

Part II

2. East Asian Cooperation: Retrospect and Prospect

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East Asian Cooperation: Retrospect and Prospect

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1. Retrospect

Out of the chaos engendered by World War II, the Cold War, the wars in Korea and Viet Nam, and the end of colonialism, the idea of regional cooperation in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region began to form in the second half of the 1960s. This movement began with a series of meetings initiated by academics and businessmen, who were mainly focused on economic issues. The war in Viet Nam was still raging, and Indonesia had just emerged from the aftermath of an abortive Communist coup. Against this background, in 1968 the Pacific Asia Forum for Trade and Development (PAFTAD) was officiated as the first forum of economists in the region; this had been preceded by the Pacific Business Economic Council in New Zealand (1967) for businesspersons. Dialogue, research, and business began to develop more quickly, and governments in the region increasingly began to recognise the meaningful contribution of these areas. This ultimately led to a government initiative to create the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which officially came into being in 1989. It was preceded, in 1980, by the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, which was consciously designed as a tripartite regional cooperation wherein governments (in a private capacity), businesses, and academics would come together to work on issues of

regional economic cooperation, development, and growth. The idea of the council was mainly driven by Japanese and Australian scholars concerned about the direction of the European Community (EC).

In 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established as a subregional cooperation in Southeast Asia, mainly in response to the dynamics of the Cold War, Viet Nam War, and Confrontation of Indonesia against Malaysia. ASEAN began to participate actively in regional cooperation processes on two levels: Track One, or cooperation between governments; and Track Two, or cooperation between non-state actors and officials in their personal capacities. The ASEAN Minister Meeting proposed an ASEAN Post-Ministerial Meeting attended by ASEAN Member States and dialogue partners to discuss security issues, especially on confidence-building measures (CBMs). It was established in 1983, and had been proposed by the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies, an association of ASEAN think tanks. Prior to this, the Canadian foreign minister and later Prime Minister Joe Clark suggested that ASEAN apply the model of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in the East Asia or Asia-Pacific region. The foreign minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, proposed a similar idea.

Following two 'Track One and a Half' workshops convened in Manila and Bangkok in the early 1990s, the establishment of an ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was accepted at the 1992 ASEAN Summit in Singapore. The first ARF meeting was held in Bangkok in 1993, after the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. The meeting gained momentum from the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Japan's support was critical to the establishment of the ARF, as the United States (US) was encouraged to lend its support as well.

The ARF has three stages of objectives: CBMs, preventive diplomacy, and conflict resolution. It came to include more than 20 members, including India, Pakistan, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Since its setup, the ARF has performed well in terms of CBMs, but has moved more slowly in the areas of preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution measures. One possible reason for this is that the second and third

objectives of the ARF are considered more intrusive in the domestic spheres of member states. Despite criticisms regarding the ARF's inability to make progress on its second and third objectives, the CBMs alone have been a great accomplishment, and prove that ARF members are making progress.

The ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) was first created to address non-traditional security cooperation, such as that related to natural disasters and peace-keeping; however, it now focusses on more traditional security issues, such as joint naval exercises between ASEAN and China (which took place at the end of October 2018) and between ASEAN and the US in the near future. The ADMM+ has also taken up other important issues, such as air security. However, as it is relatively new, it is still in the process of defining its role in traditional security issues.

The East Asia Summit (EAS) is a forum for cooperation in strategic economic and security issues, and since its inception has been moving towards solidification as a possible ideal forum on security cooperation in the East Asian region. As the EAS is the only security summit in the region, it has received more institutional support from the establishment of the EAS working group consisting of the Jakarta-based ASEAN and non-ASEAN ambassadors to ASEAN. It has been taken more seriously by the members since 2016.

While these regional cooperation initiatives represent positive progress, President Trump's erratic and impulsive US-centred policies loom large, and uncertainty has become the new normal. On the economic front, the Trans-Pacific Partnership 11 (TPP-11), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and APEC are important institutions that could fill the gaps that may occur in the region if the US abandons multilateralism. Although they may not necessarily be fully adequate, they are at least in the region and would be available if needed.

China has also initiated some important regional organisations with distinct functions and roles, including the Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation, which was developed from the Shanghai Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia; the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Due to the uncertainty mentioned above, these organisations have an important role to play in the future. Thus, it is important to consider how they can complement the other organisations, including those initiated by ASEAN.

2. Prospect

In 1999, during an interview with Singapore's Channel News Asia network, I was asked to name the most important person who had changed Asia. My answer was Chairman Deng Xiaoping who opened up China 40 years ago in December 1978, making it possible for China to become what it is now, and giving Asia (and the world) the chance to develop together peacefully. Chairman Deng gave us China's peaceful rise, and the East Asian region has taken the opportunity to develop together with China, making it the most rapidly developing region in the world. East Asia's development has become a model for emerging economies in many parts of the world. Chairman Deng wanted to see China develop peacefully, and be accepted by the region by not showing off its power and success, and being willing to deal with others on equal and 'win-win' basis. China has now become a great power in its own right and the second biggest economy in the world. Domestically, it is facing popular pressure and demands to stand up against the powers that caused the suffering of the Opium Wars 180 years ago, although China has managed to turn the painful legacy of the past into its current success as a global power.

Since the early 1980s, China has participated in regional affairs and development through ASEAN initiatives such as the ARF, ADMM+, and EAS. Currently, China also has bilateral trade agreements with each ASEAN member state, and one with ASEAN as a whole. In addition, China has been an active member of the APEC and Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, and a member of the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, a Track Two regional construct.

In 2016, China established the AIIB to finance and cooperate in infrastructure building in Asia. In 2013, China created the BRI as a new global strategic cooperation venture in the fields of infrastructure, finance, trade, social, and person-to-person cooperation along the traditional Silk Road. It is not aiming to supplant the existing international order, but rather to bring about new, complementary initiatives for global cooperation. China has benefitted greatly from the current order, and thus cannot be considered a total revisionist power; however, it can perhaps be considered partially revisionist, because it was not present at the creation of the global order after the end of World War II, and has in that sense come up with new initiatives. At most, it would simply like to change certain parts of the status quo. In the process, China has given new meaning to the strategic value of the Silk Road for Eurasian relations, such as through the BRI.

China's membership in trade regimes such as the World Trade Organisation, APEC, and ASEAN-based regional cooperation shows that it is undoubtedly still a status-quo power. Some allege that China has been unfair on issues like intellectual property rights and state subsidies, although Japan and other countries have behaved similarly in the past. Nonetheless, China must look carefully at the complaints raised by the US and other Western countries regarding these issues. If these allegations are true, China should make amends to make itself credible. I believe China is trying hard to do this, and reform some of its policies on trade and investment. The attitudes and policies of any major power appear intended to acquire dominance, by thinking mainly of its own national interests. A case in point is President Trump's actions in creating self-centred policies without any care for others.

As a member of the international community, China is playing by the rules as others do, and has been actively participating in certain United Nations-initiated efforts such as peace-keeping, programs on the environment, and the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. While China strongly resists any attempt by an outside power to interfere in its domestic affairs, compromises are possible in some cases, such as specific human rights issues. Just as the US resists the supremacy of China, China also will resist any US attempt to interfere in its domestic affairs, let alone change its current system

of government into a liberal democracy. In addition, China will work to oppose any efforts by the US to hamper China's goals to improve its high-technology capabilities towards 2025.

China has toughened its position on the South China Sea because it needs this sea for strategic reasons. In defending its interests, China has been very assertive on its own instead of taking the path of diplomacy, as shown by its reaction to the results of the United Nations Tribunal on the South China Sea. Over the course of 2 years (2015–2016), I and my ASEAN colleagues initiated a series of dialogues and conferences with our Chinese counterparts that increased our understanding of the problem, which I now follow. Frankly, I think that the decisions of the tribunal were overly one-sided and anti-China. However, at the same time I agree that China should not be so assertive, which is creating doubts as to its peaceful rise. China has not accepted the results of the tribunal because they know that the US and Japan were behind it. It will be difficult to implement the decisions, which were obviously anti-China, and it is unclear who will adhere to them. After all these activities on the South China Sea, now a second chance to conclude the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea in the next 2 years is open. This is important for establishing regional order in the South China Sea.

China has stated that it would like to maintain a corrected globalisation, multilateralism, and an open economy. These principles are undoubtedly important to keep in place an international order that can balance the unilateralism of the US, and at the same time sustain peace and development both globally and regionally. Each country should do its part to keep its economy open and promote intense regional cooperation to overcome any issues that may arise from President Trump's policies. Supportive regional institutions include those initiated by ASEAN and the West, such as APEC, TPP-11, ARF, ADMM+, and EAS. Chinese initiatives like BRICS (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China, and South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, AIIB, and BRI; and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Ideally, most of these organisations should be complementary, as it is important to maintain openness in the economy and politics of the region and the world. Maybe it is for every member of Asia and the Pacific to take up this challenge.

The term 'Indo Pacific' has become common in the region since 2017. However, it is also somewhat confusing as countries have divergent views and definitions of it. At present, the biggest area of confusion is the revival of Quad 2, as announced in November 2017 on the side of the East Asia Summit in Manila. Quad 1 was slowly diminishing 5 years ago, due to the differing interests of countries like Australia. The US has now taken the lead on Quad 2 (which, similar to Quad 1, consists of Australia, India, Japan, and the US) to promote security cooperation against China.

The US policy is aligned with its 2017 National Security Strategy, in which it declares that China and the Russian Federation are its rivals. This is serious, and opens up a new chapter in China–US relations, with significant consequences for the Asia-Pacific region. Quad 2 can be seen as the implementation of the US' national strategy for containing China. This is of course undesirable for both Indonesia and ASEAN. Indonesia has consistently proposed that regional cooperation should be open and led by ASEAN. Thus, with this mindset, the EAS (which consists of all relevant countries in the region, as well as India, the Russian Federation, the US, and China) should be the platform for Indo Pacific.

One big question is the future of the US in East Asia. President Trump remains ambivalent towards this question. On the one hand, his insistence on an 'America first' agenda is basically anti-multilateralism. This has raised questions regarding the value of the US alliance with Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Australia. Although his military staff and the White House have claimed that US policy in the Asia-Pacific region remains business as usual, it is difficult to take this for granted. Trump is clearly a unilateralist, and will ultimately make the decisions in this area. Thus, all countries in the region must continue to cooperate closely and work not only to maintain bilateral relations but also to keep multilateral institutions relevant.