An Accommodative Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific:

Where Do We Stand and What Do
We Want?

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Abstract: In the Asia-Pacific geopolitical dynamics, China's rise and its accompanying "assertive" diplomacy are often cited by some studies as the cause of security concerns. The author argues that this interpretation of the Asia-Pacific security situation is wrong. The Asia-Pacific confronts various and complex security problems, which cannot be simply attributed to the rise of China. The occurrence and activation of so many security problems in the Asia-Pacific only indicate that the security architecture in the region is undergoing a profound transition. The old security architecture inherited from the Cold War era cannot effectively handle the security problems in the region any more. The Asia-Pacific needs a new architecture adaptive to the features of the post-Cold War era. The new security architecture should embody the spirit of cooperation and reflect Asian countries' interests and ways of handling regional affairs. More importantly, the new security architecture should feature ample accommodativeness, not only including the diverse cultures and paths of development of the region, but also encouraging and incentivizing all parties

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of the region to learn from each other so as to jointly create a sustainable security environment for the region.

Keywords: Asia-Pacific security architecture; power shift; U.S. alliance; Asian regionalism.

At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, relations among nations in the Asia-Pacific were suddenly confronted by a round of turbulence. First of all, China-U.S. relations deteriorated unexpectedly after about eight years' of steady development since 9/11 and a promising start in the Obama administration. Secondly, renewed tensions on the Korean Peninsula flared up after the *Cheonan* Incident. Thirdly, disputes in the South China Sea reemerged, especially between China and the Philippines, and between China and Vietnam. Fourthly, tensions between China and Japan mounted after Japan's unilateral nationalization of the Diaoyu Islands. Thus, in 2010, the same year that the United States vigorously promoted its strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific,¹ the quietness of the region was suddenly disrupted. The nations in the Asia-Pacific region began to shift their attention away from economic development and cooperation to ever-increasing security concerns. In short, regional security is facing many new challenges that demand urgent and innovative management.

To the international society, China's rise and its so-called "assertive" actions are often cited as the cause of instability.² This observation is

¹On July 22, 2009, U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton announced at the ASEAN summit, "the United States is back in Southeast Asia." This might be viewed as the starting point of the Asia-Pacific Rebalancing Strategy. In 2010, the U.S. was very actively involved in East Asian affairs, especially the disputes between some countries, for instance, the *Cheonan* Incident, the South China Sea disputes between China and some Southeast Asian countries, and China-Japan disputes over the Diaoyu Islands. The name of the U.S. Asia-Pacific Rebalancing Strategy has been changed several times. At the beginning, it was called "return to the Asia-Pacific," then "pivot strategy," and finally the name was fixed as "rebalancing strategy."

²For a summary of the narrative about China's assertiveness and its negative influence on international relations, see Walter Lee, "China's Unassertive Rise: What Is Assertiveness and How We Have Misunderstood It?" *International Journal of China Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (December 2013), pp. 503–538.

ill-founded, for it overestimates China's capacity of influencing regional affairs and wrongfully attributes blame to China.

By analyzing the major security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, the author maintains that it is the transitional characteristic of the regional security architecture, rather than the rise of China, that leads to the emergence of regional security concerns. Erected in the Cold War era, the current security architecture in the Asia-Pacific can no longer effectively address today's security problems. In this sense, a new security architecture is needed and the process of constructing a new architecture has been initiated. Establishing a more accommodative security architecture that better reflects the features of the post-Cold War era is the best way to meet the demands and expectations of most countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Complexity of Security Challenges in the Asia-Pacific

If we look into the evolving security landscape in the Asia-Pacific during the past ten years, we can find that security challenges in the region are getting more and more complex and diversified:

First of all, there are physical security problems caused by territorial and sovereignty disputes, such as the competition in the South China Sea, disputes between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands, and border conflicts between Thailand and Cambodia, to name only a few. However, most of these problems are not new. The reemergence of these old problems has various causes and cannot be easily ascribed to one single factor. For example, one of the direct causes leading to the South China Sea disputes is that the United Nation Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) requires all parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to submit their plans or at least preliminary information concerning the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles by May 13, 2009,³ rather than growing actual conflicts hitherto, considering the fact that the "U-shaped line" in the South China Sea had never been the

³Chinese researchers have noticed the negative impacts of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, see Liu Zhongmin, "Guoji Haiyang Xingshi Biange Beijing Xiade Zhongguo Haiyang Anquan Zhanlue [The Maritime Security Strategy of China in the Context of a Changing International Maritime Environment]," *Global Review*, No. 3 (May/June 2011), pp. 1–9.

focal point of dispute despite occasional challenges before 2009.⁴ In another case, the contest between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands was indeed triggered by the Japanese Government's announcement of nationalizing the islands, which concerns China with its sovereign rights over the Islands and Japan's foreign policy orientation.⁵ Therefore, it is unreasonable to simply attribute all these regional security problems to the rise of China, given that these physical security problems in East Asia are usually complicated and caused by diverse factors with unique historical and practical backgrounds.

The second grave security concern in the Asia-Pacific region is the strategic competition among major powers, especially between China and the United States, a rising power and an established power trying to maintain its global leadership. Ironically enough, the incentive for China and the U.S. to engage in an armed conflict, compared with the situation before 2008, is actually decreasing, because the Taiwan issue, a most sensitive one in their bilateral relations, has remained on the backburner over the past years. Thus, the current worries about China-U.S. conflicts are more the result of the dynamics of "power shift" rather than a reflections of the real intentions of both countries to even calibrate a war against each other.

In terms of power shift,⁶ however, China and the U.S. are not the only two countries in the region that are influenced by the change of power

Current security challenges in the Asia-Pacific are caused by diverse factors rather than simply the rise of China.

⁴Zhang Jie, "Dui Nanhai Duanxuan de Renzhi yu Zhongguo de Zhanlue Xuanze [The Perception Gap on the "U-Shaped Line" in the South China Sea and China's Strategic Choices]," *The Journal of International Studies*, Issue 2 (March/April 2014), pp. 45–60.

⁵For the analysis of the reasons for Japan's nationalizing the Islands, see Zhai Xin, "Ribei Minzhudang Zhengquan Guoyouhua Tiaoyudao de Dongyin [On the Reasons of the JDP Government's Nationalization of the Diaoyu Islands]," *China International Studies*, No. 5 (September/October 2012), pp. 23–31.

⁶As to the "power shift" between China and the U.S., American researchers also notice that mainstream scholars of China believe that the U.S. in the foreseeable future will retain overwhelming superiority. See Thomasingar, "China's Vision of World Order," in Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2012–13: China's Military Challenge* (Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), pp. 343–376.

structure. For example, within ASEAN, Vietnam's rise and its potential role as a competitor and challenger worries some traditional leading countries in the union. In South Asia, Pakistan worries about the rise of India and their growing capacity gap. In East Asia, Japan might be the country that feels more uncomfortable with the rise of China than the United States, because China's rapid development directly challenges the status of Japan as the leading power among Asian countries. This observation, to some extent, explains the worsening China-Japan relationship since 2010, when China surpassed Japan in GDP terms. Thus, as far as power shift is concerned, it is also unreasonable to suppose that China is the only major factor influencing interactions among nations.

Thirdly, the Asia-Pacific faces a range of non-traditional challenges and lacks institutional safeguards to handle them. The 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean killed 230,000 people in 14 countries, in which Indonesia suffered the most, followed by Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand.⁷ The 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan claimed 15,890 lives (as of February 10, 2015),⁸ and substantial amount of radioactive material was leaked to the nearby sea after the meltdown of three nuclear reactors installed in the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. These two cases demonstrate that destructive effects of non-traditional security problems are sometimes more fatal than traditional ones. Non-traditional security problems should attract at least the same attention from Asia-Pacific countries, if not more.

Growing tension in traditional security arenas has seriously hindered regional cooperation on non-traditional security issues.

However, due to the growing tensions in traditional security arenas after 2010, regional cooperation has been undercut and regional capacity to cope with non-traditional security threats further weakened.

Fourthly, for all the benefits and profits that economic globalization and Internet-related technologies can offer, they have also created new security challenges. For

⁷"2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake_and_tsunami.

⁸"2011 Japan Earthquake—Tsunami Fast Facts," CNN Library, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/17/world/asia/japan-earthquake—tsunami-fast-facts/>.

instance, the Internet and mobile communications have created a totally different virtual world. Should the rules in the virtual world be applied in the real world? In the relatively invisible and high-speed Internet world, how can we effectively prevent and detect crimes and manage other security risks in a timely manner? Are we ready to handle the great capacity of social media for social mobilization? The rules for managing cyber-related issues have not been well-established. Most countries in East Asia have experienced fast economic growth and social progress, but they are still at the early stage of development. The new security challenges brought about by new technologies increase the vulnerability of the region and demand intensive attention.

To sum up, it is obvious that there are many different security challenges in the Asia-Pacific. Simply attributing the regional tensions to the rise of China is irrational. The multiplicity of security risks in the Asia-Pacific indicates that the region is transforming, that the old way of interactions among regional countries is not as effective as before, and that the outdated security arrangements basically inherited from the Cold War era are not able to deal with the complicated and diversified challenges any more. Therefore, a new security architecture is needed to tackle new security challenges in the Asia-Pacific.

Going Beyond the Cold War System: Slow but Lasting Progress

Generally speaking, there are three types of security arrangements in the Asia-Pacific: the U.S.-led alliance system, regional cooperation mechanisms, and sub-regional arrangements focusing on concrete issues.

The U.S.-led Alliance System

The U.S.-led alliance system is an important security presence in the Asia-Pacific. However, the system was designed for the Cold War security landscape and can no longer accommodate the new security reality in the post-Cold War era. It was established for the purpose of defeating the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact alliance and it is difficult to transform it into an inclusive regional arrangement for cooperation because of its fundamentally confrontational nature.⁹ Without a clear target, the alliance system

⁹For more details see Wu Chunsi, "Strategic Transition and Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region," *Global Review*, Winter 2013, pp. 82–88.

would lose its momentum for further evolution. Alliances exist to search for an enemy, which antagonizes international relations and poisons the regional political atmosphere.

An important case in this regard is NATO, the European pillar of the U.S. alliance system. NATO found itself in an awkward position after the Cold War: how to find the rationale for its continual existence? For this purpose, NATO actively pursued transformation, trying to expand its mission and shift its focus from security to political affairs, from being against Russia to safeguarding regional security in Europe. But the outcome did not turn out as envisioned. First of all, NATO became actively involved in the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. Secondly, NATO's action of global intervention, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, has drawn a lot of criticism even in Europe. Thirdly and also most importantly, NATO can hardly handle its relations with Russia. By expanding to Eastern Europe

and the former Soviet republics, NATO has cornered Russia and then received strong Russian counter-actions. Thus, we have to ask, if NATO fails to get along with Russia in Europe, how can we expect U.S.-led alliances, bilaterally or multilaterally, to deal with China properly in the Asia-Pacific?

The U.S.-led alliance system in the Asia-Pacific is more likely to be a major obstacle to both long-term regional peace and sustainable Sino-U.S. relations. It is clearly not advisable to be retained as a basis of the

post-Cold War security architecture in the region.

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Regional Security Cooperation Platforms

The second type of security institutions in the Asia-Pacific is large-scale platforms for security and political cooperation such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

Established in 1994, the ARF holds foreign ministers' meetings and other dialogues more than ten times at various levels each year. The topics of the ARF vary greatly, covering confidence building, preventive diplomacy, oil spill incidents, cyber-security, maritime and aeronautical search

and rescue, and so on. The ARF is the most influential and widely attended political and security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, based on the principle of "ASEAN-centrality," the ARF provides quite a special cooperation function sometimes ridiculed as "a pony pulling a carriage," which means that in the Asia-Pacific, smaller countries, rather than big powers, play the driver's role in regional cooperation.

The leading role of ASEAN has been called into question from time to time since the outbreak of the 1997/1998 Asian Financial Crisis. Firstly, economic strength of ASEAN countries was crippled by the crisis. It is widely doubted whether some ASEAN states would continue to invest in security affairs irrelevant to their own interests. Secondly, the centrality of ASEAN to some degree comes from the incompetence of big countries in regional affairs. When big countries begin to change their passive attitude to regional affairs and find ways to coordinate their policies, the advantages of small- and medium-sized countries who are leading regional affairs will decrease. Thirdly, some ASEAN members are involved in conflicts with other countries. Thus, whether ASEAN can continue to play a central, neutral, and objective role in regional affairs has become increasingly uncertain. An important platform for regional political and security cooperation as it is, the ARF may encounter daunting challenges before developing into a powerful security architecture.

Another important candidate for regional security architecture is the EAS, which is a product of ASEAN's expansion of partnership with major players in the region. In 2005, ASEAN extended the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and South Korea) mechanism to incorporate Australia, India, and New Zealand. Then in 2010, the United States and Russia became formal members of the Summit, after which the EAS has included almost all major countries in the region.¹⁰ Besides, the annual summits of the EAS (in comparison to the ARF's foreign ministers or defense ministers meetings) also make the EAS a promising leading platform for regional security cooperation. Nevertheless, the EAS also faces many challenges in its future development.

¹⁰Kevin Rudd, "U.S.-China 21: The Future of U.S.-China Relations under Xi Jinping," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, April 2015, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/Summary%20Report%20US-China%2021.pdf>.

The first is in its leadership. As an extension of the ASEAN+3 process, the EAS is a new platform where ASEAN wants to play a central role. However, the inclusion of the U.S. undermines the leadership role of ASEAN, because the U.S.'s pursuit of leadership of the Asia-Pacific is no secret at all. Thus, which direction the EAS will take next is the first question many people want to ask. Secondly, the predecessor of the EAS, ASEAN+3, is mainly a mechanism for political dialogue between ASEAN and its three partners. It has yet to decide whether the EAS should continue to play that role or should transform itself into a security mechanism in the Asia-Pacific. Thirdly, it is mainly because of its summit meetings that the EAS has gathered so much attention, yet in dealing with concrete security issues, government agencies and other organizations at operational levels might be more instrumental. With regard to its slow institutionalization process, it may take a long time for the EAS to truly function as a comprehensive platform for all salient issues in the region. The final challenge is about its inclusiveness. Although relatively limited participation might be an advantage for decision making, the absence of representatives from some countries may hinder effectiveness. For example, South Korea is a member of the EAS, but North Korea is not. How to engage each and every partner in this regional institution remains unclear.

Multilateral Functional Cooperation

At the current stage, the existing regional mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific have various shortcomings and are thus inadequate to constitute the overall security architecture of the region. Of course, in addition to the multilateral mechanisms, there are other "mini-multilateral" mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific like the Six-Party Talks on the Korean nuclear issue and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The Six-Party Talks was initiated on August 27, 2003 in order to deal with the North Korean nuclear crisis. Up to September 30, 2009, there had been six rounds of talks and several important documents on North Korea's nuclear program were issued. From then on, however, the Six-Party Talks have come to a standstill, and it seems difficult to expand the mandate of the Six-Party Talks from the Korean nuclear issue to more comprehensive

Northeast Asian security issues, although there are some discussions with regard to this proposal.¹¹

In comparison with the Six-Party Talks, the SCO is a more successful example in promoting sub-regional security cooperation in Central Asia. Established in 2001, the SCO has not only enhanced mutual trust among Central Asian states, Russia, and China, but has also become an effective instrument against terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Now, cooperation among SCO members has extended to the energy and economic sectors. The institution exhibits many merits that regional cooperation is expected to achieve.

However, even in the case of the SCO, casually expanded membership and missions may endanger its effectiveness and the unity of its members. The cost might be higher than expected for transforming from a sub-regional security cooperation institution on concrete, functional issues into a regional architecture covering much more complicated and diversified security issues.

Wavering Asian Regionalism

Around 2008 and 2009, some new official proposals on regional security mechanisms were made. The first is former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's proposal of an Asia-Pacific Community.¹² It was first raised in his speech at the Asia Society in Sydney in June 2008 and was then reiterated in his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in May 2009. Mr. Rudd basically called for a mechanism of dialogues, cooperation, and actions on economic and political matters and also future security challenges, involving almost all countries in the region such as the U.S., Japan, China, India, Indonesia, and others.

Soon after Mr. Rudd's proposal, then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak put forward his "New Asia Initiative" in Jakarta, Indonesia in March 2009.¹³ According to President Lee's proposal, South Korea shall

¹¹See Shi Yuanhua, "'Liufang Huitan' Jizhihua: Dongbeiya Anquan Hezuo de Nuli Fangxiang [Institutionalization of the Six-Party Talks: The Direction for Northeast Asian Security Cooperation]," *Global Review*, No. 2 (March/April 2005), pp. 15–20.

¹²"Australian PM Wants Asia-Pacific Union," *China Daily*, June 5, 2008, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2008-06/05/content_6737054.htm.

¹³Zhu Zhiqun, "South Korea in a New Asia initiative," *Asia Times Online*, June 30, 2009, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/KF30Dg01.html>.

play a central role in representing the interests of Asian nations in the international arena. South Korea plans to conclude free-trade agreements with all Asian countries and establish a green-growth belt in the Asia-Pacific region.

About half a year later, Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama announced his plan on regional cooperation as well. Mr. Hatoyama's concept of "East Asian Community" aroused wide attention, for the proposal not only called for strengthened cooperation in East Asia, but also implied that Japan was trying to distance itself from the U.S.¹⁴

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All those proposals demonstrated that the Asia-Pacific, especially East Asia, is seeking new momentum for further regional security cooperation. However, the invigorating development of Asian regionalism was suspended right after 2010, when the U.S. announced its "rebalancing strategy" in the Asia-Pacific. On one hand, it seemed that all countries in the region were waiting for the U.S. proposal on regional cooperation,

because historically, the U.S. has seldom stayed subject to regional proposals from other countries. On the other hand, with the implementation of the U.S. "rebalancing strategy," relations among regional countries, especially among China and some of its Southeast Asian and East Asian neighbors went sour, and East Asian cooperation and Asian regionalism slipped to a low level. However, the demand for regional cooperation still exists, because the security challenges faced by Asian countries are real and serious.

China's Firm Support for Regional Security Cooperation

With its participation in various international activities as a permanent UNSC member, China has gradually familiarized itself with international organizations and multilateralism, which finally helped China participate

¹⁴Tsuneo Watanabe, "A Chilly Washington Reception for Hatoyama Diplomacy," The Tokyo Foundation, March 18, 2010, <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/topics/eurasia-information-network/a-chilly-washington-reception-for-hatoyama-diplomacy>.

in Asia-Pacific multilateral cooperation.¹⁵ In 1994 China decided to join in the ARF, a sign of China's increasing adoption of multilateral approaches to strategic and security issues in its foreign policy.¹⁶ Since then, China has kept up its engagement with other countries in the Asia-Pacific. Its occasional disputes with some regional states have not changed the orientation of China's multilateral diplomacy. To an ever increasing extent, China supports regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

Dissolving Conflicts in a Cooperative Way

Disputes and conflicts are commonplace in international relations. What is crucial for regional peace and stability is not whether conflicts exist or not, but whether the region takes suitable approaches to handle the conflicts. In the current dynamics, Asia-Pacific countries need to cultivate a "cooperative spirit" to properly handle their disputes and jointly deal with common problems.

To nurture the spirit of cooperation, some practices of Asia-Pacific countries who are in dispute have to be changed. First of all, Asia-Pacific countries in conflict should learn to be empathetic toward each other and mutually acknowledge the reality of conflicting interests. Secondly, Asia-Pacific countries should abandon the mentality of trying to take advantage of the other side. Over-emphasis on relative gains can only increase distrust among related parties and ruin the cooperative process. Thirdly, Asia-Pacific countries should not seek to solve regional disputes by enlisting support of extra-regional powers. Looking for outside support only increases antagonism among all sides. Finally, cooperation also means restrained response. It is important for all parties to refrain from radical responses in times of contingencies so as to win more time and space for crisis settlement.

¹⁵For reasons for China's engaging in multilateral diplomacy, see Jiang Zhajiu, "Zhongguo Diqu Duobian Anquan Hezuo de Dongyin [Motivations for China's Regional Multilateral Security Cooperation]," *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, No. 1 (Spring 2006), pp. 1–27.

¹⁶For the change of China's attitude toward regional multilateral cooperation, see Liu Changming and Pang Chun'en, "Cong Shuangbian Zhuyi dao Duobian Zhuyi: Zhongguo yu Dongbeiya Guanxi de Xinmoshi [From Bilateralism to Multilateralism: A New Model of Relations between China and East Asian Countries]," *Journal of Shandong University*, No. 5 (September/October 2007), pp. 111–115.

In practice, China's reiterated support for regional security cooperation is not yet enough. As the largest nation in the region, China needs to take the lead in establishing new norms and codes of conduct for interactions of all parties, in order to encourage a cooperative spirit of the post-Cold War era.

Speaking for Asian Interests and the Asian Way

To support regional cooperation, China endorses Asian countries' efforts in exploring an Asian way of development and cooperation, typically reflected in ASEAN countries' practice of promoting regionalism.¹⁷

Compared with Western-style regionalism, the ASEAN way of regional cooperation exhibits some distinct characteristics: first of all, ASEAN countries insist on respect for sovereignty and non-interference in domestic issues, in contrast with the Western argument that sovereignty concerns are increasingly out of date. Secondly, ASEAN countries adopt the "consultation and consensus" principle in their decision-making process. Their preference for soft institutions and comfortable pace of integration does not follow the pattern of Western-style regionalism. Thirdly, ASEAN countries recognize and accept diversity of the region. Over the past two decades, inclusiveness has been practiced quite well in ASEAN integration.

Reflecting on the ASEAN practice of regional cooperation, China believes that Asian countries have their own understandings on how to manage regional affairs and interactions. China advocates that Asian countries' interests and preference should be put at the center of Asia-Pacific cooperation, a case made by Chinese President Xi Jinping in his address at the 2014 CICA summit meeting where he emphasized that "it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia."¹⁸

As residents in the region, Asian countries' interests differ from those of non-resident actors. The reason is not difficult to find. In an extreme scenario, non-resident actors could stay away from Asia, while Asian

¹⁷Zhang Yunling, "East Asian Community Building: View from a Chinese Scholar," Research Bulletin of the Japan Center for Economic Research, June 2006, <https://www.jcer.or.jp/eng/pdf/zhang.pdf>.

¹⁸"Xi Jinping's Remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia," Chinese Foreign Ministry, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1159951.shtml.

countries have no other options but to face this scenario. Asian countries must therefore pay more attention to maintaining regional stability. It might be dangerous for Asian countries to blindly follow the agenda and proposals of non-residents. Only with a better understanding of their own interests can Asian countries better pursue a secure regional status.

Thus, what China is aiming for is an equitable and inclusive regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific, rather than “driving the U.S. out of Asia.” Whether the U.S. stays in or away from Asia will not be decided by China; instead, it is determined by U.S. calculation of its benefits and costs of keeping its presence in Asia. China takes an open and inclusive attitude toward non-resident actors in Asia, calling for their positive and constructive roles in promoting Asia’s security and cooperation. From the Chinese perspective, the ideal security architecture in the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific should be accommodative enough to not only include various parties of the region but also embody the spirit of cooperation and consensus.

China aims for an equitable and inclusive regional security architecture rather than “driving the U.S. out of Asia.”

Blueprints for an Accommodative Security Architecture

The new post-Cold War security architecture should reflect the features of cooperation and inclusiveness of major powers. However, the Cold War history suggests that ideology is still a critical element hindering mutual acceptance among major powers. To construct a new security architecture in the Asia-Pacific, it is of great significance to reduce the influence of ideological factors.

Having the concern over ideological competition in mind, we need to consider the kind of institution that can provide a broad and solid base for regional security cooperation so that all members of the region can equally join in as long as they are committed to safeguarding regional peace and security. Compared with the broad-based architecture, the proposal of building up a regional security architecture on the basis of the U.S. alliance system actually has less attraction for countries which have different

ideological and geopolitical orientations. Therefore, the term “accommodativeness” tends to add an additional dimension to the concept of inclusiveness. “Inclusiveness” may reflect a subjective willingness to include other parties into the system. However, if the system itself is not inclusive enough for ideological or other reasons, other parties still cannot join in it. Thus, an accommodative architecture stresses the shape and capacity of the system, requiring it to be more tolerant and flexible for various participants.¹⁹

Respecting Diversity of the Region

To be more accommodative to all members of the region, it would be better if the new security architecture could accept the norm of “respecting the diversity of the region.”

The Asia-Pacific is a multicultural region. Regional security cooperation and security architecture require enlarging common ground, calling on regional countries to take common actions, reaching consensus on threats, and taking the same position on security issues. That countries uphold their own culture and choose their own development path does not conflict with their mission on security cooperation. On the contrary, over-emphasis on ideological integration by organizing so-called “coalition of democracies” may result in the split of the region and increasing antagonism among regional countries.

Respecting diversity is a fundamental requirement to sustain cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, because it conforms to and underwrites many important, universal principles in international relations. For instance, it confers equal status on all states in international affairs. Also, a country that advocates respect for diversity is likely to be more tolerant and open to newcomers. Therefore, in the process of promoting security cooperation on some specific issues, Asia-Pacific countries should also pay attention to

¹⁹G. John Ikenberry suggests in his well-known book *Liberal Leviathan* that liberal internationalism can create a larger order — a political and economic space within the international system — in which participating states operate. See G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 71. Disagreeing with Ikenberry, this author argues that liberal internationalism still has an important obstacle — the ideological factor — that is blocking the participation of states with interests.

solidifying the norm of protecting and respecting diversity of the region. Through codifying the norm of respecting diversity, the Asia-Pacific security architecture can have its spiritual pillar established.

A Consultative and Effective Decision-Making System

On the basis of respect for diversity, the organizational framework of the new security architecture should be different from the current one inherited from the Cold War era, which was largely dominated by superpowers. The new security architecture should reflect the principles of equal participation, consultation, and democratic decision-making. Thus, the new security architecture needs a decision-making system with wide participation. Asian countries should have their voice on the agenda setting of regional affairs. Moreover, small- and medium-sized states should preserve their important roles in the decision-making process, as they have been doing in ASEAN practices. On the whole, in terms of a decision-making system, the new security architecture should absorb the merits of the ASEAN way, so that small countries' interests can be better protected, and big and balanced relationships between big and smaller countries can be achieved.

Meanwhile, a potential risk accompanying the wide and equal participation might be lack of efficiency of the system. None of these Asian countries wants the new security architecture to be a talk shop. What the Asia-Pacific needs is an institution that can effectively handle regional security problems. One way to reduce the negative effects of power sharing in the process of decision-making might be to assign tasks more clearly. For example, more *ad hoc* committees should be established so that major security issues of the region can be handled by specific countries under regional consensus.

Major Areas for Security Cooperation

Given the existing complex security challenges in the region, it is especially important to figure out priorities and focal issues for cooperation.

The emerging security architecture should feature respect for regional diversity, a consultative decision-making process, and broader dimensions of cooperation.

The question we need to ask is: What fundamental interests do all Asia-Pacific nations share? In the author's opinion, they share three major common interests at least: (1) lasting economic development; (2) freedom from fear of violence; and (3) readiness to address contingencies or natural disasters.

Economic development is the foundation for Asia-Pacific prosperity. It is of great importance to sustain economic development in the Asia-Pacific. However, in the age of globalization, regional supply of finance, information, and energy have many weaknesses to remedy. How to prevent economic development from being disrupted? There is plenty of space left for cooperation.

Secondly, a secure environment for the people of Asia-Pacific countries entails freedom from fear of violence. In recent years, geopolitical competition among countries has received a lot of media coverage, but acts of violence are the more immediate risks threatening people's daily lives. For example, terrorism and religious extremism are widespread threats around the world, including China's neighboring countries like Afghanistan. Moreover, Asia-Pacific countries are facing the serious challenge of cross-border crime. In 2012, two Chinese cargo ships were attacked on the Mekong and all the 13 crew members on board were brutally murdered. This is a recent case highlighting the importance of transnational security cooperation against cross-border crime. Immediate security challenges to people's daily lives should become the focal point of regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

In addition to preventing and responding to security challenges, disaster rescue and humanitarian relief should be another focus of Asia-Pacific security cooperation. In spite of the fast economic growth, major Asian countries do not have sufficient capability to handle emergencies and natural disasters. In the cases of the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Japan's nuclear leakage in 2011, and the missing of Malaysia Airlines jet plane (MH370) in 2014, Asian countries relied excessively on outside countries' assistance. How to help people out of such emergencies is an area that Asian countries should invest more in, to fulfill their security responsibilities. In short, regional security institutions should make some arrangements on how to respond and coordinate policies of various countries in serious regional disasters and emergencies.

Conclusion

There are many security challenges now in the Asia-Pacific. Some of them stem from major powers' competition, but more are the result of new technologies, lack of agreed regulations on emerging issues, and natural disasters as well as incidents. The security challenges require responses from the region, and should not be used as a pretext for intensifying and escalating competition among nations; instead, these challenges should serve as a wake-up call for regional powers to come up with new mechanisms for more effective cooperation and coordination.

Since the end of the Cold War, Asian people have never relaxed in seeking a post-Cold War security architecture for the region. Given the shortcomings in the security mechanisms such as the ARF, the EAS, and the U.S.-led alliance system, it is not realistic for regional countries to depend on them to maintain regional peace and security. Therefore, the Asia-Pacific is still in the process of transforming from the Cold-War security architecture to the post-Cold War one. The transformation process itself brings about some uncertainties and risks to the region, and it makes the task of building a new security architecture more urgent.

A new accommodative security architecture that can address the post-Cold War security risks of the region should reflect some essential features including respect for regional diversity, highlighting the "Asian way," and expanding realms of cooperation. But most importantly, it has to be inclusive enough to engage all parties that are committed to maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. With regard to many misperceptions and misunderstandings on regional security issues, sober assessment and extensive discussions are needed so that we clearly know where we are and what we want, in order to build a solid foundation for a new security architecture that can better serve the interests of people in the region.