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US Perspectives on East Asia Community Building

FRANK JANNUZI

In the 40 years since the creation of ASEAN, the geopolitical landscape of East Asia has changed dramatically. The Cold War, with the divisions it exacerbated, has ended. States once governed by authoritarian regimes have developed into multiparty democracies. Bitter rivals have found, at least in some cases, that reconciliation and economic interdependence are far preferable to bellicose relations and economic self-reliance. Significantly, China has emerged as a major economic and military force, an aspiring great power whose explosive growth is reshaping the contours not only of East Asia but of the entire globe. Together, China and its great power neighbors—Japan and India—are eyeing each other warily, occasionally elbowing each other as they strive to secure their economic and security interests in the world's most dynamic region.

On the 40th anniversary of ASEAN, it is an appropriate time to take stock of the efforts of East Asian states to forge a cohesive community marked by common interests and effective multilateral organizations, and to discuss Washington's response to these efforts. Washington was an early proponent of an East Asia community when it sought to cobble together an Asian version of NATO to thwart Soviet and "Red Chinese" ambitions during the Cold War. But those efforts largely foundered, disrupted by nagging intraregional disputes and undermined by a latent

Asian antipathy for anything that reeked of European or Japanese (or American) colonialism. Steps toward regionalism were also hampered by squabbles over the very definition of East Asia, with some arguing for a narrow geographic understanding of East Asia as the nations of ASEAN plus China, Japan, and Korea, while others advocate a larger grouping adding India, Australia, and New Zealand. A still wider definition, embodied by APEC, embraces nations on both shores of the Pacific, including the United States.

In the absence of effective multilateral organizations in East Asia, the United States came to rely more on its bilateral alliances than on any regional grouping, to the point where by the mid-1990s Washington's attitude about East Asia community building had morphed from Cold War enthusiasm to something approaching post–Cold War disdain.

In the 1990s, the United States thwarted early steps toward building an East Asia economic community, fearing a diminution in US influence. More recently, however, the United States has awakened to the potential benefits (as well as the pitfalls) of a genuine East Asia community. As discussed below, this new interest in an East Asia community is the result of three developments: 1) the rise of China; 2) the emergence of transnational threats that call out for multinational remedies; and 3) an awareness that the nations of East Asia appear determined to forge an East Asia community, with or without the United States, and that US economic interests will be best served by promoting the creation of an East Asia community that is open to US trade and investment.

US attitudes toward East Asian regionalism are shifting incrementally. It now seems likely that Washington's initial responses to the changing strategic environment will include at least two elements: 1) redefining and reinvigorating its traditional bilateral alliances, using them as a bridge to secure vital US *security* interests until such time as a genuinely integrated and capable East Asia community emerges; and 2) negotiating a web of bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) to secure US market access in anticipation of the *eventual* emergence of a regional free trade area built upon one of several competing foundations (ASEAN, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, or APEC). What remains unclear is whether the United States will embark on a third course of action—active support for building an East Asia community that will promote regional peace and security, foster economic integration, and nurture democratic governance and respect for human rights. If the United States wants to

see the emergence of such a community, it will have to do more than sit on the sidelines. It will have to get in the game.

LUKEWARM ON REGIONALISM?

Any examination of US attitudes toward East Asian regionalism should begin with the disclaimer that the US government and American East Asia specialists are not of one mind on the issue. There are almost as many views on the subject as there are people studying it, and attitudes have shifted over time. A second caveat is that the US view of East Asian regionalism is not forged in isolation but rather in connection with the views of other players, especially China and Japan. These three nations are likely to ricochet off one another, with US enthusiasm for regionalism waxing and waning depending in part on whether China and Japan are judged to be supporting or opposing the creation of an East Asia community. Ironically, Chinese and Japanese enthusiasm for community building has sometimes contributed to US malaise, while Chinese and Japanese detachment has only led to US ennui. Finally, although efforts to build an East Asia community are very much on the minds of leaders in the region, it must be said that foreign policy officials in Washington in 2007 are more likely to be focused on the war in Iraq, instability in the Middle East, terrorism, and nuclear nonproliferation than they are on Asia's progress toward economic or political cohesion. A lack of sustained, high-level attention to East Asia policy tends to make US attitudes toward East Asian regionalism a moot point at the moment.

Still, it is possible to discern certain macro trends in US thinking on the subject of multilateralism in general and the building of an East Asia community in particular. During the Cold War, the United States recognized the utility, indeed the strategic *imperative*, of encouraging regional groupings that could balance Soviet influence and ultimately safeguard democratic systems and open markets. More often than not, the United States sought to be a formal member of these groups—as with NATO, the Organization of American States, and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization—or at least an active observer—as with ASEAN, where the United States is both a “dialogue partner” and a participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), created in 1994.

Toward the end of the Cold War, Washington had little time for a brand of East Asia regionalism that seemed to offer little in the way of

strategic or economic value. ASEAN's timid response to the Tiananmen Square massacre seemed to illustrate for many in Washington the futility of attempting to forge an East Asia community that would champion cherished Western political values.¹ And yet, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the geopolitical landscape of the world changed, as did Washington's perception of the role and value of multilateral organizations. With the end of the Cold War, Washington no longer looked to regional groups to alter the global balance of power. But this did not mean that regional organizations were without value. Rather, the United States began to work more actively with regional groupings to address transnational security threats or to promote regional peace and stability.

In East Asia, the end of the Cold War created new opportunities for collaboration among ASEAN states and between the members of ASEAN and neighboring great powers. The Paris Peace Accords of October 1991 marked the end of the Cambodian conflict and also set the stage for a new era of cooperation among former antagonists. Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995, and China fully normalized relations with Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines after years of tense relations. The end of the Cold War thus made possible new ad hoc partnerships in East Asia, but it also deprived ASEAN of one of its organizing principles—its opposition to Chinese- and Soviet-inspired communist movements in Southeast Asia.² When that common threat disappeared, many of the traditional rivalries among Southeast Asian states reemerged, sometimes making it difficult for ASEAN to reach consensus, and limiting ASEAN's value in the eyes of US policymakers.

With respect to hardcore national security interests, the end of the Cold War prompted the United States to reemphasize America's web of bilateral alliances in East Asia. In a *unipolar* world, the need to forge regional groupings as counterweights to competing great powers seemed

1. Washington has long held unrealistic expectations about the role that ASEAN, an organization founded on the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of member states, might play as a champion of democracy and human rights in East Asia. Those unrealistic expectations continue today. The newly adopted ASEAN Charter ostensibly obligates member states to play a more active role in the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, but it nonetheless preserves ASEAN's respect for state sovereignty, even when a state's gross misconduct might reasonably justify outside involvement.

2. During the Cold War, China funded, trained, and equipped communist parties and communist insurgencies in every Southeast Asian state with the exceptions of Singapore and Brunei.

less urgent. And so, although ASEAN gained some limited currency as an organization capable of promoting intraregional political cooperation and economic integration, ASEAN was not judged by Washington to be a pillar of strength. To the contrary, Washington in the 1990s tended to shift its priority to bilateral partnerships focused on narrow, achievable results. The Clinton administration did not place much faith in multilateral organizations focused on broad, sometimes amorphous goals. Absent a strong domestic political push from Americans of Eastern European descent, even NATO expansion would probably have never occurred during this unipolar period. The United States still worked to promote regional economic blocks of its own design (e.g., the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA), but it generally frowned upon the formation of regional groupings that might exclude the United States or have the effect of diminishing US global influence.³ This US tendency to rely on bilateral alliances reflects a deep-rooted American skepticism about the efficacy of regional or global governing institutions to address critical national challenges. In East Asia, the preference for bilateralism also reflects the dominant position of the US-Japan alliance and the perception that Japan—saddled with constitutional restrictions on collective self-defense—could not operate effectively within a NATO-style regional alliance structure.

9/11 WAKE-UP CALL

The United States got a painful reminder on September 11, 2001, that many emerging nontraditional security threats—not only terrorism wielded by extremist Islamic groups but also energy security, environmental degradation, pandemic influenza, and nuclear proliferation—were distinctly transnational in nature and called out for multilateral approaches. Information and technologies need to be shared, law enforcement efforts coordinated, and aid policies synchronized to meet these new challenges. From Washington's perspective, regional groups also seem desirable as a response to the emergence of China as a potential peer competitor and to the resurgence of North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

3. The Clinton administration was notably cool to the notion of an Asian Monetary Fund during the Asian financial crisis, and the United States has also taken a dim view of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the East Asia Summit.

Yet, as viewed from Washington, the capacity of multilateral organizations in East Asia remains quite modest, particularly when compared (as it inevitably is) with Europe, where alliance structures are robust and the process of community building is further along. There is no NATO in East Asia, and no OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] reflecting a common commitment to developing effective democratic governance in weak states. To be sure, East Asian nations are adapting existing institutions and building new ones to enhance regional economic integration, promote good governance, and better address both traditional security concerns and transnational human security challenges, but these efforts are all still in their early stages. Will East Asia develop regionalism based on issue-oriented functionalism, or will the region resign itself to the more modest goal of trying to set norms? Can the nations of East Asia achieve even this second, more modest, objective?

The diversity of East Asia is one of its greatest strengths, but it also poses serious obstacles to effective multilateralism. The nations of the region have divergent interests and are in different stages of economic and political development, making it difficult to reach consensus and agree on concrete steps to address common challenges. Outside observers of East Asian regionalism often criticize ASEAN and its various appendages as “talk shops,” lacking in substance.

Therefore, although the United States likes the *idea* of an East Asia community and has sometimes sought to play an active, constructive role in promoting regionalism, Washington will not bet its future on the ability of East Asian states to pull together an effective union with a common set of security objectives, economic policies, and a shared commitment to democratic governance and human rights. Washington strategists believe forging such a community will take years, and in the mean time, the United States, with its objective-driven foreign policy, will seek to preserve and strengthen its traditional bilateral alliances. These alliances represent a hedge against the uncertainties of China’s rise, including the possibility that Beijing might come to dominate a more integrated East Asia community. Alliances, bolstered by bilateral FTAs, also allow the United States to hedge economically against the possibility that East Asian states might attempt to form a trading block that would disadvantage the United States.

To enhance the value of its traditional alliances and to make them more relevant to post–Cold War challenges, Washington has tried

in recent years to make them less exclusive. As is discussed below, Washington is encouraging allies to work in concert with other state actors and emerging regional organizations based on common interests and values. The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is one example of this, an effort to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction relying heavily, but not exclusively, on US allies. The Six-Party Talks are another example, pulling together two close US allies—South Korea and Japan—and forging an ad hoc group with two former rivals for power and influence in East Asia—China and Russia. Building on the platform provided by its alliances, the United States has led a diverse group of states sharing a common commitment to the goal of dismantling North Korea's nuclear program.

SKEPTICISM ABOUT REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

Alliances are often thought to exist more as a *counterpart* or alternative to efforts at global governance than as a *complement* to those efforts. Many supporters of traditional alliances doubt the utility of multilateral institutions and all but the most robust multilateral alliances (i.e., NATO). In fact, attempts to advance global peace and security by negotiating new treaties, developing new international norms, or building new networks of nations or multilateral institutions have been roundly criticized by scholars who doubt the very existence of international law.

These critics question the efficacy of any organization that is not backed by a sovereign state wielding the threat of force. They place little stock in the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the UN, much less APEC, the ARF, East Asia community, or other multilateral organizations. They have little confidence that an anarchic world can be brought into line by toothless treaties such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation or by consensus-based multilateral organizations such as ASEAN. They point to the failure of the Kyoto Protocol as a case in point, with even Japan, the host of the talks, failing miserably to meet its Kyoto emissions targets. These skeptics—they would call themselves realists—look with dismay at Burma, a country that has stubbornly resisted lackluster efforts by ASEAN and the UN to promote civilian rule and the release of opposition political figure and Nobel Laureate Aung

San Suu Kyi. Finally, they wonder how any East Asia community could provide an effective counterbalance to China's growing dominance in the region, worrying that China would use its influence to bend any regional group to its will by exploiting the differences among its neighbors.

Former US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton must surely be counted among these skeptics, but he is hardly alone. It is this skepticism about the value of multilateral institutions in the era of globalization that helps explain why the Bush administration had no qualms about walking away from the Kyoto Protocol or the International Criminal Court, mechanisms designed to address gaps in the international order accentuated by the demise of the bipolar world order. The Bush administration would prefer to forge ad hoc coalitions of the willing—along the lines of the PSI—than to build up regional groups that might prove ineffective at “crunch time.” This reluctance to invest in multilateral groups—a lack of enthusiasm that was vividly illustrated by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s failure to attend the ASEAN ministerial meeting in Vientiane in 2005 and President Bush’s failure two years later to fulfill his promise to meet with the leaders of ASEAN—runs counter to the political culture of East Asia. The ability of the United States to elicit support or extract concessions “at crunch time” is directly proportional to the energy spent building close, cooperative, and cordial relations at times of relative ease.

The United States can be forgiven for not getting too excited about the formation of an East Asia community or the creation of the East Asia Summit. Given the lingering regional animosities among China, Japan, Korea, and Russia, and given the huge disparities between rich and poor, democratic and authoritarian regimes, the East Asia community hardly seems poised to form a cohesive block. Beyond efforts to reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade and promote regional integration (steps the United States welcomes), it is unclear whether an East Asia community can agree to an agenda for action. But the United States cannot afford to be complacent about East Asian regionalism or to neglect its own role in helping to shape or thwart the creation of an East Asia community. And if the United States remains reluctant to commit itself fully to the prospect of East Asia community building, it must at least take other practical steps to increase its capacity to address the new challenges it faces in East Asia and elsewhere.

ADVANCING US INTERESTS: A BLENDED APPROACH

The United States seems to have settled on a blended approach to advancing its core security and economic interests in East Asia, not only relying on traditional bilateral alliances (adapted to the post–Cold War world) but also working to develop effective ad hoc regional structures. The United States is not hostile to the creation of a more cohesive East Asia community, provided only that it does not attempt to exclude the United States. In fact, the United States has asked the members of APEC, ASEAN+3, the ARF, and other groups to work with them to advance common interests. This mixed strategy did not emerge quickly or without debate, and it remains unclear whether Washington will really throw its weight behind regional efforts to address East Asia's many challenges. At issue is whether the United States prefers to rely on bilateral alliances and ad hoc regional structures—both of which require constant nurturing—or whether it might be preferable to foster self-sustaining regional groups (even those that do not include the United States as a member) that could work on common challenges in parallel with US efforts and would not require constant US care and feeding. Also at issue is whether the United States is prepared to place its confidence in an East Asia community (one that explicitly does not include the United States as a “member”) or whether the United States will judge that an East Asia community would tend either to be dominated by China or to advance an agenda at odds with core US interests.

Despite the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the dominant analytical framework used by Washington to assess the future of the East Asian region and to reorient its alliances remains the balance-of-power theory. Many analysts have predicated their policy prescriptions on traditional zero-sum terms. As Aaron Friedberg, a former adviser to Vice President Cheney, put it in 2001, “Asia’s future will resemble Europe’s past; that it will be marked, in other words, by competitive great power politics, shifting alliances, costly arms races, periodic crises, and occasional wars.”⁴ Even those scholars or government officials emphasizing the positive trends toward regional integration usually concede that realpolitik and balance-of-power theory will

4. Aaron L. Friedberg, “Introduction,” in *Strategic Asia: Power and Purpose*, ed. Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2001), 7.

best predict the complex patterns of interstate behavior in East Asia.⁵ Given this reality, the United States is not going to abandon its bilateral alliances any time soon. But 9/11, avian influenza, the 2004 tsunami, and even global warming all graphically illustrate the need for those bilateral alliances to adapt to changing threats and for bilateral arrangements to be complemented by regional mechanisms to address emerging trans-national challenges.

ALLIANCES IN TRANSITION: EXTENDED BILATERALISM

In fact, the United States *is* working to reconfigure its alliances so they may coexist with, and even support or complement, multilateral organizations. The United States understands that the post–Cold War world is marked by challenges that defy easy unilateral or bilateral solutions. The resilience of America's reconfigured bilateral alliances appears to defy the expectations of scholars such as Rajan Menon, who forecast in 2003 what he considered to be an inevitable outcome of the post–Cold War era: the obsolescence of US-led alliances in the absence of a clear organizing principle from which nations forge security partnerships.⁶ According to Menon, absent the overarching threat of the Soviet Union or the emergence of a comparable villain, US bilateral alliances would whither. In fact, the ability of the United States to adapt its alliances to new roles and missions seems to confirm the view of Robert Scalapino that effective management of the challenges of East Asia will require a blend of balance-of-power and concert-of-power approaches.

Far from becoming obsolete, the US-Japan alliance, for instance, appears to be enjoying new life in new areas. The revised Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation allow for such previously unforeseen developments as the provision of Japanese logistical support for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and the application of the allies' acquisition and cross-servicing agreement to US and Japanese troops serving in Iraq and to tsunami relief efforts in Indonesia. The US-Japan alliance is today better positioned to address shared global

5. Amitav Acharya, "A Concert of Asia?" *Survival* 41, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 84–101; Josh Kurlantzik, "Is East Asia Integrating?" *Washington Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Autumn 2001).

6. Rajan Menon, "The End of Alliances," *World Policy Journal* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2003).

concerns and respond to nontraditional security threats, and a similar process is underway for the US-ROK alliance.

Some influential backers of the US-Japan alliance (including former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage) have even called for broadening the alliance to make room for trilateral cooperation with China.⁷ Forging such trilateral cooperation is considered important not only to address issues such as maritime security and nonproliferation but also to set the stage for a style of East Asian regionalism that will not jeopardize US interests.

In sum, US *exclusive* bilateral alliances in Asia appear to be giving way to *extended* bilateralism, designed to complement the growth of multilateral institutions and East Asia's tightening web of interdependence.⁸ US alliances are being transformed from threat-based arrangements to interest-based partnerships. In essence, the United States' network of bilateral alliances seems likely to be extended and integrated, building on common interests and common values to complement and supplement multilateral institutions. Rather than competing with the institutions of regional and global governance that are a response to "the vacuum of power that occurs with increased interdependence and interaction among political communities,"⁹ these new bilateral alliances "version 2.0" will accommodate a range of interests among the various regional players in East Asia and could help provide structure where there is no obvious supranational governing body.

Admiral Dennis Blair, former combatant commander of US Pacific Command, concurs with this shift away from a zero-sum balance of power mentality, arguing for "enriched bilateralism" that involves other regional powers as active participants. Blair sees these enriched bilateral alliances as steppingstones to genuine, effective multilateral institutions.¹⁰ The TCOG (Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group)

7. Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, *The US-Japan Alliance in 2020: Getting Asia Right* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007).

8. William Tow, "Assessing Bilateralism as a Security Phenomenon: Problems of Under-Assessment and Application" (working paper, Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences, June 2003), as cited in *Alliance Diversification & the Future of the US-Korean Security Relationship*, ed. Charles Perry and James Schoff (Cambridge, MA: Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis, 2004).

9. Dan Oberg (conference paper, Global Governance Conference, Institute for International Policy Studies, Tokyo, October 2006).

10. Dennis Blair and John Hanley, "From Wheels to Webs: Reconstructing Asia-Pacific Security Arrangements," *Washington Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2001).

process and the Six-Party Talks themselves are examples of the enriched bilateralism contemplated by Blair. Former Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly has testified before Congress that the Bush administration hopes the Six-Party Talks might evolve into an effective regional security forum, an idea that President Bush officially embraced at the 2006 APEC summit.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

In the economic sphere, the United States is closely monitoring efforts of East Asian states to promote regional economic integration and perhaps form a cohesive economic unit or trading regime comparable to NAFTA. Washington is alert to any effort that might have the result of excluding the United States from the world's most dynamic economic region and wants to preserve its influence through the international financial institutions it helped to create and still leads.

The impetus for greater Asian economic integration flowed out of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the failure of the International Monetary Fund or other international financial institutions to respond deftly to the emerging crisis or to deal effectively and compassionately with its aftermath. The United States blocked Malaysian and Japanese efforts to form an East Asian Economic Caucus and an Asian Monetary Fund, respectively, during the East Asian financial crisis—moves still remembered (and resented) by many East Asian states, particularly Thailand. In the wake of the collapse of the Asian Monetary Fund idea, the leaders of the ASEAN states met with the leaders of China, Japan, and South Korea in Malaysia in 1997 to see what might be done to forge closer cooperation among Asian states to promote economic stability and prevent unregulated capital flows. This first ASEAN+3 meeting led to the “Chiang Mai Initiative” in 2000, a network of currency swap arrangements designed to prevent a recurrence of the “Asian contagion.”

The Asian financial crisis was a turning point in the quest for an East Asia community, providing a clear rationale for greater collective capacity to address a variety of economic challenges and promote mutually beneficial trade relations. But it is against this landscape of growing integration that regional rivalries also play out. Beijing's initiative to

create a China-ASEAN FTA and Japan's interest in establishing an East Asia economic partnership agreement encompassing 16 countries, including ASEAN, Japan, China, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India, reflect a competition for regional influence and leadership. The Bush administration countered by proposing a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) at the APEC summit in 2006. An APEC-wide FTA would become the United States' largest FTA and would mark a departure from past US practice in Asia.

The notion of an APEC-wide FTA was a clever expansive countermove to narrower Chinese and Japanese proposals, but from the moment they floated FTAAP as an idea, senior members of the Bush administration must surely have known that it stood little chance of becoming reality. The obstacles were obvious, beginning with the institutional weakness of APEC itself. US support for, and reliance upon, APEC has been variable. At times, Washington has looked to APEC to drive forward regional trade liberalization, but at other times it has all but abandoned the economic agenda in favor of counterterrorism or other security priorities. Even if the members of APEC could negotiate an FTA, and even if APEC could somehow summon the institutional strength to implement such an accord, it is far from certain that the US Congress would ever bless a deal that probably would require the United States to abandon massive agricultural subsidies and include China in an FTA despite deep US concerns about product safety, intellectual property protection, and human rights in China. The proposal, therefore, is best understood as a US chess move to prevent the creation of any trading block that might put it at a disadvantage. Indeed, the more significant move on trade by the United States in 2006 was the signing of the US-ROK FTA, a bilateral accord designed to lock the United States into the region and counter efforts by China and the European Union to lure Korea away from the United States.

MULTILATERALISM AND THE CHINA FACTOR

Paradoxically, the emergence of China as a great power—reaching out to its Asian neighbors and increasingly active globally—is both a driver and an impediment to US support for an East Asia community. An East Asia community would at first blush appear to offer a useful hedge against any Chinese expansionist ambitions. At the same time,

some fear that the creation of an East Asia community could magnify China's influence by giving it a community to dominate.

The appropriate US strategy toward China is the subject of much debate in Washington, although in truth the overall course of US-China relations has not deviated far from the path of engagement over the past 35 years. A few Cold Warriors continue to advocate containment, despite the inappropriate parallels to the Soviet Union and the sheer impossibility of containing 1.3 billion Chinese who are intent on restoring China to a position of global prominence. Some strategists envision a US-China "condominium" in East Asia, with separate spheres of influence designed to avoid entanglements. This notion seems hopelessly unrealistic given the reality of US global engagement and Washington's mistrust of Beijing's strategic intentions, to say nothing of the issue of Taiwan and its security. A few years ago the Rand Corporation offered up a strategy of *congagement*, a sort of "strategic hash" of policies drawn from containment and engagement that accurately captured the ambivalence that many Americans feel about China's rise without offering a truly compelling vision for what to do about it.¹¹ More recently, the Bush administration articulated the concept of China as a "responsible stakeholder." This update on Nixonian engagement clearly articulated the US desire that China become a responsible member of the international community but did not explicitly endorse the concept of an East Asia community of which China would necessarily be a major part. Most recently, the Council on Foreign Relations offered up a strategy of *integration*, blending three elements: *engaging* China on issues of mutual concern, *weaving* China into a web of regional and global institutions, and *balancing* China's military power.¹² The Council on Foreign Relations China Task Force explicitly endorsed paying greater attention to ASEAN, the ARF, and APEC and called on the United States to appoint an ambassador for ASEAN affairs and to sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (and thus become eligible to attend the East Asia Summit).

Hopefully, the US response to China's rise will avoid the characteristics of the Cold War and will not repeat the errors of a previous era by

11. Zalmay Khalilzad, "Congage China," *RAND Issue Paper IP-187* (1999), available online at www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/IP187/IP187.html.

12. Council on Foreign Relations, *US-China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda, A Responsible Course* (Task Force co-chairs: Carla Hills and Dennis Blair; project director: Frank Jannuzi) (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2007).

attempting to carve up East Asia into competing spheres of Chinese, Japanese, and US influence. China's emergence on the world stage is not a zero-sum game for the United States and its friends and allies. To the contrary, China's development can be a powerful force for good provided only that it is accompanied over the next three decades, as it has been for most of the past three decades, by growing Chinese adherence to international norms in the areas of security, trade, and human rights.

An excellent way to help ensure that China does indeed become a responsible stakeholder is to foster the development of an East Asia community that embodies the values that the United States at its best has championed at home and abroad: peaceful settlement of disputes, open markets, democracy, and respect for human rights. The creation of such an East Asia community would be a great boon to the United States, even if the United States were not a formal member of it, provided only that the community was constructed to be "open" rather than "closed." It is possible that such a community might emerge even without active US involvement and encouragement. But given the large number of competing regional structures—ASEAN, ASEAN+3, APEC, and the East Asia Summit—it makes sense for the United States to prioritize its efforts and to invest resources and energy into those structures best suited to meet its security and economic needs. Where necessary, as with the Six-Party Talks, the United States may still turn to ad hoc arrangements. But over the long haul, Washington's interests will be better served by the emergence of an integrated East Asia community that is self-sustaining and capable of tackling meaningful tasks, from responding to unanticipated financial shocks to curbing the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting regional peace and security.

Clearly, the United States is not yet prepared to put its faith in the emerging, largely untested, East Asian regional organizations. For the foreseeable future it will continue to rely primarily on bilateral alliances to safeguard its vital interests in the region. But it would appear that the exclusive bilateralism that has been the hallmark of America's hub-and-spokes security arrangements is not well suited to the security challenges of the 21st century. And bilateral FTAs offer only a partial solution to the possibility that East Asia might form a trading block that would disadvantage the United States. Indeed, some have argued that bilateral arrangements and even regional

agreements run counter to the spirit of truly open trade that is the goal of the WTO.¹³

As time goes by, the United States seems poised to embrace regionalism in East Asia, first as part of a mixed strategy and perhaps eventually as a genuine alternative to the bilateral alliances forged during the Cold War. There is some evidence that the United States is already moving in this direction. After 9/11, the United States looked to APEC to forge a regional consensus on how best to thwart Islamic radicalism. To address modern transnational crimes like drug running and trafficking in persons, the United States has created the International Law Enforcement Academy in Thailand. To rein in North Korea's nuclear ambitions, the United States worked with China to create the Six-Party Talks. Other new regional organizations appear to be an inevitable and appropriate response to the forces of globalization, economic interdependence, and nontraditional transnational security threats. But ultimately such ad hoc responses require a lot of work to sustain. It would be preferable for the nations of East Asia to forge an effective community capable of responding to the myriad threats that will inevitably challenge the maintenance of regional peace and stability. The nations and peoples of East Asia will have to decide the precise architecture of the East Asia community. Already, there has been much discussion of the issue, and perhaps the East Asia Summit will provide a forum for further strategic dialogue on the topic.

At Oxford University, and at my own *alma mater* of Yale, the dons on occasion dine at "High Table," where they discuss the great issues of the day (or their latest golf exploits, depending on the mood). President Bush (a Yale man) will not sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, a necessary prerequisite for membership in the East Asia Summit. But the next US president probably will sign the treaty, even if he or she cannot get it ratified by the Senate. The next president will want the United States to have a seat at the high table of East Asia, if only to survey the scene and enjoy a good meal. Future US administrations will likely lead America to play a more constructive role in East Asia community building if only to ensure that the United States' position as a global leader is not compromised by its own neglect.

13. Jagdish Bhagwati, "The Consensus for Free Trade among Economists—Has it Frayed?" (lecture before the WTO, October 8, 2007), available online at www.wto.org/english/news_e/news07_e/bhagwati_oct07_e.htm.