sup>51</sup>

Specific language helped NATO identify common security interests. Most importantly, Article 5 states, “an armed attack against one or more of them... shall be considered an attack against them all.”<sup>52</sup> The agreement provided greater flexibility in response language, stating members would take “such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force.”<sup>53</sup> Thereby, Article 5 provided clear collective defense, but left room for tailored individual response.

The signing of NATO was a historical shift for the United States, Europe, and the world. McCullough stated that, “for the United States, it marked a radical departure with tradition—the first peacetime military alliance since the signing of the Constitution—but had such an agreement existed in 1914 and 1939, Truman was convinced the world would have been spared two terrible wars.”<sup>54</sup> For Western Europe, it marked the first form of unification of nations with a common purpose, moving the European nations away from nationalism and toward cooperation. For liberal democracies, it signaled an effort to bring stability and order to the international structure.

SEATO was created in 1954 as an anti-communist security agreement between eight member nations. Members from Southeast Asia only included Thailand and the Philippines. Other members included the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, and Pakistan. During WWII assessments, President Roosevelt sought stability in Asia through

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992.), 735.

cooperation with China.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, when mainland China became communist in 1949, regional alliance thinking shifted to include European partners.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, the organization did not include potential regional powers, like Japan, South Korea, or India. More importantly, although SEATO looked like a multilateral agreement on the surface, it was largely bilateral.<sup>57</sup>

The differences included:

Instead of the NATO commitment to collective defense as outlined in article V, which states that an attack on one will be considered an attack on all, article IV of the SEATO treaty merely classifies such an attack as a threat to peace and safety. Furthermore, in SEATO the United States made it clear that it retained its prerogative to act bilaterally or unilaterally. This was formalized in the Rusk-Thanas joint statement of 1962, in which the United States stressed that its commitment to Thailand ‘does not depend upon prior agreement of all the other parties to the treaty, since the obligation is individual as well as collective.’<sup>58</sup>

SEATO also had no unity of command or unity of action; force was applied nationally, not institutionally.<sup>59</sup> SEATO was disbanded in 1977, after struggling with broader regional membership, including more powerful stakeholders.

There were multiple reasons for SEATO’s failure. Membership and common security language provided obstacles for sustainment. Too few regional members limited the cohesion of the regional organization. But, most importantly, SEATO’s failure was based on the threat faced during the Vietnam War. SEATO’s failure was mainly from “the nature of the existing threat, an internal insurgency from Hanoi as opposed to a conventional threat from Moscow.”<sup>60</sup> In this manner, the alliance became irrelevant, “a fig leaf for the nakedness of American power...a zoo

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<sup>55</sup> Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origin of Multilateralism,” *International Organization* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 575–607.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 578.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> John J. Tierney Jr. “Reviving SEATO,” *The Institute of World Politics*, August 25, 2020, accessed March 14, 2021, <https://www.iwp.edu/articles/2020/08/25/reviving-seato/>.

of paper tigers.”<sup>61</sup> The failure of SEATO highlights the previously discussed importance of threat analysis.<sup>62</sup>

Where the SEATO alliance failed, the ASEAN political institution has largely been successful in the Indo-Pacific. Created in 1967, ASEAN focused on cooperation between five nations: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The organization sought cooperation through “economic, social, cultural, technical, educational and other fields, and in the promotion of regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.”<sup>63</sup> ASEAN’s aim was to signify “the collective will of the nations of Southeast Asia to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity.”<sup>64</sup> Today, ASEAN has expanded to ten states and represents a solidified cooperation institution in Southeast Asia.

Importantly, a realistic understanding of ASEAN is needed to understand its nature and role in regional geopolitics. At the heart of ASEAN is a set of values that bring together an extremely diverse Southeast Asian region. Bilahari Kausikan highlights that ASEAN is often misrepresented in western thinking, and that the fundamental values and norms of the organization are vital to the future of strategic competition in the region.<sup>65</sup> The values of consensus building and non-interference are vital in the function of ASEAN.<sup>66</sup> ASEAN was developed as an organization to manage mistrust across members, especially larger members like

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Gray, *Thucydides Was Right: Defining the Future Threat*.

<sup>63</sup> ASEAN, “History,” ASEAN, accessed December 15, 2020, <https://asean.org/asean/about-asean/history/>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Bilahari Kausikan, “Will ASEAN Survive Until 2030?” Australian Institute of International Affairs, December 30, 2020, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/will-asean-survive-until-2030/>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Indonesia.<sup>67</sup> This difference, ASEAN managing relations between members by managing mistrust across members, is fundamental to ASEAN's operations, and is shown through the Konfrantasi, and the continued strength of Indonesia in the region.<sup>68</sup> After the largest regional actor, Indonesia, opposed the creation of Malaysia, Indonesia began a confrontation (Konfrantasi) with Malaysia by infiltrating Borneo. After the Konfrantasi in the mid-1960s, the region felt the need to protect its security and manage mistrust across members, through ASEAN.<sup>69</sup> Overall, the organization strengthens a multipolar region, allowing the region to avoid control by a single entity, and simultaneously allows for complex entanglement with individual nationalism.<sup>70</sup> Importantly, the value of ASEAN to the region is through both individual and regional resilience, creating a region that is able to deal effectively with strategic competition, leveraging benefits from both US and Chinese regional efforts.<sup>71</sup>

ASEAN is more focused on economic and social cooperation, but room for a security agreement exists. To meet these security environment challenges, ASEAN has agreed to establish a security community, a type of security cooperation.<sup>72</sup> The nature of ASEAN security cooperation shows the evolutionary nature of cooperation and security policy in the region, moving from an economic and social institution, as ASEAN has grown, to now also a security community.

## Regional Actors

Across the diverse Indo-Pacific, various actors have formed interconnected relations, creating a complex geopolitical region. The backgrounds of three countries—Japan, South Korea,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Political - Security Community," ASEAN, accessed December 15, 2020, <https://asean.org/asean-political-security-community/>.

and Taiwan—are of vital interest in analyzing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The interconnections throughout history between the United States and major regional countries provide important lessons for future arrangements.

Japan is a vital security partner for the United States and has the ability to shape security relations in the region. Japan currently has a strong Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) alliance with the United States, with a capable, but limited Japanese Self Defense Force. Japan has recently moved beyond bilateral focus, expanding into initial multilateral efforts with the Quad. Japan's current structure is largely based on post WWII security and stability concerns. From the Ashida Memorandum of 1947 and through Prime Minister Yoshida's engagements, Japan sought bilateral security and avoided US efforts at multilateral regional security.<sup>73</sup> The Yoshida Doctrine emphasized the need for domestic stability and growth in post-war Japan, and this focus limited multilateral opportunities. The Japanese resistance to multilateralism persisted through 1959 and was illustrated in NSC 5913/1, which effectively diminished US hopes for increased multilateralism through Japan.<sup>74</sup> Japan preferred a strong bilateral commitment with the United States due to Japanese constitutional collective security limitations, demand for post-war stability, and the social exchange networks between regional US partners.<sup>75</sup> Importantly, the connections between US commitments played a role in Japanese preference: the US alignment with South Korea and Taiwan created less incentive for Japan to pursue multilateral security commitments.<sup>76</sup> Japan offers increased opportunity for multilateral cooperation, through a more modern view of its own constitution and through dialogue and partnership with neighbors.

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<sup>73</sup> Yasuhiro Izumikawa, "Network Connections and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia," *International Security* 45, no. 2 (Fall 2020): 7–50.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

South Korea is also a vital security partner and currently has a strong MDT alliance with the United States. Historically, South Korea sought multilateral security cooperation in the region, due to the close North Korean threat, excluding Japan due to historical animosity.<sup>77</sup> South Korea also pursued a strong bilateral agreement with an initially reluctant United States.<sup>78</sup> President Rhee specifically sought multilateral cooperation through a “United Free Asia” and through the Asian People’s Anti-Communist League (APACL) and the Organization of East Asian Nations.<sup>79</sup> South Korea even went so far as to use coercive binding in seeking a bilateral agreement with the United States, with Rhee threatening the Korean War armistice contingent upon security agreement with the United States, and eventually, South Korea unilaterally releasing prisoners of war to force the United States into bilateral agreement.<sup>80</sup> Throughout history, South Korea sought strong bilateral relations with the United States and multilateral regional cooperation, excluding Japan. South Korea still faces security threats from North Korea, and there is room for multilateral cooperation to ease tensions.

Currently, the United States supplies arms to Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), while carefully balancing China-US policy. Historically, the US policy toward China during the post-war period and Cold War greatly influenced the strength of US commitment to Taiwan.<sup>81</sup> As China became a larger actor, the need for the United States to balance China-US policy with Taiwan-US policy became more difficult.<sup>82</sup> Ultimately, the United States offered Taiwanese security commitments while leaving room for engagement with China. As such, Taiwan sought regional multilateral cooperation, but ultimately relied on bilateral ties. Taiwan

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

presents the most difficult prospect for increased multilateralism, due to the interconnection of Taiwan with China, and with the rest of the region and world.

The United States also has strong security ties with Australia and New Zealand, and recently reinforced ties with India. All of these countries are seeking increased regional cooperation to counter a rising China. Historically, ANZUS provided strong ties between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. The commitments between New Zealand and the US were severed in 1986, due to nuclear policy provision disagreements. Historically, India has focused domestically since its transition to independence. Increasingly more stable and prosperous, India could be a key actor in regional multilateral cooperation. Most recently, India has established strong ties with Japan and has been a key player in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) between the United States, India, Australia, and Japan. Further inclusion of India in multilateral agreements could serve as a significant counter to Chinese influence, especially against the BRI. The renewal of an improved and expanded Quad (Quad plus) could also hamper Chinese influence.<sup>83</sup> India has seen conflict with China over border disputes and has sought strengthened relations with the United States through the bilateral Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).<sup>84</sup> India, Australia, and New Zealand offer increased opportunity for multilateralism, through security partnerships, dialogues, and possible communities.

Overall, the background and history of the region play a vital role in understanding cooperative strategy. A diverse set of actors and growing powers present challenges and opportunities in a very complex environment.

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<sup>83</sup> Jagannath P. Panda, "India, the Blue Dot Network, and the 'Quad Plus' Calculus," *The Air Force Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, July 17, 2020, accessed August 24, 2020, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2278057/india-the-blue-dot-network-and-the-quad-plus-calculus/>.

<sup>84</sup> James Griffiths, "India Signs Defensive Agreement with US Following Himalayan Standoff with China - CNN," *CNN*, October 27, 2020, accessed November 16, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/27/asia/us-india-defense-china-intl-hnk/index.html>.

## Analysis: Scenario Planning Assessment

Using current issues and trends, I create an assessment of the most likely future, providing an opportunity for analysis of the region. Overall, the region is likely to continue to be affected by complex transregional challenges accelerating in pace. The scale and rate of these challenges will continue to cause disruptive innovation, pushing the world more toward globalization. To adapt to these monumental changes and new challenges, increased cooperation is required throughout the region, providing needed resiliency.

Today's strategic environment is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). While the strategic environment has always been volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, the degree is the key component for the modern environment.<sup>85</sup> The nature of the strategic challenges in today's environment is radically different.<sup>86</sup> The strategic environment is characterized by accelerating disruptive change, where interactions are more difficult to determine, as complexity has mixed with disruptive change to make prediction and anticipation categorically more difficult.<sup>87</sup> The information age and the global market have provided disruptive innovation for the global system. Modern solutions must prove adaptable to both the information age and globalization. As such, the existing organizational approaches may be ill suited to the modern strategic environment and do not offer necessary resiliency.<sup>88</sup>

Transregional challenges confront the region at an increasing rate. Most notably, pandemic, climate change, information, globalization, and extremism present transregional

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<sup>85</sup> Richard L. Hughes, Katherine Colarelli Beatty, and David L. Dinwoodie, *Becoming a Strategic Leader: Your Role in Your Organization's Enduring Success* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Margaret Heffernan, "The Human Skills We Need in an Unpredictable World," filmed July 2019 in Edinburgh, Scotland, TED video, 15:06, accessed December 15, 2020, [https://www.ted.com/talks/margaret\\_heffernan\\_the\\_human\\_skills\\_we\\_need\\_in\\_an\\_unpredictable\\_world](https://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_heffernan_the_human_skills_we_need_in_an_unpredictable_world).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

challenges. These challenges often present new difficulties, which are non-attributable to specific state actors, but present real security challenges. New domains, like cyber and space, also present similar transregional problems. In a global world, it is likely that these transregional problems will persist and overtake traditional threats in scale and impact.

Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the international response demonstrated the nature of non-traditional security threats that are transregional. From inception through pandemic transmission, a global cooperative approach presents the only real option for most efficiently and quickly defeating the virus. Global cooperation has not been ideal but will likely serve as an example to the world of the importance and need to cooperate against similar threats.

Similarly, climate change poses an existential, global threat. These large-scale climate change impacts especially threaten the Indo-Pacific, due to large population centers in maritime and equatorial regions. The region is still developing, which amplifies pressure to cut environmental standards to boost growth. Nations largely act independently and lack the required resources to combat the global challenge. Similarly, there is no strong institutional framework to target specific challenges with specific responses.

Extremism presents transregional challenges, often from non-state actors. The information age and post-modernism allow extremist views ample room for growth. Importantly, extremism has taken root in a diverse and disparate range of governmental systems, showing its ability to cross not just geographic boundaries, but also political and ideological systems. The response to combat extremism can be strongly cohesive, bringing together large numbers of disparate members.

Increasingly, the world will be defined by global challenges, often acting across domains. These challenges will be transregional, complex, and lasting. Traditional challenges, like state competition, will also remain, but will be amplified as transregional challenges grow. These modern strategic environment challenges are wicked problems, which are “ill-defined and rely

upon elusive political judgment for resolution.”<sup>89</sup> In the Information Age, evolutionary approaches that consider the nature and role of the network are needed to help overcome complexity and wicked problems.<sup>90</sup> To meet the challenges of disruptive change in a VUCA environment, the region needs resiliency. As Margaret Heffernan outlines, possible solutions to unpredictability include relying more on our human connections and cooperation.<sup>91</sup> Rethinking our cooperation strategies is a key way to reinforce the human element in our security resilience and hedge against unpredictable futures. Cooperating and addressing transregional threats, like pandemic or climate change, can pay huge dividends for future security scenarios. A multifaceted multilateral net offers a necessary stopgap between isolated action and full global response. Ultimately, in a system and world defined by new global challenges, society’s ability to persevere and thrive will be directly correlated to its ability to rapidly adapt and cooperate.

## Analysis: Cooperative Theory and Typology

By understanding the best theories about how cooperative structures form and the types of cooperative structures that nations pursue, a deeper understanding can be gained to help form and develop the best strategies for the future. Cooperative theory spans many international relations sections while the modern types of cooperative structures have evolved well beyond alliances.

### Cooperative Theory

Alliance research spans realism, constructivism, and liberalism. Each area provides important lessons for the overall understanding of the extraordinarily complex interactions and actors that comprise international cooperation. The most important and relevant research is

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<sup>89</sup> Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,” *Policy Sciences* 4, no. 2 (June 1973): 160.

<sup>90</sup> Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Seventh Sense: Power, Fortune, and Survival in the Age of Networks* (New York, NY: Back Bay books, 2016).

<sup>91</sup> Heffernan, "The Human Skills We Need in an Unpredictable World."

presented through many different international relations filters. Importantly, a composite view offers the most comprehensive understanding of alliance typology.

As previously stated, two major schools of thought, constructivists and realists, have shaped alliance research in the Pacific. The constructivists argue that social identity theory was a major factor of the cooperation structure in the Pacific, specifically, the lack of collective identity.<sup>92</sup> Other constructivists argue that the regions' norms and values prioritized a region-specific sort of non-intervention mindset.<sup>93</sup> Constructivists also argue that the historical atrocities of the Japanese prohibited a multilateral cooperative agreement.<sup>94</sup> In contrast, realists argue that US goals and interests in the region favored bilateral agreements.<sup>95</sup> Modern network approaches add to the existing research.

The constructivist theory of theoretical eclecticism emphasizes that a singular perspective does not provide robust understanding.<sup>96</sup> A wider spectrum of analysis is needed, from an approach that is focused on power, threats, and identity.<sup>97</sup> A depiction of this approach is illustrated in Figure 1.

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<sup>92</sup> Hemmer and Katzenstein, "Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origin of Multilateralism."

<sup>93</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

<sup>94</sup> John Duffield, "Why Is There No APTO? Why Is There No OSCAP?," *Asia-Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, *Contemporary Security Policy* 22, no. 2 (2001): 69–95.

<sup>95</sup> Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia."

<sup>96</sup> Hemmer and Katzenstein, "Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origin of Multilateralism."

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

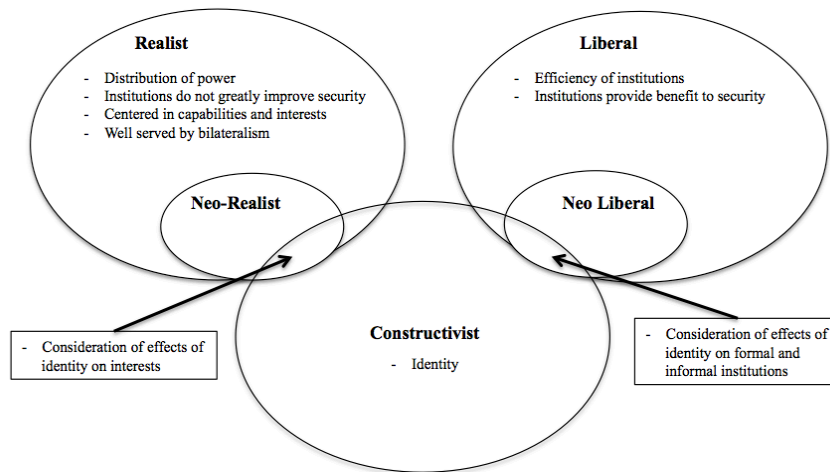


Figure 1: Theoretical Eclecticism. Created by author. Based on concepts from Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origin of Multilateralism,” *International Organization* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2002).

The first factor, power, spans cooperative agreements through history, particularly in the importance of great power status in the formation of both the European and the Asian alliances. Relative power differentials influence how the stronger sides shape the cooperative agreement, while power from threatening states provides the impetus for alliance cooperation. A multilateral approach was used in Europe, through NATO, to rebuild a strong region against a contemporary Soviet threat. In Asia, US regional bilateral structures were preferred, due to a weaker region and a lesser Soviet threat. The power relationship between the United States and member nations shaped cooperative structures. This difference is highlighted in George Modelski’s quote: “in NATO the benefits and obligations are shared fairly equally. In SEATO the disparity between the great and small powers is greater... Most of SEATO’s concrete operations represent one-way traffic to help area states and not a two-way cooperative enterprise.”<sup>98</sup>

Realist arguments further stress the importance of the largest power, the United States, on the region. From this thinking, the US goals and intents in the region were focused on control,

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 583.

restraining potentially out of step partners.<sup>99</sup> The United States feared states tipping to communism. Thus, most of the agreements focused on restraint, as the US policy of avoiding entrapment married directly with the US policy of containment.<sup>100</sup> In this manner, the US alliance structure in Asia was focused on control by the United States. Determining the type of alliance structure using the powerplay model is dependent on the goals of the great power and smaller states, shown in Figure 2 below.

	Target State: Small Power	Target State: Great Power
Small power(s) seeking control over target	Quadrant 1 multilateralism	Quadrant 2 multilateralism
Great power seeking control over target	Quadrant 3 bilateralism	Quadrant 4 multilateralism

Figure 2: Powerplay: Bilateral versus Multilateral Control. Victor D. Cha, “Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia,” *International Security* Vol. 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009-2010), Figure 1.

Threat identification and response matters in cooperative theory. In Europe, the threat was focused, a Soviet cross-border invasion that existentially threatened both nation and civilization.<sup>101</sup> Dean Acheson described the existential Soviet threat in Europe saying, “not only to our country but also to the civilization in which we live.”<sup>102</sup> In the analysis of the Soviet threat in Europe, the common cultural perspective was seen as a major benefit, with Undersecretary of State Lovett calling the “cement” of the cooperation “not the Soviet threat, but the common Western approach and that Western attachment to the worth of the individual.”<sup>103</sup> Conversely, in Asia, the threat was perceived as a national threat, focused on possible insurgency in individual

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<sup>99</sup> Cha, “Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia.”

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Hemmer and Katzenstein, “Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origin of Multilateralism.”

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 585.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 585.

nations. The history of colonialism played a heavy factor in this Asian perspective, contributing to a more national approach with less multilateral cohesion.<sup>104</sup> This trend included the role of violent WWII Japanese occupations in Asia, which also limited the potential to include Japan in broad multilateral agreements.<sup>105</sup>

The identity of regions plays a major role in institutional structures. For example, the United States was more socially and culturally tied to Europe than Asia.<sup>106</sup> Europe presented more similarities in civil, racial, ethnic, religious, and historical matters.<sup>107</sup> The US view of the Asian region was vastly different from Europe, and often critically condescending. Where the United States saw shared social identity with Europe, it often denigrated the Asian. This view of the Asian was shown by a State Department official's view of the Philippines, saying the Filipinos "were only one generation out of the tree tops."<sup>108</sup> The United States was also regionally focused more on Europe than Asia, placing the US cohesion with Europe at a premium above Asia.<sup>109</sup> Overall, cultural identification and institutional forms were much closer between the United States and Europe, rather than between the United States and Asia.

Neither the constructivist nor the realist perspectives provide the complete picture. Adding network analysis provides important insights into the reasoning for the hub-and-spoke system in the Pacific.<sup>110</sup> Ultimately, this increased understanding offers recommendations for future regional cooperation goals.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 597.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Izumikawa, "Network Connections and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia."

Fundamental to this approach is analyzing the formation of cooperative agreements in East Asia through the network of interactions between nations, using Social Exchange Theory (SET).<sup>111</sup> In this manner Social Network Analysis (SNA) offers a more robust explanation of the interactions and factors that shape cooperation in the region.<sup>112</sup> Using this approach, the network can be analyzed through the system and agent levels.<sup>113</sup> From this analysis, the form of the social network can be determined by the exchange interactions and patterns that develop among actors.<sup>114</sup> This method offers an improved cost-benefit analysis, taking into account the exchanges and the related risks and benefits.

Two concepts are fundamental in social exchange theory's study of alliances. First, "any exchange entails an opportunity cost, and that actors rationally seek to optimize the net benefits through exchanges."<sup>115</sup> Where opportunity cost is largely omitted in many aspects of life, it is a keen aspect of cooperation strategy, taking alternatives into account. Second, network theory relies heavily on the law of decreasing marginal utility.<sup>116</sup> The law states that: "all else equal, as consumption increases the marginal utility derived from each additional unit declines."<sup>117</sup>

Modern SNA examines the interactions of the United States with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in the establishment of the hub-and-spoke system in East Asia.<sup>118</sup> In particular, the interactions and nature of the allies were more powerful than the realist argument.<sup>119</sup> The results

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Will Kenton, "Law Of Diminishing Marginal Utility," Investopedia, accessed February 18, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/l/lawofdiminishingutility.asp>.

<sup>118</sup> Izumikawa, "Network Connections and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia."

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

of this analysis illustrate the differences in traditional views of alliance formation in East Asia against SET, reflecting that national preferences of the individual nations did not explain the eventual system.

Importantly, network research indicates the hub-and-spoke system that has developed was largely not preferred, but resulted from the interactions of the actors in the network exchange.<sup>120</sup> For example, the United States preferred a defensive multilateral agreement, while Japan preferred hub-and-spoke, and South Korea and Taiwan each preferred an offensive multilateral agreement.<sup>121</sup> This is important for the United States, as the ideal US model was not the actual model presented.<sup>122</sup> The United States preferred a more multilateral system, but was forced into a hub-and-spoke system based on the network exchange interactions between the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.<sup>123</sup>

International relations theories offer many insights into the types and natures of cooperative agreements. No one theory can best describe alignment or alliance typology. Factors from each theory offer a glimpse into the more comprehensive network and must be viewed as a lens for understanding.

### Cooperative Typology: Alignment as Foundation, Many Different Types

Beyond theory, typology provides insight into the actual types and natures of modern cooperative agreements. New understanding and terminology in cooperation, more suited to the modern strategic environment, provides insights into the types of modern structures.<sup>124</sup>

“Alignment” is recommended instead of “alliance,” allowing for a more diverse spectrum of

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas S. Wilkins, “‘Alignment’, Not ‘alliance’ - the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 2012): 53–76.

structures.<sup>125</sup> In this manner, the current understanding, taxonomy, and theory of alliance and alignment in international relations is imperfect, in need of update and refinement.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, thinking about alliances is often focused on out-of-date theories and models.<sup>127</sup> Importantly, all of the scholarly issues with alliance academic study have been amplified by the strategic environment, which is rapidly and significantly changing.<sup>128</sup>

In theory, there are many different interpretations of alliance and alignment. Generally, alignment is the larger factor, of which an alliance is a smaller, more formalized component. Conversely, alignment is “a relationship between two or more states that involves mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination on security issues under certain conditions in the future.”<sup>129</sup> Michael Ward summarized alignment benefits, calling the concept “multifaceted and multidimensional” in his description:

Alignment is not signified by formal treaties, but is delineated by a variety of behavioral actions. It 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.<sup>130</sup>

Importantly, alignment provides the opportunity to consider a broader perspective, inclusive of national instruments of power, beyond military power alone.

The modern types of alignments further complicate the understanding of interstate cooperation. Modern cooperative agreements include alliances, coalitions, security communities,

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 56.

strategic partnerships, and other agreements..<sup>131</sup> All of these cooperative arrangements fall within the alignment category.

Alliances are the most formal type of alignment and are focused toward the military instrument of power. Alliances can be bilateral or multilateral..<sup>132</sup> According to Robert Osgood in 1968, an alliance is:

a formal agreement that pledges states to co-operate in using their military resources against a specific state or states and usually obligates one or more of the signatories to use force, or to consider (unilaterally or in consultation with allies) the use of force in specified circumstances..<sup>133</sup>

The most significant modern alliance, NATO, is a multilateral example focused originally on a Soviet-based threat. The security arrangement of the United States with the Philippines illustrates a bilateral alliance. Alliances can evolve, as NATO has evolved after the Cold War, becoming more institutionally focused, providing its own momentum..<sup>134</sup>

Coalitions are created for a shorter duration, are less formalized, and are narrowly focused..<sup>135</sup> Oftentimes, a coalition can bring together dissimilar nations for a specific and imminent threat..<sup>136</sup> Coalitions often form in times of conflict. An example of this is Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), the coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. The coalition brings together 79 partners, to “defeat ISIS in designated areas of Iraq and Syria and set the conditions for

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Robert Osgood and John H. Badgley, *Japan and the US in Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins university Press: 1968), 17. Quoted in Wilkins, “‘Alignment’, Not ‘alliance’ - the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” 56.

<sup>134</sup> Wilkins, “‘Alignment’, Not ‘alliance’ - the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment.”

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

follow-on operations to increase regional stability.”<sup>137</sup> In this manner, the cooperative agreement is across a wide range of disparate partners, focused on a narrow threat, ISIS.

Another type of alignment, a security community, exists when “states align together to eliminate the use of violence as a recourse of action within their designated political space, and work together to change intramural perceptions to forge an exclusive common identity (or 'we-feeling').”<sup>138</sup> Both the European Union (EU) and ASEAN are examples of security communities.<sup>139</sup> Importantly, security communities are often formed initially as economic communities, but develop into organizations with shared security identities.<sup>140</sup>

Strategic partnerships have emerged as another form of alignment between nations. Often, strategic partnerships form on an economic basis, but can also include security features.<sup>141</sup> Not well defined, Wilkins offers the following definition: “structured collaboration between states (or other 'actors') to take joint advantage of economic opportunities, or to respond to security challenges more effectively than could be achieved in isolation.”<sup>142</sup> Examples of strategic partnerships include the United States-Russia post-Cold War arrangement, the 1996 Russo-Chinese security arrangement, and India’s partnership with major powers.<sup>143</sup> Prominent features of security partnerships include: organization around a purpose, goal driven, informality with low commitment cost, and economic teamwork driving further security cooperation.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Inherent Resolve, “About CJTF-OIR,” Inherent Resolve, accessed November 21, 2020, <https://www.inherentresolve.mil/About-CJTF-OIR/>.

<sup>138</sup> Wilkins, “‘Alignment’, Not ‘alliance’ - the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” 65.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

There are numerous other forms of cooperation under alignment. Some of the largest include concert, entente, and non-aggression pacts.<sup>145</sup> A concert fosters peace through negotiated regulation of conflict.<sup>146</sup> *Entente* is an informal form of understanding between states. Non-aggression pacts establish neutrality between states, but have largely fallen out of use.<sup>147</sup> Overall, these other forms of alignment present even more options for interstate cooperation.

In summary, a modern taxonomy can be useful when considering cooperation among nations. Foundation in alignment allows a wide range of agreements. These relationships are depicted in Figure 3.

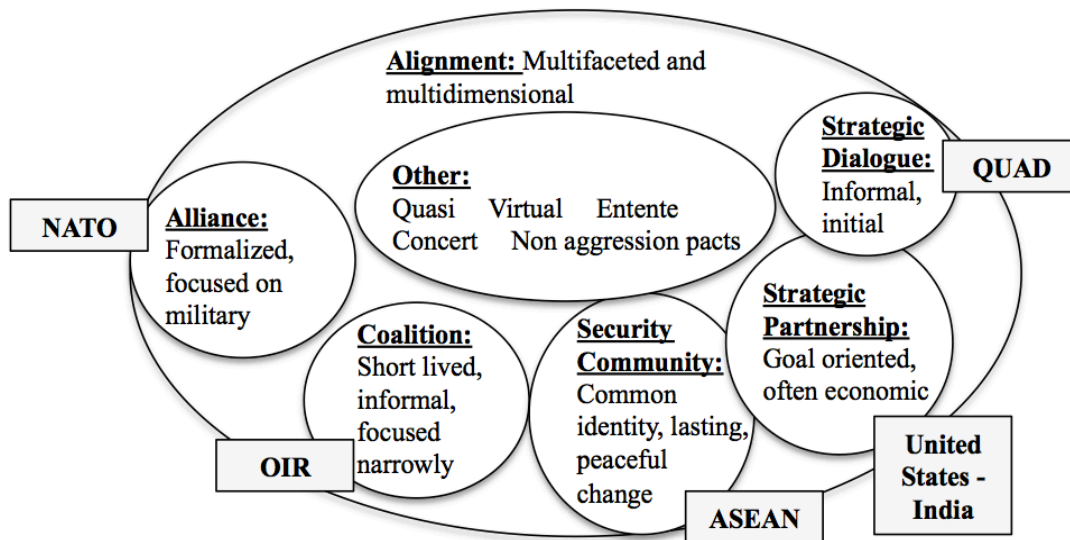


Figure 3: Alignment Taxonomy. Created by author. Based on concepts from Thomas S. Wilkins, “‘Alignment’, Not ‘alliance’ - the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 2012).

The modern spectrum of cooperation can offer an array of options for cooperation in the modern strategic environment.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

## Reliability: Language Matters

Reliability must be considered when determining the right structure for cooperation. Initial reliability research determined that alliance partners were reliable in only 27 percent of alliance commitments.<sup>148</sup> Expanded reliability research has determined that by aligning a specific threat with a specific promise, reliability can be increased to around 75 percent.<sup>149</sup>

Several factors affect the reliability of alliance commitments. First, costs of honoring commitments are often high, including resource requirements and stability risk.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, for most alliances, there is no enforcement mechanism.<sup>151</sup> These factors amplify each other, leading to a decrease in alliance reliability. Conversely, alliances are formed with a reasonable probability of success. Most importantly, alliances are formed to deter, with cooperation increasing the probability of deterrence.<sup>152</sup> As deterrent threats, alliances need to be credible, capable, and communicated to the threat.<sup>153</sup> In order to establish alliances that deter, the adverse factors must be overcome, while the deterrent factors clearly stated. In this manner, the specific, actual language of the alliance matters greatly.<sup>154</sup> By focusing on specific language of commitment and type of cooperation, alliances can be more reliable, focused on specific threats with specific promises.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, implementing national tools of power, through specific cooperative arrangements that integrate “declaratory policy, employment policy, force

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<sup>148</sup> Brett Ashley Leeds, Andrew G. Long, and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, “Reevaluating Alliance Reliability: Specific Threats, Specific Promises,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 5 (October 2000): 686–699.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

development policy, and force deployment policy”<sup>156</sup> can strengthen individual and collective strategies.

Applying reliability research with taxonomy illustrates a model for cooperative agreement and reliability. This model is shown in Figure 4 and describes the prevalence of agreement by the size of the circle, contrasted with reliability and formality of agreement.

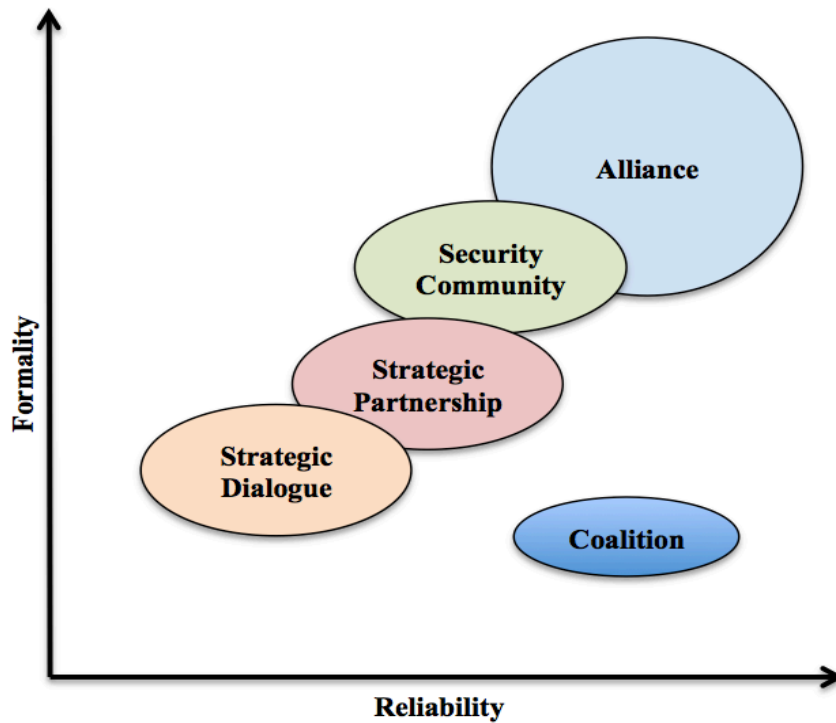


Figure 4: Plotting Alignment. Created by author. Based on concepts from Brett Ashley Leeds, Andrew G. Long, and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, “Reevaluating Alliance Reliability: Specific Threats, Specific Promises,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 5 (October 2000); and Thomas S. Wilkins, “‘Alignment’, Not ‘alliance’ - the Shifting Paradigm of International Security Cooperation: Toward a Conceptual Taxonomy of Alignment,” *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 1 (January 2012).

The more formal an agreement, the more specific the language and threat addressed, and hence the more reliable.

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<sup>156</sup> D. Robert Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power: A Critical Examination of the U.S. National Security System* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 91.

An understanding of cooperative typology can provide insight into the structures and networks used in the modern environment. Factors from each theory offer a glimpse into the more comprehensive network based in alignment and must be viewed as a lens for understanding.

### **Recommendation: A Smart Multilateral Net, Focused to Meet the Future**

The recommendation of this research begins by applying the most relevant issues and trends in the strategic environment, and then works from a macro level down to a micro level recommendation. The recommendations from macro to micro provide a consistent, integrated approach to adapting to the environment. The strategy and military shifts amplify the shifts in multilateral approaches, providing increased opportunity to meet future challenges.

At the macro level, a shift in strategic orientation provides more clarity beyond strategic competition, shifting US grand strategy towards risk management and resiliency in a VUCA future strategic environment with a truly competitive peer. The grand strategy shift encompasses a more refined China strategy, a shift in military mindset and posture, and a more multifaceted, multilateral net concept for cooperative organization. The needed revolution in military affairs is both technological and conceptual in mindset, meeting the ongoing changes in the environment. Information, cyber, space and transregional challenges provide stimuli for revolution in technologic defense means and defense mindsets. The impact of our cooperative structures is vital to ensuring our ability to adapt and remain resilient in this complex environment. The net concept offers constructive focus areas for tailored and targeted efforts, starting at sub-regions, and using the lessons of cooperative theory and typology. Finally, analysis of existing policy and policy trends is offered, providing a roadmap of how to get from current to optimal position.

### **Adjusting Strategy: Vision and Principles**

The optimal cooperative structure for the United States in the Indo-Pacific is intricately related to the US strategy for the region. As stated in the most recent National Defense Strategy,

the United States has returned to great power competition..<sup>157</sup> In the Indo-Pacific, this means competition with China. China poses a challenge, and the United States must refine its strategy for what is meant beyond competition..<sup>158</sup> Additionally, the strategy must be resilient, allowing for the changing strategic environment.

As highlighted, China presents the strongest and most dangerous long-term strategic peer for the United States. China's use of advanced technology and long-term synthesis of national instruments of power for coercive efforts present a clear and present danger for the United States and the established international order..<sup>159</sup> The outcome of strategic competition need not be conflict with China, but the United States must prevent China from coercively exerting power in order to protect both abroad and homeland interests..<sup>160</sup>

This is not to say that the United States cannot work with China on some items, and the United States must continue to look for areas of cooperation. A refined China strategy must balance the possibility for cooperation with a persistent deterrent threat. As shown by regional actors like ASEAN, it is possible to both stand against and cooperate with China at the same time..<sup>161</sup> The United States must listen to the regional partners and simultaneously denounce malign actions, while working with China on aligned regional challenges. Initial successes may be gained in economic, climate, infrastructure, and terrorism efforts, through a dialogue or partnership-type structure, targeting mutual challenges. In this way, China will be included in the region's multifaceted and multilateral net. Inclusion of Chinese decision-making with regional

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<sup>157</sup> Jim Mattis, "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge," US Department of Defense, last modified 2018, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

<sup>158</sup> Christian Brose, *The Kill Chain* (New York, NY: Hachette Books, 2020).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Kausikan, "Will ASEAN Survive Until 2030?"

actors can further tie China to responsible action. This cooperation is vital, as it increases incentives for China through its goal of increased regional power, while also taking advantage of the US multilateral inclusive advantage.

To solve the paradox between competition and cooperation with China, the United States, and its allies and partners, must boldly highlight the strengths of the existing liberal international system while strongly denouncing the malign aspects of the Chinese system and shoring up defenses. The United States must stand firm on human rights issues, proprietary intellectual data, surveillance, and international rules and norms. Additionally, the United States must apply the lessons of Thucydides's Trap and work to not overreach, be careful with threat identification, balance vulnerability with strength, and establish rules of equilibrium between powers.

Changing strategic thinking from a finite game to an infinite game can also help foster resiliency in a complex world.<sup>162</sup> Importantly, the world and the strategies of the world increasingly represent infinite games, especially during strategic competition. Winning is represented by constantly gaining a comparative advantage over competition. As such, these interactions offer different characteristics from finite games: they are played by both known and unknown players, there are no agreed upon rules, and there are infinite time horizons.<sup>163</sup> By avoiding a finite mindset and by adopting an infinite mindset, better outcomes can be achieved through the use of "higher levels of trust, cooperation, and innovation."<sup>164</sup> This change in thinking can help form more effective, reliable, and resilient cooperative strategies and policies in the region, and bridge the gap between competing and cooperating with China.

Further refinement of a competition strategy must deter China from imposing overt power on regional US interests.<sup>165</sup> There may be room for increased Chinese soft power in the

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<sup>162</sup> Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Game* (New York, NY: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>165</sup> Brose, *The Kill Chain*.

region, but coercive hard power must be deterred. Stripping this strategy to its essence, the United States and regional partners must deter the Chinese military from projecting offensive power.<sup>166</sup> This protects both US regional interests and the US homeland in strategic competition. The best outcome for the United States is a balance, where the status quo is maintained, and China's offensive capability is deterred. To maintain the status quo between powers, treaties and non-aggression pacts can help clarify accepted rules. The backbone of US defense must be based in broad cross-domain deterrence, effectively integrating our ability to deter in air, space, land, sea, and cyber.<sup>167</sup> Many of these efforts must be based in the maritime domain, the main regional vein for offensive power projection and the most likely vehicle for Chinese aggression.<sup>168</sup> To fully foster this approach, the US regional military and cooperation strategy must also evolve.

## Revolution in Military Affairs: More Defense

A revolution in military affairs is needed in the United States in order to prevail in strategic competition with China.<sup>169</sup> The most common definition of a RMA is: “a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of technologies, which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts, fundamentally alter the character and conduct of military operations.”<sup>170</sup> The disruptive technological changes in information, cyber, and space combined with military doctrinal and conceptual changes for nontraditional, transregional security challenges make the current and future environments ripe settings for revolution.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Jon R. Lindsay and Erik Gartzke, *Cross-Domain Deterrence: Strategy in an Era of Complexity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.).

<sup>168</sup> Brose, *The Kill Chain*.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Sean M. Maloney and Scot Robertson, “The Revolution in Military Affairs: Possible Implications for Canada,” *International Journal* 54, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 445.

The necessary RMA must leverage the technological changes in information, cyber, and space to accomplish two things: first, it must shift the military mindset from more of an implemented instrument of national power to an insurance policy, and second, it must shift its balance away from offensive power projection to defense.<sup>171</sup> For too long, the cost of using the military has been simplified. The true opportunity costs must be considered, and the United States must realize that every action has a countering cost, often an advantage for our competitors. As such, the United States must dramatically limit its involvement in diverse conflicts and invest in long-term strategic competition, viewing its military as more of an insurance policy for emergency use rather than a tool to be used for providing short-term gains.<sup>172</sup> The disruptive innovations of the information age, transregional domains, and advanced technologies tip the scales more in favor of defense, and the United States must develop a more diverse, resilient, and networked defense capability to counter Chinese offensive capability.<sup>173</sup> By focusing on defense, the United States can also shift the budgetary focus from operations and sustainment to research and development; especially in fiscally constrained environments, enabling innovation to foster competition advantages.<sup>174</sup> By enabling this two-pronged revolution, the United States can best be prepared for long-term strategic competition with China, limiting Chinese coercive power.

### Expanding the Net: Smart, Resilient, and Multifaceted Multilateral Agreements

Only with robust regional and global allies and partners can the United States expand capacity and capability to strategically compete with China. The risk and importance of strategic catastrophe with China is so high that the United States and its allies and partners must work to put aside historic limitations and work together. This will take time, and a NATO-type security

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<sup>171</sup> Brose, *The Kill Chain*.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

organization may never materialize.<sup>175</sup> A new Pacific NATO or re-imagined SEATO is not needed, as modern cooperative structures have evolved beyond strict alliances to include more diverse alignment structures. Avoiding a singular institution benefits social exchanges, providing greater regional incentive for cooperation, further helping to limit finite US resources through increased intrinsic regional demand for cooperation. Avoiding a singular institution also allows room for marginal cooperation with diverse participants across alignment typology, allowing increased reliability through specific commitments. The net should be multifaceted, allowing cooperation at different levels on different priorities. In this way, every link of the multilateral network provides another strand in the net, deterring malign Chinese actions while promoting stability. Figure 5 depicts the US and regional architecture. Overall, the network must become stronger, with even more linkages.

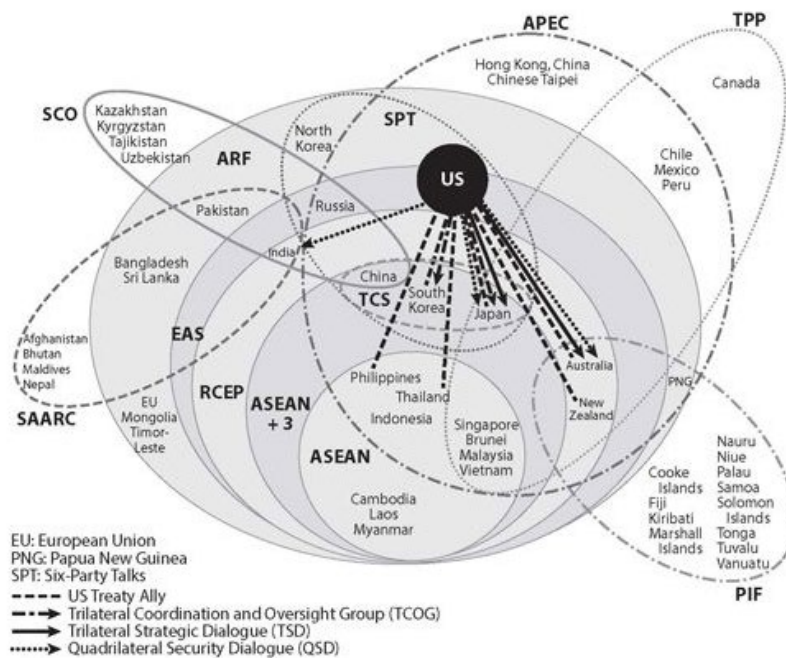


Figure 5: US and regional architecture in Asia. Victor D. Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), Figure 8.2.

<sup>175</sup> Michael Green and Evan Medeiros, “Can America Restore Its Credibility in Asia?” *Foreign Affairs* February 15, 2021, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-15/can-america-restore-its-credibility-asia>.

Regional cooperation cognition must be expanded to fully understand the history, actors, challenges, and opportunities. Theoretical eclecticism and network analysis offer the best models of understanding the complexities and networks involved in cooperation agreements. US strategy and policy must use cooperation research and analysis to avoid the historical pitfalls of cooperative strategy and overcome the traditional regional challenges. The traditional limits of multilateralism, geography, connections, power, threat, and identities have been reduced with the information age, globalization, and modern strategic environment. These post-WWII SEATO limitations can be overcome, as demonstrated through modern organizations like ASEAN and the Quad. Applying network theory to cooperative structure development can help overcome historical realist power and constructivist identity limitations. Only when deeper understanding of the history, nature, networks, theories, and challenges of regional cooperation are understood can the meaningful change needed for the future be accomplished.

The future US multilateral cooperative structure must strongly consider China's strategy and cooperative regional policies in the US's policy implementation. Hillman offers three policy recommendations for the United States: fortify existing organizations, cautiously participate in new organizations when risk is appropriate, and offer genuine multilateralism.<sup>176</sup> Some research has shown "that embedding China in multilateral institutions offers the most prudent path for managing the country's rise and integration into the international system."<sup>177</sup> Conversely, other scholars have pointed out "that US power and leadership is most effective when the United States allows itself to be bound by multilateral institutions and rules that it helped create."<sup>178</sup> In this way, multilateral agreements could serve as a double-edged sword for the West, amplifying US

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<sup>176</sup> Hillman, "A 'China Model?' Beijing's Promotion of Alternative Global Norms and Standards."

<sup>177</sup> Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," 160.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 160.

power, while constraining Chinese influence. Including China in carefully determined multilateral agreements, where risk appropriate, is important.

The United States must further enable our partners and develop methods to increase member defense spending and resiliency, while providing support based on the United States' own RMA. Additionally, the United States must leverage its global partners, through European partners, to bulwark global defensive postures against a Chinese expansion. NATO has become more alert to the challenges of China. Recently, the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, amplified the shift for NATO, saying “the rise of China is a defining issue for the transatlantic community, with potential consequences for our security, our prosperity and our way of life.”<sup>179</sup> The US must increase the number and strength of net layers by continuing to work with European partners, moving toward a shared US-European strategy towards China.<sup>180</sup> Including European partners in security dialogues provides the optimal structure for increased European support.

By focusing on a multifaceted model, the United States can build on the multilateralism present in the region, cooperating with whom we can, where we can. The goal is inclusivity, including as many as possible, on as many issues as possible. In this manner, inclusivity can also combat the historical limitations of SEATO, pushing for broad memberships beyond SEATO's inclusion of only Thailand and the Philippines. Figure 6 presents a notional example of a menu of options that governments could use to link instruments of power with bilateral or multilateral agreements for particular countries.

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<sup>179</sup> “China's Rise to Define Transatlantic Ties, NATO Chief Says,” *Reuters*, February 19, 2021, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-security-nato-idUSKBN2AJ24G>.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

		Bilateral	Multilateral
Diplomatic	Governance		
	Human Rights		
	Equality		
Informational	Disinformation		
	Credibility		
Military	Armed conflict		
	Stability		
	Border integrity		
	Mutual action		
	Cyber		
	Space		
	Maritime		
	Air		
Economic	Free trade		
	Market access		
Legal and Law Enforcement	Counter narcotics		
	Migration		
	International law		
Scientific and Technological	Innovation		
	Research and development		
Environmental	Climate change		
	Pandemic		

Figure 6: Notional Instrument of Power Agreement Menu. Created by author.

This type of approach accentuates the strengths of the region and the already existing cooperative types in place, ranging from security communities, bilateral security agreements, to security partnerships. Additionally, this multifaceted approach allows for more reliability, marking specific agreements with specific language across sectors..<sup>181</sup>

Through its efforts, the United States must realize the competitive market and offer a comparatively better alternative, based on international values, rules, and norms. As the United States develops competitive and cooperative options for the region, the United States must remember that the entire region is connected and constantly changing through networks. Importantly, the changing and increased role of Japan, and potentially diminished role of the United States are key factors for regional security..<sup>182</sup> Japan's increased security role must be carefully considered, and may be best gradually applied, through financial backing of broader

<sup>181</sup> Leeds, Long, and Mitchell, "Reevaluating Alliance Reliability: Specific Threats, Specific Promises."

<sup>182</sup> Izumikawa, "Network Connections and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia."

multilateral efforts. The historical animosity between South Korea and Japan is still a relevant factor, but can be diminished through proper US analysis of security networks, US commitments, and gradually increased Japanese regional security roles.<sup>183</sup>

The net system will be complex, with various layers of cooperation at different levels, across different countries. The United States can cooperate multilaterally with the entire Indo-Pacific region on diplomatic, environmental, and pandemic efforts. Security communities and partnerships offer structures for targeted goals with broad membership. The United States must have a tailored bilateral agreement for armed conflict with, for example, South Korea. Additionally, these agreements must be evolutionary and capable of change. Although it is unlikely at present to form a robust multilateral agreement between Japan, South Korea, and the United States for security, progress should be made and frequently reviewed for more favorable agreements. If the United States is truly to compete where we can, and stand where we must with China, we must have a system that is responsive, adaptable, and evolutionary. There also needs to be a much larger focus on governmental oversight and integration of a robust system. The State Department would help to foster other instruments of national power.

The United States must lead this effort, bridging a robust multilateral network in the Indo-Pacific. Some progress has been made, as shown in the recent Pacific Deterrence Initiative.<sup>184</sup> The Initiative increases the costs for malign Chinese action. It demonstrates the type of refinements needed to deter China and modernize both American and partner defense. The United States must leverage its strong relations with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, to establish the backbone of a multifaceted, multilateral, cooperative net. After the backbone is created, India, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines must be prioritized. Utilizing and strengthening the Quad can provide a pivotal capability of bringing together the United

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Green and Medeiros, “Can America Restore Its Credibility in Asia?”

States, Japan, India, and Australia. ASEAN and other regional agreements should be strengthened, helping to serve as a robust and resilient multilateral defense and restraint against China.

In this way, the United States can improve many of the historical weaknesses of its cooperative strategy in the region. The United States needs “to retain its capabilities to provide security for its allies to ensure their desire to continue security exchanges with the United States.”<sup>185</sup> Using cost benefit analysis, allies must view the United States as the best competitive alternative, especially with a rising China. The content matters, and our benefits in transparency, inclusion, and rules-based order offer a firm core competency foundation for competitive advantage. The United States must fully understand the nature of networks and social exchange theory and accurately apply carrots and sticks as necessary to shape multilateral security across the region..<sup>186</sup> Understanding the networked nature of cooperative strategy in the region, with applicable use of smart power persuasion and coercion efforts, provides the largest area for improvement on historical policy..<sup>187</sup>

### Sub-regions: Tailored and Targeted Efforts

The building of a multifaceted, multilateral network will take long-term work; however, regional efforts can provide the building blocks necessary for initial progress. By adopting tailored sub-strategies for regional Indo-Pacific areas, the net can be strengthened, while providing the bedrock for future needs. Across all regions, the United States should highlight coercive efforts of China, while highlighting the benefits of the liberal international order, focusing on transparency, law, mutual respect, and inclusion.

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<sup>185</sup> Izumikawa, “Network Connections and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia,” 49.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2011).

A diverse and growing region, South Asia presents opportunities in economic development, climate change resiliency, pandemic resiliency, and infrastructure development. The United States should continue to strengthen ties with India, as a long-term hedge for the region. In South Asia, focus on cooperation and collaboration with China through infrastructure and development efforts can help regional, US, and Chinese goals.<sup>188</sup>

Southeast Asia has built resiliency, but some areas could be strengthened. In particular, Chinese action on common natural resources, like the Mekong River, offer room for a stronger multilateral stance.<sup>189</sup> This region is in relatively good shape, with a resilient multilateral organization, ASEAN, in place and better comparative alignment with the United States.<sup>190</sup> By offering more support to ASEAN, through a security community-type alignment, the United States can help ASEAN to continue to build homegrown regional resiliency.

Northeast Asia presents key security challenges regarding North Korean aggression and the Taiwanese future, and emphasis must be placed on the TRA and South Korean MDT. As such, the focus for building increased multilateral nets must be based on stability and security, possibly with increased Japanese strategic dialogues and partnerships. The region's stability and security focus also extends into the global commons, and increased stability and status quo efforts must be made between the United States, Russia, and China through treaties and non-aggression pacts. Support for Mongolia is a vital factor, optimized through partnership and affecting the dynamics between Russia, China, and the United States.

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<sup>188</sup> Saira Yamin, "South Asia Sub-Regional Perspectives on the U.S. Strategic Approach to the Indo-Pacific" (Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, February 9, 2021).

<sup>189</sup> Marimi Kishimoto, "US and China Lock Horns over Mekong River Data Management," *Nikkei Asia*, September 10, 2020, accessed February 22, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-and-China-lock-horns-over-Mekong-River-data-management>.

<sup>190</sup> Miemie Winn Byrd, "Southeast Asia's Perspectives on U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategic Approach" (Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, February 9, 2021).

In Oceania, the United States should continue to focus on the largest actors, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand, while keeping the larger geographical region stable. The region has potential to bring further European support, through France and its holdings, through security dialogues, partnerships, and communities, as well as through the maritime commons. Climate change, law, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) offer the key areas in the region to foster increased multilateral agreement.

## Evolution of Existing Frameworks and Strategy

Importantly, the proposed recommendation offers an evolution from current US strategy and policy. Moving from the Indo-Pacific Strategic Report of 2019, through the recently declassified Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, and the inclinations of Biden's China team, represented by Kurt Campbell, the Biden pick for Indo-Pacific Coordinator, a leading National Security Council (NSC) position for Asia and China policy, and Ely Ratner, the principal advisor for the Pentagon on China, the proposed recommendation offers constructive pathways to evolve competition strategy and policy with China.

Released in 2019, the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (IPSR) offers the most comprehensive recent strategy document. The emphasis is on competition and resiliency, highlighted in the subtitle "Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region."<sup>191</sup> The IPSR calls for further investment in United States, ally, and partner defense capabilities that provide combat-credible deterrence.<sup>192</sup> The IPSR also reinforces the need for an evolved and expanded network of allies and partners, through which a "networked security architecture" can "uphold the international rules-based order."<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> US Department of Defense, *The Department of Defense Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region* (Department of Defense, 2019.), accessed March 12, 2021. <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>, 17.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., ii.

The Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific expands on the IPSR, offering further refinement of lines of effort, assumptions, and desired end states. The framework is focused more on traditional security threats, avoiding many of the transregional security challenges that mark the environment.<sup>194</sup> More refinement across governmental agencies could target specific challenges and levels of cooperation across the region, providing a more multifaceted multilateral network. Additionally, the framework does not offer any transformative framework for the United States military to evolve its own defense, building resiliency and innovation in fiscally constrained environments.

With a new administration, some strategy and policy changes will likely shift the approach of the United States in the Indo-Pacific. The new policies likely favor a move from engagement with China, to more strategic competition, in line with some of the previous administration's efforts.<sup>195</sup> The new policy makers favor competition with China, but also inclusion of China in decision-making.<sup>196</sup> They favor strengthened alliances to support the international order, and more defense resiliency.<sup>197</sup> Renewed focus on cooperation through alliance and partnerships, an evolution of military resilience into more dispersed locations, and the inclusion of China mark likely policy trends for the new administration.<sup>198</sup> Importantly, coexisting with China is a likely policy point, with increased China cooperation on decision-making and transregional challenges, like climate change and pandemic.<sup>199</sup> In this manner, the

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<sup>194</sup> US Department of Defense, *U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific* (Department of Defense, 2021), accessed March 12, 2021, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> Kathryn Putz, "Kurt Campbell and Biden Administration's China Policy," *US-China Perception Monitor*, January 27, 2021, accessed February 20, 2021, <https://uscnpm.org/2021/01/27/kurt-campbell-and-biden-administrations-china-policy/>.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

likely trends of the new administration offer a more revolutionary approach, moving toward a more sustainable and clear long-term stability.

In comparison to the most recent strategy and policy trends, the recommendation for a more targeted long-term competition strategy, revolution in military affairs, and evolved cooperation strategy offers a more dramatic shift than historical policies. The most recent policy trends support a more networked and resilient cooperative structure, but need to be expanded to address the growing threat of transregional challenges. It is reassuring to see that policy is trending to working with China, while also deterring Chinese aggression. Ultimately, the ability to do both will determine the stability of the Indo-Pacific.

## Conclusion

Long-term US interests are best protected through a refined strategy, a military revolution, and a net of multifaceted multilateralism using diverse cooperative structures to respond to the modern strategic environment. The foundation of these efforts must be based in expanded cognition of regional cooperation and an evolved awareness of the history, nature, and network of actors and interactions. Increased smart multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific can protect US interests while allowing for a growing China. By building capability and capacity through diverse, smart, and targeted multilateral agreements, the United States can meet traditional security challenges while preparing for non-traditional transregional challenges.

US efforts should balance optimism with caution, careful of threat identification and areas of cooperation or conflict. US efforts must be sensible and resilient, considering both political and cultural analysis.<sup>200</sup> In this manner, the United States can approach its policy and strategy efforts with “our minds wide open,” looking for creative solutions to new challenges.<sup>201</sup> Once specific threats have been fully analyzed and identified, they can be countered through

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<sup>200</sup> Gray, *Thucydides Was Right: Defining the Future Threat*.

<sup>201</sup> Rudd, “Understanding China’s Rise Under Xi Jinping.”

diverse multilateral institutions, tying specific threats to specific promises, and integrating instruments of power.<sup>202</sup> More nuanced agreements can create room for compromise, cooperation, and improved reliability, especially with dissimilar governmental systems.

The United States and China are not forced into future conflict. The United States has the will and the capability to change its strategy, policy, and thinking to avoid war, stand where needed, and cooperate where it can. The United States has benefited greatly from its alliance structures over history and must work to refine and continue alliance efforts that are increasingly at risk.<sup>203</sup> The strategy and policy for this path provides the United States, the Indo-Pacific region, and the world the benefit of increased order and stability, increased ability to counter transregional threats, and a potential partner instead of adversary.

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<sup>202</sup> Leeds, Long, and Mitchell, “Reevaluating Alliance Reliability: Specific Threats, Specific Promises.”

<sup>203</sup> Rapp-Hooper, *Shields of the Republic: The Triumph and Peril of America’s Alliances*.

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