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**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE**

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**Asia-Pacific Rebalance: New Realities in  
Traditional US Alliances in the Region**

*Master thesis*

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## **Abstract**

The thesis seeks to examine the development of the US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia alliances, during the implementation of the rebalance to Asia policy under the Obama administration. It discusses the application of three major international relations theories, realism, liberalism, and constructivism, in studying the causes and effects that resulted in different outcomes across the three dyads, from security, economic, and cultural perspectives. To establish a causal relationship, the thesis employs a qualitative case study method, controlled comparison, to test the theories and identify the factors that play a decisive role in determining the differences. It then concludes that between the three alliances, it was the rational choice of policymakers, focused on state survival and economic interests, that influenced state behaviour in cross-border relationships. The US alliances in Asia-Pacific have been operating mainly on pragmatic foundations and principles, to serve strategic purposes, and have little to do with normative, ideational factors.

## **Keywords**

Asia-Pacific, alliance, economic interdependence, foreign policy, hegemony, national identity, rebalance, security threat

**Range of thesis:** 78 pages, 29,626 words, 196,516 characters

## **Declaration of Authorship**

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.
4. The thesis as submitted is 196,516 characters long (including spaces), i.e. 78 manuscript pages.

Prague, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017

**Phu Nguyen Doan**

Name and surname

Signature

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**Proposed Topic:**

**Asia-Pacific Rebalance: New Realities in Traditional US Alliances in the Region**

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**Introduction:**

*Background*

My thesis will focus on the United States' 'rebalance to Asia' policy, examining the international geo-political background, and the corresponding variances of outcomes in the US' traditional, treaty allies in the Asia-Pacific region, namely Japan, South Korea and Australia. For the purpose of testing my theories, I study three bilateral US-alliance relationships, namely the Japan's case, the South Korea's case, and the Australia's case.

As pointed out in the topic, my research will analyse some of the current, salient geo-political issues in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region. Covering some 2.8 billion hectares of land area, or approximately 22 per cent of global land area (Waggener & Lane, 1997), this immense region plays an irreplaceably important role in the global development, being 'the world's factory floor' and provides its most important sources of services, technology and investment, and final-goods markets, as reported by The Economist (2014). That being said, APAC is the stage where the world's three largest economies – US, China, and Japan – thrive and compete at the same time.

Beside remarkable economic and social developments, APAC is also seen as a conflictual ground, harbouring regional security complexes, harbouring crises, instabilities, tensions, and disputes between local rival countries, as well as the power struggle between global and regional hegemony. The last few decades have witnessed a decrease in American predominance, and an ever-growing challenge from China to US power, particularly in Asia. As an effort to counter the rise of China, in the first half of the 2010s, the Obama administration has deployed 'rebalancing', a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, five-pillared strategy to put

the US right back at “the center of the action” in Asia, in all political, economic, and military perspectives (WH, 2013).

### *Goal of the thesis*

My research, therefore, examines ‘strengthening alliances’, the first of five pillars in rebalancing strategy, in which the US proposes a closer coordination with five treaty alliances in APAC: Japan, South Korea, Australia, (the remaining two, Thailand and the Philippines are not being examined in this thesis). In reality, the rebalance policy shows a noticeable variance in implementation and outcomes in bilateral relations between the US and each ally, causing by both internal and external factors. Scholars have voiced different opinions about the necessity and effectiveness of the US rebalance policy, whether it is going on a right path, or just adds to the deterioration of the regional instabilities and security issues. For example, Harold (2014) and Green and Cooper (2014) stress that the rebalance is sustainable, and it is of fundamental importance for the US to continuously demonstrate its commitment to APAC, whereas Ling (2013) and Löfflmann (2016) argue that the policy seems unlikely to succeed in its stated aims, or even de-balances the region.

In order to narrow the gap between those analyses, I will try to empirically verify my theories (as explained in the next section), and arrive at a conclusion, that despite its shortcomings, rebalance policy is necessary for the peace and security of APAC in the long run. My sources of data include the primary data, i.e. policy documents and statistics from international organisations, US and (aforementioned) allied governments as well as key stakeholders in the region, and secondary data from political analysts, specialists, and international think-tanks.

### **Research framework:**

I will examine the three alliances: US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia partnerships, and answer the following research question:

***What causes the differences (different level or type of co-operation) between the three alliances?***

The answers to this question will be analysed under three international relations theory perspectives: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Each theory serves to develop a proposition which I employ to explain a specific aspect of the question.



**Theory 1 – Realism:** The differences in the type or level of cooperation in the three alliances result from the varying implications for each alliance for distribution of power in the global/regional system and for the counter of security threats. Therefore, the most extensive alliance ensues from the bilateral relationship where the two countries could harvest the largest security benefits.

*Hypothesis:* A bilateral alliance with a larger security importance will result in a more extensive co-operation than an alliance with a lesser security importance.

*Dependent variable:* The variances of co-operation between three alliances.

*Independent variable:* The security importance of an ally, the vulnerability of an ally.

**Theory 2 – Liberalism:** The differences in the type or level of cooperation in the three alliances result from the different levels of economic interdependence between the states in each of the three alliances. Therefore, the most extensive alliance ensues from the bilateral trade ties where the two countries could harvest the largest economic benefits.

*Hypothesis:* A bilateral alliance with a larger economic interdependence will result in a more extensive co-operation than an alliance with a lesser economic interdependence.

*Dependent variable:* The variances of co-operation between three alliances.

*Independent variable:* The level of economic interdependence.

**Theory 3 – Constructivism:** The differences in the type or level of cooperation in the three alliances result from the differences in the compatibility of national identities of the countries in each of the three dyads. Therefore, a bilateral alliance between the two countries with compatible national identities will demonstrate corresponding discourses and activities differently from an alliance between the two countries with incompatible national identities.

*Hypothesis:* A bilateral alliance between the two countries with compatible national identities will demonstrate differently from an alliance between the two countries with incompatible national identities.

*Dependent variable:* The variances of co-operation between three alliances.

*Independent variable:* The (in)compatibilities in national identities of the countries.

## **Operationalisation:**

My thesis will begin with an overview of the current APAC scenarios, its historical background, and how the regional key players are adapting to the situation, in order to clarify the variables, and the cause and effects of current developments.

I then proceed with a literature review of relevant articles/papers that have been dealing with this topic and related topics, to examine what kinds of questions have been asked, the variances of their findings, and how are they related to my research.

Using a (neo)realist approach, I will analyse the salient IR issues affecting the region, whereas the balance of power and balance of threat theories could explain the newly formed strategic partnerships in APAC. The economic interdependence and bilateral trade ties between the allies will also be explained from a liberalist perspective for empirical evidences that support my theory. In addition, the constructivist theory serves as an analysis tool for examining the construction of national identities, foreign policy doctrines, and what possibly led to the different perceptions of one another between the countries in each of the three dyads.

The platform for my theoretical analysis will be based on several renowned literatures in the field, such as “Theory in International Politics” (Waltz, 1979), “The Origins of Alliances” (Walt, 1987), “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics” (Mearsheimer, 2001), and “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics” (Moravcsik, 1997).

## **Methodology:**

In order to test my theory, I will apply an analytical, empirical, qualitative approach, using the case study’s controlled comparison and process tracing methods to illustrate and describe both the similarities and differences in the implementation and outcomes of the rebalance policy towards three US treaty allies: Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

In controlled comparison, I choose the method of difference to investigate the similar general characteristics and different values among the cases. In process tracing, I will use observations within each case to determine the cause-effect link between the initial case conditions and case outcomes. To conduct the testing of theory, I rely on the methods described in the textbooks “Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science” (Van Evera, 1997) and “Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences” (George & Bennett, 2005).

## **Data and case selection:**

My sources of data come from several primary and secondary sources, such as:

- Primary sources: policy papers (white paper, blue book etc.), government data and statistics, government press releases, media interview with policy makers
- Secondary sources: specialist's analysis, public surveys, independent international research institute's reports

Case selection:

- The Japan's case: US-Japan partnership from 2010 to present
- The South Korea's case: US-South Korea partnership from 2010 to present
- The Australia's case: US-Australia partnership from 2010 to present

## **Outline:**

- I. Introduction
  1. Background of the topic
  2. Scope of the thesis
  3. Outline of the thesis
- II. Theoretical background and literature review
  1. Theoretical approach
  2. Literature review
- III. Methodology
  1. Summary of the available methods and explanation of the choice of method(s) for theory testing
  2. Description of research practice
- IV. Empirical analysis
  1. Security importance and bilateral co-operations between the US and treaty allies
    - a. Theoretical and qualitative analysis
    - b. Discussion of the findings
  2. Economic interdependence and bilateral co-operations between the US and treaty allies
    - a. Theoretical and qualitative analysis
    - b. Discussion of the findings

3. Compatibility of national identities and bilateral co-operations between the US and treaty allies
  - a. Theoretical and qualitative analysis
  - b. Discussion of the findings
- V. Conclusion
- VI. Bibliography
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## **List of Abbreviations**

5AF:	Fifth Air Force, United States Pacific Air Forces
7AF:	Seventh Air Force, United States Pacific Air Forces
ACA:	Arms Control Association
ACYPL:	American Council of Young Political Leaders
ADoD:	Australian Government Department of Defence
AHRC:	Australian Human Rights Commission
APAC:	Asia-Pacific
CULCON:	United States-Japan Conference on Cultural & Educational Interchange
DFAT:	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government
DOD:	United States Department of Defense
DOS:	United States Department of State
EUSA:	US Eighth Army
IIE:	Institution of International Education
JMOD:	Japan Ministry of Defense
JUSFC:	Japan-United States Friendship Commission
MFA:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea
MINFA:	Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs
MND:	Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea
MOFA:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
TRE:	United States Department of the Treasury
USCB:	United States Census Bureau
USJBF:	United States-Japan Bridging Foundation
USTR:	United States Trade Representative
WH:	The White House

## Introduction

One of the most salient, frequently discussed topics in contemporary international politics since the beginning of the twenty-first century, besides the ongoing war on terror, is the shift of power in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region. Covering some 2.8 billion hectares of land area, or approximately 22 per cent of global land area, this immense region plays an irreplaceably important role in the global development, being ‘the world’s factory floor’ and providing its most important sources of services, technology and investment, and final goods markets (Waggener & Lane, 1997; Petri, et al., 2014, p. 79). Home to over 4.5 billion people, nearly 60 per cent of the world’s population, APAC in general and East Asia and Pacific in particular are also the stages where the world’s three largest economies, US, China, and Japan thrive and compete at the same time (UNESCAP, 2017). This region, a conglomeration of heterogeneity, demonstrates diversity in political ideologies and economic models, in which autocracies and democracies, central planning economies and market economies could be seen co-existing with one another.

Nevertheless, apart from remarkable economic and social developments, APAC is also a conflictual ground, harbouring potential instabilities and crisis. In this region, one can observe security complexes, heightening tensions, unsolved disputes between rival countries, and most notably the power struggle for regional dominance between a declining hegemon and a rising power. The last few decades have witnessed a decrease in American predominance, and an ever-growing challenge from China to US power, particularly in Asia. As an effort to counter the rise of China, in the first half of the 2010s, the Obama administration has deployed ‘rebalancing’, a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, five-pillared strategy to put the US right back at “the center of the action” in Asia, in all political, economic, and military perspectives (WH, 2013).

This thesis examines ‘strengthening alliances’, the first of five pillars in rebalancing strategy, in which the US proposes a closer coordination with its treaty allies in APAC: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines. However, the thesis chooses to focus on the US bilateral relationships vis-à-vis the first three, for reasons explained in the methodology and data analysis sections. Given the significance of US-led alliances in regional peace and stability, there are a lot of literature covering these topics, debating the partners’ roles and their contribution in regional management. Before examining the scholarly debates in the beginning

chapter, I will first outline several perspectives on the three alliances, the US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia partnerships, to present a narrative of the cases in question.

*US-Japan alliance.* Since the late 1940s, Japan has been assessed by the US Government to bear a strategic importance to all powers whose interests in Asia are at large. According to a report by the Central Intelligence Agency, any power controlling Japan holds a vital position to dominate the North Pacific, and is able to deter external intervention in the area of interest, denying those who plan to challenge the regional status quo the ability to conduct aggressive action (CIA, 1948). Based on these analyses, the CIA concluded that it is imperative for the US to maintain economic support and security protection of Japan, to not only keep the country from falling into Soviet hands and consequently becoming anti-American, but also secure its achievement of political stability and economic rehabilitation, and from that contribute to the peaceful stabilisation of Asia. It is believed that such standpoint has been playing a vital role in shaping the US foreign policy vis-à-vis Japan, to develop this partnership into one of the most important US alliances. Japan, on the other hand, employed the Yoshida doctrine to rely on the US for security protection, and focused national power on economic development, as a guideline throughout the Cold War era.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, the US-Japan alliance has been reassessed to accommodate new, crucial factors, the unstoppable rise of China and the substantial security threats in Northeast Asia. Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye (2007, pp. 15, 26) maintain that while this alliance should remain at the core of the US Asia strategy, it is necessary for the alliance to be more open, based on common interests and values, fostering the triangle of US-Japan-China relations to guarantee regional stability. Evelyn Goh (2011, pp. 887-888) warns of two undesirable outcomes in the new East Asian security order, namely the domination by China and the withdrawal of the US from the region. To avoid such predicaments, Goh argues, the US-Japan partnership needs to play an essential role in a three-pronged strategy: maintaining US preponderance, particularly its military presence, in the region; socialising and integrating China peacefully into the East Asian security order; and cultivating regionalism to ensure peace in the long run. Similar to Goh's opinion, Hyun-Wook Kim (2011) points out four indicators that have led to a change in the US-Japan alliance in the post-Cold War era. Fostered by shared commonalities in mutual goals, threat perception, strategic compatibility, and command structure, both partners have collaborated more extensively to strengthen the alliance cohesion. Facing emerging challenges, Japanese policy makers realised they could no longer adhere to the Yoshida doctrine, and determined to exploit the alliance as the main driver

behind the normalisation of national security policy (Dian, 2014, p. 154). Since the second half of the 2000s, the Abe administration has worked relentlessly to improve Japan's national security posture, through promotion of the US-Japanese alliance cooperation, particularly the revision of mutual defence guidelines, furthered military ties and commitments to the US rebalance to Asia policy, and attempts of revisionism that have met with mixed reactions from Washington (Hughes, 2015).

*US-South Korea alliance.* The US and Republic of Korea entered a security alliance in 1953, when the two countries signed the Mutual Defense Treaty. The Treaty established a legal basis for US forces stationed in South Korea to defend the country and maintain the status quo on the Korean Peninsula. Accordingly, while South Korea assumes control of its armed forces during peacetime, the command will be taken over by the US in the event of war. Robert Dujarric (2005, pp. 448-450) points out that despite having its forces stationed in South Korea for the last six decades, the US did not allegedly prevent the constant political upheavals that had been taking place during the second half of the twentieth century. Instead, its presence did help mitigating the consequences of political struggles. For instance, one of South Korean presidents, Kim Dae-jung, was saved from imminent death thanks to American pressure, when he was a political dissident opposing the military government in the 1970s. According to Dujarric, during the Cold War, the US-South Korea alliance was guided by three pillars: dealing with North Korean threat, shaping South Korean politics, and enhancing regional security. However, those pillars have lately been undermined by the new era's challenges, reflected in the decline of common threat perception, public opposition to the US military presence, and lack of shared visions towards a rising China.

Nevertheless, the US-South Korea alliance is still being held in high regard. G. John Ikenberry (2004, p. 354) stresses the importance of the traditional American hegemonic hub-and-spoke order in regional security, an intensely complex and symbiotic security and political system that is not easily replaced in a foreseeable future. David Kang (2009, p. 17) maintains that even during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun presidencies, those that chose to engage China and proposed a softer approach towards North Korean issues, the alliance survived strong differences between Washington and Seoul, and even reached new milestones, demonstrated by the participation of South Korean troops in Iraq, further reconfiguration of US forces posture in South Korea, and the ratification of a bilateral free trade agreement. Jae-Jung Suh (2009, p. 77) highlights the implications of US military transformation under new strategy concept on the bilateral relationship, arguing it would further entangle South Korea

more deeply in the US alliance system. Youngshik Bong (2016) posits that the US-South Korea security alliance has proven to be successful and sustainable in protecting and promoting South Korea's national security. As a result, South Korea's domestic political conditions and public opinion have been primarily in favour of the alliance. Similarly, Dohee Kim and Uk Heo (2016, p. 12) examine the US-South Korea relationship throughout two decades after the end of the Cold War, and find out that while South Korean economic development and democratisation tend to have a negative effect on the relationship, education attainment and bilateral trade ties seem to pose a greater, and positive impact, as the majority of intellectuals and educated people still recognise the importance of the alliance.

*US-Australia alliance.* The US-Australia bilateral relationship has played a dominant role in shaping Australian economic and security policies, as well as maintaining the US supremacy in the Oceania, since the Second World War. Mark Beeson (2010) notes that the Australian sentiment towards the US, from both policy makers and general public, has been mostly positive, with a strong support for the bilateral relationship. However, that euphoria soon came to a change facing newly emerged challenges in the twenty-first century. Being a middle power, Australia has limited capacity to influence the US foreign policy, designed primarily to further American interests and powered by American immense political, economic, and strategic leverage, thus inevitably put Australia in a clearly disadvantaged position. From this perspective, he argues, a more integrated and more exclusive relationship with Washington might potentially compromise Canberra's long-term strategy, in all three economic, political, and security dimensions. Therefore, it was in Australian core interest to develop a more independent stance in the bilateral relationship, and exert its power to play a more constructive role in the international system (Beeson, 2010, 2011).

Besides such endogenous preferences, the contemporary power shift in the APAC, created by China's challenge to US hegemony, also prompted the Australian policy makers to adapt to the new era. Hugh White (2011) argues that it is time to adjust Australian foreign policy to accommodate China's rising power, to manage and minimise newly emerged strategic risks. Given the ongoing power struggle, an intensified Sino-American contest will undoubtedly force Australia to choose between the US, its greatest and most important ally, and China, the world's second largest economy whose market Australia is increasingly dependent upon. This opinion on Australia's unresolved dilemma seems to be widely shared among political scientists. Nick Bisley (2013) reasserts the centrality and sustainability of US-Australia alliance in Australian statecraft, but on the other hand reminds the readers of the growing economic

integration between Australia and China, one that could possibly strengthen China's leverage and handicap Australia's ability in dealing with cross-border issues. Stephan Frühling (2014) examines the Australian strategic policy, and points out that despite being identified as a recipient of US extended deterrence, Australia's strategic posture demonstrated serious inconsistencies in collaboration with the US at the local, regional, and global levels. He calls for a resolution by either accepting a closer military and political integration with the US, or reducing the importance of the US alliance for Australia's security. Due to geopolitical reasons, Australia seems to have an intrinsic fear of abandonment, and perceives national security as being linked to the global balance of power, reflected in the deep integration into the US alliance system (Gyngell, 2014, p. 382). With the ongoing power shift, such predicaments are being deteriorated. The only way to navigate through the complexities ahead, Gyngell suggests, is an effective foreign policy to skilfully keep three objectives, *the US alliance*, *Asian relations*, and *rule-based order*, in alignment.

Looking at these discussion, one can identify a relatively visible pattern of alliance behaviour across the three cases. On the one hand, analysts notice and suggest closer cooperation and better integration in the US-Japan and US-South Korea bilateral relationship, to address newly emerged challenges, particularly in the security dimension. On the other hand, the US-Australia partnership seems to demonstrate a distinct development, in which the Australians call for a more independent stance in the relationship, to lessen their reliance on just one patron, and accommodate new game changers. What implications could that possibly bring to the development of the alliances? Traditionally, all the three dyads, US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia are long-term strategic alliances, sharing similarities in the security, economic, and political aspects. In reality, the rebalance policy shows a noticeable variance in implementation and outcomes in bilateral relations between the US and each ally, causing by both internal and external factors. The goal of the thesis, therefore, is to perform a causal analysis, and seek to address the research question: "What causes such differences between the three alliances?"

During the development of this thesis, under the instruction of my supervisor, I have made a few changes comparing to the thesis proposal, to improve the quality of my research. The hypotheses and accompanying variables were refined to address the research question more concretely. The methods being used to test the theories were also reduced to one single method, controlled comparison, to focus better on the data analysis. Therefore, the proposed structure was rearranged for a more streamlined and systematic layout. In general, while the final thesis

shows several insignificant differences from the proposal, its core arguments have been maintained and addressed with appropriate method and procedures, and should be referred to as the official and final version.

In order to answer the research question, the thesis will start with the literature review in Chapter One, revisiting some of the scholarly perspectives as the background and precursor of the rebalance policy, namely the regional hegemonic order, and the alleged power struggles between an apparently rising power and a presumably declining hegemon. The chapter utilises academic views on such issues to engage in the debate between those who support the rebalance and those who oppose it, to identify the gap that should be addressed in examining the contemporary international politics in the APAC.

Subsequently, Chapter Two presents a theoretical and methodological framework for the answer to the research question, and through that determine the factors that caused the variances between the three alliances. The theoretical section applies three major international relations schools of thought, *realism*, *liberalism*, and *constructivism* as the fundamental principles to develop the core arguments and emphasise the cause-effect relationship within case being examined. The methodological framework discusses the research design employing a qualitative approach, controlled comparison as a method being used for testing my theory, and technical issues relating to that method.

The data analyses are presented in Chapter Three and Four. In Chapter Three, I examine the variances in the outcome of rebalance initiative implementation across the three alliances, to identify the case values on the effects. Chapter Four investigates the independent variables among the three cases, determining the values on the causes. Correspondingly, the results will be used to test the theories, based on which I will explain the observations, and discuss their implications on my research. In conclusion, Chapter Five sums up the findings as an answer to the research question, and considers other possibilities as further implications for future examination of the developments of international politics in the APAC.

## Chapter One: Literature Review

### 1.1. Overview

To gain a deeper insight into the application of theoretical frameworks to current developments in APAC's interstate politics, the literature review will start with scholarly perspectives on the regional hegemonic order, and the alleged power struggle between an apparently rising China and a presumably declining US, as the background and precursor of the rebalance policy. Then it will continue to assess contested debates between those who support the initiative, asserting the fundamental role of US leadership in maintaining regional stability, and those who dismiss the notion, seeing it as a disruption of regional affairs and deterioration of the existing dilemma between Asian neighbours. While the literatures have extensively debated the pros and cons of the rebalance, and sometimes converge with one another, little do they seem to analyse the current developments of the initiative, and what could have constituted the inter-alliance differences in its implementation.

### 1.2. Current hegemonic order in Asia-Pacific

The notion of *hegemony*, set forth by Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, refers to the ideas and conditions in which the leadership not only justifies and maintains its dominance but also manages to win the active consent of the subordinates, realising its goals without resorting to violent solutions (Gramsci, 1971, 2000). Accordingly, in international politics, it is required of the hegemonic state to possess both the hard power, commanding other states through its sheer military and economic strength, and the soft power, getting other states to want what it wants through intangible resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions (Nye, 1990). An international system that operates on a set of norms and rules predominantly formulated and enforced by a hegemon, therefore, is more likely to be embraced and adhered to in a peaceful manner by other countries, results in what international relation scholars call a *hegemonic stability*. A prerequisite of hegemonic status is a well-established supremacy in both economic and military strength, that is, a 'preponderance of power', a condition the US has maintained for decades since the end of Second World War, single-handedly dominating the underlying principles of international political and economic relations (Schuman, 1940, p. 80; Goldstein & Pevehouse, 2014, pp. 57-58). The uncontested US-led hegemonic order in Asia is seen as



relatively ‘user-friendly’, within which not only its allied states, but also its largest competitor, namely China, could fit into and benefit from, as argued by G. John Ikenberry (2004, p. 365).

In the APAC, the American hegemony has been recognised by its traditional allies as the great stabiliser, who maintains peace and order, deterring the actual or perceived ambitions and conflicts of interest between regional powers (Heisbourg, 1999, p. 16). As Robert Keohane (1984, pp. 46, 49) says, hegemonic leadership plays a vital role in creating a pattern of order. Ikenberry (2004, p. 354) identifies the paradigm of the US alliances in East Asia as a combination of hard bilateral security ties, in which the US acts as the security provider, and soft multilateral economic relations. He specifies that through the hub-and-spoke system, the US has pursued a divide and rule strategy among APAC allies, securing its leadership position by maintaining a better relationship with each country than those countries have with each other. On the one hand, the US-centric order helps binding allies to the US-led rules and norms, reducing the potential security dilemmas in a region full of unsolved historical and territorial issues. On the other hand, he says, it was the intertwined relationships that make American hegemony more open, predictable, reciprocal, institutionalised, and therefore, more benign and tolerable. Another factor that contributes to the sustainable hegemony is the lack of a political community in East Asia that could balance against American power. Unlike EU and NATO member states, East Asian countries are widely diverse in terms of regime types, making it naturally difficult to unite in solidarity, and perceived by US policymakers as an ‘alien, inferior community’, which serves the US preference for a unilateral or bilateral order in Asia (Hemmer & Katzenstein, 2002, p. 575; Ikenberry, 2004). Nevertheless, recent global economic crises have left serious impacts on the US economy, which in turn somewhat affect and challenge the US foreign policy, paving the way for scholarly debates over the possibility of American hegemonic decline, regional hegemonic struggle, and consequently, power transition in the APAC.

The American hegemonic decline has long been predicted, that while the US will likely remain militarily and economically superior than the rest of the world, it will face unavoidable challenges in both the military/strategic realm and the technological/economic advantage, diminishing the disproportionation the US has been enjoying since the Second World War (Kennedy, 1987, pp. 514, 534). Sharing the same view with Kennedy, Stephen Gill (1988) points out several factors that contribute to this downturn. Internally, as a hegemon, the US has been footing the bill for military expenditures and economic initiatives around the globe to maintain its international dominance, and eventually the costs will take its toll on the benefits.

Externally, while the other major states are free riding on the benevolent behaviour of the leading state to maximise their relative security and aggregate economic welfare, they also attempt to challenge the hegemon status. The collective weight of such challenges, he argues, has accelerated American relative decline, although the US still manages to maintain a vast and global military capacity (Gill, 1988, p. 5).

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the closure of Cold War era, the US has enjoyed the sole superpower status. While this much-anticipated unipolarity conveniently serves the American hegemonic order, it also entraps the US in endless and somewhat unworthy adventures, as David Calleo (2010) mentions in his assessment of the American decline, two decades after the establishment of the new, unipolar world order. He highlights the US diminishing share of the world's GDP and global trade, from 40 and 16 per cent in 1960 to 23 and 8 per cent by end of 2000s, respectively, against the rise of less developed rivals, the consequences of 1990s economic bubbles, and the ever-growing deficits, as some of the most visible indicators of the decline (Calleo, 2010, p. 216). With a relatively weakened economy, the US has to hold on to its unrivalled military capability to maintain the hegemonic status. From a similar perspective, Mark Beeson argues that while the establishment of US-led Bretton Woods institutions has reinforced American power and benefited allies, paradoxically, it also left a certain impact on the potential weaknesses of that very same power. Apparently, its recent shifts towards unilateralism and/or bilateralism have eroded the foundations of American power and influence, motivating other states to form regional mechanisms and initiatives that exclude the US, to balance against the traditionally Western-favoured institutions (Beeson & Higgott, 2006; Beeson, 2007). Such decentralisation of global economic architecture, on the one hand, could contribute positively to the diversification of global trade liberalisation and multilateralism, paving the way for a so-called New Bretton Woods system (Rana, 2013). On the other hand, it also grants more freedom and leverage to countries traditionally subordinated to the US dominance, empowers them to take a more independent stance, and thus undermines the existing hegemonic order. To cope with changing times, Paul Kennedy (1987, p. 534) suggests that US policymakers should recognise the upcoming broad trends in international politics, and skilfully handle and prioritise its foreign policies in a way that the US could still benefit from, or at least would not aggravate, the unavoidable relative erosion of its dominance.

### 1.3. Great power politics in Asia-Pacific

Given the geopolitical complexity, resource abundance, chronic tensions, and unsolved disputes of the region, it is only natural that the American hegemonic decline, although relatively, and the Chinese extraordinary rise, to say the least, assertively, would result in agitated discourses over a seemingly inevitable competition for supremacy over APAC. Even when the US was still enjoying its post-Cold War prime years as the sole, unchallenged superpower, IR scholars had already voiced their concerns over China's future capabilities and intentions, and what would be an appropriate US approach vis-à-vis the awakened dragon, 'containment' or 'engagement' (Shambaugh, 1996). Facing a rising China, John Mearsheimer (2001, p. 402) predicts a not so positive prospect, in which "a wealthy China would not be a status quo power but an aggressive state determined to achieve regional hegemony". Should this assertion about China's rise not be clear enough, then five years later, his short answer "no" to his own question, "Can China rise peacefully?", in an article that leaves little to the imagination right from the title, "China's Unpeaceful Rise" should suffice (Mearsheimer, 2006). The very same statement was repeated, bluntly, in his assessment of a 'gathering storm' in Asia (Mearsheimer, 2010). His perspective, as depressing and even tragic as it may appear, is nothing short of appropriate coming from a leading offensive realist, and more importantly, paints a strikingly correct picture of the events unfolding in the next decade.

While some IR scholars are contemplating China's rise towards hegemony, others also express credible doubts about the regional impacts of the Middle Kingdom's ascension to power, or so to say, from a Chinese standpoint, the quest to regain its long-lost and rightfully deserved dominance. It is worth noting that even though some scholars believe the rising China to be a peaceful, status quo power (Goh, 2005; Kastner & Saunders, 2011; He & Feng, 2014; Lee, J., 2016); the majority consensus, many of which drew from the power transition theory and the 'China threat' theory (Organski, 1968), is that a Chinese hegemonic order will likely display a belligerent behaviour in a zero-sum game (Christensen, 2001; Mearsheimer & Brzezinski, 2005; Kugler, 2006; Tammen & Kugler, 2006; Goldstein, 2007; Jeffery, 2009; Johnston, 2013). Denny Roy (1994, 1995) goes straight to the point, asserting that a burgeoning China, fuelled by Chinese vast economic potential and authoritarian domestic politics, poses long-term danger for regional security. A Chinese hegemony emerged from and trying to fill a 'power vacuum' caused by a significant withdrawal of US military and political influence, Roy argues, might not be as benevolent as expected, is prone to using force to pursue its goal, and most likely will trigger a response from regional rival(s) which could escalate into another

bipolar conflict. The Chinese concept of *Tianxia* ('All-under-Heaven'), its own version of global hegemony, is promoted by Chinese scholars who endorse the notion of a peace-loving and benign twenty-first century empire that claims to be superior to the anarchic Westphalia system (Zhao, 2006; Zhang, 2011; Zhao, 2015). However, *Tianxia* is being rebutted by Western scholars pointing out the pattern of gloomy fates that happen to those who do not relinquish their sovereignty and yield to Chinese dominance in a Sinocentric world, as historical evidences have proven (Callahan, 2008; Carlson, 2011; Dreyer, 2015). To quote Ikenberry (2004, p. 364), "hegemonic orders can be liberal and benign or coercive and exploitative", such a fifty-fifty chance does not look desirable for APAC middle and small powers, whom China traditionally perceives, treats, and keeps as inferior partners within its sphere of influence.

Considering a seemingly inevitable power competition in APAC, what are IR scholars talking about? On the one hand, Ikenberry (2004, 2016) maintains the relative sustainability of American hegemonic order in East Asia for at least the next few decades, with the US and China counterweighing each other. But on the other hand, he also predicts a scenario of power transition in Asia, in which economic weakness and political exhaustion could result in the US ceding regional security leadership to another rising power, assumingly China, the same as what happened to Great Britain after the Second World War. Christopher Layne (1993, 2006, 2008, 2009) repeatedly advances the realistic vision of a waning American hegemony facing an emerging Chinese great power, thus calls for a new offshore balancing in US grand strategy. Satoshi Machida (2010), Edward Kwon (2012), and Vincent Wang (2015) point out economic and security threat perceptions of China, both in the US public and international system. Yves-Heng Lim (2013, 2014) argues that as a dissatisfied power, China not only attempts to disrupt the current balance of power, but also manoeuvres to marginalise the US from regional institutions, and exclude from the regional game the only actor that can resist Chinese ambitions. Shaun Breslin (2010, 2013) posits that once China has the power to change the world to one of its making, it will. And perhaps, changes that come from a dissatisfied emerging great power, who has endured a self-proclaimed 'century of humiliation', might not necessarily be pleasant to those who happen to be at the receiving end of its policies.

In his analysis of future American power, Joseph Nye (2010, pp. 8-11) argues that the US strength was mustered from its openness, not isolationism, and an underlying constitutional framework that stresses the importance of decentralisation. Indeed, that seems to have empowered the global attractiveness and creativity of the US, which unarguably exceeds any other country, including China. However, on a regional scale, one presumable Chinese

advantage over the US is the authoritarian, centralised power that vested in a unitary body of the Communist Party of China, in contrast with the democratic separation of powers and pluralism set forth in the US Constitution. Consequently, the Chinese decision-making process, particularly in foreign policies, from time to time seems to be considerably more streamlined and effective than that of the US. Facing the rise of Chinese power, there is no uniform East Asian response, as Robert Ross (2006, p. 379) contends. According to Ross, East Asian states choose to either accommodate or balance against China, but most if not all of them are consolidating their ties with the US. While Alexander Vuving (2012, p. 419) acknowledges the ongoing close competition for economic primacy between China and the US, in which the US still leads by a small margin, he predicts that from the 2030s onward, China will muster enough economic strength to seriously challenge US pre-eminence in Asia, shifting the Sino-US balance of power. Given the importance of Sino-US relations, which Aaron Friedberg (2005, p. 8) calls “the most significant bilateral international relationship” and Harsh Pant (2012, p. 248) considers “the most consequential for global stability”, it is understandable that Washington will not let Beijing exert its unconstrained power in APAC. Realising its lack of a strategic framework in dealing with Asia, which China interpreted as a sign of the US decline and an opportunity to assert itself, Pant says, the Obama administration has no other choice but to defend its supremacy in the region, proclaiming a rebalancing to Asia. And as Friedberg (2015, p. 107) articulates, in such a structural, power-political competition, better balancing is not a perfect strategy, but for now it remains the best available alternative for US policymakers.

#### **1.4. Debating the rebalance**

Announced in 2010 by the Obama administration, the rebalancing is a comprehensive, multi-faceted policy initiative targeting all three political, economic, and security dimensions to revitalise and strengthen US position in APAC. Despite the White House’s reassurance that the rebalance “does not mean containing China or seeking to dictate terms in Asia” (WH, 2013), many IR scholars appear to have reached a consensus that the initiative should be seen, and rightfully so, as the US reaction against a rising China. Hugh De Santis (2012) highlights several factors prompting the initiative, two exogenous (China’s discriminatory policies in international trades, China’s military buildup), two endogenous (anti-China sentiment, US policymakers’ stance on China issues), and historical, cultural and psychological perceptions of China, particularly from a liberal democratic point of view. Micheal Swaine (2012, p. 38) asserts that the rebalance is “motivated by concerns over China’s growing power, influence,

and behavior in the Asia-Pacific”, a view that is shared by Justin Logan (2013), who also emphasises on China’s growing economic and military power and influence in the region. Similarly, the notion that a rising and assertive China is the main reason for US rebalancing is widely shared by scholars and analysts who apparently choose to approach from a geopolitical, realist perspective (Satake & Ishihara, 2012; Scott, 2012; Ratner, 2013; Rudd, 2013; Basile & Isernia, 2015; Envall & Hall, 2016).

Originally named ‘pivot to Asia’, it inadvertently raised some concerns among other American allies and partners, who might have translated that into the US pivoting *away from* Europe or the Middle East, and thus the initiative was renamed ‘rebalance’ (Meijer, 2015, p. 2).<sup>1</sup> And given the emphasis that the US had never left Asia, the term ‘rebalance’, instead of ‘pivot’, seems to be more appropriate (Weitz, 2012). Regardless of how it is called, the initiative’s magnitude and its significant implications for regional security and stability have ignited plenty of debates from IR scholars, many of those seem to evolve around two contrasting perspectives, supporting or dismissing the notion.

#### *1.4.1. Rebalance as a regional stabiliser*

Before being officially mentioned by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2011), the rebalance initiative has been implicitly implemented for quite some time. Nina Silove (2016) points out that under George W. Bush administration, US policymakers have pursued a strategy of reorientation, a ‘shift’ towards Asia, aiming at deterring China from and protecting American supremacy in hegemonic status, and what the Obama administration has been doing was a labelling and extension of that strategy. The US, she argues, has implemented both an external and internal balancing strategy, to increase the combined power of the US and its APAC allies and partners, as an attempt to maintain the power balance in the region. Jae Jeok Park (2011) traces the US-led hub-and-spoke alliance system’s development into *hedging* against the emergence of a multilateral order in the region, which the US deems ‘undesirable’ since such a new order could erode US benign hegemonic status. Nevertheless, while Park advances the ‘general interests’ of the US-led alliances, namely multilateral security arrangements concretising the status quo, and hedging against undesirable multilateral security orders in which China is overwhelmingly influential, he belittles the regional potential threats, including the rise of China, North Korean weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and terrorism (pp. 138-140). This seems to be a misjudgement, since a rising China and a declining US might possibly

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘pivot’ and ‘rebalance’ therefore are used interchangeably in this thesis, subjected to the way cited authors mentioned it. However, it should be read as ‘rebalance’ as it is officially named now.

end up in a Thucydides trap, escalating to an armed conflict (Lam, 2016). And if even the democratic peace theory sometimes fails to explain certain cases of wars between democracies (Rosato, 2003), then how could one expect a WMD-capable authoritarian, personalistic regime with virtually no domestic constraints, such as North Korea, to be any less belligerent?

As Douglas Stuart (2012) recalls the American failed attempts to accommodate China's rise in a benign, mutually profitable manner, due to intrinsic geopolitical and geoeconomic issues of the region, he argues that the US should rely upon the San Francisco system of alliances, developing new modes of security cooperation with regional allies to response to Chinese power. The postwar order in Asia, as Kevin Rudd (2013, pp. 9-10) maintains, has rested on the presence and predictability of US dominance, and such an order might probably be destabilised by China's rise, one that associates with intersecting and conflicting interests, values, and worldviews. Therefore, Rudd asserts, the rebalance has served a necessary corrective, reestablishing strategic fundamentals. To address the growing security tension in Asia, in May 2014 Chinese State President Xi Jinping proposed a new regional security framework, solving Asia problems by Asian people (Bloomberg News, 2014). Should this initiative be realised, it would be a direct assault on the American alliance system in APAC (Green & Cooper, 2014). Similarly to what Park (2011) has predicted, such an erosion of the status quo does not go unnoticed by the US, and as Michael Green and Zack Cooper (2014, p. 26) suggest, a further improved rebalance strategy is necessary to guarantee security and stability in the region, to foster its economic growth. Scott Harold (2014) stresses the affordability, durability, appropriateness, and strategic importance of the rebalance, based on the US national interests, to forecast its sustainability, one way or another, regardless of whose presidency that supersedes Obama's.

China's vigorous economic power and intensive military buildup, combined with its authoritarianism and track record of using forces in not only domestic affairs but also territorial disputes, apparently do not help alleviating neighbour states' concerns about the regional well-being, should the country achieves a hegemonic status, as argued by Rosemary Foot (2014). Consequently, she asserts, a rebalance strategy that emphasises all three military, economic, and diplomatic dimensions is welcomed by most APAC countries, minus China. Harbouring no territorial ambitions and acting as a stabilising force, the US seems to be in a good place to maintain the status quo (Foot, 2014, p. 134). Sharing Foot's view, Tim Huxley and Benjamin Schreer (2015, p. 137) point out that the rebalance was, to a certain extent, inadvertently helped and accelerated by China's extroverted policies towards other states, who find themselves in

need of a reinforced alliance or a new security partner, and thus strengthens American forces throughout the region. So far, the US is still counting on soft balancing, but should China attempts to change the existing balance of power in a not-so-peaceful manner, Washington might have to resort to its less desirable strategy, hard balancing, which is also a long-term plan of developing US allies' military capability (Burgess, 2016, pp. 114, 135). Looking forward, Jean Garrison and Marc Wall (2016) maintain that the rebalance policy demonstrates a continuity in its approach to China, by encompassing both cooperative and hedging strategies, and thus minimise the possibility of conflict outcome between two strategic rivals.

#### *1.4.2. Rebalance as a problem*

While some IR scholars perceive the rebalance as a positive and much-needed initiative, several others express their doubt about its effectiveness and sustainability. A consensus among those who oppose is that the rebalance policy is ill-informed, fails to accomplish its objectives, and ironically aggravates the regional insecurities. Simply put, the policy is assessed as counterproductive and predicted to be short-lived. Robert Ross (2012, pp. 72, 81) posits that the pivot is fundamentally flawed, since it was based on the US misreading of China's leadership as confidence, while in fact it was anxiety. China's aggressive behaviour, he argues, is a tactic employed by an anxious Beijing trying to strengthen their legitimacy through seemingly nationalist diplomacy. As a result, China interprets the strengthening of US presence in APAC as an imperialist stratagem to deny China's legitimate and vital interests, and consequently adopts belligerent policies as a rational and perhaps only way to guarantee its own security. Robert Kelly (2014) stresses the American public's negligence, ignorance, and apathy towards (East) Asia, resulting in constituency's lack of interests and shallow electoral support for the initiative, and therefore paints a grim prospect for the pivot's sustainability. Additionally, the pivot is handicapped by financial constraints, since off-shore balancing and regional build-up costs are adding more burdens to the US debt, much of which borrowed from China itself. An alternative and perhaps better strategy to maintain US power and influence in the region, Kelly suggests, would be promoting long-term democratisation and liberalisation of Asian polities and economies (p. 498).

David Beitelman (2012, p. 1075) sees the Sino-US competition from the hegemonic transition theoretical perspective, and points out that while the US is trying to develop a strategic trust with China to ensure peace and stability in the international system, this progress is nevertheless being eroded by actions from both sides stemmed from the balancing. On the one hand, the US attempts to deter China aggression through strengthening alliances and



partnerships with other regional powers, and on the other hand, such initiative only seems to provoke China, who has been exploiting that strategic trust as a political leverage in the bilateral relationship with the US. The burden-sharing between the US and its allies, as Christian Le Mière (2013) points out, is also a limitation to the initiative. Since the US faces evergrowing financial constraints, it is asking allies to handle a bigger share in funding regional defence and security. Given the differences in regional US allies' perception of threats, their domestic constraints, and their dependence on the US for security and on China for economic growth, it is unsurprising that such requests do not receive an unanimous feedback from APAC allies and partners to accomplish its objective, that is reassuring allies and deterring China. That said, he insists, Washington does not have an effective containment nor accommodation policy toward China (Le Mière, 2013, p. 40). Wei Ling (2013) traces the development of the pivot from power cooperation to balance of power, and claims that instead of rebalancing, the US has indeed debalanced the region. Accordingly, the pivot has put neighbouring countries, particularly those that have territorial disputes with China, into a side-taking dilemma, increased mutual distrust with China, jeopardised regional multilateralism, and therefore, essentially made the APAC less stable, less integrated, and more conflict-prone. By her argument, such deterioration is caused by the US mishandling of the initiative, and not by China's revisionism exerting its influence and trying to change the status quo order.

Drawing on Stephen Walt's theory of alliances, Mark Beeson (2015, pp. 316-317) debates the role of US forces in regional security against a common threat. He argues that China suspects the rebalance as specifically containing its rise, and responds accordingly to protect its vital interests. Furthermore, the US reinforcing in the region does not have the desired effects, since China's behaviour is becoming more assertive and aggressive, not less. Therefore, Beeson suggests accommodating China's rise and encouraging it to play a constructive leadership role in the region as a better solution. Identifying a strategic dilemma in US foreign policy, Georg Löffmann (2016, p. 105) points out that the US attempt to protect its leadership in the APAC through a combination of cooperative engagement and strategic restraint display inconsistencies, and for that reason the rebalance will not sustain nor succeed. Increased comprehensive cooperation with US allies and partners only fuel China's fears of being surrounded by hostile forces, resulting in Chinese countermeasures and security dilemma in the region. Meanwhile, uncertainty and costs associated with enhanced American commitments are undermining the political credibility of the initiative. Similar to other authors, Löffmann advises a closer engagement with China in a form of great power relationship on

the one hand, and additional US investments to sustain the initiative and reassure allies on the other.

It is worth noting that while the aforementioned literature debate the rebalance policy from contrasting perspectives, most of them seem to choose the realist notions of state survival, security, and balance of power (or threat) as the predominant *modus operandi*. While this by itself is a correct approach, perhaps an expanded analysis embracing other IR theories, such as liberalism and constructivism, could contribute an additional view to the research of contemporary international relations in Asia-Pacific. And given that the literature rarely discuss the realities in rebalancing activities, my thesis seeks to engage the developments of rebalance policy across three US alliances, and what behind the differences that set them apart. The theoretical framework for my research is developed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

### 2.1. Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present a theoretical and methodological framework for the answer to the research question, and through that determine the factors that caused the variances between the three alliances. The first half of the chapter engages in theoretical analysis, building the framework for the research design, operationalisation and data analysis of this thesis, to answer the research question: “*What causes the differences (different level or type of cooperation) between the three alliances?*”

The second half of this chapter deals with methodology, presenting the method used to carry out my research, the process of data collection, data analysis, and development and testing of my theory. It discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the method, the scope and limitations of the research design, and the data analysis process. The method adopted for my research is case study analysis, using the method of differences to identify the causality that constituted the research question.

### 2.2. Theoretical framework

Three major international relations schools of thought, *realism*, *liberalism*, and *constructivism* and their respective theories are applied as the fundamental principles to develop the core arguments, and the accompanying discussions will attempt to emphasise the cause-effect relationship within each alliance, as well as the relativity and impact of these theories regarding the construction and testing of hypotheses. The theoretical framework presents an overview of each theory and explains why is it used to develop a proposition which I employ to explain a specific aspect of the research question.

#### 2.2.1. Realist approach – balance of threat

Realism maintains a belief that the world politics is fundamentally a stage on which the predominant actors, the nation-states, compete with one another in their relentless pursuit of power. A basic tenet of realist arguments, falls under the structural realist realm, as articulated by Kenneth Waltz (1979) in his book *Theory of International Politics*, is that the international system is defined by anarchy, due to the lack of a central entity governing the world. Within such an anarchic system, each state – the central, unitary actor in international politics – is

responsible for its own survival and well-being against a constant threat of violence and wars. Consequently, since states themselves are rational actors operating in a self-help world, their interests revolve around power, the ‘currency of international politics’ and also the only means to defend themselves, whether it be balancing against a common adversary to preserve security (as defensive realists argue) or maximising their opportunities to gain advantage and establish hegemony for domination over the others (as offensive realists assert) (Jervis, 1992; Mearsheimer, 2013, p. 77). Accordingly, the current security landscape in APAC, from a structural realist standpoint, could be seen as a clash between the revisionist struggle for hegemony from one side, namely China, and the collective effort to maintain regional security and status quo from the other side, that is the network of US alliances and partnerships. Since this thesis focuses on the US APAC alliance, the defensive realist theory will be employed to develop the hypothesis and examine current developments in the region.

Stephen Walt, one of the preeminent scholars in the realist school, proposes the balance of threat theory to refine the balancing theory, in his book *The Origins of Alliances*. Being one of the dominant, established theories in realist analyses, the balance of power theory rules that states aligning with one another against the most powerful and rising state, a notion agreed upon by Kenneth Waltz (1979), David Hume (1987), and even traced back to Thucydides’ writings in *History of the Peloponnesian War*. To provide greater explanatory power to states’ balancing behaviour as the balance of power theory fails to account for several significant empirical evidences in modern history, Walt analyses threats rather than just power alone, and arrives at a conclusion that it is indeed the most threatening state (not necessarily the most powerful) that prompts other states to align against it (1987, p. 263). The factors that affect the level of threat include *aggregate power*, *geographic proximity*, *offensive power*, and *aggressive intentions* of the state in question. In the balancing alliance, he argues, the value a recipient state offers and the leverage a supplier state enjoys will determine the security importance of that alliance (Ibid, 43.). Applying these factors to APAC’s regional security and among the three US alliances, we can see that each ally (the recipient) has their own security concern towards regional threats, their own importance in the US global strategy, and therefore, their own version of bilateral cooperation with the US (the supplier).

For that reason, and by examining the relevant factors in the US alliances and APAC historical and geopolitical issues, I hereby construct my first hypothesis based on the balance of threat theory as follows:

***Hypothesis 1:*** *A bilateral alliance in which a US partner faces a larger security threat will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance where the partner faces a lower security threat.*

This hypothesis is developed to explain the relationship between the security importance and vulnerability of a US ally as the *independent variable* (IV), and the level of overall bilateral cooperation as the *dependent variable* (DV). To be more specific, the IV is indicated by the ally's scoring on four factors: its *aggregate strength*, its *geographic proximity* to a regional threat, its *military capabilities*, and the potentially *aggressive intention* of the threatening state towards that ally. Based on this premise, the US would maintain a stronger alliance with a state that has lower aggregate strength and military capabilities than its main threat(s), is closer to that threat, and has more conflictual relations with that threatening state. The underlying reason for this hypothesis is that an ally state that is more vulnerable to the threat(s) would be more interested in aligning with the US, and the US would also find it more critically important to protect that ally. The outcome in security domain, part of the aggregate value of the DV, is indicated by *military presence* and *joint activities* in security cooperation, and the *number of high-ranking official visits, joint statements, and implications of US representative*, in terms of diplomatic cooperation, between the US and each ally in the three dyads.

### *2.2.2. Liberal approach – economic interdependence*

Advancing an alternative view, and even strikingly different from that of realism, the liberal scholars insist that international relations are not solely dictated by the state *per se*, and on this account effectively dismiss the notion of state being the fundamental, primary actor in international politics. Instead, they argue, foreign policies are influenced and shaped by non-state actors, such as domestic individuals and private groups, international organisations, and transnational entities, whose concerns and interests are translated into state's preferences, and thus determine state's behaviour. And while realists see the international system as an anarchic and conflictual realm in which states compete with one another over power politics, liberalists believe that mutual peace, security, and benefits could be reached through cooperative behaviour among states. In brief, liberalism focuses primarily on state-society relations, from which state preferences shape international relations outcome, and the more liberal a state gets, the tighter domestic constraints are imposed on its international behaviour (Putnam, 1988; Slaughter, 1995; Moravcsik, 1997).

Historically, German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in his search for perpetual peace, put forward three ‘definitive conditions’ to maintain peace between states, namely *republican constitution* (i.e. democratic peace), *federation of free states* (i.e. international institutions), and *universal hospitality* (i.e. economic interdependence and free trade), which later became the mainstream concepts in modern liberal international relations theory (Kant, 1795). His third condition, *universal hospitality*, and its translation into commercial liberalism therefore suitably serve as the theoretical basis to examine the causal link between the degree of interdependence and the extent of bilateral cooperation in a cross-border relationship.

Andrew Moravcsik (1997, p. 520) maintains that in international politics, the configuration of interdependent state preferences determines state behaviour. Based on this assumption, his commercial liberal approach identifies the powerful private actors’ economic benefits or disadvantages as the main force driving their incentive to press government to either facilitate or obstruct cross-border transaction. Commercial liberalism, he argues, has important implications for security affairs as well, since through trade states could generally accumulate wealth in a much more beneficial way than violent or coercive means such as war or sanctions, particularly when the transnational commercial ties and production structures are diversified and complex. In fact, if we study the bilateral trade volumes between developed liberal democracies, four of which (US-Japan, US-South Korea, US-Australia) are being used for case studies in this thesis, the observable data seem to support Moravcsik’s statements regarding the correlation between economic interdependence and peace, and the direct causal link between the increasing complexity of economic integration, *inter alia*, and state behaviour in world politics (Ibid, 534-535.). Correspondingly, the bilateral cooperation in the three APAC dyads are also being examined from a certain commercial liberal standpoint, that is economic interdependence, focusing on the economic interests each ally could acquire from the relationship, and in turn translate those into their foreign policy.

My second hypothesis, therefore, is based on the economic interdependence theory, to identify the causal factors of the differences in bilateral cooperation between the three dyads:

***Hypothesis 2: A bilateral alliance with a stronger economic interdependence will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance with a lesser economic interdependence.***

This hypothesis is developed to examine the relationship between the level of economic interdependence between the US and each ally as the *independent variable*, and the level of bilateral cooperation as the *dependent variable*. The IV is measured by relevant economic

indicators such as *export/import data*, *trade balance*, and *bilateral investments* between the US and each ally. Bases on this premise, the US would maintain a stronger alliance with a state whom it has a stronger economic tie with, from which the two countries could harvest the largest economic benefits. The underlying reason for this hypothesis is that the cross-border commercial ties between the private actors of both countries yield economic benefits large enough, so that the non-state actors are inclined to pressure their governments into even stronger bilateral relationship, to foster not only the economic opportunities but also the pacific effects for both states (Moravcsik, 2011, p. 719). The outcome of such enhance cooperation, in the economic aspect of the DV, is indicated by the *number and type of trade agreements* between the US and each ally, and their *consensus in promoting trade liberalisation*.

### 2.2.3. *Constructivist approach – national identity*

While realism focuses on the anarchic and conflictual nature of the international system, and liberalism stresses the importance of cooperation among states, constructivism seeks to explain international politics by employing an ideational approach to the factors constituting state behaviours. Accordingly, international politics is to be examined primarily on a social, not material, basis, in which identities, norms, beliefs, and values have structural meanings and influence political outcome (Wendt, 1994). Christian Reus-Smit (2005, p. 188) characterises constructivism by stressing the importance of both normative and material structures, the relationship between agents and structures, and how political action is shaped by identity. Each state, constructivists argue, has its own *national identity*, the way states perceive themselves as a cohesive entity, which in turn helps shaping state goals and interests. In the international system, the realisation of such goals is influenced by collective or social identity, how states identify themselves in cross-border relationships, based on which national interests are determined and implemented. Alexander Wendt (1992) sees the differences in state behaviours vis-à-vis one another as the consequence of how states regard each other, as enemies (threatening) or as friends (non-threatening), or simply put, “anarchy is what states make of it”. Therefore, he essentially claims that state behaviours are not perpetually fixed, but situationally dependent on how their national identity is translated into political action, within a system whose circumstances are not exogenous as perceived in the realist and liberalist realms, but indeed endogenously created by the actors themselves (Ruggie, 1998, pp. 862-864).

Peter Katzenstein (1996) presents a comprehensive debate on how culture and identity dictate statemanship, particularly in the realm of national security. In the first chapter of his edited book *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*,

Katzenstein introduces three interrelated concepts that characterise social factors constituting state behaviour: *norms*, collective expectations for the proper behaviour of an actor with a given identity; *identity*, varying constructions of nation- and statehood; and *culture*, collective models of nation-state authority and identity. On this accord, he sees state behaviour as a result of national identity, emerging from the state's interactions with different social environment in both domestic and international context, and changes in identity, therefore, might transform the political interests and subsequently national security policies outcome. Jepperson et al. (1996) highlights three layers making up the international cultural environment: the *formal institutions or security regimes*, the *world political culture*, and the *international patterns of amity and enmity*. The third layer, i.e. perception of (other) states with comparable positions relative to the state in question as friend or foe, appears to rest on the ideational factors. Accordingly, the authors argue, national security interests essentially depend on a state's construction of self-identity in relation to the conceived identity of others, and configurations of state identity affect interstate normative structures.

On that account, the third hypothesis is based on the presumption of state behaviour drawn from national identity:

***Hypothesis 3: A bilateral alliance with a larger compatibility in national identities will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance with a lesser compatibility.***

This hypothesis is developed to examine the relationship between the level of compatible national identities between the US and each ally as the *independent variable*, and the level of bilateral cooperation as the *dependent variable*. The IV is measured by relevant identity indicators such as *history, ethnic group, language, religion, and political ideology* between the US and each ally. Based on this premise, the US would maintain a stronger alliance with a state whom it enjoys a larger affinity with, as there are more similarities between them. The underlying reason for this hypothesis is that an alliance established between states with more intrinsic, deep-rooted 'shared understandings' will likely result in a more concrete security community, with more extensive collaboration, than an alliance established under historical or strategic circumstances. The outcome of bilateral cooperation in the cultural realm of the DV is indicated by *cultural exchange programmes* between the US and each ally, and *regional and/or global policies and initiatives* in which the US and each ally share the same or similar approaches.



#### *2.2.4. Addressing the power effect in data analysis*

As it will be revealed later in Chapter Three and Four, the level of cooperation seems to be most significant in the case of US-Japan alliance. Given Japan's economic strength and population, it is obvious that Japan clearly outweighs either South Korea or Australia, or even the two countries combined, in terms of size and potential of a US ally. This might create an impression to the readers, that simply because the common potential of the US-Japan alliance is greater than in the other two cases, it is natural that their bilateral activities would also be more extensive. Therefore, it is not surprising if someone chooses to question the US-Japan alliance's supremacy suggested by my studies, arguing that the relative strength of the US-Japan dyad is merely a reflection of the size of Japan as a country, and thus does not indicate any genuine factors related to the theoretical framework and data analysis of the alliances. That being said, I am aware that the level of bilateral cooperation could be affected by the size of a partner state. However, I would argue that while the size of a country plays an important role in influencing alliance behaviour, it cannot completely account for nor explain the level of cooperation. For example, I hereby refer to the US-Canada partnership as a case in point, although this alliance is not included in the scope of this thesis.

As the facts suggest, the US and Canada seem to share the commonalities much more significant than any other allies. In the security realm, being almost the same in size, with a land area of 9,147,420 square kilometres for the US and 9,093,510 square kilometres for Canada, the two neighbour states share the longest international border in the world, of nearly 9,000 kilometres (World Bank, 2017). The US also has the most extensive defence arrangements with Canada than with any other country, cooperating in mutual security commitments and binational continental defence (DOS, 2017f). In the economic sphere, the two countries share the world's largest and most comprehensive trading relationship, with Canada constantly ranks as the US largest or second largest trade partner (DOS, 2017f; USCB, 2017). In the cultural realm, it is safe to say that there is no any other country that bears almost the same national identity with the US as Canada does, since they both have more or less the same roots in history, ethnic, language, religion, and political ideology aspects. In short, theoretically speaking, Canada as a state bears a crucial if not the greatest significance to the US in all three security, economic, and cultural dimensions.

Nevertheless, in reality, there are few signs of a substantial strategic cooperation that supposes to match the magnitude of such a unique and mutually dependent bilateral relationship. Despite being Canada's most important ally and defence partner, the US does not

maintain any military installation in the country. Instead, there are several hundred personnel from both sides serving in exchange positions (CAF, 2014). Given the lack of credible threats from state actors endangering Canada's security, the two partners have not entered a joint ballistic missile defence system, unlike the US-Japan and US-South Korea alliances (Berthiaume, 2016). Their bilateral military cooperation seems to take place mostly in joint counter-terrorism initiatives, particularly in the post-9/11 era. And as a Canadian political scientist has pointed out, the defence relationship has lately declined from the long-term effects of Canadian indecision in joint defence command (plus insufficient military spending), and American indifference in bilateral defence posture, seeing Canadians as freeloaders and liability (Richter, 2009, p. 35). In terms of diplomatic exchanges, between 2010 and 2016, President Obama made only two trips to Canada, while his counterparts, the Canadian Prime Ministers, made nine trips to the US (DOS, 2017a).

Looking at these facts, it can be deduced that on the one hand, Canada is clearly a rather powerful ally of the US, and in comparison, matches the same rank as Japan (whom will be analysed in Chapter Four) or even higher in all security, economic, and cultural implications vis-à-vis the US. But on the other hand, despite having such concrete ties, the US-Canada alliance does not match the extent and frequency of strategic bilateral cooperation observed in the US-Japan dyad throughout the implementation of rebalance policy, or even that of the US-South Korea partnership in some aspect (see Chapter Three). Having discussed that, I would maintain that while the size of a country does matter in allying behaviour, it is neither the only nor the most important element dictating the level of bilateral cooperation. To examine the operationalisation of an alliance, other factors should be accounted for. Therefore, three IR theorist perspectives have been employed in the theoretical framework to develop propositions in accordance with each theory. Through the analysis of three specific dimensions, *security threat*, *economic interdependence*, and *national identity*, I will address the causality in the three cases under examination.

### **2.3. Methodological framework**

The methodological framework is divided into three subsections. I will start by stating my research question and the reason for addressing the research question. The second subsection focuses on the research design, in which I introduce the qualitative approach for my study, the method being used for testing my theory, and the advantages and disadvantages associating

with that method. Finally, subsection three discusses the ethics, validity, reliability, and limitations of the research.

### 2.3.1. *Research question*

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, in order to examine the underlying cause of the US rebalance to Asia policy, as well as the inter-alliance variances in its implementation, the following research question needs to be addressed:

***“What causes the differences (different level or type of cooperation) between the three alliances?”***

The answer to this question serves two purposes. First, it attempts to apply the international relations theories into practice. In the APAC, the US has five traditional treaty allies, governed by collective defence arrangements, namely Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines. However, in reality there are certain discernible differences between all five alliances, of which the first three are being examined. Through the data analysis and theory testing, the thesis aims to provide a more detailed, practical approach into the study of US foreign policy in the region. Second, the findings from this research could contribute to the understanding of international politics in the APAC, and might perhaps provide a viable example for the study and predictions of future US foreign policy, particularly under Trump’s presidency. At the time of writing this chapter, the Trump administration has announced that “the rebalance to Asia is over”, but that does not necessarily mean that the US has lost interest in the region (Panda, 2017). As the US pledges to “remain active and engaged in Asia”, it is necessary to identify a paradigm of APAC interstate politics to envisage the upcoming developments in the region.

To answer the research question, the core arguments were divided into three specific aspects, based on the international relations theories of *realism*, *liberalism*, and *constructivism*. Accordingly, three hypotheses were developed as follows, seeking to engage the security, economic, and cultural aspects of the bilateral cooperation across the three dyads:

***Hypothesis 1: A bilateral alliance in which a US partner faces a larger security threat will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance where the partner faces a lower security threat.***

***Hypothesis 2: A bilateral alliance with a stronger economic interdependence will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance with a lesser economic interdependence.***

***Hypothesis 3: A bilateral alliance with a larger compatibility in national identities will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance with a lesser compatibility.***

The method for testing hypotheses will be discussed in detail in the next subsection.

### 2.3.2. *Research design*

#### *a. Qualitative approach*

My research employs a qualitative, case study approach. According to Robert Yin (2009), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within real-life context. Case study, Stephen Van Evera (1997, p. 55) argues, is a strong method of testing theories, particularly if the researcher wants to infer or test explanatory hypotheses. While Robert Stake (2005) defines case study by the researcher's interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry being used, others seem to see it as a methodology for a comprehensive research and report strategy, aiming at getting the study as close and practical as possible to the readers (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009; Cresswell, 2013). As John Cresswell (2013, pp. 100-101) further elaborates, my study of the APAC alliances seeks to explore real-life, multiple cases, through detailed and in-depth data collection from multiple sources of information. Based on Cresswell's framework, my research is conducted through a five-step procedure, described as follows.

*Appropriateness.* My thesis examines the developments in three certain traditional US alliances in the APAC over a limited course of time, seeking to inquire into the causes and effects of geopolitical issues on political outcome. Through comparison of the three cases, I will identify the underlying factors that might have caused the variances between the three dyads.

*Case selection.* A collective, multisite study was carried out over three cases that show different perspectives on the alliance issues. The cases in question are the US-Japan (Case A), US-South Korea (Case B), and US-Australia (Case C) bilateral cooperation in respect of the US rebalance to Asia policy, carried out under Obama's presidency, between 2010 and 2016. The reason those cases were chosen is that the three allies in question share similar characteristics in political regime, economic development, relationship vis-à-vis the US, and their positions in the rebalance policy. The time range 2010–2016 was chosen because it spanned from the announcement of the initiative to the end of Obama's presidency, showing a continuity in the implementation under one leadership.

*Data collection.* My research employs several sources of information, categorised as documents and archival records. Given the nature of this thesis, that is examining foreign policy implemented during the past seven years, the data being collected are mainly secondary data, obtained from policy documents and statistics from US and allied governments, international organisations, as well as key stakeholders in the region. Additionally, I also utilise data from political analyses, specialist comments, and international think-tanks' publications. Although secondary data is abundant and publicly available, it has certain intrinsic weaknesses of being generic, not customised to the researcher's needs, and out of the researcher's control. To minimise such unwanted effects and guarantee correctness and unambiguity as far as possible, I have selected the data only from established, reliable, suitable, and verifiable sources.

*Data analysis.* Through the data collection, I first provide a detailed description of each case (within-case analysis), then engage in thematic analysis across the cases (cross-case analysis). Subsequently, drawing on the theoretical framework, I will discuss my findings and interpret the data to find out the meaning of the cases.

*Interpretation.* In this last step, I will report the meaning of the cases and conclude the implications acquired from my findings. Based on the result of the test, my hypotheses will then be (in)validated. From there, I will deduce the underlying factors behind the variances, and thus answer the research question.

#### *b. Method of testing*

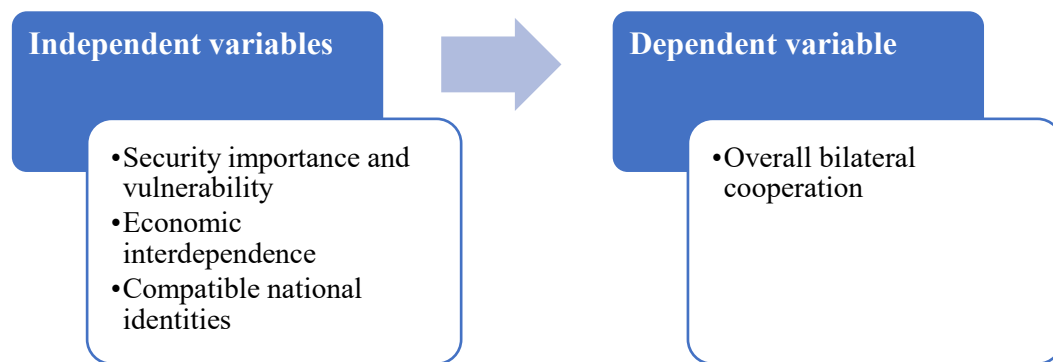
To test the theory, I employ the controlled comparison's method of difference. Introduced by John Mill (1882), it is one of the five inductive reasoning principles, often referred to as 'Mill's Methods'. According to Mill, method of difference is a reliable instrument of the investigation of nature, drawing on the foundation that whatever cannot be eliminated, is connected with the phenomenon by a law:

If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or an indispensable part of the cause, of the phenomenon (Mill, 1882, p. 280).

That said, when one examines comparable cases with similar context but different phenomena, one should look for certain conditions that are only present in case(s) when the phenomenon occurs and absent when it does not. From such observations, the researcher could infer that different outcomes are probably stemmed from different causes. Van Evera (1997, pp. 56-57)

studies paired observations in multiple cases analysis, seeking to establish the cause of study variables by investigating the intercase covariation between the value on dependent variable (DV) and the value on independent variable (IV). Accordingly, to examine the causality, these three conditions should be accounted for: *time order*, *covariation*, and *non-spuriousness*. First, the cause must precede the effect. Second, variations in DV connect with and correspond to variations in IV. And third, both variations are not mutually caused by any third variables. Applying this method to my research of the three APAC alliances, using the IVs and DV developed in Chapter II, Figure 1 demonstrates a paradigm describing the causality in the development of bilateral cooperation across three alliances:

**Figure 1:** Causal relations in the alliance relationships



To test the theories using Mill’s method of difference, I outline a procedure as follows. First, I establish the basis for comparison in a qualitative manner. The factors that constitute the IVs and DV are ranked on the values of their performance as high – 3, moderate – 2, and low – 1. Second, I will measure the extent of DV, demonstrated by an aggregate value each case scores in overall bilateral cooperation. This DV value was, in fact, constituted from several sub-values representing respective dimensions in the policy outcome, namely the strategic, diplomatic, economic, cultural, and regional/global cooperation. Through this step, the prominent case with the highest DV value will be identified. Third, I measure the IV values, represented by separate values each case scores in security, economic, and national identity dimension, in order to find the case with high values on the IVs. Then the theories will be tested in the fourth step through controlled comparison to determine which case displays congruence between the IVs and DV, from which I could ascertain the theories’ validity and applicability in the research.

*c. Scholarly evaluation of the method*

Falls under the category of controlled comparison, the method of difference examines paired observations in two or more cases to verify if the values on the pairs are congruent or incongruent with the theory's predictions, and therefore infers the causality (Van Evera, 1997, pp. 56-57). Although Mill's methods are regarded to as useful ways for identifying causal relationships from a certain number of observations, there are criticisms attacking their limitations, questioning their ability to deliver the predetermined conclusions. According to Stanley Lieberson (1991), application of Mill's methods to a small number of cases appears to be faulty, since it does not allow for probabilistic theories, struggles with measurement errors, and fails to handle interaction effects and multiple causes. Andrew Bennett (2004, pp. 31-32) argues that Mill's methods require demanding and unrealistic assumptions in order to provide nonspurious inferences, one of the fundamental conditions for examining causality, as mentioned in the previous section. The methods, Bennett says, can only provide a reliable inference when these three requirements are satisfied: causal relations being inspected must have necessary or sufficient conditions, all variables are accounted for in the analysis, and availability of cases for examination.

Jukka Savolainen (1994), on the other hand, reasserts that Mill's methods of agreement and difference are appropriate logics of causal relations in comparative historical research (Skocpol, 1979; Skocpol & Somers, 1980). Savolainen refutes Lieberson's claims, one by one, saying the application of Mill's methods are not negatively affected by small sample size. First, case-oriented research aims at explaining particular outcomes, and particularistic explanations can make use of probabilistic theories to aid historical interpretations. Second, Mill's methods are capable of handling interaction effects, based on previous methodology put forward by Theda Skocpol (1979), and furthered by Savolainen's own assertion that interaction between two variables can be regarded as a causal candidate. Third, in qualitative historical research, where conceptualisation and measurement are two inextricable processes, the problem of measurement error can be dismissed as artificial. And lastly, Lieberson's argument on multiple cause is based on a lack of symmetry in the causal analysis, and therefore is misleading.

### 2.3.3. *Self-assessments of the research*

#### *a. Ethical issues*

My research involves foreign policy and interstate relationship of APAC countries, at high politics level. Following the instructions set forth by Creswell (2013), I hereby discuss the research's ethical issues as follows.

Prior to conducting the study, I had sought approval from the Department of International Relations, Institute of Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University and received permission to carry out my research. At the beginning of the study, I had disclosed the purpose and structure of my investigation through the research proposal, submitted to and available for download at the University's Study Information System. During the study, the data being examined were collected from declassified, official, publicly available primary and secondary sources, with proper citations attributed whenever and wherever necessary to uphold academic integrity. Therefore, human interactions with research participants or objects were maintained at the minimal level, leaving no impacts on individual or national security. In the data analysis and report, I have made every effort to avoid biased statements, by reporting different perspectives and even seemingly contradictory findings, employing an intelligible, straightforward, and neutral tone to communicate to the audience of this research. Upon completion of this study, the research's findings will be shared with a wide audience, including the research's participants, stakeholders, and anyone who is obligatorily or personally interested in the study. Should there be requests for the compliance with ethical practices and lack of conflict of interest, I will gladly abide and follow accordingly.

#### *b. Validity and reliability*

To ensure validity and reliability of the research, I carried out the following steps presented by Robert Yin (2009, pp. 40-45), in which he sets up four criteria to assess the quality of research design: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

*Construct validity.* "Identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied." As previously stated, I combined and employed multiple sources of evidence in the data collection process to identify the operational measure, seen here as the controlled comparison's method of difference.

*Internal validity.* "Seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships." To ensure non-spuriousness, in the data analysis process I apply the explanation building technique to



infer the causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The analogous expositions across three cases will create an overall explanation for the theory testing and verification.

*External validity.* “Defining the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.” Since case studies rely on analytic generalisation, my research – based on multiple case studies – could utilise replication logic to generalise its causal inferences beyond the immediate case studies, to other circumstances in international politics analysis. Considering the predominant characteristics of the contemporary international system (anarchy, interdependence, or social constructivism), it can be ascertained that such inferences are applicable to the real world.

*Reliability.* “Demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated, with the same results.” To minimise errors and biases in my data analysis, I have operationalised as many steps and collected as much information as possible, and developed a case study protocol in order to focus on the research topic and anticipate potential problems, so that the same procedures repeated by another researcher would arrive at the same findings and conclusions.

### *c. Limitations*

While I have tried my best to ensure the quality and neutrality of this research as far as humanly possible, several limitations remain.

First – *language barrier.* This study examines the US bilateral cooperation vis-à-vis Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Two of these four states, the US and Australia, are majority native English-speaking countries, while the others are not. Since I do not possess an advanced or academically capable level in Japanese and/or Korean languages, the data for examination were collected solely from English sources. As a consequence, certain discrepancies between the original versions of Japanese and/or South Korean government publications and their English translation might exist. Although empirical evidences (facts, figures) most likely remain intact, there is a possibility that their interpretations could vary from the original meanings.

Second – *sustainability of the research.* At the time of completion of the thesis, the current US government had put an end to the rebalance to Asia policy, in an effort to dismantle its predecessor’s legacies. While the Trump administration continues to exhibit its commitments to engage in APAC affairs, it is highly unlikely that alternative, comparable measures and manoeuvres would be again implemented at equivalent depth and scale. Therefore, it might appear futile to some to examine a defunct phenomenon in international politics. However, by

studying the developments of the rebalance policy, its causes and effects, one might gain a deeper knowledge into the underpinning principles of what really drives interstate politics in the region.

Third and lastly – *personal preferences*. As an inhabitant of the APAC, whose country is inextricably entangled in the ongoing power struggles, it is my intrinsic motivation to engage in regional politics and discover the predominant trends of international relations that influence all three diplomatic, economic, and security aspects. Although my research was conducted in a neutral and objective manner, some of my analyses and remarks might give the impression of being securitised, particularly when I am discussing certain factors in the independent variables. Again, I would like to reassert that this tendency *per se* is not an attempt of securitisation, but rather a direct consequence of witnessing regional politics from a first-hand account. Nevertheless, any of my implications that suggest the primacy of one IR theory over another are based on observable facts, not subjective perception.

## Chapter Three: Differences in the Bilateral Cooperation

### 3.1. Overview

Emerged from the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951, the US-led bilateral alliance network in Asia-Pacific (APAC) – dubbed as the ‘San Francisco System’ – aimed to serve US strategic objectives in the region: containing the ‘domino effect’ outcome of spreading communism, restraining Japanese militarism resurgence, and securing US supremacy in the Pacific Ocean. This post-war order, San Francisco System was designed as a ‘hub-and-spoke’ model, centred on US (hub) interests and maximised its leverage in the bilateral relations with regional allies (spokes), who depended on the US for security protection. Even though the ‘spokes’ Japan, South Korea and Australia all enjoy US ally status, have their own mutual defence treaties with the US, and share the US ‘nuclear umbrella’, there are certain distinctions in the bilateral cooperation between the three dyads. The variances became more remarkable when we observe the implementation of the US ‘rebalance to Asia’ policy during the Obama’s presidency, in the 2010–2016 period.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.2, the dependent variable being examined is an aggregate value representing the *overall bilateral cooperation* across the three dyads. The level of cooperation is measured by one aggregate value made up from the combination of scores each alliance attains in five related dimensions: security, diplomatic, economic, cultural, and regional and global cooperation. Demonstrated in a qualitative manner, the indicator values are ranked as high – 3, moderate – 2, and low – 1.

In the following sections, I will describe the differences in bilateral strategic, diplomatic, economic, cultural, and regional and global cooperation dimensions between the three alliances, in order to empirically verify my hypotheses in the next chapter. If the realist theory that implies on security threat is correct, then we should expect to see the US-Japan alliance performs more extensively in overall bilateral cooperation in general, and in strategic and diplomatic cooperation in particular, than the US-South Korea and US-Australia alliances do. If the liberal theory is supported by empirical evidences, we should anticipate that the US-Japan economic interdependence would lead to a comprehensive bilateral relationship as well as economic cooperation more substantial than those of the US-South Korea and US-Australia relationships. And if the constructivist theory proves to be accurate, then based on their shared

cultures, identities and values, the US-Australia alliance is assumed to be strongest, particularly in cultural, regional and global cooperation, between the three dyads.

**Table 1:** Alliances’ performance in overall bilateral cooperation

<i>Alliance</i>	<i>Overall bilateral cooperation</i>					<i>Total score</i>
	<i>Strategic</i>	<i>Diplomatic</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Regional and global</i>	
US-Japan	3	3	3	3	3	<b>15</b>
US-South Korea	2	2	2	2	1	<b>9</b>
US-Australia	1	1	1	2	2	<b>7</b>

Based on the aggregate value of their performance in Table 1, it appears that the three alliances US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia demonstrate tangible differences on the level and extent of bilateral cooperation between them, as deduced in following inferences. We can observe that among the three cases, the US-Japan alliance exceeds the other two by a considerable amount, having the a much higher level of bilateral cooperation. The US-South Korea partnership ranks second in four out of five aspects, but appears to be at the early phase in regional and global cooperation. The US-Australia dyad, however, shows somewhat limited scope and frequency in the strategic, diplomatic, and economic cooperation, and only performs extensively in the cultural and regional/global cooperation. The following sections will analyse each aspect of the bilateral cooperation to present up-close examination and explanation of the individual dimensions.

### 3.2. Strategic cooperation

The US maintains military presence in all three countries, but there are significant differences between them. The levels of bilateral security cooperation are indicated by *military presence* (including troops, bases, equipment, and associated costs), and *joint activities*, in the following reconstruction of the three military alliances.

#### 3.2.1. US-Japan alliance

Considered as the centrepiece of US forward *military presence* in the APAC region, as of 2015–2016, the US maintains approximately 54,000 military personnel among 85 bases and facilities across the Japanese archipelago, under the auxiliary command of United States Forces Japan (USFJ, a subordinate command of the US Pacific Command) headquartered in Yokota Air

Base, west of Tokyo (USFJ, 2017). These current 54,000 American servicemen indicated a remarkable increase in the US military presence in Japan, from the long-standing 47,000 stationing troops agreed upon by the two governments since 1996 (Garamone, 1996).

In terms of equipment, the US Air Force is operating its Fifth Air Force from the Yokota Air Base headquarters, overseeing the 18<sup>th</sup> Wing that provides air superiority from two squadrons of F-15C/D fighters assisted with E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft and KC-135 air refuelling tankers, the 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing with two squadrons of F-16CM Block 50 multirole fighters, and the 374<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing specialised in transporting operations (5AF, 2012). The city of Yokosuka is home port to the US Navy's largest forward-deployed fleet, the Seventh Fleet, comprises of 70-80 surface ships and submarines (including the most advanced Nimitz-class nuclear-powered supercarrier USS Ronald Reagan, Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, and Ticonderoga-class cruisers), and 140 aircraft (US Navy, 2017). In line with the rebalance strategy, the US Navy has deployed to Japan its newest maritime patrol and reconnaissance, anti-submarine and anti-surface ship aircraft, the P-8A Poseidons, replacing the aging P-3C Orions in late 2013; and also sent a squadron of F-35B Lightning II, the US most advanced joint strike fighter, to its Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Japan in early 2017, following a plan announced in late 2016, to replace the AV-8B Harrier, F/A-18 Hornet, and EA-6B Prowler aircraft that is currently based with the III Marine Expeditionary Force (Orchard, 2013; Foote, 2017). This event also marked the first operational overseas deployment of the newly-developed fifth generation aircraft. Meanwhile, the US Army maintains a supporting role in Japan, operating port facilities and logistics installations.

Apart from the US stationed military equipment, in recent years the US arms sales to Japan also covered numerous high-profile purchases of some of the most advanced conventional weapons, as part of Japanese military build-up, including 42 F-35A joint strike fighters, three RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned surveillance aircraft, 17 V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, three KC-46A Pegasus aerial refuelling tankers, four E-2D Hawkeye AWACS aircraft, and two upgrades of Aegis ballistic missile defence for Japanese destroyers. These advantages could be seen as direct result of Japan's NATO Plus-Five status that entitles to preferential treatment in allied defence cooperation with the US (Chanlett-Avery & Rinehart, 2016, p. 20).

Article XXIV of the Agreement regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, stipulated from the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, dictated that Japan is responsible for the costs associated with hosting US bases, while the US armed forces maintenance and operational expenditures are furnished by the US (MOFA, 1960). The US

Department of Defense in 2004 pointed out that Japan's financial contribution accounted for 74.5 per cent of the US stationing cost (DOD, 2004, p. B-21). In 2010 the Japanese and US governments renewed a mutual defence cost-sharing commitment, according to which Japan would spend JPY188.1 billion (US\$2.02 billion) annually between 2011 and 2015 (Slavin & Sumida, 2010). However, in fiscal year 2015 Japan's shares had amounted to JPY720 billion (US\$6.6 billion) including the cost of relocating US bases (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2016). The cost-sharing agreement was then renewed in December 2015, agreeing upon a five-year package with annual payment of JPY188.9 billion (US\$1.6 billion) through 2020 (Cronk, 2015).

In the 2010s, there were an increasing of US-Japan *joint defence and security initiatives*. These developments seem to be in line with Japan's change of national identity, from a 'peaceful state' to a 'normal state', whose normalisation, particularly in military capability, is encouraged and facilitated by the US. Between 2010 and 2016, the USFJ and Japanese military oversaw six biennial joint exercises in Japanese territory, while the US also hosted six annual, bilateral amphibious landing exercises between the US Marine Corps and Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the annual Integrated Air Missile Defense Wargames advance counter-air defence capabilities of the US-Japan joint forces through bilateral training at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (Billot, 2014). To strengthen the bilateral command and operation coordination, the Bilateral Joint Operation Center was established in 2011 in Yokota Air Base (JMOD, 2011). June 2013 marked the first time Japan Self-Defense Force headed abroad to participate in a multilateral amphibious landing and island-recapture exercise hosted by the US, Operation Dawn Blitz 2013, an event that had substantial implications in Japan's military normalisation process (Stratfor, 2013). In a joint press conference with Prime Minister Abe in April 2014, President Obama reiterated the mutual security treaty commitment, should an armed conflict occurs in Japan's disputed territories with regional powers (WH, 2014). Aside from military drills, the annual white paper *Defense of Japan 2016* listed several cooperation activities and frameworks:

- Bilateral dialogue through summit-level and ministerial-level such as the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee ('2+2' Meetings), Security Subcommittee (SSC), and the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation (SDC).
- New Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation in 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> Data compiled from USFJ Press Releases, and Price (2016).

- Cooperative measures: setting up of the Defense Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Working Group in 2013; cooperative development of SM-3 Block IIA ballistic missile defence interceptors; enhancement of maritime security, joint training and exercises; operationalisation of mutual logistics cooperation for either party; and joint/shared used of the USFJ-administered facilities.
- Cooperation in response to the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake; cooperation in regional, global peace and security, space and cyberspace (JMOD, 2016, pp. 238-241).

### 3.2.2. *US-South Korea alliance*

The Republic of Korea hosts the second-largest US *military presence* in APAC, with approximately 28,500 troops stationed in nearly 30 facilities, placed under auxiliary command of US Forces Korea (USFK, also subordinated to US Pacific Command) (Garamone, 2015). This number has been keep stable under 30,000 through the last 10 years, after the George W. Bush administration planned a major cut of forces in the Korean Peninsula in 2004 (Brooke & Shanker, 2004).

Due to the realistic threat of a land-based armed attack from North Korea, the majority of US troops in the country is the Eighth US Army, based at Yongsan Garrison, equipped with armoured fighting vehicles, air defence batteries, field artillery, and surveillance and reconnaissance systems for ground combat (EUSA, 2017). To provide air supports, the US Seventh Air Force, headquartered at Osan Air Base, is operating several squadrons of F-16 fighters, A-10 ground-attack, and C-12 airlift aircraft (7AF, n.d.). Also based at Yongsan Garrison, the US Commander Naval Forces Korea and Marine Forces Korea assume facilitating and supporting roles for US Navy and US Marine activities in peace time.

As a major purchaser of US weapon systems with a NATO Plus-Five status, South Korea also plans to purchase advanced US weaponry such as 40 F-35A JSFs and four RQ-4 Global Hawk UAVs to boost its defence capability. In terms of technology transfer, US and South Korean defence manufacturers has jointly developed T-50 Golden Eagle, a trainer and light fighter aircraft (Manyin, et al., 2016, pp. 27-28).

The cost of stationing US troops in South Korea is shared by both parties. In 2014, Seoul and Washington renewed their Special Measures Agreements, a financial support mechanism through which South Korea contributes to the cost. Accordingly, South Korea paid KRW920 billion (US\$867 million) in 2014, then KRW932 billion (US\$824 million) in 2015 and KRW944 billion (US\$821 million) in 2016, equivalent to 50 per cent of the total non-personnel

cost of US troops stationed in the peninsula, not including the separate US\$9.74 billion Seoul has to pay for relocation and construction of US military facilities in South Korea (Ibid., 25.).

In the framework of *joint defence and security initiatives*, from 2011 through 2016, the US-South Korea alliance had conducted approximately 12 major military drills and training exercises.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, the two countries agreed on delaying the handover of US wartime control of South Korean military to Seoul, so that South Korean government could have more time to improve its military capabilities to deter another Korean war, and by doing so concretised US forces presence in the Peninsula (Choe, 2014). Most notably, in July 2016 the two governments agreed to deploy the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in response to North Korea's continued development of ballistic missile technology, seen as an 'ironclad commitment' to defend South Korea (USFK, 2016). In response to North Korea's nuclear tests, the US dispatched B-2 and B-1 long-range strategic stealth bombers to the Korean peninsula in 2013 and 2016 as a show of forces and solidarity with its treaty ally (Strobel, 2013; Pearson & Park, 2016). According to the South Korean *2014 National Defense White Paper*, in the first half of the 2010s the two countries had administered these cooperation activities and frameworks:

- Bilateral dialogue through annual ROK-US summits, ROK-US Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting (2+2), Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD), ROK-US Military Committee Meeting (MCM), and the Terms of Reference for the ROK-US Cyber Cooperation Working Group.
- Development of the 'ROK-US Combined Counter-Provocation Plan' (CPP) and the 'Tailored Deterrence Strategy' (TDS), to response to North Korean nuclear and WMD threats (MND, 2015, pp. 51, 60).

### 3.2.3. *US-Australia alliance*

The US and Australian armed forces had been fighting together since World War I. With the foundation of ANZUS security treaty in 1951, Washington and Canberra committed their alliance to the level of mutual defence. In November 2011, President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced a plan to increase US *military presence* in Australia, starting with the deployments of 200 to 250 Marines to Australia's Northern Territory on six-month rotations from mid-2012, and building up to around 2,500 troops by 2016, along with greater access by US military aircraft to Australian facilities (WH, 2011). However, due to negotiation

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<sup>3</sup> Data compiled from USFK Press Releases.



issues over cost-sharing, by summer 2016 the number of US military personnel in based in Darwin has just reached 1,250, while the full deployment of 2,500 troops was delayed to 2020 (Robson, 2016).

With such a modest force, whose mission is to conduct exercises and interoperability training with the Australian Defence Force, it is unsurprising that as of current, the US stationed equipment are mostly ground force weapons, 100 vehicles, four helicopters, and support equipment (ADoD, 2016a). Notwithstanding, it seems that the US has considered adding more firepower to its Australian military presence, as there were discussions upon deploying B-1 and B-52 long-range strategic bombers in Australia, although the talks were not yet concluded (Packham & Brunnstrom, 2016). In addition, the US Pacific Command had also announced the deployment of F-22 Raptor multirole fighters to Australia in the near future (Kerr, 2016).

Australia's military capabilities is also being increased to match the strengthened alliance. With access to US sophisticated weaponry, and as a NATO Plus-Five member, Australia has participated in numerous defence programmes with the US, one of which is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. In 2014, the Australian government has approved the procurement of 72 F-35A aircraft (ADoD, 2014).

In the first few years, the operational cost of US troops stationed in Australia were split between the two countries on an ad-hoc basis. However, in October 2016, the two countries had agreed to share more than AUD2 billion (US\$1.52 billion) in infrastructure investment and other associated cost that linked to the 25-year deployment of US troops in Australia (Westbrook, 2016).

Between 2012 and 2016, the US and Australian armed forces have conducted extensive *joint defence and security initiatives*, including five bilateral trainings and 12 exercises (ADoD, 2016a). The Australian *2016 Defence White Paper* mentioned two legislative frameworks in accordance with the strengthened military alliance, namely the Australia-United States Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty (2013) that aims at achieving and sustaining fully interoperable forces, and the Force Posture Agreement (2014) that dictates the two allies' collaboration on mutual defence activities in Australian territory (ADoD, 2016b, pp. 122-123). For bilateral dialogues, the Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) are being held annually with the participation of the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence, and their US counterparts (i.e. '2+2').

#### 3.2.4. *Comparison of the outcomes*

Looking at the US military presence in each of the three allies' territory, and the joint activities the US armed forces have been conducting with each ally, the numbers suggest that the US-Japan alliance clearly exceeds the rest in every aspect, indicating a high value on the outcome. At a moderate level, the US-South Korea partnership also demonstrates extensive bilateral cooperation in both troops number, military equipment, and activities. Whereas, the US-Australia bilateral security cooperation seems somewhat limited in size, and focuses on interoperability training activities, rather than establishing permanent US military presence in Australian territories.

### 3.3. **Diplomatic cooperation**

The bilateral relationships between the US and each of the three allies are described as “based on shared vital interests and values”. The levels of their diplomatic cooperation are measured herein by *number of high-level visits* (including presidential and ministerial level), *bilateral joint statements* between the US and each ally, and the implications of *US representative* in each country. The data was collected and consolidated from the US Department of State website, President Barack Obama's archived website, and respective country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs websites (MOFA, 2014; DOS, 2017a; MFA, 2017; MINFA, 2017; WH, 2017).

#### 3.3.1. *Diplomatic exchanges*

Between 2010 and 2016, the US conducted three presidential visits to Japan, four to South Korea, and two to Australia. The US also received 12 head of state visits from Japan, eight from South Korea, and four from Australia. In terms of foreign affairs ministerial visits, the US Secretaries of State made seven trips to Japan, seven to South Korea, and three to Australia. Meanwhile, their Japanese, South Korean and Australian counterparts have been making 26 trips from Japan to the US, 16 trips from South Korea, and 11 trips from Australia. Tables 2 and 3 will provide more details on the *high-level visits* between the US and each ally.

**Table 2:** Head of state visits between the US and each ally

<i>Year</i>	<i>US to Japan</i>	<i>Japan to US</i>	<i>US to S. Korea</i>	<i>S. Korea to US</i>	<i>US to Australia</i>	<i>Australia to US</i>
2010	1	2	1	1		
2011		2		2	1	2
2012		3	1			1
2013		2	1	1		
2014	1	1	1	1	1	1
2015		1		2		
2016	1	1		1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 3:** Foreign affair ministerial visits between the US and each ally

<i>Year</i>	<i>US to Japan</i>	<i>Japan to US</i>	<i>US to S. Korea</i>	<i>S. Korea to US</i>	<i>US to Australia</i>	<i>Australia to US</i>
2010	1	6	2	2	1	1
2011	1	6	2	1		1
2012	1	3		3	1	2
2013	2	4	1	2		1
2014	1	2	1	3	1	1
2015		2	1	3		2
2016	1	3		2		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

In line with the visits, the three alliances also issued a remarkable number of *joint statements* in the 2010–2016 period. Accordingly, the US-Japan alliance, with extensive head of state visits and annual Security Consultative Committee (‘2+2’) conventions, has resulted in eleven joint statements in bilateral security-defence issues, allied visions, and nuclear security cooperation. Meanwhile, the US-South Korea alliance has produced eight joint statements, half of which followed their ‘2+2’ meetings, while the rest addressed specific issues such as the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Alliance, North Korea’s nuclear programme, and the deployment of the THAAD anti-ballistic missile system in the Korean Peninsula. In the framework of AUSMIN Consultations, the US-Australia alliance has issued six joint statements regarding the bilateral relationship, security-defence issues, and addressing violence against women.

The *US envoys* to each of the three allies also show discernible differences. In 2013, Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of late President John F. Kennedy and a close ally of President

Obama, was chosen to be the US ambassador to Japan. Her appointment reflected Tokyo's growing influence in Washington, since she had "the ear of the president", as remarked by US Secretary of State John Kerry (Gordon, 2013). Another long-time key adviser to Obama, Mark Lippert, who possessed an extensive military and national security background, was appointed as the ambassador to South Korea in 2014. Through Lippert, Seoul could gain direct access to the US president and the secretary of defence (Keck, 2014). Meanwhile, the US ambassador to Australia, John Berry, had an expertise in public administration, and was expected to help deepening the bilateral cooperation in science and conservation (Laughland, 2013).

### *3.3.2. Comparison of the outcomes*

With substantial high-level exchange visits and joint statements between the two countries, and the implication of the appointment of US ambassador, the US-Japan alliance appears to surpass the rest in the level of importance. In a similar, but less extensive manner, the US-South Korea dyad also demonstrates how significant South Korea's security means to US policymakers. The US-Australian partnership, however, seems to be less active in diplomatic exchanges, and thus attains a lower value in the level of diplomatic cooperation.

## **3.4. Economic cooperation**

All four countries have a highly competitive, industrialised, free market economy deeply integrated into global trade, with the US ranks as the largest economies in the world, followed by Japan (third), South Korea (eleventh), and Australia (twelfth), in terms of gross domestic product (World Bank, 2016). Therefore, their bilateral economic cooperation could be examined by analysing the number and type of trade agreements between the US and each ally, and their consensus in promoting trade liberalisation.

### *3.4.1. US-Japan alliance*

Being the world's leading economic powers, the US and Japan's bilateral economic relationship accommodates a colossal flow of trade in goods and services, as well as international investment, notwithstanding the fact that a Free Trade Agreement has not yet been established between them. Between 2010 and 2016, Japan maintained its position as the US' fourth largest trading partner, whom the US has a median annual trade deficit of approximately US\$67.63 billion with (USCB, 2017).

In late 2010, the two countries launched the US-Japan Economic Harmonization Initiative (EHI), an ambitious and comprehensive bilateral initiative that aims to promote the shared goals of information exchange, trade facilitation, business opportunities, and better coordination in common interest. In 2013, Washington and Tokyo signed a new Protocol to Income Tax Treaty to bring the existing 2003 Treaty into closer conformity with the current tax treaty policies of both countries (TRE, 2013). Beside these bilateral initiatives, the US and Japan also participated in the proposal of Trade in Service Agreement (TiSA) in 2013 to liberalise trade in the service sectors between 23 parties, the Equal Futures Partnership in 2012 to promote women's economic and political role globally, and most notably the (now abandoned by Trump's presidency) Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multilateral agreement that was supposed to regulate most goods and services traded between all 12 signatories, in order to advance a closer economic interconnection across the Pacific Ocean.

On a global scale, the US and Japan share a common ground in trade liberalisation. Both countries actively engage in the establishment of TiSA (mentioned above), the WTO-regulated conclusion of the Expansion of Trade in Information Technology Products (ITA) in 2015 and ongoing negotiation of Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA). Also under the WTO framework, the US and Japan have been playing a constructive role in the Trade Facilitation Agreement, as seen in their acceptance of the Protocol of Amendment in 2015 (WTO, 2017).

#### *3.4.2. US-South Korea alliance*

South Korea also ranks high as the US' sixth largest trading partner in the 2010–2016 period, resulted in a median annual trade deficit of US\$20.72 billion from the US side (USCB, 2017). The Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) entered into force in 2012, marking a major achievement in the bilateral economic cooperation, strengthening the alliance, and emphasising US commitment to the APAC region. Under KORUS FTA, nearly 95 per cent of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products will become duty free within five years, and most tariffs will be eliminated within 10 years (USTR, n.d.).

After four years of implementation, the US-South Korea trade and investment relationship has become significantly larger than prior to the KORUS agreement, with an 8.4 per cent rise in US exports of manufactured goods, 208 per cent rise in US auto exports, and 34.5 per cent rise in US services exports to South Korea (USTR, 2016a). Beside the landmark KORUS FTA, Washington and Seoul have also actively participated in TiSA, TPP, the 2015 ITA, EGA, as well as their acceptance of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

### *3.4.3. US-Australia alliance*

The cornerstone in US-Australian bilateral trade is the comprehensive Free Trade Agreement established since 2005, and by 2015 it has resulted in a 76 per cent increase in two-way trade, as well as doubling the foreign direct investments between the two countries, compare to pre-FTA. In the 2016 review of the agreement, both countries reaffirmed the importance of the FTA as a key pillar of the close alliance partnership and a major driver of expanded economic ties between the two countries (USTR, 2016b). Between 2010 and 2016, the US enjoys a median annual trade surplus of US\$15.98 billion with Australia (USCB, 2017).

In 2014, the US and Australia signed an Intergovernmental Agreement to implement the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), and improve tax cooperation between the two countries, under the existing bilateral tax treaties framework. Much in the same way as Japan and South Korea, Australia was also an advocate of the TPP, and a founding member (besides the US and Japan) of the 2012 Equal Futures Partnership initiative. In terms of global trade liberalisation, Australia and the US adopt similar stances in the TiSA, the 2015 ITA, EGA, and in their acceptance of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

### *3.4.4. Comparison of the outcomes*

All three alliances seem to have similar levels of consensus in promoting global trade liberalisation. However, there are significant variances in their bilateral trade ties. Despite the lack of a free trade agreement, the US-Japan alliance has exceeded its counterparts in the economic domain, as its trade volume clearly overshadows those of the others, represented by a much higher value in the indicators. Facilitated by the FTA, the US-South Korean partnership also shows impressive improvement, representing a moderate value in their trade ties. In comparison with those two, the US-Australia economic integration demonstrates a somewhat lower importance, with the Australian economy being more dependent upon the US than the US does Australia.

## **3.5. Cultural cooperation**

The extent of cultural and educational exchanges between countries could be seen as one of the indicators regarding their relationship vis-à-vis one another, though which the US could exert its soft power on the allies. For this purpose, the bilateral cultural cooperation is measured by the number and/or level of government-coordinated exchange programmes between the US and each ally.

### *3.5.1. US-Japan alliance*

Cultural and educational exchanges at the government level between the US and Japan dated back to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are currently coordinated by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission (JUSFC), a federal agency created by the US Congress in 1975 to strengthen the cultural, educational and intellectual foundation of the bilateral relationship, and advance common interests between the two countries, by granting scholarships to four areas: Exchanges and Scholarship; Global Challenges; Arts and Culture; and Education and Public Affairs. Between 2010 and 2016, the JUSFC had approved 144 grants (JUSFC, 2017).

Beside the financial support from JUSFC, the US-Japan relationship also receives consultation from the US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON), a binational advisory panel that aims at promoting and strengthening the cultural and educational links between the two countries. In line with the rebalance policy, CULCON has commenced several initiatives to further the bilateral cooperation and implementation of cultural, educational, and intellectual exchanges:

- Education Task Force (since 2012): Seeks to revitalise and invigorate US-Japan educational exchanges.
- Summit of US-Japan Related Organizations (since 2012): Raises awareness, promotes public diplomacy, and shares best practices.
- Working Groups: Focuses on topics relevant to US-Japan relations and seeks solutions to common challenges.
- Legislative Exchange Summit (since 2012): Shares best practices and explores new ways to engage US lawmakers.
- Symposia (since 2015): Aims at promoting a strong US-Japan relationship (CULCON, 2017).

Both the JUSFC and CULCON had joined hand to create the United States-Japan Bridging Foundation (USJBF) to encourage and support more US students to study abroad in Japan, to foster future US-Japan relationship. From 2010 to 2016 the Foundation had awarded approximately 700 Bridging Scholarship grants for US undergraduate students to study in Japan (USJBF, 2017).

In terms of government-sponsored cultural and educational scholarships, the renowned US Fulbright Program currently offers seven kinds of grants for bilateral exchanges, including three for Americans coming to Japan (Fulbright US Student Program, Fulbright US Scholar

Program, and Fulbright US Specialist Program), and four for Japanese doing exchange in the US (Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant, Fulbright Foreign Student Program, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Program, and Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program) (DOS, 2017b).

### *3.5.2. US-South Korea alliance*

Created in 1981, the US Congress – Korean National Assembly Exchange Program is jointly funded by the US Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Republic of Korea National Assembly, with the objective to promote and enhance the perspectives of Korean and American young people on the two countries’ legislative process, relationship history, and provide a comprehensive view on economic, political, and security aspects of the bilateral relationship. Between 2011 and 2016, the US and South Korea have exchanged 20 students from both country each year to participate in this programme (Meridian, 2017).

The US-South Korean education and cultural exchange also benefits from the Fulbright Program, with six kinds of grants for Americans (Fulbright US Student Program, Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program, Fulbright US Scholar Program, Fulbright International Education Administrators Program, Fulbright US Specialist Program, and Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program), and four for Koreans (Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant, Fulbright Foreign Student Program, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Program, and Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program) (DOS, 2017c).

### *3.5.3. US-Australia alliance*

Being two Western countries who share common heritage, language and origin from the Anglo-Saxon civilisation, it is natural that the US and Australia find themselves very much alike and highly compatible in political and cultural relationship. Between 2010 and 2015, the US is the top destination for Australians studying abroad, while the number of American students coming to Australia often ranks within the top ten (IIE, 2016).

Among numerous exchange initiatives, there are two notable ongoing government-sponsored bilateral programmes being examined in this section. The first is the American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) that focuses on providing future global leaders and policy makers from and to the US with in-depth exploration of the governance, politics, bilateral relations, culture, and geographic diversity of the host country, through which participants could foster long-lasting relationships (DOS, 2017d). Secondly, similar to Japan



and South Korea, US-Australian cultural and educational exchange receives the support from Fulbright Program, which allocates three types of grants for Americans (Fulbright US Student Program, Fulbright US Scholar Program, and Fulbright US Specialist Program), and three for Australian (Fulbright Foreign Student Program, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Program, and Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program) (DOS, 2017e).

#### 3.5.4. *Comparison of the outcomes*

Although the cultural cooperation is relatively less distinguishable compared to other dimensions, it appears that the US-Japan alliance has conducted more initiatives to strengthen their cultural ties than the US-South Korea and US-Australia dyads have. As such, beside the US-Japan partnership at the leading position, the other two seem to be on par with moderate values on their performance in cultural cooperation.

### **3.6. Regional and global cooperation**

This section examines the regional and/or global policies and initiatives in which the US and each ally share the same or similar approaches, to understand the level and extent of the alliances' efforts in enabling and improving their collective soft power.

#### 3.6.1. *US-Japan alliance*

As one would expect from such a comprehensive and significant alliance, the US and Japanese governments not only adopt similar approaches in many initiatives and policies but also work together to realise their goals. The coordination between the US and Japan in multifaceted global and regional policies could be observed in the following developments, between 2010 and 2016:

- In 2013, the US and Japan issued a Fact Sheet on US-Japan Global Cooperation that highlighted three aspects of their global partnership: *Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief*; *Development Assistance*; and *Contribution to Global Security*.
- Based on this Fact Sheet, the two countries initiated the annual senior level US-Japan Development Dialogues, starting from 2014, through which they jointly addressed development policy priorities as well as global and regional challenges, including gender equality and women's empowerment, the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda, disaster risk reduction, development assistance cooperation throughout the world,

enhanced regional connectivity, responses to conflicts and refugee crisis, as well as democratic transitions in new and emerging governments.

- In 2014, the US and Japan reaffirmed their joint-engagement and cooperation in four areas: *Cooperating Together with Southeast Asia*; *Expanding Trilateral Coordination*; *Advancing Development around the World*; and *Looking to the Future*.
- In 2015, the US and Japan reiterated their commitment to enhance their longstanding relationships through four initiatives: *Expanding Bilateral Economic and People-to-people Ties*; *Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation for Our Future*; *Cooperating to Promote Regional and Global Stability*; and *Working Together to Promote Sustainable Development around the World* (MOFA, 2016).

### 3.6.2. US-South Korea alliance

As a middle power in East Asia, South Korea's international development cooperation with the US is still in early stages. Notwithstanding, in June 2011 the two governments, represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), signed a Statement of Intent to Cooperate on Global Development. This memorandum acknowledged the remarkable transformation of South Korea from a former recipient of US development assistance to a partner donor, and identified seven priority areas for cooperation: global hunger and food security, climate change and the environment, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, overseas volunteerism, public-private partnership promotion, health and education, and aid effectiveness (Snyder & Choi, 2012). The first USAID-KOICA international collaboration took place in December 2015, when the two agencies joined hands to support the Ethiopian government's Health Sector Transformation Plan initiative (USAID, 2015).

When Park Geun-hye was elected president of the Republic of Korea in 2013, she proposed the South Korean-led Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) to promote institutionalised multilateral cooperation on the one hand and complement the US rebalance policy on the other. Also named 'the Seoul Process', this initiative spearheads Park's *trustpolitik* and seeks to solve the 'Asian Paradox' to build regional stability and prosperity. However, in order to survive and thrive, NAPCI needs not only the participation and support from the US, but also the cooperation of regional powers (Snyder & Woo, 2015).

### *3.6.3. US-Australia alliance*

To strengthen their multifaceted and longstanding alliance, in 2010 the US and Australia governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on International Development Cooperation that seeks to advance mutual collaboration in international development, to achieve better outcomes that serve their mutual interests. The MOU listed nine strategic objectives to implement the two countries' commitments: addressing global poverty in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals; promoting sustainable growth; building technical and scientific capacity in developing countries; supporting research and innovation; global action on climate change; engaging partner countries; building governance capacity of partner countries; minimising the burdens imposed on partner countries; and robust approaches to performance measurement and accountability of development outcomes.

To realise those objectives, the two governments indicated ten priority areas for cooperation: maternal and child health and family planning; food security and agricultural water management; malaria prevention and control; climate change adaptation and mitigation; conflict/post-conflict situations; development cooperation in the Pacific; gender equality; education; operational level partnerships; and performance measurements (DFAT, 2010). In 2010, the US and Australia joined an international public/private global alliance to support country strategies in improving reproductive, maternal, and new-born health (USAID, 2010). In 2011, the two countries announced a series of international development cooperation around the world, from clean water projects, food security, HIV mitigation and addressing the impact of climate change in Southeast Asia, to supporting community dispute resolution in Central Asia, and healthcare and family planning in Africa (USAID, 2011).

### *3.6.4. Comparison of the outcomes*

Lastly, regional and global cooperation is an area where the US and Japan demonstrate a high level of collaboration to exert their collective soft power internationally. The US-Australia alliance, likewise, is implementing a comprehensive collaboration at a moderate level. On the other hand, the US-South Korea alliance is still building up its cooperative activities, and as a consequence receives a modest rank in this dimension.

## Chapter Four: Application of Theories and Causal Analysis

### 4.1. Overview

Having been discussed the previous chapters, the purpose of this data analysis is to identify the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables in contemporary APAC alliances developments, through theory testing with controlled comparison. Following Mill’s method of difference, I will carry out the theory testing through three steps. First I identify the general, mutual characteristics of the three cases. The next step follows with the analysis of independent variables across three cases. The third step performs theory testing to verify if values on the IVs are congruent or incongruent with values on the DVs, explains the observations, and discusses the results’ implications on my research.

### 4.2. Cross-case general characteristics

The three cases being studied share certain general, mutual characteristics in their strategic relationship with the US, economic development, and political regime, which could be examined under realist, liberal, and constructivist perspectives respectively. To present a chronological view of the alliances, their historical developments are described in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Historical developments of the alliances

<i>Year</i>	<i>Alliances</i>	<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1945		End of Second World War	Japan’s total defeat and unconditional surrender leads to its disarmament and allied occupation, in both Japan and Korea, and consequently the establishment of two Koreas.
1949	US-South Korea	Diplomatic recognition	The US establishes relationship with the Republic of Korea (South Korea).
1950	US-South Korea	Outbreak of the Korean War	The US-led allied forces come to the rescue of South Korea, who was on the verge of total annihilation by an invasion from the North.
1951	US-Japan	San Francisco Peace Treaty; US-Japan Security Treaty	Officially ends the state of war and recognises Japan’s sovereignty. Establishes a legal basis for US forces stationed in Japan. Precursor to the 1960 Treaty.
1951	US-Australia	ANZUS Treaty	Collective security agreement serves as the foundation of defence and security cooperation in the Pacific region. Originally between the US, Australia,

			and New Zealand, who later withdrew from US protection in mid-1980s.
1953	US-South Korea	End of Korean War	The war ends in an armistice and without a peace treaty, and until this day the Korean Peninsula is still in a state of war.
1953	US-South Korea	Mutual Defense Treaty	Establishes a legal basis for US forces stationed in South Korea to defend the country from another war, and maintains status quo on the Peninsula. The South Korean military is placed under US control.
1960	US-Japan	Japan-US Mutual Cooperation and Security Treaty; US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement	Cornerstone of the alliance relationship, governs US military presence in Japan, and places Japan under US protection including nuclear umbrella.
1966	US-South Korea	US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement	Governs the US armed forces presence in South Korea.
1978	US-Japan	Guidelines for Japan-US defence cooperation	Authorises bilateral defence planning, training, and exercises. Primarily aims at deterring armed attacks against Japan.
1978	US-South Korea	US-ROK Combined Forces Command	Unifies military operations under binational command.
1985	US-Australia	AUSMIN (2+2 Meetings)	Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations, the principal annual forum for bilateral consultations, comprises of two ministerial officials of foreign affairs and defence from each side.
1990	US-Japan	Japan-US SCC (2+2)	Full implementation of the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee meetings (originated from 1960 Treaty), with two ministerial officials of foreign affairs and defence from each side.
1991	US-South Korea	(First revision) US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement	Enhances Korean authority in investigation of US personnel-related criminal activities.
1997	US-Japan	(First revision) Guidelines for US-Japan defence cooperation	Adapts to the post-Cold War world, enhances the alliance operations in both defence of Japanese territory and responses to situations in areas surrounding Japan.
2001	US-South Korea	(Second revision) US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement	Aims at an equal partnership between the US and South Korea, with more power to Korean authorities.
2004	US-Australia	AUSFTA	Free Trade Agreement between the Australia and the US.
2005	US-Japan	Transformation and Realignment for the Future	Strengthens military cooperation, realigns US forces in Japan, and facilitates Japan's role in non-combat support for US-led security initiatives and contingencies beyond Japan's borders.
2006	US-South Korea	KORUS FTA	Free Trade Agreement between South Korea and the US.
2007	US-Australia	Australia-US Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty	Provides a comprehensive framework for facilitated exports and transfers of

			defence articles between the two countries.
2010	US-Japan, US-South Korea, US-Australia	Pivot to Asia (later renamed 'rebalancing')	American statecraft set forth to concretise its presence in the Asia-Pacific region, by increasing multifaceted investments and strengthening its alliance network.
2010	US-South Korea	US-ROK 2+2 Meetings	Bilateral meetings between the US and South Korean ministerial officials of foreign affairs and defence.
2014	US-Australia	US-Australia Force Posture Agreement	Treaty-level framework that enables US forces presence in Australia.
2015	US-Japan	(Second revision) Guidelines for US-Japan defence cooperation	Reasserts US commitment to Japan's security, and grants Japan with substantial flexibility and responsibility in bilateral defence cooperation, such as "collective self-defence", global peace and security, or opening up Japan's arms exports.

In the security realm, all three countries Japan, South Korea, and Australia are US close and strategic allies, being protected by the unchallenged American military power, on the legal basis of mutual defence treaties. Furthermore, all three alliances evolve around the US as the greater partner, the 'hub', while each ally plays the role of a lesser partner, the 'spoke'. With the US preponderant power at the centre, this paradigm serves to strengthen the Pax Americana that has been maintained since the end of the Second World War, and particularly after the dissolution of bipolar world order in early 1990s. This reality reflects what IR theorists call a 'hegemonic stability', in which a single nation-state presides as the dominant superpower, and through its unquestionable power and influence enforces laws and rules in the international system, maintaining peace and order on a macro level, and committing to the development of a liberal international economy (Keohane, 1984, p. 31; Gilpin, 1987, pp. 72-73). The US military presence in the region, beside its fundamental role as a security protector against external challenges, also acts as an internal stabiliser deterring any potential conflicts between its allies. This status quo has guaranteed and facilitated peace, prosperity, and stability in East Asia during the last seven decades.

Regarding economic domain, along with the US, all three countries are advanced market economies, members of the G20 and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). With the US being the world's largest economy, Japan the third, South Korea the eleventh and Australia the twelfth, their bilateral economic relations play an irreplaceable role in the regional and global developments (World Bank, 2016). Fostered by extensive economic linkages, each alliance reinforces the interdependence between the two

partners, not only promoting peace through the effects of mutually beneficial trade but also motivating states to communicate more effectively, and thus contributing to conflict resolution in a non-violent manner (Gartzke, et al., 2003). More importantly, it is the free trade that promotes peace by removing protect barriers to international commerce, an important foundation of domestic privilege and a potential cause for igniting acts of aggression (McDonald, 2004, p. 549). Looking at the post-Cold War interstate relationships between the US alliances in the APAC, it is obvious that the countries in question have not engaged in any regional armed conflict, nor did they have aggravated, escalated tensions between one another.

Another mutual characteristic shared among the three alliances is that all the partner states are liberal democracies. It is worth noting that all four allies do not adopt the exact same form of democracy. The US and South Korea are presidential republics where heads of state lead the executive branch and are chosen through (in)direct election, while Japan and Australia share their similarities in constitutional monarchies in which executive leadership enjoy majority support from the legislative branch. According to the *Freedom in the World 2016* report, all four countries performed positively in the leading group, scoring at least 83 out of 100 points (Puddington & Roylance, 2016). That said, regardless of the variances in their democratic forms of government, the alliances seem to have established a consensus in promoting liberal ideas, upholding civil liberties, and defending democratic norms. Those ideas and values, constructivists argue, help shaping the modern state system and international politics (Snyder, 2009).

### **4.3. Analysis of independent variables**

In this section, I will perform an analysis of the independent variables across the three cases. Each variable will be represented as an aggregate score to measure its impact on the alliances, and compare between the three dyads. The scores are ranked in a qualitative manner, into three levels of values indicated: high – 3, moderate – 2, and low – 1. Based on how high each alliance scores against one another, the values of independent variables across the cases will be ascertained as a precursor for analysis in the next steps.

#### *4.3.1. Security importance and vulnerability*

The theory regarding causal relationship between strategic importance and level of bilateral cooperation is interpreted in the first hypothesis, according to which an alliance facing a larger security threat will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance facing a lower

security threat. In other word, it is a typical balance of threat theory’s application. I hereby examine the security threat each US ally faces to establish its severity, and create an expectation towards the observables in the outcome of rebalance initiative. If the hypothesis passes the test, then we could expect to see a positive correlation between the IVs and DV.

Contemporarily, there are no non-state actors in the APAC that could possibly pose any significant threat to national security and state survival of Japan, South Korea, and Australia. However, the three alliances perceive a combined, mutual threat from China’s assertiveness and North Korea’s belligerent behaviour. China, who has territorial disputes with most of its neighbours, possesses a vast arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, and is gambling for global supremacy, is undoubtedly the biggest threat to regional peace and stability. North Korea, still in the state of war, repeatedly conducting nuclear test, escalating provocations, and being explicitly clear about attacking the US and its allies, cannot be ruled out as a credible threat either. Meanwhile Russia, despite being a great power with a mighty army and nuclear capability, does not directly endanger the region given its primary and traditional focus on the European continent, its staggering economy, and its lack of capability to challenge the APAC status quo, and therefore is not considered a significant threatening actor in this analysis.

Having been discussed in Chapter Two, the security importance and vulnerability of an ally is indicated by four factors describing the threat that ally is facing. The four indicators are the threat’s *aggregate strength*, *geographic proximity*, *military capabilities*, and *aggressive intention* towards the ally in question. The premise to ascertain factors that influence aligning behaviour across the alliances is based on the level of perceivable threat each ally is facing. As classified in Table 5, the higher the score, the more severe the threat is. And the more severe the threat is, the more inclined the US and its ally in the dyad are to enhance the ally’s security through strengthened bilateral cooperation.

**Table 5:** The magnitude of the threat posed to the three allies

<i>Magnitude of a threat vis-à-vis US allies</i>					
<i>Indicator Case</i>	<i>Aggregate strength</i>	<i>Geographic proximity</i>	<i>Military capabilities</i>	<i>Aggressive intentions</i>	<i>Total score</i>
Japan	2	3	3	3	<b>11</b>
South Korea	3	3	2	2	<b>10</b>
Australia	2	1	3	1	<b>7</b>



Considering the above comparison, Japan faces the biggest security threat in the region. It is not only in close proximity to a regional threat, who expresses constant aggressive behaviour with Japan being one of the main targets, but also economically and militarily weaker than that very threat. South Korea shares most of those features, but does not suffer double aggression as much as Japan does, and therefore faces a relatively less severe, but still very credible threat. Meanwhile, Australia is not much affected by proximity nor aggressiveness of the threat, and enjoys a fairly secure sense of safety. The interpretation of this variable is discussed in the following subsections.

### *Aggregate strength*

The aggregate strength of a threat is measured by its size, population, and economic capabilities (Walt, 1985, p. 9). As mentioned above, the threat being examined is a combination of China and North Korea, whose strength are put in comparison with that of Japan, South Korea, and Australia. The data being used are collected from the World Bank’s DataBank.

**Table 6:** Aggregate strength of the countries (World Bank, 2017)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Aggregate strength (2010 data)</i>		
	<i>Size (km<sup>2</sup>)</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>GDP (US\$ million)</i>
China	9,562,911	1,337,705,000	6,100,620
North Korea	120,540	24,500,506	N/A
Japan	377,950	128,070,000	5,700,096
South Korea	100,030	49,410,366	1,094,499
Australia	7,741,220	22,031,750	1,142,251

In terms of aggregate power, all three allies face an overwhelming threat from China (and North Korea). However, as seen in Table 6, North Korea, with its chronic economic problems and a malnourished population, hardly makes any noticeable difference in this category. China, on the other hand, overpowers all other countries in absolute terms. First, China’s vastness clearly overshadows even the combination of all the rest, in which only Australia’s size is barely comparable. Second, as the world’s most populated country, China strongly surpasses all the other states being mentioned. And third, in terms of economic strength, China’s GDP is only challenged by Japan, who, by its turn, is considerably stronger than South Korea and Australia. For those reasons, the magnitude of aggregate strength each US ally is facing is ranked as follows: 3 – South Korea, who is weaker than China in all senses; 2 – Australia and Japan, each of whom has an advantage comparable to China (Australia’s size, and Japan’s GDP).

### *Geographic proximity*

Given both Japan and South Korea in particular and East Asia in general have traditionally been under the Chinese sphere of influence, it is not surprising to see Walt's argument on proximate threats and the tendency for encircling states to align against a central power being applied in this (re)balancing behaviour (Walt, 1985, p. 10). Despite not sharing land borders with China, as the East China Sea and Yellow Sea serve as natural barriers between China and themselves, each country is just a few hundred kilometres away from China mainland, a distance easily conquerable in the age of advanced weaponry.<sup>4</sup> The second source of threat, North Korea, poses an direct threat to both South Korea who is literally adjacent across the Military Demarcation Line at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, and Japan who is located less than eight hundred kilometres from the Korean peninsula, making the Japanese archipelago fall entirely within striking range of its medium-range ballistic missiles. Meanwhile, remotely located in the Southern Hemisphere and surrounded by two oceans, Australia is relatively secure against imminent dangers caused by a conventional, unexpected attack from any hostile. Therefore, in terms of geographic proximity to a threat, both Japan and South Korea score 3, while Australia scores 1.

### *Military capabilities*

From a realist perspective, offensive capability is assessed in terms of hard power, that is the military manpower, military expenditure, and weapons inventory. The comparisons of these factors are presented in Table 7, 8, and 9, employing data collected from the World Bank, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

**Table 7:** Military personnel of the countries (World Bank, 2017)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Military personnel</i>				
	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
China	2,885,000	2,945,000	2,945,000	2,945,000	2,993,000
North Korea	1,295,000	1,379,000	1,379,000	1,379,000	1,379,000
Japan	242,000	260,382	260,382	260,086	259,800
South Korea	692,000	659,500	659,500	659,500	659,500
Australia	55,000	56,552	56,552	56,552	56,552

<sup>4</sup> Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, the disputed territories in East China Sea currently under Japanese administration, are just approximately 330 kilometres from China's shore.

**Table 8:** Defence expenditures of the countries (SIPRI, 2017)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Defence expenditure (US\$ million)</i>				
	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
China	113,527	137,401	144,383	155,898	169,321
North Korea	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Japan	45,515	46,364	46,527	47,161	46,584
South Korea	31,479	33,458	33,730	34,201	35,070
Australia	23,145	24,877	25,184	24,835	23,965

**Table 9:** Strategic weapons inventory of the countries (IISS, 2010)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Strategic weapons inventory</i>			
	<i>Strategic missiles</i>	<i>WMDs</i>	<i>Blue water navy</i>	<i>Strategic bombers</i>
China	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
North Korea	Yes	Yes	No	No
Japan	No	No	No	No
South Korea	No	No	No	No
Australia	No	No	No	No

Clearly, there are no country in the group that could match the offensive capability of China, who not only has the world’s largest armed forces, exceeds in military spending, rapid military build-ups, but also possesses intercontinental ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads, and aspires after expeditionary operations. Along with North Korea who claims to have successfully tested nuclear weapons and maintains a large army of nearly 1.4 million active soldiers, the two countries constitute an immense aggregate military force seemingly unstoppable against any single power in the region. All three US allies appear to be, by themselves, outmanned and outgunned should an all-out war with those threatening states breaks out, although Australia, given its geographic location, might at least buy some time before help arrives.

It is worth pointing out that while Japan outspends the other allies in defence expenditures, its military operationalisation is somewhat limited compares to those two. As a consequence of its pacifist constitution, the Japan Self-Defence Forces – with much less manpower than South Korea’s – are forbidden to exert its capability beyond a defensive role, lack of offensive weapons and even fighting experience. Having been branded as ‘toothless tiger’, Japanese armed forces suffered from public ridicule and disdain in an anti-militaristic society (Gady,

2015). Australia, having modest-sized armed forces and lowest military spending among the three allies, does not seem to fare positively in comparison with the other powers, particularly when we factor in the vast landscape that its military is supposed to defend. South Korea, however, possesses a large and powerful conscription-based military to maintain its readiness against attacks from the North. With no legal restrictions, theoretically, Seoul could flex its muscles to deal with incoming threats, something it has encountered repeatedly during the last six decades. Therefore, regarding to their own military strength in response to that of the threats, South Korea faces a moderate impact (score: 2) from threats' offensive capabilities, while Japan and Australia appear to be in a relatively worse position (score: 3).

*Aggressive intentions*

The last factor that provokes (re)balancing behaviour, as Walt (1985, p. 12) points out, is the offensive ambitions the threatening states express. Accordingly, the more aggressive or expansionist a state appears to neighbour states, the more likely it is to trigger an opposing coalition. Among the three US allies, Japan and South Korea have undergone constant and escalating threats, both verbal and material, from China and North Korea. Meanwhile, Australia does not directly suffer that much of a credible threat, at least in the security realm. The level of offensive intentions each ally encounters is demonstrated in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Aggressive behaviour towards US allies

<i>US ally</i>	<i>Aggressions towards US allies</i>			
	<i>Threatened by China</i>	<i>Violated by China</i>	<i>Threatened by North Korea</i>	<i>Violated by North Korea</i>
Japan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Korea	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Australia	No	No	No	No

Despite having been protected by the US since 1960 under a mutual defence treaty, Japan still endures the most provocations from both China and North Korea. During the 2000s and early 2010s, Chinese naval ships had repeatedly ventured into Japanese territorial waters, and Chinese aircraft violated Japanese airspace 627 times between fiscal year 2008 and 2012 (2077 times if counted until end of FY2015) (JMOD, 2016, p. 286). Beijing even unilaterally imposed what it calls 'East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone' (ADIZ) over the disputed territory of Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, overlapping Japanese and South Korean ADIZs, despite strong protest from both countries. Lately, in correlation with heightened tensions over the

disputed islands, China has accelerated its naval exercises in East China Sea, triggering Tokyo's concerns that Beijing might consider taking over the contested area by force (Holmes, 2012). Through the education system and government-controlled media, Beijing nourishes and incites anti-Japanese sentiments, already popular and widely accepted in China, to serve its political agenda (Forney, 2005; Lague & Lee, 2013). Indeed, the possibility of a Chinese attack on Japan should not be ruled out, given the following realistic scenarios: tensions over territorial disputes getting out of control and escalating into armed conflicts; Beijing's exploitation of the 'century of humiliation' narrative to justify its use of force in international disputes; or facing rising domestic dissidence, the Communist Party might wage a war against one of its branded enemies, to which Japan fits the profile, as an instrument to strengthen its legitimacy. Meanwhile, Japan perceives a multi-layered threat from North Korea, who has exacerbated Japan's security anxieties through its continuous shows of force, and its attempt to undermine the political basis of US-Japan security pact, leaving a grievous impact on Japan's security policy (Hughes, 2009, pp. 293-294). North Korea has been jeopardising Japan's security with its repeated provocative missile launches, banned and condemned by the United Nations, many of which violated Japanese airspace during the last two decades (Kim, 2016; ACA, 2017). The systematic abductions of Japanese citizens, which Pyongyang had acknowledged, is also another outstanding issue in the bilateral relationship (Kantei, 2007; The Guardian, 2014). Regarding North Korea's nuclear capability, Japan considered Pyongyang's nuclear tests, unanimously condemned by the United Nations Security Council, as irresponsible acts that constituted a grave threat to Japan's national security (MOFA, 2007; United Nations, 2009). In addition, North Korea had more than once listed major Japanese cities as targets for its nuclear attack (JMOD, 2013, p. 24).

South Korea, despite being able to maintain a stable and generally positive relationship with China, does have territorial disputes in the Yellow Sea, where two countries' exclusive economic zones overlap. However, the most serious violations South Korea suffers come from the North, whom it is still technically in the state of war with. Beside nuclear tests and missile launches that compromise the entire regional security, regardless of inter-Korean dialogues for normalisation and unification, Pyongyang has incessantly violated and endangered the South's security, through vocal and material provocations, and even direct military actions. During the 2000s, the North carried out 292 infiltrations and local provocations against the South, and 135 missions in the first half of 2010s (MND, 2015, p. 276). Most notably, North Korea was held responsible for the sinking of South Korean warship Cheonan, and shelling of Yeonpyeongdo

Island, both occurred in 2010, killing and injuring a total of 68 servicemen and civilians. It is worth mentioning that Pyongyang still leaves open the possibility of unification by force, and has its artillery systems – several thousand to say the least – zero in on Seoul, ready for bombardment (Park, 2014, p. 7; Stratfor, 2017).

There are several explanations for this state of insecurity in Northeast Asia. First, Beijing has been following an increasingly assertive foreign policy, particularly in unresolved territorial issues, fuelled by China's rising nationalism as an instrument for its state-building and seeking great power status. Second, the legacies of Second World War, most of those related to atrocities committed by Imperial Japanese army, are being exploited by China – and, to a lesser extent, the two Koreas – as a tool to justify their aggressions towards Japan. And third, North Korean monolithic, dictatorship regime's belligerence during the last six decades creates a perpetual menace to all countries in the region. Taking these factors into consideration, Japan seems to suffer a higher impact from the aggressive intentions of both China and North Korea, who are abusing Japan's lack of legal basis and material capability to effectively defend itself without relying on the US, as well as its divided public opinion upon military normalisation (Teslik, 2006). Facing a credible threat of a North Korean armed attack, one that would result in catastrophic economic and human losses, South Korea does not look any better off when it comes to national security and state survival. Australia, meanwhile, is fairly safe from any imminent threat, and therefore experiences a much lower impact from aggressive intentions.

#### 4.3.2. *Economic interdependence*

The second hypothesis, discussed in Chapter Two, seeks to explain the causal relationship between economic interdependence and level of bilateral cooperation across the three dyads. From a commercial liberal approach, international affairs at the government level are driven by economic benefits (or losses) the private actors of each state receive through their cross-border transactions. The hypothesis argues that the US will maintain a stronger alliance and more intensive bilateral cooperation with a partner that it is most economically integrated with, and from that bilateral trade the largest economic benefits – in relative comparison with other partners being examined – could be harvested. Therefore, this section analyses the *economic interdependence* as an independent variable, to ascertain the level of economic integration the US has with each ally, and make an assumption regarding the observables in the outcome. If this hypothesis holds water, the level of interdependence should reflect positively on the level of bilateral cooperation.

With the US as the world’s biggest economy and all four allies being G20 and OECD member states, it is obvious that their bilateral economic relationships have been getting increasingly intense, comprehensive, and most importantly, interdependent. To determine the level of their economic integration, it is necessary to examine the factors that constitute the overall interdependence, namely the *trade volume (exports and imports)*, the significance of *trade balance*, and *bilateral investments*. These indicators are examined over the 2006–2010 period, and classified in Table 11 below. Similar to the security threat factor, I employ a qualitative ranking to measure the level of economic integration each dyad has: high – 3, moderate – 2, or low – 1. Should there be a big difference between two or more cases in each factor, it would be demonstrated numerically different. If not, the values will be grouped into the same class to indicate there is no significant gaps between them.

**Table 11:** Economic interdependence influencing the rebalancing behaviour

<i>US ally</i>	<i>US economic integration vis-à-vis allies</i>					
	<i>Export to</i>	<i>Import from</i>	<i>Trade significance</i>	<i>Investments in</i>	<i>Investments by</i>	<i>Total score</i>
Japan	3	3	3	2	3	<b>14</b>
South Korea	2	2	2	1	1	<b>8</b>
Australia	1	1	1	2	2	<b>7</b>

Taking all indicators into account, the US-Japan alliance appears to have the strongest and deepest ties among the three dyads. Not only does the US export the most to and import the most from Japan, resulted in a trade deficit of significant importance to both economies, their bilateral investments, most notably reflected by the Japanese FDI in the US, also overshadow the rest. South Korea and Australia, sitting closely together in the GDP ranking, score a similar aggregate rating in regard to their bilateral economic relationship vis-à-vis the US, although there might be visually discernible gaps between their trade volumes and direct investments. The following subsections will discuss the indicators in detail.

#### *Export/import and trade balance*

Visualised in Table 12 and 13, using data collected from the US Census Bureau, bilateral trade volumes represent the level of economic integration between the US and each ally. As the world’s biggest and second biggest economies (up until 2010), it is not surprising to see the US-Japan trade ties outperformed the other two dyads by a great deal, despite not having a bilateral free trade agreement. While the two partners trade mostly in machinery and industrial,

sophisticated products, given the advanced level of technology both countries possess, it is worth noting that US imports from Japan always exceed its exports to Japan, indicating Japan as a major, crucial supplier for the US economy, and also a much bigger market in comparison with South Korea and Australia. In addition, the other two dyads also show visible differences between their trade ties with the US. Both South Korean exports and imports vis-à-vis the US exceed Australian performance, corresponding to their positions in the World Bank's 2010 GDP ranking, in which South Korea ranks fourteenth and Australia closely follows at fifteenth (World Bank, 2011). The US-South Korean trade flows mainly deal with manufactured goods, agricultural products, services and technologies, while the US-Australian partnership trades in machinery, industrial supplies and materials, manufactured goods, agricultural products, and financial services (DOS, 2017f).

**Table 12:** US exports to allied countries (USCB, 2017)

<i>US ally</i>	<i>Imports from the US (US\$ million)</i>				
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Japan	58,459	61,160	65,142	51,134	60,472
South Korea	32,219	34,402	34,669	28,612	38,821
Australia	17,546	19,178	22,219	19,599	21,805

**Table 13:** US imports from allied countries (USCB, 2017)

<i>US ally</i>	<i>Exports to the US (US\$ million)</i>				
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Japan	148,181	145,463	139,262	95,804	120,552
South Korea	45,804	47,562	48,069	39,216	48,875
Australia	8,204	8,615	10,589	8,012	8,583

**Table 14:** US trade balance with allies

<i>US ally</i>	<i>US trade balance with allied countries (US\$ million)</i>				
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Japan	-89,722	-84,304	-74,120	-44,669	-60,080
South Korea	-13,584	-13,161	-13,400	-10,604	-10,055
Australia	9,342	10,563	11,630	11,588	13,222



Shown in Table 14, as a consequence of bilateral trade flows, the trade balance between the US and each partner reflects the importance and depth of integration of respective trade tie. US trade deficits with Japan appear to be at enormous values, constantly surpass that of US-South Korean partnership by at least four to one ratio. In its relationship with Australia, however, the US enjoys a trade surplus at a relatively stable level. That said, in terms of economic impacts on cross-border relationship, trade ties as an indicator has the highest value in the US-Japan dyad, followed by the US-South Korean partnership (moderate), and US-Australia alliance (lower level of economic integration).

#### *Bilateral direct investments*

Another indicator to establish the level of economic interdependence is the bilateral foreign direct investment in each partnership. Table 15 and 16 show the volumes of US direct investments in each allied country, as well as allies' investments in the US, during the last five years prior to the commencement of rebalance initiative. The data used for comparison were collected from OECD database.

**Table 15:** US direct investments in allied countries (OECD, 2017)

<i>US ally</i>	<i>FDI by the US (US\$ million)</i>				
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Japan	84,428	85,224	99,803	91,196	113,523
South Korea	27,299	23,558	22,426	23,930	26,233
Australia	67,632	84,331	92,668	106,212	125,421

**Table 16:** Allies' direct investments in the US (OECD, 2017)

<i>US ally</i>	<i>FDI in the US (US\$ million)</i>				
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Japan	204,020	222,695	234,748	238,140	255,012
South Korea	9,459	11,939	12,859	12,969	15,746
Australia	38,777	35,595	37,399	36,760	35,632

Among the three allies, Australia attracts the most US investments, who is also both the top investor in Australia and the top market for Australian investors. US investors have been engaging in a diverse portfolio in Australia, spanning from holding companies to financial services, mining and energy, given the advantage of being a resource-rich country, to

manufacturing and technologies (Tang, 2015). Similarly, Australian FDI in the US is spearheaded by manufacturing and finance services. However, in overall comparison, the US-Australian bilateral investments cannot compete with the pre-eminence of US-Japanese partnership, thanks to the colossal amount of money Japanese investors have put into the US market, mostly in the wholesale trade and manufacturing sectors. US investments in Japan, follows closely behind US FDIs in Australia, also focus on the manufacturing, wholesale trade, and financial services. Coming at the third place, the US-South Korean investment ties also engage in finance, manufacturing, and wholesale trade sectors, but at considerably smaller scale and volume (DOS, 2017f). In other words, by examining bilateral investment as another indicator of economic interdependence, we can observe the highest combined value in the US-Japan relationship, moderate value in the US-Australian economic ties, and relatively lower value in the case of US-South Korean alliance.

#### 4.3.3. National identity compatibility

The third and last hypothesis, based on constructivist notion of national identity, aims at explaining the variances in rebalance initiative’s outcome, by putting forward the compatibility of constructed identities between the US and each partner as the cause. The ideational approach, employed by constructivists, looks at international politics through a social perspective to identify the possibly influential factors that affect political outcome of foreign policies. The factors in question are the essential social characteristics of a state, seen here as *history, ethnic group, language, religion, and political ideology*, that constitute the *national identity* as an independent variable, being analysed across the three dyads to determine their affinity. To verify the hypothesis that the US will maintain a stronger alliance with a partner whom it enjoys a larger affinity with, I will inspect the relevant factors and their compatibility between the US and each partner, and compare with the actual outcome in rebalance policy implementation. Again, alliance performance in this dimension is ranked qualitatively, in which the levels of compatibility are assessed as high – 3, moderate – 2, or low – 1.

**Table 17:** National identity compatibility between the US and APAC allies

<i>US ally</i>	<i>US national identity compatibility vis-à-vis allies</i>					
	<i>History</i>	<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Political ideology</i>	<i>Total score</i>
Japan	1	1	1	1	3	<b>7</b>
South Korea	1	1	1	2	3	<b>8</b>
Australia	3	3	3	3	3	<b>15</b>

As shown in Table 17, national identity compatibility is reflected by an aggregated score of each alliance performance through all five indicators. Without doubt, the US-Australia alliance attains the higher value in every category, making it the leading partnership in this ranking. For obvious reasons, the US does not have that much of a compatibility with neither Japan nor South Korea, who are more akin to one another than with the US. That said, among the APAC allies being examined, no other countries are more alike to the US than Australia, thus identified the prominent case for the purpose of testing the hypothesis. The analyses of these factors are elaborated in the following subsections.

### *History*

The first indicator being examined is the national history of each APAC ally, in relative comparison with the US. In this regard, it is obvious that the US and Australia have the most in common, with both countries having comparatively young histories and being former colonies of the British Empire. While the American colonies gained their independence through the revolutionary war against Great Britain which ended in 1783 with the Treaty of Paris and thus became a republic, the Commonwealth of Australia was established as an independent nation in 1901 with a constitutional monarchy in which the head of state being the British monarch. Since their foundation, both nations have been sharing similar characteristics in nation-building, mostly endogenously, on the liberal democratic basis, to govern their countries under the supreme power of their constitutions.

The East Asian countries of Japan and South Korea, on the other hand, have long history that could trace back to prehistoric time. Both were historically influenced by Chinese culture, or the *Sinosphere*, which centres on Confucian beliefs as orthodox ideology in statesmanship. Established by natives, throughout their histories (minus the first half of the twentieth century), the dynasties of Japan and Korea (as in a unified Korean Peninsula) have maintained a monocultural and homogeneous national identity, deeply rooted in Confucian principles of the *Mandate of Heaven* which justifies the divinity and absolute power of the ruler, or its Japanese equivalence *Tennō* ('*Heavenly Sovereign*') of the Emperor (Burgess, 2004).

Considering these factors, it is obvious that the US-Australia dyad has a high compatibility in their histories. Whereas, neither Japanese nor (South) Korean history are compatible with the US, and thus both are ranked as low in this aspect.

### *Ethnic groups*

As a direct and positive result of being the countries built by immigrants, both the US and Australia have adopted and enjoyed multiracial and multicultural diversity. The majority of their population are Caucasians of European origins, followed by migrants from Asia and Africa, and native inhabitants (CIA, 2017). Despite certain outstanding issues such as racial discrimination, potential separatism, and religious extremism targeting minority groups, such multiracialism and multiculturalism have played a positive role in attracting mass migrations since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and assimilating immigrants into their new homeland. As Anthony Smith points out, through the national agencies of mass socialisation, immigrants and their descendants have been admitted into the nation-building process (Smith, 1991, p. 11). Being cases in point, both the US and Australia have actively engaged in creating open societies, promoting and defending democratic values of liberty, equality, and justice, and building a collective sense of constitutional patriotism.

Meanwhile, South Korea and Japan share the same characteristic of having some of the most ethnically homogeneous population in the world. South Koreans take pride in their nation's ethnic homogeneity, branded as 'pure-blood nationalism', and often express discrimination or even hostility towards non-Koreans (Choe, 2009). As a consequence, the country has been associated with xenophobia, a problem that has negatively affected the nation's economy and public atmosphere (Lee, H., 2016). The situation does not look any better in Japan, a country with a similar homogeneity and closed society, in which 98.5 per cent of the population are ethnic Japanese (CIA, 2017). In such a land where cultural and ethnical homogeneity are highly conserved and prized, racial discrimination and xenophobia are some chronic and serious issues that affect quite a large proportion of foreigners living in Japan (Funakoshi, 2017).

Such evidences in the ethnic factor suggest that the US-Australia alliance maintains a high level of compatibility. Considering their intrinsic differences, both Japan and South Korea do not fare well in ethnic compatibility with the US, and therefore the two dyads US-Japan and US-South Korea have low values in this dimension.

### *Language*

Corresponding to and as a direct consequence of the two indicators discussed above, language is another category where there are significant variances between the US-Australia alliance and its East Asian counterparts. Both the US and Australia adopt the Latin alphabet, use English as

the primary language in government business and other official pronouncements, as well as the native tongue of the predominant majority of the population (79.2 per cent in the US and 76.8 per cent in Australia) (CIA, 2017). Furthermore, their common language is also the most widely spoken language in the world, since English, as a *global lingua franca*, is listed as official language by over 50 sovereign states. On the other hand, Japanese and Korean languages are heavily influenced by the Chinese language, particularly in their logographic written characters, the *Kanji* in Japan and *Hanja* in Korea (both borrowed from Chinese characters), or even their locally developed phonetic alphabets, the Japanese *Kana* and Korean *Hangul* (also based on Chinese characters). Similar to their homogeneous uniqueness, Japanese and Korean languages are not spoken elsewhere except their countries.

Similar to the previous two factors, the observables in language comparison once again demonstrate that the US-Australian partnership has a high compatibility. The other two alliances, US-Japan and US-South Korea, as a matter of fact, hardly show any affinity in their languages.

### *Religions*

Another aspect of national identity being used for comparison in this analysis is religious beliefs. Theoretically, freedom of religion is one of the most fundamental constitutional rights and civil liberties in any modern secular political establishment, including and particularly liberal democracy. That said, the notion of *separation of church and state*, set forth in the First Amendment of the US Constitution, serves as a guideline in conducting politics. Nevertheless, in practice, religious beliefs appear to have a certain, if not significant, influence in political behaviour, making Christianity America's *de facto* established religion (Steensland, et al., 2000; Citrin, et al., 2001; Driskell, et al., 2008; Ben Barka, 2011). Should there be any doubt regarding this argument, perhaps an examination of the US Pledge of Allegiance in which the phrase "one nation under God" is clearly stated, the "God bless America" as a standard closing remark in almost every official speech during the last few decades, or the words "In God We Trust" engraved in US legal tender bills and coins should be able to lend credibility to its unambiguity.

Having said that, it seems logical to draw a connection between countries with similar religious beliefs and their affinities in national identity. In this regard, the US shares with Australia its characteristic of having Christianity (Protestant, Catholic, and other divisions) as the predominant religion, with 70.6 per cent of American population and 58.3 per cent of

Australians residents worshipping the Holy Trinity. Surprisingly, Christians also seem to be the majority in South Korean religious population, accounted for 31.6 per cent of the populace, while the traditional East Asian religion of Buddhism comes second at 24.2 per cent. Meanwhile, 79.2 per cent of Japanese population follow the indigenous religion of Shintoism, and 66.8 per cent Buddhists, leaving just 1.5 per cent practising Christianity (CIA, 2017).

Drawing from these observations, I would argue that the US-Australian case exhibits the most compatible values in their religion and belief. Whereas, the US-South Korean partnership indicates a certain, although modest, amount of compatibility, given the most influential religion in both countries being Christianity. Japan, on the other hand, demonstrates a much lower affinity of shared beliefs with the US.

### *Political ideology*

The last factor being examined here is political ideology, or the compatibility in national political culture between the four allies. As aforementioned, all three dyads share a general characteristic of all partner states being liberal democracies, and this is also the one category where there is little difference, with all four countries scoring more or less the same point. Nevertheless, it is worth examining the certain differences between them.

Shaped and guided by republicanism since its founding, the US political system aims at building and preserving a government “of the people, by the people, for the people”, first and foremost mentioned in the US Constitution (1789) and reasserted by President Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address speech (1863). Thus, the US political ideology was founded on a set of liberal and progressive ideas and norms, promoting equality, liberty, and rule of law. Having said that, the US political system is, by itself, endogenous, created from the intrinsic needs of the American people. In this regard, it is once again Australia who shares the most similar aspects with the US, since Australian Constitution (1900) was created by the people of the Australian colonies, to establish Australia as an independent nation in the British Commonwealth. The Australian Constitution also emphasises the separation of power – similar to the US Constitution – but does not include a Bill of Rights. Instead, it does imply certain aspects of the protection of rights and freedom (AHRC, 2006).

The two East Asian democracies, however, bear certain unique characteristics, legacies of the Second World War. Being totally defeated, devastated, occupied, and demilitarised, Japan had no choice but to accept a pacifist constitution largely drafted by General MacArthur’s administration, and thus, Japan’s post-war identity was shaped by the US. Promulgated in 1946,

the Constitution of Japan has not gone through any amendment. Its renowned Article 9, ‘Renunciation of War’ has served as a fundamental pillar for Japanese foreign policy during the last seven decades as well as a precursor for its liberal economic development under the Yoshida doctrine, and Articles 10 – 40 provided the framework for civil liberties and human rights. Meanwhile, South Korea created its first constitution in 1948 to establish a presidential republic with the authoritarian rule of President Rhee Syngman. South Korea had endured a lot of political and social upheavals under military dictatorship from the 1960s to late 1980s, at which point the country started its democratic transition, marked by the ninth amendment of the Constitution and first democratic election. Thanks to such incredible transformation, South Korea had emerged out of the rubble of two catastrophic wars, to become a global economic powerhouse and role model of democracy in Asia.

It is worth mentioning that while all four countries are ranked at the same high level of political ideology compatibility, there are certain characteristics that should not be left out. As previously discussed, the US and Australian political system were constructed endogenously from and by the will of the people since their founding. Whereas, the current liberal democracies in Japan and South Korea were built after the Second World War, with the US playing an extensive role in case of South Korea, or even direct intervention in Japan’s state building (Cha & Lee, 2013).

#### **4.4. Causal analysis**

In Chapter Three, I analysed the developments of APAC alliances in the implementation of rebalance policy, through the 2010–2016 period. According to which, the *overall bilateral cooperation* is observed as one aggregate, comparable value across the three cases. Drawing from these observations, the findings indicate that there are certain remarkable variances in the outcome, in which the US-Japan alliance (Case A) appears to be distinguishably stronger than the US-South Korea (Case B, second strongest) and US-Australia (Case C, third-ranking) alliance. Subsequently, the hypotheses will be tested to see which theories hold water and what implications can be deduced from them.

##### *4.4.1. Realist explanation – security importance and vulnerability as a cause*

The first hypothesis, drawn on the realist balance of threat theory, postulates that a bilateral alliance in which a US partner faces a larger security threat will result in a more extensive cooperation than an alliance where the partner faces a lower security threat. On this premise,

the independent variables of the three cases will be compared against each other vis-à-vis the corresponding dependent variable to see if values of the cause correlate with values of the effect.

- *Case A (US-Japan alliance)*. As observed, among the three US allies, Japan faces the biggest security threat, as the country is not only being targeted by both Chinese assertiveness and North Korean belligerence, entangled in a chronic security dilemma, but also under constitutional constraints barring it from fully realising national defence capability. In other words, Case A has the highest value on the IV. Regarding the outcome, the empirical evidences suggest that the US-Japan alliance is also the strongest among the three dyads, with its overall bilateral cooperation, as the DV, exceeding its counterparts.
- *Case B (US-South Korean alliance)*. Being threatened by one credible, realistic, imminent menace instead of two, South Korea ranks second in terms of security threat factor, making the value of IV in Case B second-highest. Looking at the US-South Korean partnership, it also appears that this dyad score a second-highest aggregate value on the overall bilateral cooperation.
- *Case C (US-Australia alliance)*. Not being in the vicinity of a source of threat, nor affected by any direct aggressive intention are the reasons that make Australia the least impacted by threat factors. As a consequence, the US-Australian overall bilateral cooperation lacks some of the extensiveness seen in the other two dyads, and ranks third in terms of value on the DV.

With such correlations, these findings seem to support the first hypothesis, and thus verifies the application of balance of threat theory into the implementation of rebalance policy. Being interpreted into realities, the theory's implication fits the description of each case under examination. Simply put, the severity of security threat an ally faces determines the level of bilateral outcome. Accordingly, the security threat that Japan faces is larger than that of South Korea and Australia (in that order), which on the one hand encourages it to align with the US more extensively, and on the other hand prompts the US to strengthen its protection of Japan, resulting in US-Japan bilateral ties more extensive than US-South Korea and US-Australia.

In addition, the implication becomes clearer when we examine the value of two sub-dimensions, strategic and diplomatic cooperation, which fall under the security domain in the overall bilateral cooperation. Not only the US-Japan alliance has conducted considerably more activities in strategic cooperation than the US-South Korea and US-Australia partnerships



have, but its diplomatic exchanges also showed a remarkable difference from the others, with extensive visits from both sides and appointment of US representative trusted by the president. From a security perspective, these discoveries appear to confirm the importance of security threat as a credible cause in the analysis of these bilateral cooperation.

#### 4.4.2. *Liberal explanation – economic interdependence as a cause*

The second hypothesis is based on the liberal notion of economic interdependence, seeks to identify cross-border trade as an influential factor on foreign policy outcome. On that account, the strength of economic interdependence an alliance has will determine the intensity of its partnership. To establish the causal relationship between economic interdependence and overall bilateral cooperation, I will pair the observations across the three cases to test their congruence.

- *Case A (US-Japan alliance)*. The economic relationship between the US and Japan, the world's biggest and third-biggest economies, is undoubtedly the most intensive among the cases being examined. It is more substantial than the US-South Korea and US-Australia trade ties in both size and volume, and consequently leads to an even stronger tie in US-Japan partnership, during the implementation of the rebalance policy. Therefore, Case A has both the highest value on IV, and also on DV as the overall bilateral cooperation.
- *Case B (US-South Korea alliance)*. The US-South Korean partnership ranks second in terms of economic integration, with significant bilateral trade flows and constant trade deficits on the US end. Regarding the outcome, this dyad attains the second rank in overall bilateral cooperation, as previously reported.
- *Case C (US-Australia alliance)*. In comparison with the other two dyads, the US-Australia partnership has relatively less intensive trade flows, making Australia the third most important trade partner for the US. Correspondingly, the value on DV in Case C also ranks third, reflecting the level of US-Australian bilateral cooperation.

As the cross-case findings show, the higher the IV value gets, the higher the DV value appears to be. This result supports the validity of the second hypothesis, which establishes a causal relation between the level of economic interdependence and the extent of bilateral cooperation. The impact of economic interdependence on international relations, as argued by commercial liberalism, is verified through the analysis of these cases. Therefore, it can be deduced that the

magnitude of cross-border transactions has translated into and correlated with the level of interstate relationship.

One sub-dimension of bilateral cooperation, in the economic sphere, provides further support to the liberal theory. Aside from leading in the overall bilateral cooperation as an aggregate value, the US-Japan alliance also surpasses the other two in terms of economic partnership, demonstrated in the trade volume, trade agreements, and trade policies that both countries seem to have consensus upon. That said, economic interdependence does play a crucial part in influencing the policy outcome of the rebalance initiative.

#### 4.4.3. *Constructivist explanation – national identity as a cause*

The third and last hypothesis employs a constructivist narrative on ideational factors that constitute state behaviour in international politics. The theory posits that an alliance established between states who share more intrinsic, deep-rooted affinities with one another will likely result in a more cohesive and extensive collaboration, than an ad hoc alliance established to serve certain strategic purpose. To test the validity of this theory, once again, I will perform controlled comparison of cross-case values on IVs and DV with the theory's assumption.

- *Case A (US-Japan alliance)*. Based on the observation of American and Japanese national identity characteristics, Case A demonstrates the least compatibility between the two partners. Nevertheless, while Case A has the lowest values on IVs, it exhibits the highest values on DV, in the overall bilateral cooperation.
- *Case B (US-South Korea alliance)*. Not too different from Case A, Case B also displays a remarkably low affinity between the US and South Korean national identities. Its DV, however, appear to have the second-highest values.
- *Case C (US-Australia alliance)*. Proven by the highest compatibility in all five examined aspects that belong to the national identity domain, Case C undoubtedly has the highest IV values. However, that does not create a correlated effect on the DV values, as the US-Australian overall bilateral cooperation ranks third in comparison to the other two APAC alliances.

The testing of constructivist theory reveals an interesting finding. Unlike the realist and liberal approaches, the constructivist proposition does not pass the comparison test. As observed, the cases with lower values on the IVs turn out to be higher on the DV, while the one case that has higher IV values does not have the best performance on the DV. This finding tells us that in the APAC, national identity does not play an influential role in state's aligning behaviour, as

the states who are most active in bilateral cooperation are not necessarily the states who are most akin to one another. The implication here is that while national identity might have been a strong driver in forming alliances, it does not automatically dictate the development of the rebalancing policy and the strengthening of bilateral relationship.

A closer look into two sub-dimensions of bilateral cooperation might bring more evidences to this implication. The leading dyad, US-Japan alliance, not only excels in aggregate value of the overall bilateral cooperation, but also outperforms its counterparts in cultural and regional/global collaboration. Through extensive bilateral exchanges, the US and Japan exert their own soft power on one another, bridging the gap between Eastern and Western civilisations. And by coordinated efforts in regional/global policies and initiatives, the two partners influence their collective soft power internationally, strengthening the ties between them. Judging from these observations, it is safe to infer that in an alliance, national identity compatibility is, although important to say the least, not a crucial factor dictating the outcome of bilateral cooperation.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

The increasingly important role of Asia-Pacific in contemporary international politics, the decline of American hegemonic dominance, and the assertive rise of China as a new regional power, are the main reasons driving the Obama administration to initiate the rebalance policy. The strategy's first pillar, 'strengthening alliances', emphasises the US military presence and strengthens the US alliances in the region, and through that promotes the liberal and democratic values, to maintain the US pre-eminence in both hard and soft power stances in Asia-Pacific. This foreign policy has been examined from three different approaches based on major international relations theories, to determine the decisive factors that influenced the outcome in bilateral cooperation between the US and each ally.

In this thesis, I have attempted to analyse the causal relationships between current circumstances in the Asia-Pacific region, and the events unfolded in the US implication of rebalance to Asia policy, reflecting in the variances of the alliance developments during the first half of 2010s across the three selected cases: US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia alliances. Throughout the thesis, my research has engaged the issues in a methodical and systematic manner. The Introduction started by presenting an overview of contemporary APAC situation, the US rebalance to Asia policy, and issues evolving around its implementation. Chapter One reviewed the literature that have been engaging in international and regional politics, discussing the multi-faceted issue of the rebalance initiative. Chapter Two presented the theoretical and methodological framework, developing an approach to study the cases and address the research question. Chapter Three analysed the variances in the policy outcome, identifying the values of the effects. Chapter Four first dealt with the possible causes, analysing three different dimensions of partnerships under examination, namely the security, economic, and cultural aspects. Subsequently, it established the causal relationships between the causes and effects, based on the result of theory testing through controlled comparison. The following sections recapitulate my arguments and present the findings to conclude my research.

Regarding each dimension of the rebalance initiative, it is clearly visible in the security domain that the US alliance in which the junior partner faces the bigger security threat is also the one that performs more actively in bilateral cooperation, particularly in military collaboration. From a theoretical perspective, this implies that in the context of security importance, that dyad is more inclined towards better cooperation, from both the junior partner

who feels the intrinsic need to defend itself from external threat, and the US strategic goal to protect that ally and safeguard its position. That said, this phenomenon supports the notion of realist *balance of threat* theory, in which states align with one another to balance against the most threatening state. Moving forward, we can expect to observe even more activities in bilateral cooperation in the US-Japan and US-South Korea dyads, should the level of threat they face do not seem to be decreased.

Similarly, the economic sphere demonstrates a positive correlation between the level of economic interdependence and the extent of bilateral cooperation across the three cases. The impact of economic interdependence on international relations, as argued by commercial liberalism, is verified through the analysis of these cases. As the findings have pointed out, the magnitude of cross-border transactions within each dyad, from which the two partner states could harvest economic benefits, has rendered into and corresponded with the level of bilateral relationship. The empirical evidences in these findings indicate a stronger bilateral cooperation in the dyads with more integrated trade ties. Accordingly, the liberal *economic interdependence* theory proves was proven correct, as the economic integration between the US and the three allies in question bear significant importance in their foreign policies, and thus confirms the notion that state preferences determine state behaviour, as previously mentioned, and could perhaps be generalised to a wider population.

The findings in cultural realm, on the contrary, do not corroborate the constructivist *national identity* theory. As the observations have suggested, the alliance that has the most extensive bilateral cooperation is not the one with the most compatible identity characteristics between its partners. This seems to refute the theoretical prediction on the importance of national identity in alliance behaviour. While cultural affinity might have had a certain effect on forming alliances between states with shared understandings and mutual characteristics, it *per se* does not guarantee a high value in bilateral cooperation. Therefore, this finding implies that ideational factors alone are not sufficient to explain state behaviour in international politics, a domain that has traditionally rested on rational principles.

In summary, drawing from my observations and results of theory testing, the findings demonstrate a correlation between security importance and economic integration as the causes and extent of bilateral cooperation as the effects. Whereas, cultural affinity does not play a significant nor primary role in shaping the policy outcome between two partner countries. In other words, what appears to be influencing bilateral cooperation is the rational choice of policymakers, focusing on survival, security assurances, and economic benefits, rather than

compatible values and shared identities. In terms of theoretical implication, this suggests that the predominant factors driving alliance behaviour in trans-Pacific politics seem to be based on pragmatism, emphasising relative and/or absolute gains, not norms and ideas. And because each alliance perceives their preferences and priorities on different levels and magnitudes, the outcomes are also demonstrated in different manners and extents. Perhaps, this finding could contribute some certain value to international relations scholarship, particularly in examining cross-border relations between countries with diverse backgrounds.

Nevertheless, several issues remain. First, due to the scope of this thesis, I was not able to examine all the US alliances in the APAC covered by the rebalance initiative. While the analysis of the US-Japan, US-South Korea, and US-Australia dyads seems sufficient to identify the causal relations, perhaps a more comprehensive research encompassing all five dyads (including the other two, US-Thailand and US-Philippines alliances) could have had contributed more to the analysis of international politics. Given the significant differences in country's developmental stages and background information between the first and the second group, such an extended and challenging research would engage multifaceted phenomena, and might reveal further interesting evidences and findings to verify, and perhaps improve, the prescribed propositions.

Second, I chose to approach mainly the bilateral interactions in each dyad, and discounted several external factors, such as international and regional reactions to the initiative. For example, the literature review section mentioned both the positive reception from most Asian countries, and China's seemingly provocative manoeuvres as a negative effect of the rebalance policy, but did not fully examine those phenomena. While it must have been useful to expand the study towards said areas to gain a deeper insight into interstate politics in the APAC, such an in-depth research would require a larger pool of resources and therefore, unattainable in a limited time frame, as in the case of this thesis.

Third, concerning China's rise. It is believed that under normal circumstances, the US cannot and will not fully contain the rise of China. Almost every nation-state in the region, US ally or not, maintains some sort of interconnectedness with both the US and China. That said, it will be unrealistic to draw a clear line between the established hegemon and the ambitious rising power, forcing regional countries to take side. Perhaps, what seems to be a viable solution to avoid hard confrontation and ameliorate the existing security dilemma in the region is to further the American soft power approach through economic integration and cultural

impacts, winning more hearts and minds of APAC inhabitants, to gain more supporters of liberal and democratic values.

Asia-Pacific has been, and will remain, an arena of great power competition. On the one hand, the region benefits from cross-border trade ties with both the US and China, the world's two largest economies. But on the other hand, its security and stability are likely to be put at risk should the US-centric order is undermined. Taking this fundamental truth into consideration, besides cementing US security commitments to the region, further initiatives are needed in the economic sphere to safeguard the trans-Pacific trade ties, securing American economic leadership, and shaping APAC countries to the Washington Consensus. After all, as my analysis has proven, security assurance and economic interdependence are two decisive factors determining alliance behaviour. On that account, all partners in the US alliances, including the US itself, need to implement a balanced and synchronised strategy to accommodate new opportunities and address newly emerged challenges. Such a daunting task is undoubtedly hard to accomplish, but ultimately, isn't that what international relations is set out to do?

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