International Relations of the Asia-Pacific Volume 10 (2010) 465–490
doi:10.1093/irap/lcq009

More Pax, Less Americana in Asia

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Abstract

Northeast Asia presents a major theoretical puzzle: the region is rife with security challenges and seems continually poised for horrific military conflicts. Yet, despite many structural tensions, the region has been devoid of significant shooting wars since the signing of the Korean armistice in 1953. This essay examines two major contributions to that pacific condition: first, the pervasive focus on economic development and the growing economic links across the region; and second, the growing number of multilateral institutions within the Asia-Pacific. It concludes that while a 'Pax Americana' was important to peace in the past, the long-term prospects are for the continued absence of overt conflict but in ways that will reflect an overall decline in America's capacity to shape regional developments.

1 Introduction

Northeast Asia presents a major theoretical puzzle: the region is rife with security challenges and seems continually poised for horrific military conflicts. Yet, despite many structural tensions and the regularized rattling of sabers, the region has been devoid of significant shooting wars since the signing of the Korean armistice in 1953. To many this apparent anomaly is largely a matter of time: the deep structural rifts

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and the inherently anarchic nature of international politics mean that Northeast Asia is a 'cockpit of great-power conflict', that is 'ripe for rivalry' (Friedberg, 1993; see also Betts, 1993; Buzan and Segal, 1994; Layne, 1996; Bracken, 1999, inter alia). To others, and sometimes with overlaps to the first group, the absence of war in the region is the outgrowth of America's overwhelming regional military presence. Playing the role of 'offshore balancer' and sustaining an elaborate infrastructure of 'hub and spoke' alliances with Japan, the ROK, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia, the United States has, in this view, forged a munificent 'Pax Americana' that has so far prevented otherwise fractious Asian states from attacking one another (Mearsheimer, 2001; Yahuda, 2004; Christensen, 2003; Cha, 2007; Green, 2007, inter alia.).

Such perspectives lead logically to the conclusion that Northeast Asia's future will be highly problematic, particularly when viewed by 'power transition' theorists (e.g. Buzan, 2010; Organski and Kugler, 1980; Gilpin, 1981; Kennedy, 1987; Betts, 1993; Mearsheimer, 2001; Kaplan, 2010; though cf. Goldstein, 2005; Jia and Rosecrance, 2010). Power transition theorists typically contend that the emergence of a peer competitor dissatisfied with things as they are – most recently linked to expectations about 'the rise of China' – is likely to destabilize the fragile status quo ensured by a once dominant power. Thus China is seen likely to challenge the prevailing 'Pax Americana', which in turn will lay the groundwork for one or more major state-to-state military conflicts. The logical route to avoiding such a tumultuous outcome is taken to be a sustained and preeminent US hegemony undergirded by overwhelming military superiority. Such views show an unmistakably unilateralist and status quo bias. They presume that future developments in Northeast Asia not mirroring US priorities will automatically be negative, not only for the United States, but for the region itself.

Such images contain grains of theoretical plausibility and historical truth. But they suffer from at least three shortcomings. First, their neo-realist presuppositions privilege the relative distribution of material resources, most particularly military resources, on a global basis. This reduces Northeast Asia to little more than a passive subsystem within the broader balance of powers. Northeast Asia is arguably the single most critical region in the evolving international order. However, a

system wide global perspective risks underplaying the extent to which Northeast Asia has become what Buzan (2003) calls a 'regional security complex', driven increasingly – although hardly exclusively – by its own internal dynamics, not all of which can be reduced to the balance of military resources. As Choi and Moon (2010, p. 355) phrase it 'the over-emphasis on power, alliance, and [the bias favoring] regional stability [lead] many analysts to under-specify the finer pictures of regional dynamics, resulting in the diverging gap between regional realities and the theory-based predictions for the region'.

A second problem involves the privileging of military capabilities and resources over alternative sources of power, most particularly economic power, a criticism deeply resonant with neo-liberal theory (Keohane, 1984; Keohane and Nye, 1989, inter alia). This point is particularly salient because the ruling elites of most states in Northeast Asia (and East Asia more generally) have demonstrated a collective predilection toward enhancing their nations' power and prestige through rapid economic development as opposed to the traditional military resources privileged by realist theory (Moravcsik, 1997). In effect such an economic prioritization has transformed the zero sum competition over relative (military) power stressed by realists and their supporters into a positive sum regional collaboration that hinges on non-competitive enhancement of national (and regional) economic power. To the extent that such a norm of economic prioritization becomes regionally pervasive, as constructivist theory would argue, the incentives for cross-border cooperation begin to counter those pushing for confrontation.

Finally, the singular focus on the power of national states undervalues the growth of Northeast Asian and East Asian regional institutions which have become more numerous in recent years. The states of Northeast Asia have shown a tentative, but increasing, willingness to forge regional multilateral institutions designed to deal collectively with both traditional and non-traditional security problems. Such institutions hardly supersede the power of national states; indeed membership in such regional bodies is predicated on statehood. But, as suggested by neo-liberal and institutionalist analyses, as the numbers of such bodies increase, state actors are afforded an enhanced opportunity for forum shopping as they face an increasing array of institutions through which to advance state interests. Moreover, these bodies simultaneously hold out the prospect of various intra-organizational coalitions and alliances

that can temper any predilections toward unilateralism and bridge the chasms of conflict as leaders wrestle with problems of crisis management.

This essay addresses the changing security situation in the Asia-Pacific with an eye toward rectifying these shortcomings. It does so in the spirit of avoiding the absolutism and paradigmatic exclusivity thrown up by the competing strains of realism, institutionalism, and constructivism. It opts instead for a problem-oriented approach that resonates with what Sil (2000a,b) calls 'analytic eclecticism' (see also Katzenstein and Okawara, 2001–2002; Sil and Katzenstein, 2005). As such, it concentrates on two central questions surrounding the notion of the Asia-Pacific as benefitting from a 'Pax Americana': first, just how much 'pax' is there is the region; how has it been achieved; and how likely is it to continue? and second, just how much of whatever tranquility exists is the result of American actions; and how might American preferences require future adjustment? Stated more pithily, within the Asia-Pacific, how much 'pax?' and how much 'Americana?'.

The essay concludes that the prospects for peace in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific are far less dismal than neo-realists and power transition theorists purport. The current situation certainly provides no guarantee that future crises will not be mismanaged, nor that states at some point will not unleash their military might. But it does argue for the power of state choice. It contends that the structural constraints of military resources are but one factor shaping the choices made by state leaders. And it argues further that a heavily economic focus and a rising arsenal of regional security institutions offer such leaders a number of powerful buffers against a spiral into the Hobbesian war of all against all.

This paper is organized into four parts. First, it sketches the current security order in the Asia-Pacific. It demonstrates that while many current conditions presage conflict, the region has in fact shown a growing predilection for highly hedged cooperation rather than overt hostility. Second, it examines the current economic linkages across the region. It shows the broad commitment of national governments to economic development as a source of national strength as well as the extent to which regional production networks, cross-border investments, and trade provide the basis for suggesting that the region is ripe, not for rivalry, but for commercially based peace (Rosecrance, 1986). Third, it examines

the changing security architecture in the Asia-Pacific, analyzing the expanding mechanisms that have been layered on top of – and in juxtaposition to – the longstanding bilateral alliances that pivot around Washington and the Pentagon or around China, Russia, and the DPRK. It shows the growth and complexity of numerous new intra-Asian institutions. These, I argue, by no means eliminate historical alliances, rivalries, and American preeminence, but they have begun to complement and supplement them, creating cross-cutting pressures offering new foundations for cooperation among previously hostile states. Finally, the paper suggests that current trends toward economic interdependence and formal mechanisms of cooperation and conflict resolution, although they must still confront a bevy of potential trouble spots, hold expanding prospects ripe for big power collaboration. Such collaboration may well mean a decline in US influence, even if the US remains the single most influential power in the region. Any emerging security order is therefore less inherently likely to reflect US priorities but simultaneously that order need not be systematically hostile to US interests. The Asia-Pacific is thus poised to see continued peace but a peace less completely malleable to the priorities of the United States.

2 The big surprise: peace in the Asia-Pacific[1]

As the geographical vortex of numerous intra-regional security fissures, Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific contain the world's heaviest concentrations of military force. Three of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (USA, China, and USSR/Russia) are nuclear weapons states who treat the region as part of their territorial backyards. North Korea has twice-tested nuclear devices and demands recognition as a nuclear power. Additionally, at least three other governments (ROK, Taiwan, and Japan) are assumed to have the technical capability to 'go nuclear' on short notice. China, the US, ROK, Russia, Taiwan, and North Korea have all deployed or possess ballistic missiles. Proliferation of nuclear materials and delivery systems threatens to unleash an expanded nuclear and missile competition. And while it would be a mistake to speak of an active Northeast Asian 'arms race', the United States has been expanding its military spending exponentially

1 My thanks to Joseph Grieco for this formulation.

since 2001 while other countries, most particularly China and Japan, have been bolstering their respective military capabilities in a tit-for-tat fashion giving considerable attention to new and sophisticated weapons systems involving ballistic missiles, submarines, space weaponization technologies, mini-aircraft carriers, and cyber-warfare capabilities, among others (e.g. Pempel, 2007; Pyle, 2007; Samuels, 2007; Hagström and Williamsson, 2009, inter alia).

As Kim (2004) has noted, since the reunification of Germany and Viet-Nam, Northeast Asia is also the geographical region with the largest concentration of divided polities in the world. Tensions in the two most dangerous of these – across the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean peninsula – oscillate from hot to cold with the DPRK recently threatening military firestorms in all directions, including a familiar sounding 24 June 2009 promise to 'wipe America off the map' (AP, 24 June 2009).

Furthermore, numerous fractious territorial disputes remain unresolved; at least a dozen such disputes complicate dyadic relationships in Northeast Asia alone. An even larger number of contests exist in the region's various seas involving competing EEZs, continental shelf claims and odd rock outcroppings holding up jerry-built structures designed to stake out 'national claims' (Bateman, 2009; Koo, 2009).

At a slightly lower level of volatility, differences in culture, religion, political, and economic systems, as well as toxic memories from past wars and occupations cast ominous shadows, particularly among the key states in Northeast Asia (Gries *et al.*, 2008). Elite and mass public opinion surveys regularly show high levels of distrust among neighboring countries (e.g. Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2006, 2008, inter alia) effectively eliminating any border-spanning Asian identity that might foster transnational cooperation. Moreover, strategic shifts and maneuvers scramble predictions about friendships, rivalries, and regional leadership on a regular basis.

Northeast Asia, reflecting what Christensen (2003, p. 25) calls 'anemic security institutionalization', also stands in dramatic contrast to Western Europe which was impelled toward closer security cooperation through NATO in the face of perceived threats from the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies for the first 45 years after World War II it, or the many Arab countries in the Middle East as they endeavor to downplay their differences and present a common front against Israel. East Asia has never in modern times faced any commonly perceived external threat.

Rather, as Michael Yahuda (2004, p. 229) points out, 'the defenses of most East Asian countries are directed against one another'. Thus, neither Northeast Asia nor the Asia-Pacific has any external impetus toward 'collective defense' and neither has become a 'security community' where shooting wars have become unimaginable.

Without much imagination a wealth of scare scenarios can easily be built around such multiple triggers. The region's security problems appear as ominous as the deep fault lines that form Asia's geological 'ring of fire', with its regular and devastating earthquakes. Unquestionably hard security confrontations are easy to envision (Alagappa, 2003; Pempel, 2005, inter alia).

Yet as noted in the previous section, Northeast Asia has been fundamentally at peace for decades. A security 'order' has prevailed within what Buzan (2003) calls this 'regional security complex' leaving it with no major wars, the management and resolution of many major disputes, and the ongoing accommodation of change without violence (Mastanduno, 2002, p. 182; Alagappa, 2003). Indeed, as Alagappa (2003, pp. 1–33) and others (e.g. Kang, 2003; Cha, 2007, p. 110; Goh, 2007/2008, p. 113) have shown, despite the bevy of latent security problems, many prior conflicts have been resolved; others are being deliberately avoided; and a series of confidence-building measures continue to reduce tensions across the region. This constitutes the Asia-Pacific's 'big surprise', the absence of state-to-state warfare despite the numerous potential triggers for such confrontations.

Solingen (2007, p. 757) underscores this improved security climate: 'Existing disputes have been restrained as never before in recent history, and major powers have normalized diplomatic relations despite continued tensions .... Military modernization has not undermined macroeconomic and regional stability. Military expenditures relative to GNP have declined from 2.6% (1985) to 1.8% (2001), lower than world averages of 5.4% (1985 and 2.5% (2001), with parallel declines – in most states – in military expenditures relative to central government expenditures'. Potential security threats or military confrontations remain low on the political priority list for most governments across the Asia-Pacific (Pempel, 1999; Woo-Cumings, 1999; Frost, 2008; Mahbubani, 2008; Overholt, 2008, inter alia).

Important as the United States contribution may have been in facilitating the overall reduction in tensions and the reduced focus on Asian military spending historically, numerous moves toward tranquilizing relations have also taken place independently of the US military presence. China

and Russia, for example, have resolved their multiple border disputes and demilitarized their shared 2,640 mile border; commercial interactions between the two (including increased military sales) have increased steadily (Weitz, 2007, p. 53), and meanwhile the probability that such cooperation will come at the expense of the rest of the region is limited. Japan has moved to downplay its negative wartime legacy and prime ministers since Koizumi have avoided visits to the regionally radioactive Yasukuni shrine. Meanwhile, summits have become regular occurrences among top leaders from Japan, China, and Korea. Although relations across the Taiwan Straits remain tense, the last PRC missiles were fired over Taiwan in 1996, and the two sides have moved toward a strategic standoff sans shooting, while advancing economic linkages and tangible measures toward cooperation, particularly since the 2008 election of Ma Ying-jeou. Meanwhile, contrary to the predictions of self-described realists (e.g. Mearsheimer, 2001), there has been no Asian 'balancing' against American hegemony, nor against a 'rising China' (Kang, 2007). Instead virtually all governments in Northeast Asia (with the conspicuous exception of the DPRK) have prioritized economic development while irredentist territorial claims and military freelancing have been relegated to the policymaking back burners.

Episodic dissensions recur and certainly, the potential for an intra-regional arms race should not be discounted. The nuclearization of the DPRK poses an ominously destabilizing security threat. But overall, the vast majority of the region's structural tensions have become little more than the distasteful backdrop before which a vastly more complex contemporary drama is being acted out. For the most part, governments across the region have resisted more than temporary and mechanistic reassertions of longstanding territorial claims and (again with the notable exceptions of the DPRK and Myanmar, and not necessarily including the United States) virtually all of the key countries in East Asia have come to define their security far less exclusively in military terms and ever more comprehensively in terms that pivot heavily on continued economic development.

3 A region-wide economic agenda

Charles Armstrong (2006, pp. 257–258) makes an important observation about meetings among the leaders of Northeast Asia: 'although

historical animosities and distrust among China, South Korea, and Japan, not to mention Russia, persist, in recent years, the conversations among the respective governments have tended to focus more on free trade areas and increasing cooperation at all levels'. Across East Asia as a whole and generally across the Asia-Pacific, there has developed a pervasive conviction that economic growth offers a powerful route through which nations can enhance their power and prestige. The consequence has been a collective backing away from prior conceptualizations of military might and territorial conquest as the principal means of enhancing national influence[2] and a greater focus on individual and collective economic growth as a positive sum approach to enhanced national power.

The contention that economic interaction can trump military competition traces back to the theories of Immanuel Kant (Doyle, 1983). Although by no means universally accepted, commercial peace theory holds that as countries trade with one another and become more economically interdependent the probabilities that they will go to war against one another is sharply reduced. This is particularly true when countries share high expectations of future gains through cooperation (e.g. Doyle, 1986, 1997; Rosecrance, 1986; Copeland 1996, 2003; Govella and Newland, 2010, inter alia). Meanwhile various studies have found that wars have a significant negative impact on trade that may persist for years following the war's conclusion (Anderton and Carter, 2001; Glick and Taylor, 2005).

East Asia's experience over the last 50 or so years suggests that the easing of security tensions was a critical precondition that allowed the region's political and economic elites to focus on domestic economic development. Cross-border investments and trade in turn fostered a rise in regional economic interdependence and the collective Asian miracle that so captivated public attention. Simultaneously, the region's increasing economic successes contributed to the reduction in security tensions and the growing commitments of most East Asian governments to improving the economic well-being and wealth of their countries rather

2 The situation of the United States has been more ambivalent and will not be discussed at length. But suffice to say that the Clinton administration strongly embraced the logic of geo-economic power; so seemingly does the Obama administration although with far less avoidance of the military conflicts to which it fell heir. The George W. Bush administration was in contrast quite disdainful of the global benefits of economic power, relying far more often on military muscle (Pempel, 2008c:esp, pp. 566–569).

than to enhancing their military arsenals in the interest of territorially based confrontations with their neighbors. In effect, economic growth and a reduction in security tensions became a mutually constitutive positive spiral for most of the region particularly since China abandoned Maoism for markets in 1979.

Of particular importance has been the proliferation of cross-border production networks that have fused the capital of richer countries with the surplus labor of others. Such investments and regionalized production networks allowed Asian firms and Asian national economies to become integrated into the global economy while at the same time becoming more interdependent on one another. Between 1986 and 1992, for example, the intra-regional share of exports from Asian countries expanded from 31 to 43% (Pempel, 1997, pp. 54, 66). By 2008, intra-Asian trade had risen to 56% of total Asian trade, a figure close to that of the EU. Japan and Korea are two of the largest investors in China. Trade among China, Japan, and Korea have risen geometrically in the last decade and China is now the number one trading partner of both, having replaced the United States as Korea's most important market in 2005 and as Japan's in 2008.

With increased relevance, economic assets have become the prevailing measures of state power and influence in the Asia-Pacific. The consequence is that 'security' calculations in that region have become more 'comprehensive' and rest increasingly, not on military hardware, but on the more nuanced inclusion of economic muscle as a 'security' resource. Classical military security frictions and competitions have hardly disappeared, but these have lost any exclusivity they may once have had. As a result, the probabilities of overt military conflicts across the region have been reduced as national leaders clamor for enhanced economic development.

4 Security architecture in the Asia-Pacific

The most powerful vertebrae in the spine of the Asia-Pacific's current security architecture remain America's bilateral alliances. These constitute the most conspicuous manifestation of American hegemony and provide the architectural underpinnings for claims of a region-wide 'Pax Americana'. Well after their original Cold War justification has vanished, these still provide the 'hub and spoke' infrastructure around which many of the region's key security relationships gravitate. They also have kept the

US deeply enmeshed in the region's affairs, making it impossible to speak meaningfully about security matters in Northeast Asia without anchoring that discussion in the broader context of the United States and the Asia-Pacific. Many contend that the American military presence has contributed significantly to the maintenance of peace, economic development and the preservation of the status quo in the region, including its role in dampening the temptations toward any overt arms race and military competition between Japan and China (Friedberg, 2005; Green, 1995, 2001; Mastanduno, 2002; Christensen, 2003; Overholt, 2008, inter alia).

Some speculated that with the end of the Cold War, the United States alliance structure had lost its raison d'etre. However, as Thelen (2004) and others (e.g. Pierson, 2000) have demonstrated so powerfully, institutions that prove functionally useful in achieving one set of goals are far more likely to evolve and take on new tasks than they are to go out of business. Certainly this happened with America's alliances with Japan and the ROK; both were adjusted to become components in America's broader global security strategies (Pempel, 2007; Pyle, 2007; Samuels, 2007; Bechtol, 2009).

Moreover, the Asia-Pacific's prior bilateralism has taken on more complex dimensions as a web of new security arrangements have been layered on top of prior bilateral links or been nested into them. Thus, Japan, the United States, and the ROK have periodically toyed with variations on the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) and other mechanisms to coordinate trilaterally. Similarly, the United States, Australia, and Japan are collectively involved in a parallel but independent three party process that began in July 2007 with their Joint Declaration on Cooperation Security. Such triangular arrangements represent attempts to enhance the collective influence and interactions among America and its traditional allies, and might be seen as one possible exception to the contention that Asia has seen no balancing against a 'rising China'. (But as will be noted below, alternative arrangements that include many of the same states involve explicitly cooperative, rather than confrontational, linkages with China.) In addition, operations such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), initiated by the US but now including a number of Asian partners, provide ad hoc 'coalitions of the willing' aimed at interdicting shipments of nuclear and other WMD materials, particularly from the DPRK. PSI can also be seen at least partly as an extension of the US military alliance structures.

It is not just the United States and its allies who have continued and expanded Cold War ties reflecting traditional rivalries. Even though the security guarantees in these alliances have been softened, important residues of the Cold War also include the bilateral 'lips and teeth' alliance between China and the DPRK as well as Russia's continuing alliance with the North. Also mirroring Cold War rivalries is the newer and more multilateral Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which began in 1996 (as the Shanghai Five) and was officially launched with its current six members on 15 June 2001 – China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. Even though SCO spills geographically beyond 'Northeast Asia', the fact that Russia and China are two of its most important members makes SCO a powerful component in the region's changing security architecture. Importantly, SCO's joint military activities are the only such actions by an Asian regional body. All of this raises the possibility that the SCO might emerge as 'anti-NATO', even though its charter states that it 'is not an alliance directed against other states and regions and it adheres to the principle of openness'. Nonetheless, SCO certainly provides a potential challenge to US advances such as the deployment of its missile defense systems.

Such activities demonstrate the residual power of ongoing rivalries and balancing strategies left over from the Cold War, as well as continuing efforts, particularly led by the United States and China to either balance against one another or at least to hedge against actions by the other that might constitute infringements on their current or future influence.

All the same, security structures that are driven primarily by the United States as continuations or expansions of its bilateral linkages and that are congruent with a Northeast Asia under 'Pax Americana' have recently been supplemented, cross cut and challenged by a number of new architectural creations, many of them driven, not by the United States, but by Asian countries themselves. As I have shown in other work (Pempel, 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2010; Ravenhill, 2008) East Asian governments, most notably in the wake of the Cold War; the Asian Financial Crisis; and the unilateralism, militarism, and reduced attention to Asia during the Bush administration; have assembled a number of additional financial, trade, and security arrangements, that for the most part have memberships restricted to 'Asians only'.

The ASEAN countries, spurred in part by Japan and Australia, launched the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1993. ARF now involves

a total of 27 countries that defy traditional rivalries and who meet annually for security dialogue and confidence-building measures related to the peace and security across the 'geographical footprint' of Northeast and Southeast Asia as well as Oceania (Solingen, 2008 inter alia). Importantly, the 'ASEAN way' which focuses on informality, organizational minimalism, mutual respect for national sovereignty, peaceful resolution of state-to-state disputes, and importantly the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, has taken on a powerful normative pull across much of the region (Acharya, 2001; Acharya and Johnston, 2007, inter alia).

Also emanating out of Southeast Asia, the Shangri-la Dialogue, driven primarily by the International Institute of Strategic Studies in Singapore, has since 2002, brought together the Defense Ministers of key Asia-Pacific countries for in what its sponsors immodestly refer to as the region's 'premier and most inclusive security institution' (IISS, 2009). Shangri-la manages to assemble the defense ministers and top military officials of most Asia-Pacific countries due largely to the opportunity for well spotlighted statements of security goals and the opportunity to meet informally with counterpart officials from across the region.

The United States has been a participant in both ARF and Shangri-la. But it has been shut out of a number of the more noteworthy new bodies created for 'Asians only'. Among the more noteworthy of these are the ASEAN + 3 along with its now multilateralized regional currency swap arrangements (the Chiang Mai Initiative) and two different bond initiatives as well as the East Asia Summit (EAS). Although the ARF and the Shangri-la Dialogue offer memberships that cut across old Cold War lines and buffer against traditional rivalries, the 'Asians only' institutions not only bridge traditional rivalries, but they do so in ways that potentially contribute to a regional security order in a manner far less subject to the direction and dominance of the United States.

In this context, considerable opportunity to shape the overall order by bridging old line rivalries and weaving together the major powers of the region for collaborative security efforts may well lie in the Six-Party Talks (SPT). Clearly in the eyes of most major players in the region, the most serious regional security threats continue to center around the regime in North Korea. When the SPT began in 2002, they marked an important break from prior bilateral United States–DPRK negotiations, ushering in a new multilateral process involving the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia. From the start China has chaired the talks.

Addressing a vital security problem through the SPT constituted a signal victory for regional multilateralism over bilateralism as well as for negotiation over confrontation, particularly in so far as it was the United States with its extensive network of bilateral alliances, and under the singularly unilateral administration of George W. Bush, that proposed the process (Pempel, 2008b).

The significance of the SPT to any long-term regional security order is apparent if only in the fact that five of the major powers in the region have agreed to collaborate and have committed major policymaking and diplomatic resources to this multilateral process. In doing so, they have agreed on, and committed themselves to resolving, a potentially explosive regional security challenge, even if they currently address the problem from different predispositions and with often competing priorities.

Also holding high potential for bringing together previous rivals in Northeast Asia is the trilateral forum that spun off from the APT and that now involves a separate summit among the leaders of Japan, China, and the ROK. Starting in 2002 the three had met in mini-summits on the sidelines of the APT meetings. Then, frustrated with the slowness of ASEAN and the APT and aware of the growing number of issues that affected them collectively, the three leaders began meeting completely outside the auspices of APT starting in December, 2008. They subsequently institutionalized these meetings to allow cooperation on outstanding trilateral issues including security. Progress in overcoming their erstwhile rivalries was striking in their 2010 meeting in Jeju Korea where they agreed to establish a permanent secretariat, created a framework for a joint investment treaty and began a joint study for a trilateral free trade agreement (Iida, 2009).

In a similar vein, China has proposed, and Japan and the United States have accepted, a plan for those three countries to meet on a regular basis. At present the three leaders do hold sideline meetings in numerous other fora such as the G-20. But a new institutionalized triangular arrangement connecting the United States, China, and Japan, along with the ongoing China–Japan–Korea trilateral, would expand the cooperative possibilities among the major countries of Northeast Asia in ways that, while not in overt conflict with the United States alliance structures and US goals, provide opportunities for extra-alliance cooperation that are far more than simple reflections of any traditional definition of a 'Pax Americana'.

A further institutional impetus can be noted in the separate proposals by Australia's Kevin Rudd for an Asia-Pacific Community and from Japan for an East Asia Community (East Asia Forum, 2009). The region is also networked by dozens of multilateral (and minilateral) conferences, fora, and agreements among Asia-Pacific powers on a host of functional problems linked to non-traditional security matters from food safety to pandemics, to disaster relief. Finally, one step below such official arrangements are a series of Track II (or Track 1 ½) processes that provide additional texture to official security arrangements across the region (Job, 2003; MacIntyre, *et al.*, 2008; Evans, 2005).

Many of these bodies have yet to demonstrate significant independent ability to shape the security behaviors of either their members or other states. But without question the region's growing number of overlapping triangles and broader multilateral institutions reflect a growing predisposition toward multilateral cooperation and they have enriched the prior security architecture of the Asia-Pacific. The consequence is a vastly more complex composition of security mechanisms with greater potential for defusing conflicts than the previously hard divisions endemic to the Cold War alliances. Importantly, virtually all these institutions stress top-level dialogues among key national leaders, many of them representing states confronting security dilemmas with one another. And as Haftel's research (2007) has demonstrated, the combination of economic interdependence and regular meetings among high-level officials has proven to be a powerful combination in mitigating violent state-to-state conflict. It remains unclear just how salient each will be in influencing security relations in the Asia-Pacific. Yet this proliferation of new institutions makes the current security architecture in the Asia-Pacific vastly more porous and pliable than the bipolarity of the Cold War era.

From the above list of institutions, it is obvious that the key countries in Northeast Asia are now woven into a multiplicity of security 'architectures' with overlapping and porous linkages among different combinations of states. The region has no shortage of venues, official and unofficial, within which to address the many security issues that confront the states of the Asia-Pacific. Security institutions *per se*, of course, do little to guarantee security order. Any order they generate will depend on how effective these new bodies are in convincing national leaders to use them, and on how well they perform in actually resolving problems in the region.

One of the most persistent problems with the complex architecture *per se* is that the major powers in Northeast Asia still lack a common agenda for security cooperation on most big issues. Major players continue to advance toward quite different goals regarding many of their respective security challenges. Lacking any commonly recognized enemy, any comprehensively embracing security architecture for the Asia-Pacific will be forced to focus on *common* security rather than *collective* security. But the explosion of new institutions combined with the longstanding recognition that institutions can serve as powerful tools for socializing their members (Acharya and Johnston, 2007, inter alia) combine to suggest that even if the Asia-Pacific does not now constitute a 'regime of the like-minded' the structures being put in place might well foster increased harmonization of interests.

Meanwhile, the apparent enthusiasm of regional leaders for such new bodies, along with the rising number of institutions suggest both a willingness to cooperate and a considerable opportunity for 'forum shopping' as individual states consider which of the many institutional possibilities before them is the most likely to lead to their desired goals. Many of them are likely to do so in ways that while not necessarily challenging 'Pax Americana' directly, are proceeding with little or no US input.

5 How 'American' will any future regional order be?

Shades of a 'Pax Americana' were certainly in evidence across all of Asia during the final years of the Cold War and into the early post-Cold War period. US power and particularly its bilateral alliances with Japan and the ROK were correctly stressed by many analysts as critical pillars ensuring peace and stability within the region. America's Pacific presence provided extended deterrence to key allies and also assured many countries that America was prepared to deter any Asian power from unilaterally abusing its strengths. Simultaneously, US security guarantees mitigated any temptation for Japan to engage in major boosts to its national military power which in turn reduced regional worries about a 'resurgence of Japanese militarism' (Green, 1995, 2001). Furthermore, while Chinese leaders abhorred the challenge to their country's national sovereignty posed by American military ties to Taiwan and guarantees of Taiwanese

autonomy, the robust US military presence was otherwise compatible with China's prioritization of economic and regional development, providing reassurance rather than overt challenge (Christensen, 2003).

In attempting to assess the future potential for any 'Pax Americana' in the Asia-Pacific, it is well to recall that the longstanding 'Pax Americana' following World War II rested centrally on at least four powerful pillars: US *military predominance* in its bipolar global confrontation with the USSR and its allies; US *economic and financial strength*; the overall *soft power appeals* of American culture; and an elaborate network of *multilateral institutions* – all designed in the words of Ikenberry (2001, p. 5) to 'lock in a favorable order'. Or as Tammen and Kugler (2006, p. 37) phrase it: 'determined US stewardship over the last half century has forged a stable international political and economic system and a global regime. . . .' Will that system continue? And more significantly, will it continue to provide the US with the ability to disproportionately structure what Ikenberry and Mastanduno (2003, pp. 423–425) call a 'US-Centered Hegemonic Order' (see also Mastanduno, 2008; Blair, 2009)?

Without a doubt America has far and away the most powerful military force in Northeast Asia, as it does in the world at large. Furthermore, disparities between American military, technological, economic, and cultural preponderance compared with that of other major states actually widened during the 1990s (Ikenberry, 2002a,b). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent termination of global bipolarism, international relations were characterized by a 'unipolar moment' reflecting America's matchless superiority. Most projections of military force levels in Asia suggest that American predominance is not likely to be challenged for a decade or more, if then (e.g. Shambaugh, 2004/2005, 2005; Fravel, 2008; US Department of Defense, 2010; inter alia).

At the same time, a long-term shift in the balance of power and influence within the Asia-Pacific has been underway for 20 years or more and is likely to continue. This shift is characterized most notably by the rising power of both Japan and China and the lesser rise of ASEAN, Russia, and the ROK, all at the expense of the *relative* power of the United States. If measured by sheer size of its military or its nominal GDP, the United States is all but certain to remain the most powerful country in the world for decades. At the same time its relative dominance is waning, particularly in Northeast Asia. In particular, China's military

modernization and economic growth will allow the PRC to close some of the gap it now faces behind US might.

The relative rise of other powers in Asia, however, rests far more on the balance of their rising economic power than on sheer military muscularity. At the end of World War II the GDP of the United States was approximately six times that of the world's number two economy (then Great Britain). Today that lead has diminished to approximately three times greater than the number two (now Japan with China set to pass Japan in 2010 or early 2011). And in purchasing power terms, projections suggest that China will surpass the United States sometime between 2012 and 2015. More to the immediate point, given the disastrous tax and spending profligacy of the Bush administration, the huge costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the collapse of US financial markets in 2008–09, the United States has surrendered one of the main pillars of its prior global hegemony. The result has been a dramatic reduction in America's ability to utilize either economic or cultural influences to enhance its standing in Northeast Asia. Indeed, the United States has become ever more dependent on Asian purchases of its mounting debt, inextricably constraining the weight and influence of America's military preeminence and weakening any presumptions of a continued US-driven 'Pax Americana'.

The United States has also been a hesitant participant in the accelerating race to regionalize East Asia. The Clinton Administration, in keeping with its overall geo-economic focus, was an enthusiastic proponent of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and participated actively in the ARF. American policymakers began to lose some of their earlier interest in APEC due to the failure of the Early Voluntary Sector Liberalization (EVSL) process they had hoped would open Japanese agricultural markets to American exports (Krauss, 2004; Tay, 2006, p. 4). APEC's economic marginalization was furthered even more by what Higgott (2004) has called America's singular efforts to 'securitize' it during the George W. Bush administration. At Bush's behest, APEC was pressed to temper its original economic focus in favor of taking supportive stands against the so-called Global War on Terror.

The Bush administration's skepticism about regional institutions and the multilateral process was demonstrated by the fact that Secretary of State Rice skipped two of the three ARF meetings that occurred during her term, thereby minimizing US abilities to influence ARF activities

while generating a broader perception across Asia that the administration's priorities lay elsewhere (Dillon, 2005).

The Obama administration has taken a number of steps to reclaim some measure of the American influence in the Asia-Pacific that was squandered during the Bush years. Obama himself made an early week-long trip to Asia, meeting then and on multiple other occasions with the leaders of all major Northeast Asian states. Secretary of State Clinton's first overseas trip was to Asia, not to Europe, as had been traditional. She also attended her first two ARF meetings in a conspicuous break with Rice's avoidance. America signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in July 2009 and the US appointed its first ambassador to ASEAN while offering many gestures at greater multilateral cooperation across the region. The complex of new Asian regional arrangements provides just such an opportunity and early hints from the Obama administration are that it is desirous of embracing such a course, as evidenced by its assertion that it wishes to join the EAC, return APEC to its economic focus, create an enhanced Asian focus within the Department of State, and to boost China's role in the IMF.

In addition the Obama administration has committed itself to continuing the SPT. Although the talks have been rocky and are currently stalled, they still provide the most promising venue not only for resolving the immediate problem of a nuclear DPRK, but also for reducing the current nationalistically rooted tensions that divide the key actors in Northeast Asia and for laying the groundwork for what could be a collaborative 'concert of powers' in the region. Whether or not these talks eventually prove successful in solving the denuclearization problem, the six-party process itself should be recognized for its tremendous potential to institutionalize multilateral security cooperation by major powers in one of the world's most potentially troublesome geographies.

Should the US embrace such a process? Certainly many in US policy-making circles would argue 'no', claiming that American's long-term security interests are best served by emphasizing military strength, enhancing its bilateral alliances, and preventing the emergence of any 'peer competitor'. That is completely unrealistic in the long run given America's current engagements in the Middle East, its quagmire of economic problems at home, and the rising power of China. And meanwhile, the increased importance and agenda of the 'plus three' summit suggests

that China, Korea, and Japan are increasingly willing to take a measure of autonomous collective leadership in shaping events in Northeast Asia.

A more realistic accommodation needs to be made between the United States and China aimed, not at chasing the chimera of a G-2, but one that pursues fostering a China that in Robert Zoelick's words would be a 'responsible stakeholder' in the current global system. Such a move will necessitate, however, not just pro-US movement by China but also an American acceptance of a shared (and almost certainly diminished) global and regional influence. America is facing an economically more powerful and institutionally more connective East Asia as it is elsewhere in the world. Yet, as Soli Ozel, a professor of international relations at Bilgi University in Istanbul, referring to the increased regional role being played by Turkey was quoted as saying: 'The Americans, no matter what they say, cannot get used to a new world where regional powers want to have a say in regional and global politics' (New York Times, 2010).

America's adjustment to new conditions in Northeast Asia will not be easy. But to assume that America can unilaterally influence East Asia without making substantial adjustments in its own aims and diplomatic interactions so as to become more compatible with the changing nature of security thinking in East Asia smacks of arrogant myopia. The final result may not be a 'Pax Americana' in its most unilateral form, but it would represent an order that would be highly compatible with America's long-term interests.

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