Between balance of power and community: the future of multilateral security co-operation in the Asia-Pacific

G. John Ikenberry\textsuperscript{a} and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama\textsuperscript{b}

\textsuperscript{a}School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 301 Burr Intercultural Center, 37th and O Street, Washington, DC 20057, USA. Email: gji@georgetown.edu
\textsuperscript{b}School of International Politics, Economics and Business, Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo 150-8366, Japan. Email: jitsuo@sipeb.aoyama.ac.jp

Abstract

This paper explores the logic behind US and Japanese approaches to regional security and the prospects for a more comprehensive co-operative security order in the Asia-Pacific. The current security order in the region bears the marks of long-established and distinctive American and Japanese approaches. These approaches do hold out some hope in building a more inclusive and co-operative order, but for years to come the Asia-Pacific will be a region that will exist somewhere between a balance of power and a community-based security order.

1 Introduction

The Asia-Pacific is one of the most dynamic and potentially unstable regions in the world today, yet the security institutions that are available to manage tensions are scattered, weak or non-existent. The region encompasses a diverse mixture of rival great powers, thorny territorial disputes, unresolved historical memories, competing political ideologies, painful economic transitions, shifting military balances and divergent cultures. The unsettled relations between Japan, the United States, China, Russia, North and South Korea,
Taiwan, and South-east Asia would be a challenge to manage even if the region had well-established governance institutions – but the absence of strong and coherent regional security institutions makes the challenge even greater.

Scattered across the region are a patchwork of bilateral alliances, ad hoc security dialogues, multilateral fora, ministerial meetings, track-two encounters and other mechanisms of engagement. The US–Japan security treaty is the single most important and stable institutional anchor in the region. But increasingly leaders in the region are looking for wider and more inclusive multilateral mechanisms to manage the complex security dilemmas in the region. Japan has slowly diversified its security contacts in the region and is involved in an array of annual and ad hoc ministerial talks.1 China and the United States have recently engaged in high-level talks between their military establishments, and various security experts and political leaders have called for more formal trilateral talks between China, the United States and Japan (Abramowitz et al., 1998; Kokubun, 1998). American officials and other diplomats in the region are exploring the establishment of a G-8 dialogue – modeled on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe – between the wider set of states in the region. Ideas about new multilateral institutions are in the air.2

How stable are the current ad hoc security arrangements in the region? The answer depends in part on grasping the thinking and strategy behind American and Japanese foreign policies in the region. What are the limits and possibilities for more formal and coherent multilateral security arrangements in the region? The answer depends on what precisely one means by security multilateralism. There are a wide variety of co-operative security arrangements – ranging through great power concerts, collective security orders, multilateral alliances and loose co-operative associations. The current security order in the Asia-Pacific is organized around neither a balance of power, on the one hand, nor a fully multilateral system, on the other. The question that must be answered in looking beyond the US–Japan alliance is: can the logic of co-operation between the United States and Japan be extended outward into the region into a more inclusive co-operative security order?

To answer these questions, this paper explores the logic behind US and Japanese approaches to regional security and the prospects for a more com-

---
1 Multilateral security dialogues in which Japan is involved include the Forum for Defense Authorities in the Asia-Pacific Region, the International Seminar on Defense Science, the Asia-Pacific Seminar, and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium.
2 On the absence of regional institutions in East Asia to guide changing security realities and a discussion of institutional proposals, see Calder (2001).
prehensive co-operative security order in the Asia-Pacific. We argue that the current security order in the region bears the mark of long-established and distinctive US and Japanese approaches to regional security. The United States is pursuing what might be called a ‘liberal’ grand strategy. The US approach to security in Asia is part of a more general liberal orientation to building security order – utilizing the integrative and binding mechanisms of institutions and economic interdependence.

Our argument is that US and Japanese approaches to security do hold out some hope in building a more inclusive and co-operative regional security order. Yet movement to a truly European-style community-based security system is not yet possible. For years to come the Asia-Pacific will be a region that will exist somewhere between a balance of power and a community-based order. To get at the problems and prospects for a more co-operative multilateral security system, it is necessary to look more closely at the various types of co-operative orders. Each type of multilateral security order is based on a different logic of relations between the states in the region. More precisely, each depends on a different type of social cohesion – or co-operative principle – among states. And some of the co-operative principles are more realistic in the Asia-Pacific context than other principles. Put differently, it is not just the configurations of power in the region that matter, but also the cultural, social and political bonds of solidarity – their presence or absence – that determine what is possible and what is not.

It is useful to explore the different types of security order and identify their divergent political and cultural underpinnings. Broadly speaking, there are three general types of security orders: balance of power, hegemonic and community-based. Some scholars argue that the virtue of a balance-of-power system is that states do not need to agree on much other than the need to counterbalance power. Political or cultural affinities are not needed. Hegemonic order also can be based essentially on power realities, although the current security order in Asia, which is at least in part based on US hegemony, is given some stability and appeal because of non-power factors such as American cultural appeal and the institutional character of hegemony.

We focus first on the current US-led security order in East Asia and the glimmerings of regional multilateralism. This current arrangement might be called a liberal hegemonic order that has the US–Japan alliance as its linchpin. After this, we look at the liberal grand strategy that lies behind American involvement in the region and the types of engagement policies it is pursuing. Next we explicate Japan’s ambivalent views on security multilateralism and the historical roots of its security orientation. Finally, we look at the variety of community-based models that might form the basis of future security relations in the region. We argue that these co-operative
security orders are not yet suitable for the region but that as the region evolves – and develops deeper and more integrative regional political identity – possibilities exist for gradual movement toward multilateral security co-operation.

2 US hegemony, alliances and regional multilateralism

Political order among states has taken many different forms, but three major varieties are most important: balance of power, hegemony, and community-based co-operative security. Each represents a different way in which power is distributed and exercised among states – differences, that is, in the basic organizing relations of power and authority. Actual security orders – both regional and global – may combine characteristics from each of these alternative types. An order based on balance is one where the power of the leading state is counterbalanced by other states. Alliances emerge as temporary coalitions of states form to counter the concentration of power. As the distribution of power shifts, coalitions will also shift. Order is based on the balancing actions of states – the necessary and inevitable outcome of states seeking to ensure their security in an anarchic system. An order based on hegemony is one that is organized and maintained by a state wielding a predominance of power capabilities. A hegemonic state uses its dominant position to establish an order that is favorable to its interests. Rules and rights are established and enforced by the power capacities of the hegemonic state. Compliance and participation within the order is ultimately ensured by the range of power capacities available to the hegemon – military power, financial capital, market access, technology and so forth. Direct coercion is always an option in the enforcement of order, but less direct ‘carrots and sticks’ are also mechanisms to maintain hegemonic control. In these ways, order is ultimately based on hierarchical relationships that are ensured by the leading state’s preponderance of power capabilities.

A community-based security order is one where binding security institutions and shared political interests and values exist to shape and limit how power can be exercised. The distribution of power may still matter but not as much as in balance-of-power or hegemonic orders. Power is not restrained

---

3 The major types of international order are discussed in Ikenberry (2001).
4 For the modern classical statement of balance of power theory, see Waltz (1979).
5 For discussions of balance of power politics, see Wight (1966), Claude (1962), Haas (1953) and Walt (1987).
6 The seminal statement of this perspective can be found in Gilpin (1979).
through counterbalancing but through the operation of co-operative institutions and agreed-upon rules that limit how power and the use of violence can be employed. It is this principle of order that lies behind security multilateralism.

The current order in the Asia-Pacific is a partial hegemonic order built around the US system of bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea and other states in South-east Asia. China exists outside this order and with its rising power gives the region at least the latent characteristics of a balance of power. But the US-led alliance system in East Asia manifests a logic of relations that cannot be reduced to simple versions of either balance-of-power or hegemonic order.

The traditional way of thinking about alliances is that they are temporary agreements between states aimed at aggregating power to counter an external threat. But the bilateral alliances in Asia (and Europe as well) also play a complex role in reassurance and restraint within these security partnerships. That is, alliances can also be pacts of restraint for the states within the alliance. The US–Japan alliance helps reassure Japan’s neighbors (China and Korea) that Japan will not revert to a more militarized and aggressive regional posture. The alliance also provides reassurances that the power of the United States will be connected to Asia in a predictable and stable way.

Japan gains formal and regular access to security policy-making within the United States. US hegemony may not be entirely welcome in Asia but it is more acceptable to the extent that it is institutionalized through bilateral alliances and regional agreements.

There is disagreement among theorists as to whether this partial hegemonic security order in East Asia is stable. The dominant reality in world politics today is the United States’ unipolar power. Realists argue that concentrated power tends to be balanced – and it is only a matter of time before Asian states begin to resist US hegemony. In this view, the Asia-Pacific region is destined to return to a more traditional balance-of-power system. Others argue that US power is unusual – and more benign than past great powers. Josef Joffe (1995) argues that it is the United States’ soft power – its cultural appeal – that makes it more acceptable as a dominant state. The argument presented here is that it is the institutions that the United States has wrapped itself in – bilateral alliances and multilateral regimes – that make US power more benign and acceptable. It is the self-imposed restraints

---

7 For a survey of community-based security orders, see Adler and Barnett (1998) and Cronin (1999).
8 For a discussion of this partial hegemonic order, see Ikenberry and Mastanduno (2002).
9 The journalist Yoichi Funabashi (1998) has argued that the hidden stabilizer during the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis was the US–Japan alliance.
10 The term was introduced by Nye (1990).
on the exercise of power by the United States that makes other states less likely to balance against it (see Ikenberry, 2001). But the rising interest in multilateral security relations in East Asia raises the question of whether an alternative logic of security can replace the partial hegemonic order.

3 Multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific

With the end of the Cold War, multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific has been emerging. The most notable case is the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) initiated by ASEAN countries in 1994. Other government associations include the ASEAN-Post Ministerial Conference (ASEAN-PMC) which assumed its current form when the United States, Canada and Japan joined in 1978. ASEAN-PMC functioned to resolve the Cambodian crisis during the 1980s. Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC), organized as an economic forum in 1989, is also expected to become a new multilateral mechanism for resolving not only economic issues but also security problems. The ASEAN plus 3 (Japan, China and South Korea), initiated in 1997, will have multiple functions in the years to come.

At the unofficial level, a number of security fora have appeared to promote security dialogues. The Conference on Security Co-operation in Asia and the Pacific (CSCAP) was established in 1993 and is promoting dialogue among states that include Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the United States. Japan’s Self Defense Agency also launched security dialogues with China and Russia in 1993. The Clinton administration’s positive attitude to multilateralism in managing world affairs might have encouraged Asian countries to advance multilateral activities. All of these efforts are expected to increase transparency in security relations in the Asia-Pacific.11

Reflecting these developments in multilateral diplomacy in East Asia, there is a growing literature on multilateralism in East Asia. Different views exist between realist and liberal-institutionalists and between the views shared by US government officials and those of scholars and officials in the small and middle powers in Asia-Pacific, such as Canada, Australia and the ASEAN countries. US officials reflect a blend of realist and liberal thinking but ultimately are reluctant to loosen a nut in bilateral alliance relations, while the latter groups tend to be more enthusiastic about regional multilateralism. Japanese views are divided between these two schools of thought.12

11 On the rise of security multilateralism in East Asia, see Job (1997) and Evans (1996).
Unlike European security arrangements that have multilateral characteristics, Asian multilateralism has begun to emerge only recently. The reasons are obvious: many of the Asian countries became sovereign states when they were decolonized after the Second World War; there have been continuous conflicts in Asia, namely the Korean War, the Taiwan Straits crisis, the Vietnam War, the Sino-Vietnamese War, and the Cambodian crisis. Despite these conflicts, the Asian economies have emerged in recent decades to collectively constitute one of the growth centers of the world economy, and recently transpacific trade has exceeded transatlantic trade. As economic interdependence increased substantially in the Asia-Pacific, dialogue for security co-operation gradually followed economic co-operation.

However, it is unclear what multilateralism means in East Asia. Generally speaking multilateralism is an institutional form that co-ordinates the relations among three or more states (Ruggie, 1993). All multilateral activities presume co-operation among states (Caporaso, 1993). But when the basic security relations of the states within the region are at stake, it is not easy to see how co-operation will emerge. For example, the United States does not want to lose its predominant position by making commitments to Asian multilateral arrangements. Similarly, Japan sticks to the US–Japan alliance rather than shifting towards multilateral security frameworks. China is reluctant to be bound by multilateral agreements. On the other hand, the small and middle powers in the Asia-Pacific are championing multilateral diplomacy partly because they believe that multilateralism can enhance their power and security.

4 America’s liberal grand strategy
The United States shows no signs of wanting to transform the partial hegemonic order in East Asia – organized around its bilateral alliance ties – into a fully functioning multilateral security community. This is in part because the United States sees its hegemonic presence in the area as something other than a power-dominated or coercive hierarchical system. US officials also believe that expanding political community – and the resulting ‘soft’ multilateralism – in the region is ultimately consistent with the continuation of US-led security bilateralism. It is the liberal impulses in US foreign policy that help shape its relations with the region and that make the resulting order more benign and stable.

When the United States has had opportunities to build international

---

13 The East Asian Strategy Report 1998, for example, concludes that ‘The United States views all of these multilateral mechanisms, built upon the foundation of solid bilateral relationships and continued US military presence in the region, as playing an increasingly important role in regional affairs in the future’ (United States Department of Defense, 1998, p. 44).
political order, such as after 1919 and 1945, it has tended to do things differently to other states in similar situations. At these moments, liberal America has sought to create various sorts of integrative, reciprocal and highly institutionalized political orders, it has stressed the multilateral organization of economic relationships, and it has placed a premium on the encouragement of democratic reform in defeated or transitional states. It has taken its own experience with building order – from the ‘founding fathers’ period and after the Civil War – and brought it to bear on regional and global problems of order-building. The United States has not tended to make sharp distinctions between the logic of domestic and international order: both can be brutal and anarchic arenas of coercion and violence, and both can potentially be legitimate, reciprocal, institutionalized and stable.

This US orientation toward political order can be contrasted with the more traditional European and realist notions of order based on the balance-of-power or coercive domination. In this view, there is a fundamental and inevitable divide between the underlying character of domestic and international politics, and liberal ideas are of marginal relevance at best in overcoming anarchy and the power-balancing of states. The liberal orientation toward order is also concerned with the management of power, but it brings a richer set of ideas about how economic interdependence, democratic community, political socialization and binding institutions can contribute to stable and mutually agreeable order (see Ikenberry, 2000).14

The United States has also been remarkable in its ability to foster stable and legitimate order among states in highly asymmetrical power relations: the United States has had unprecedented power – truly hegemonic – yet it has been able to reassure weaker and secondary states that it will not dominate or abandon them. The United States has been able to build political relations with other states that overcome incentives to resist US power and trigger counterbalancing alliances. Some conservative US foreign policy practitioners and pundits organize their intellectual world view around an assumed universality and inevitability of world and regional order built around the balance of power. ‘Hard’ versions of this realist view lead to predictions that China and the United States are moving inevitably toward strategic competition and great power rivalry (Bernstein and Munro, 1997; Kagan 1997; Waldron, 1997). ‘Soft’ versions of this view, such as those associated with Henry Kissinger, also see Asia-Pacific order built on a Chinese–US balance, but are more optimistic that these great power relations can be managed peacefully (Shambaugh, 1996). Other conventional realist and balance-of-power thinkers assume that the alliances between the

14 For a discussion of these interlocking elements of political order, see Russett (1998).
United States and Japan and Korea will also be casualties of the end of the Cold War, unless China rises to replace the Soviet Union as the ‘glue’ that holds the security partnerships together.

What these conventional Cold War views of world politics miss are the array of practices and policies that the United States can bring to dynamic and potentially unstable regions that work to establish stable relations without resort of balance and strategic rivalry. A American ‘liberal’ grand strategy has long been a part of the US foreign policy tradition, at least since Woodrow Wilson, and it is grounded in a sophisticated reading of history, economics and politics. It is a strategy built around at least three elements of engagement, which seek to ‘open up’, ‘tie down’ and ‘bind together’ potentially troublesome and unstable states.

Opening up means directing the great forces of trade and investment, cultural exchange and transnational society into the closed hierarchy of statist politics. ‘These linkages bring with them powerful forces for change. Computers and the Internet, fax machines and photocopiers, modems and satellites all increase the exposure to people, ideas, and the world beyond China’s border’, as Clinton explained last October. The idea behind this so-called ‘strategic interdependence’ is to create realms of wealth and autonomy within economy and society, which encourage political pluralism and erode the iron-fisted control of the Communist Party. Expanding trade and investment also creates new and more vocal ‘vested interests’ in closed societies who want to maintain continuous and stable relations with the outside world.15

Strategic interdependence is meant to accomplish at least two objectives. The first is to help activate and reward internal groups and factions within economy and society and strengthen their domestic position, thereby giving a boost to political forces that favor democracy and a pluralistic political system. When the United States saw the Soviet Union beginning to reform under the leadership of Gorbachev, such support was part of the US strategy. Jack Matlock, the American ambassador to Moscow, took this view in a secret cable dated 22 February 1989:

We have an historic opportunity to test the degree the Soviet Union is willing to move into a new relationship with the rest of the world, and to strengthen those tendencies in the Soviet Union to ‘civilianize’ the economy and ‘pluralize’ the society. US leverage, while certainly not unlimited, has never been greater. (quoted in Hutchings, 1997, p. 33)

The other objective of strategic interdependence is to create dependencies

15 For a good exploration of these arguments, see Kahler (1997).
and ‘vested interests’ within the country who favor stable and continuous relations. This is often seen most clearly in the economic realm: international business leaders grow in number and importance in the target country and raise their collective voices in favor of political and economic openness and friendly relations.

Tying down means inviting other governments to get involved in international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and APEC. Here the idea is to create expectations and obligations on governments through membership in regional and global institutions. Political conditionality for gaining membership in these organizations can itself create leverage, but the expectation is also that once inside the institution, government officials will slowly be socialized into embracing its principles and norms. Standards of behavior are established, and even if a government only cynically endorses the principles, such as when Brezhnev signed the 1975 Helsinki Act, they can nonetheless be a powerful tool for governments and private activists. The Soviet leader had no intention of abiding by the human rights declaration, but his signature on the parchment became a rallying focus of the world’s human rights movement. Later, many of the advisers around Gorbachev were also influenced by the ‘new thinking’ that was coming out of international organizations and progressive transnational movements. It is precisely because Soviet élites were not ‘contained’ that new principles and ideologies of foreign policy could be implanted in Soviet officialdom.

Binding together means establishing formal institutional links between countries that are potential adversaries, thereby reducing the incentives for each state to balance against the other. This is the security component of a liberal grand strategy, and it has its origins at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and its fullest expression in the postwar Franco-German relationship. Rather than responding to a potential strategic rival by organizing a counterbalancing alliance against it, the threatening state is invited to participate within a joint security association or alliance. By binding to each other, surprises are reduced and expectations of stable future relations dampen the security dilemmas that trigger worst-case preparations, arms races and dangerous strategic rivalry. Also, by creating institutional connections between potential rivals, channels of communication are established which provide opportunities to actively influence the other’s evolving security policy. The binding logic of NATO allowed France and the other Western partners to acquiesce in Germany’s military rearmament during the Cold War. Even today, the United States and its European and Japanese partners

ward off rivalry and balancing among themselves by maintaining their security alliances. It is the binding logic – more so than the response to external threats – that makes these institutions attractive today.

China may not be ready for alliance, but the benefits of binding can be achieved in more modest institutional relationships, such as annual meetings of Chinese and American defense officials, working together on the non-proliferation regime, and participation in regional security fora. The idea is to respond to potential external threats by binding, thereby reducing untoward surprises, reducing the autonomy of action of potential adversaries, and providing at least some opportunities to influence what they do in the future. When discussion arose at the Paris peace conference in 1919 over whether Germany should be admitted to the League of Nations, Woodrow Wilson argued that it should, and he hinted at the binding logic of doing so. ‘It is a question of whether they were to be pariahs, or to be admitted into the League of Nations’, Wilson said, and that if they were included, at least after a period of probation, ‘Germany could be better controlled as a member of the League than outside it’ (quoted in Ambrosius, 1987, p. 133). It is a classic and enduring choice that states have when confronted with potentially dangerous or threatening states: to isolate them, contain them and organize an alliance of states to ensure against such an eventuality; or to include them within existing institutions, to attempt to co-opt them, monitor them closely and limit their opportunities to act aggressively.

These tactics and strategies work together. The more that trade, investment and political exchange work to open a country up to the outside, the more opportunities there are to tie them down and bind them with other states. This observation follows from a rather simple argument: the more open a state is – democratic, liberal, pluralist, decentralized – the more points of contact that a state can have with the outside world. Private actors in society can directly connect to international organizations and build extensive non-governmental relationships with similar actors in other states. The more connecting points and institutionalized relationships, the less arbitrary and sudden shifts in state policy are likely or possible. Webs of interdependence are created that mitigate the security dilemmas, lower the incentives to balance and render shifts in power more tolerable.

The United States’ liberal grand strategy is not really new – it has been pursued quietly during the Cold War among the industrial democracies, and with remarkable if unheralded success. Promoting economic interdependence, institutional co-operation and binding commitments are the United States’ secret weapons for creating stable world political order. It allows the United States to unleash the thousands of eager multinational companies, transnational organizations and governmental representatives that stand
ready to envelop a country and bring it into the wider liberal international order.

5 US engagement in East Asia

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has pursued a variety of policies in the Asia-Pacific, but on balance it has tended to bring liberal thinking in its overall orientation toward the region. The American government may not have a unified grand strategy toward Asia, but it has used liberal ideas nonetheless. The Clinton administration described its policy toward China, for example, as ‘constructive engagement’. At the same time, this approach to China has not precluded the Clinton administration from sending two carriers to patrol the waters off Taiwan, and it still is willing to debate how to press China on human rights and trade problems. Obviously, distinctions between ‘containment’ and ‘engagement’ are too simple to capture the mix of policies available to the United States. We can look at US foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific in this light, and see what a more assertive liberal grand strategy might look like. US strategy toward Asia was spelled out in a February 1995 Defense Department report, which emphasized four overriding goals: maintain a forward presence of 100 000 troops in the region; put America’s alliances with Japan and Korea on a firm basis; develop multilateral institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum to foster great security dialogue; and encourage China, from a position of strength, to define its interests in ways that are compatible with its neighbors and the United States (United States Department of Defense, 1995).

In the economic sphere, the liberal strategy is to foster expanded economic ties with China; encourage cross-cutting trade and investment patterns within the region among the various economic centers; and raise the level of multilateral political management of intra-regional economic relations. In many ways, the evolution of the Asia-Pacific region is already being driven by the forces of trade and investment. Japanese foreign investment exploded in the mid-1980s within Asia, reversing the earlier Western orientation of Japanese economic relations. At the same time, the overseas Chinese in South-east Asia have also created a complex production and trade network in the region. The result is a growing intra-regional economy, not dominated by either the United States or Japan. The very complexity and cross-cutting character of these relations is driving greater political and security engagement in the region (Funabashi, 1995; Pempel, 1996/97). US strategy should be to lead efforts toward the deepening of trade and investment interdependence, and encouraging institutional groupings, such as APEC, to reinforce the open and ‘soft’ character of Asia-Pacific economic regionalism. It is also important for the United States to make sure that
Asia-Pacific regionalism encompasses the Western hemisphere and not just Asia. This is important for several reasons. It ensures that a 1930s-style Asian bloc does not emerge, and it reinforces US vested interests in maintaining a political and security presence in the region.

The internationalization of the Asia-Pacific economies is important not just because the expansion of trade and investment promotes growth and rising living standards. The expansion of the internationally oriented sectors in Japan, China and Korea also strengthens the position of internationally oriented elites who are supportive of greater integration and stable multilateral relations. The rise of international business and banking in Japan, for example, has strengthened the internationalist coalition within Tokyo and created additional voices in favor of more extensive domestic economic reform and political pluralism (Yamamura, 1994). The same trajectory of internationalization, expanded vested interests and domestic reform should be encouraged in China.

In the political area, the liberal agenda is squarely focused on the expansion of wider and deeper institutional relations between China, Japan, Korea, the United States and the ASEAN countries. This goal reflects a series of arguments about how institutionalized political relations help to ensure stable and legitimate political order. One argument is that to enmesh the regional powers in a series of regional and global institutions serves to establish explicit standards and expectations of government behavior in the realms of human rights, political accountability, property rights and business law. Yardsticks are created that, often in subtle and indirect ways, allow governments and private groups to both support and criticize government policy and politics in neighboring countries. This in turn helps foster political community. Another argument is that a denser set of regional institutions provides fora and arenas for governmental and political elites to interact – thereby providing opportunities for the ‘socialization’ of these elites into common regional norms and expectations (Johnston, 2002). Finally, institutions can also provide functional problem-solving mechanisms that bring together leaders and specialists across the region to find common solutions to problems. This is the old liberal argument about functional integration and the ‘spillover’ of technical problem solving into more widely shared political bonds (Schmitter, 1969).

The final area is regional security relations. US bilateral alliances continue to play a stabilizing role in the region by making relationships between the United States and its partners more predictable. The US–Japan alliance and the US–Korea alliance both provide vehicles for the United States to play an active role in the region. In this sense, they serve the same function as NATO does for US involvement in Europe. These alliances also stabilize relations
between the United States and its Asian partners. This is the intra-alliance binding function of alliances that the realist balance-of-power perspective misses.

6 Japan’s ambivalent multilateralism

Japan tends to prefer to operate bilaterally within the Asia-Pacific region although it has begun to pursue a variety of multilateral diplomatic initiatives in recent years. There are several reasons why the Japanese tend to see international relations in terms of bilateralism. First, there are historical and geopolitical reasons. The multilateral security system in Europe emerged out of centuries of balance-of-power politics that socialized the states of Europe into a common framework and created conditions for multilateral security cooperation. By contrast, there never has been a true balance-of-power system in Asia. China was too strong politically by the time of the Opium War. As Bell (1968) writes, the ‘centrality of the Chinese position, in geographic and demographic reality as well as in the Chinese concept of world politics, is the prime obstacle to the belief in a workable Asian balance of power’. Likewise, Japan has been too strong economically after it became the first modernized power in Asia from the late nineteenth century onward. As a result, there has never been a comfortable balance between the two. All other Asian powers have been too weak to balance against the big two. The absence of a working balance-of-power system has meant that one of the critical forces that fostered a tradition of regionalism and multilateral order in Europe did not take root in Asia. This situation has also contributed to the absence of a strong sense of shared identity and culture in Asia.

Second, Asia has existed as a so-called ‘intrusive system’ – i.e. the operation of security relations within Asia have been conducted as part of a wider Pacific and global system of great power relations (Cantori and Smith, 1970). Politically significant external states have helped shape relations within the Asian subsystem. Without the involvements of these states – European powers and the United States – the Asian system would not have maintained regional order by itself. The leading states in this intrusive system – Japan and China – could gain greater leverage in pursuing their interests in Asia by bringing Euro-American influence to bear on their regional policy objectives. The outside states, which have been allied to either Japan or China, have tended to play a relatively indirect and benign role in the region, allowing their regional partners to operate as they wished as long as larger global interests were not put at risk.

To a certain extent, these characteristics of Asian politics are still relevant. Yet we should not overstate their implications today. In spite of the fact that, as discussed earlier, Asia did not have a distinct regional state system
prior to the Second World War, the interactions among Asian countries became dense enough to form a regional system for the first time in its history. Although there are a wide range of views on the emerging regional system in the Asia-Pacific – ranging from a hegemonic model to a security community – they all agree with the fact that Asia will finally form a system. As the new century begins, writes Friedberg (2000), ‘Asia will finally . . . take its place alongside Europe and North America as a leading center of wealth and power.’

There are also cultural reasons for Japan’s reluctant multilateralism. The Japanese view of international relations has tended to be hierarchical, reflecting Japan’s long experience with pre-modern Sino-Japanese relations. The international order in Asia during the Ch’ing Dynasty (1644–1912) is often characterized as a tribute-system that included such ‘nations’ as Korea, Vietnam, the Ryukyu and Japan, all loosely connected to the Chinese suzerain state. Although it is debatable whether this system had regular patterns and institution in the true sense of contemporary international relations, Sino-centered thinking and an assumption of Chinese superiority remain even today.

Domestic cultural understandings reinforce this reality. The Japanese tend to see international relations as giving expression externally to the same cultural patterns that are manifested internally within Japanese society. As is often noted, Japanese society is characterized by the prevalence of vertically organized structures. Hierarchy is evident throughout society in such relationships as the quasi-familistic hierarchical order of parent–child relations. If the images of international relations reflect the domestic power structure in a society, Japanese intellectual orientation in its foreign relations may be characterized as hierarchical. When the Japanese try to locate Japan in international society, their domestic model offers itself as an analogy. To the extent this is so, Japan’s diplomatic behavior is biased toward vertically organized, bilateral relations.

Japanese diplomatic experience also reinforces bilateralism at the expense of multilateral relations. When Japan entered into a specific international order through geopolitical alignments, Japan’s strategy was somewhat similar to the logic of what the Japanese call keiretsu (systematization). If this analogy is justified, one may be able to say that the Japanese situate their country not only in the horizontally arranged international system (i.e. balance of power) but also in the stratified international system (i.e. patron–client relations). When Japan joins such an international system, alliance policy should come into play.

More specifically, Japanese preoccupation with bilateralism stems from diplomatic experience since the late nineteenth century. At the turn of the
century, Japan was considering two different states as a possible ally – England and Russia. In short, the rationale for an alliance with England was what might be called ‘bandwagoning for profit’ – i.e. allying itself with an economically dominant power. The rationale for alliance with Russia could be called ‘bandwagoning for survival’ – i.e. allying itself with a threatening power. In the end, Japan decided to go with Great Britain for a variety of reasons, including its naval and economic power and the fact that Britain did not participate in the Triple Intervention by which Japan had to give up the Liaotung Peninsula. In the case of the US–Japan security treaty of 1951, the rationale was similar to the earlier Anglo-Japanese alliance. The United States could guarantee Japan’s safety as well as economic growth. Hence, it was bandwagoning for profit once again. Even in the case of the Axis Pact of 1940, one may find the same logic in Japanese thinking. Japan entered this pact expecting to make military and economic gains. Although the Axis Pact had a disastrous outcome for Japan, the alliances with Britain and the United States have been regarded as great successes (Tsuchiyama, 2000).

Japan’s experience with multilateral diplomacy has also shaped its views. The Japanese have two experiences of multilateral diplomacy: the entente diplomacy in 1907–1917 and the Washington Treaty system in the 1920s. Two years after the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, the Russo-Japanese War erupted in February 1904. A few months after the war started, Britain reached an entente with France (Russia’s ally) in order not to become embroiled in the Russo-Japanese War. Based on this Anglo-French entente and the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Japan concluded an entente with France in June 1907, and then a Russo-Japanese entente was concluded a month later. Finally, based on these entente treaties, Britain came to conclude an entente treaty with Russia in August 1907. This whole round of entente diplomacy was the most remarkable case of multilateralism in Japanese eyes, which laid a reliable diplomatic foundation not only in Europe, but also in Asia. This ‘bi-multilateral’ system (a combination of bilateralism and multilateralism) can be one of the models for Japan’s multilateral diplomacy in the years to come.

However, there is a pitfall in this entente diplomacy. It was ironic that the entente system of 1907 gradually created contradictions between the Anglo-Japanese alliance (the central pillar of Japanese diplomacy at that time) in which Russia was a common ‘foe’, on the one hand, and the entente system, in which Russia was a ‘friend’ of both England and Japan, on the other. The point is that the bi-multilateral system was so complicated that each aspect of it undermined the other (Kajima, 1968).

Another case of multilateral diplomacy was the Washington Treaty regime, which ended the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The Washington system
institutionalized a set of general norms, rules and principles that imposed constraints on naval armaments among the five leading powers. For the Anglo-American powers, the Washington Treaty was meant only as a tool to manage security relations. But for the Japanese, it was more than an arms control treaty. According to Iriye (1987), ‘it was viewed as an alternative to their unilateral policies or exclusive alliances and ententes aimed at particular objectives. Instead, the Washington system indicated a concept of multinational consultation and cooperation in the interest of regional stability.’ The Washington Treaty system was not only the most successful case of arms control between the wars, but also a multilateral security framework in the Asia-Pacific. Yet, as the Soviet Union and China, excluded from the system, gained more influence, and as Sino-Japanese relations deteriorated further in the 1930s, the Washington system gradually lost its function.

As these Japanese historical experiences indicate, conducting multilateral diplomacy requires the Japanese government to engage in subtle and nuanced diplomacy. This would be a challenging task especially for the postwar Japanese foreign policy élites, whose eyes for too many years have been accustomed to analyzing international affairs through the bilateral framework of US-Japanese relations. As a result, there is lingering psychological resistance within Japan in moving towards multilateral diplomacy.

This leads us to the current Japanese view of multilateral approaches to security. In spite of the fact that the Japanese tend to deal with security issues within the bilateral context of the US-Japanese alliance, the Japanese have come to have a more positive view of multilateral diplomacy in the years since the end of the Cold War. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the Japanese expected American hegemony to decline in the early 1990s – and this made foreign policy officials think more seriously of alternatives to the American-led security order. For example, the Report of the Advisory Group on Defense Issues (1994), the so-called Higuchi Report, stated that ‘the United States no longer holds an overwhelming advantage in terms of overall national strength’. Accordingly, ‘the question is whether the United States will be able to demonstrate leadership in multilateral cooperation’. As the most distinguished institution of multilateral co-operation, the Report mentioned the United Nations. For the UN security mechanism to work, the report said that ‘it is essential that multilateral cooperation be maintained under US leadership’. The report further argued that Japan should ‘play an active role in shaping a new order’ instead of playing a “passive role”. Partly because of this thinking, Japan has given its support to multilateral initiatives that have emerged recently in East Asia, including the ASEAN-ARF, ASEAN-PMC, APEC and SCCAP. Japan’s Self Defense Agency has also launched security dialogues with China and Russia, as men-
tioned earlier. All of those efforts will increase transparency in the security sphere. Japan’s ODA and its role in UN peace-keeping operations are often regarded as part of Japan’s multilateral commitments as well (Yasutomo, 1993).

Taken together, one can perhaps say that the Japanese are more positive towards multilateral diplomacy than in the past. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, many pundits and political scientists in Japan predicted that multilateral security frameworks would take over the alliance networks in Asia. Today, however, no Japanese officials or researchers within the foreign policy establishment expect that multilateral arrangements will replace bilateral security relations in the near future. It will continue to be a challenge to conduct both bilateral and multilateral relations at the same time without creating contradictions – and thereby repeating the problems that Japan experienced in the first quarter of the twentieth century. To deal with North Korea and China, for example, multilateral approaches may function as a type of preventive diplomacy, at least to some extent. However, there is no great expectation that they will have a crisis management function. For example, there is some scepticism in Japan whether the agreed framework concluded between the United States and North Korea could produce the expected outcome.

Are the US–Japan alliance and multilateral security dialogs compatible or contradictory? The multilateral security frameworks in Asia such as ARF are expected to work as confidence-building measures and, as a result, can decrease the risk of escalating security dilemmas. However, they are not likely to have deterrence and defense functions in the near future. In other words, they do not have ‘teeth’ yet. That is why those multilateral frameworks cannot do much once a crisis takes place – perhaps best seen in the case of East Timor in the summer of 1999. This situation is an even more serious problem when long-range missiles and nuclear threats are involved. The US–Japan alliance is expected to deal with such problems. Even though the US–Japan alliance is a legally bilateral arrangement, it is going to have a multilateral character by the time that a regional multilateral security framework becomes credible. Therefore, there is a sort of division of labor between them, although the multilateral security frameworks would probably not function without the bilateral alliance system. Conversely, if and when ARF has ‘teeth’ in the future, it might create contradictions with the US bilateral alliances, especially with the US–Japan alliance.

Even more importantly, when China gains influence within multilateral frameworks and becomes more democratic, Japan may face a dilemma even though no party in Asia wants a China-centered multilateral arrangement at this point. Likewise, the future deployment of Theater Missile Defense
(TMD) in the area around Japan would make Sino-Japanese-US relations more complicated because TMD may be seen in Beijing as an offensive sign that the US-Japan alliance is taking a newly threatening turn, even if the Japanese believe that missile defense is only a defensive move. The missile shield might reduce Japanese and US vulnerability to Chinese nuclear missiles, but it might also undermine Chinese conception of international security as rooted in mutual deterrence (Wilkening, 2000). Likewise, while the deployment of TMD might increase Japanese and US security in the short term, it could well decrease their security in the long run (Fujiwara, 2000). To prevent such security dilemma problems, multilateral security frameworks might be seen as more critical to great power stability in the future. The logics of bilateral alliance and multilateral security may collide with each other with the rise of TMD.

7 Community-based security in orders

When advocates call for security multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific they generally have in mind some sort of community-based co-operative order. But these come in many varieties – and each has an echo of a different historical or regional experience. Each is also based on a different principle of cohesion which may or may not be present in the Asia-Pacific context.17

The most basic order might be a concert system among the great powers. This involves agreement among these powers that they will collectively manage regional security relations. A concert system is built on mutual recognition and acceptance among the great powers. Actions taken – territorial adjustment and military engagement – are expected to be discussed among these powers. The historical case of a concert system in action, of course, is the Vienna settlement after 1815. The stable peace in Europe after the Napoleonic wars was ensured by intense diplomatic collaboration within a framework of rules and norms. The success of the concert was possible at least in part because the great powers of that era were more or less status quo powers without major territorial ambitions.18

The question is whether a concert-type order might emerge in the Asia-Pacific – among China, Japan, the United States and perhaps Russia (Acharya, 1999). The answer hinges on whether the great powers can come to see each other as members of an exclusive club with rights and obliga-

---

17 For an overview of co-operative security proposals, see Carter et al. (1992) and Nolan (1994).
18 There is the empirical question whether the nineteenth-century concert system was based more on power-driven contractarianism than on the notion of community. At best, the notion of community was limited – a shared view among elites in their legitimacy and political standing as arbiters of European security. See the debate in the American History Review Forum, centered around Schroeder (1992).
tions, and whether conflict resolution mechanisms can emerge that these states can deploy.

Another type of multilateral security order is a common security association. The purpose of the association is to protect and advance a particular ideological or political form among the states—such as communism, monarchy, or democracy. States are grouped together and establish security bonds because they embrace similar political ideals. The Nonaligned Movement, the Arab League, the British Commonwealth and the Holy Alliance are examples. This type of community security arrangement is more demanding than the great power club: it requires that the states share similar domestic political institutions and define their security in terms of the protection of those domestic institutions. There is little in the Asia-Pacific region—defined by its diversity of regime types and polity principles—that lends itself to this particular type of community security system. A security order based on democracy would divide the region more than unite it, and in an era where ideology has lost its appeal it is difficult to envisage what common set of ideas could be embraced in a way that would transcend the other regional controversies.

Another type of multilateral security order is a pluralistic security community. This type of order emerges when states within a specific region come to see their security as fundamentally linked. Facilitated by shared norms, common domestic institutions and high levels of interdependence, states within a security community come to expect peaceful change. States see themselves as fundamentally linked to other states, bound by common norms, political experience and regional location. Western Europe after the Second World War is perhaps the best example of a pluralistic security community. The preconditions for a security community are very demanding and it is not easy to see how they could soon arrive in the Asia-Pacific. The ambiguity of regional boundaries (Is the United States in or out of the region? How do South and South-east Asia relate?) makes the emergence of a tight regional identity very difficult to achieve. The diversity of political institutions and competing models of politics and economics within the region also makes a security community difficult to achieve. The Asia-Pacific has become more democratic in recent decades and there is rising interdependence among states. But the evolution of shared norms and linked systems is still at an early stage.

A final multilateral security order is the classic collective security system. This is the model of security order that we associate with Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations. The principle of association in a collective security order is that of a shared identity as a single community of nations. As Cronin (1999, p. 12) notes, ‘Within such a system states not only renounce
their right to initiate unilateral military action but also accept obligations to participate in collective action against an aggressor regardless of who it may be.’ In such a system, international law and institutions are the basic organizing elements. Such a system is not as exclusive as orders based on regional identity, shared ideology and great power status. The security order works when states are highly committed to a set of principles of collective action.

What this discussion of community-based security orders suggests is that different types of orders are based on different types of common identity and logics of interstate cohesion. If cohesion – regardless of its type – is not possible, the order is likely to revert to a hegemonic or balance-of-power order. So the challenge for security multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific is to figure out what principles of community and cohesion exist or can be created in the region. Is geographical identity, ideological affinity, pan-nationalism or cosmopolitanism likely to be the most robust basis for common identity – and therefore for establishing the bonds that are necessary for security multilateralism? Each type of community-based security manifests a shared value that allows states to reduce their ‘risk premium’ on security protection because they gain greater confidence that other states will not act in unexpectedly untoward ways. The insecurities of anarchy are mitigated. But political solidarity is rare and fleeting in world politics. It is difficult to engineer or create. It requires intensive interaction between peoples on a sustained basis. The question is what are its prospects in the Asia-Pacific. We would argue that the concert system is most promising. It is a demanding order – although perhaps less so than the others – but it does not require a full convergence of ideology or political structures. Great powers need to develop trust and formal mechanisms to resolve conflict. But each of these community-based security orders is problematic.

This analysis supports those who argue that there is reason to try to hold onto the partial US hegemonic order – and try to make it more acceptable to China and other states in the region – while these long-term processes of integration and convergence take place. It might be that the most dynamic agent of regional integration that will set the stage for greater community-based security co-operation is the ‘new economy’ that is emerging – the internet and high-tech revolution that is washing over the globe.\(^\text{19}\) The one thing that Korea, Japan, China, the United States and the rest of the region have in common today is their embrace of the information economy and the powerful waves of economic restructuring, which carry with them political change and convergence. The question might well be: can the common

\(^{19}\) Two recent essays reflect on this revolution as it relates to Asia. See Buruma (1999) and Montagnon (1999).
embrace of twenty-first century internet capitalism provide the political solidarity to build a stable and co-operative multilateral security order? The answer is probably no. The historical experience of Europe indicates that a deeper sense of shared identity is necessary to create a fully functioning security community. The pathway to such a shared identity in East Asia remains elusive.

8 Conclusion

The prevailing security order in the Asia-Pacific region is a mixture of bilateral alliances, multilateral dialogues and *ad hoc* diplomacy. This paper has argued that this messy and layered regional order is somewhere between a balance-of-power and community-based system. It is neither a stark system of counterbalancing military competition nor a multilateral co-operative system. It is somewhere in between – organized around the US-Japan alliance.

The prospects for going beyond this *ad hoc* system are not entirely promising. Both the United States and Japan have powerful incentives to maintain the bilateral system. While this might be an obstacle to a more inclusive security order, it is not altogether bad. The US-centered system does have stabilizing features. The binding character of the alliance works to restrain and reassure the various states in the region. The United States is connected to Asia in a way that makes its pre-eminent power capacities less risky and uncertain. Japan is able to connect itself to the United States and gain some predictability in its own position within the region. The other states in the region do not need to fear the remilitarization of Japanese foreign policy as well. China may not find this bilateral system – with itself on the outside – the most desirable security arrangement, but it does have the advantage of restraining an outbreak of military competition between itself and Japan.

The strategy that the United States has taken towards Asia is also based on a more general liberal orientation. This strategy seeks to build order by approaching three levels of political order: state interests, capabilities and identity. In fostering heightened levels of mutual economic dependence, the anticipation is that states will define their interests in a way that requires the maintenance of stable and continuous relations. This is true in two respects: first, when economic growth and rising incomes rely increasingly on trade and investment, foreign policies of openness and accommodation are more valued by state elites. Second, the rise of economic interdependence creates a wider array of vested interests that will seek to prevail upon the state to maintain stable and continuous relations.

The liberal grand strategy also seeks to alter the capabilities of states. This is accomplished primarily through the fusing of security policies in alliances. The liberal institutional goal is to bind states together to reduce the
security dilemma incentives for balancing and power aggregation. It is also anticipated that the institutional grounding of security policies provides transparency and possibilities for scrutiny by other states. When states must exercise their military power in concert with other states, this creates transaction costs that make arbitrary and abrupt military actions less likely. State binding also has the effect of rendering shifts in economic advantage less threatening. The United States has only been willing to bind itself to other democracies, so the use of this liberal security mechanism is not yet available for wider multilateral use.

Finally, the liberal grand strategy also holds to the view that the way state élites perceive their identities within their regional and global political community is important. It matters if countries in the Asia-Pacific have a common vision about the region as a political community. Few would dispute the argument that the European Union has only been able to proceed toward the remarkable goal of monetary and political union because there exists some shared sense among Europeans that they have a common political identity – they are Europeans. Such a shared identity does not exist in the Asia-Pacific. But it is the liberal hope that through expanded economic, political and security bonds, a greater sense of common political identity will emerge and pave the way for a more coherent and institutionalized multilateral security order.

References


