chapter two

Changing U.S.-Korean Security Relations

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United States-Korea security relations are experiencing a period of dynamic change that raises serious questions about the way that the relationship will evolve during the 21st Century. A number of well-known factors have provoked this phase. The end of the U.S.-Soviet cold war, North Korea's use of its nuclear card to engage the United States in a broader dialogue, South Korea's pursuit of diverse multilateral approaches to its security to shore up the U.S.-ROK alliance, and the emergence of Chinese and Japanese assertiveness in the regional balance of power, cumulatively have altered the context in which Washington and Seoul conduct their bilateral security relations. Both allies are struggling to come to grips with these new—and sometimes troubling—circumstances.

Post-cold war American policy in Asia as a whole, including the key Northeast Asia sub-region where two of the United States' most important alliances are located, suffers from the relative lack of sharp focus characteristic of overall U.S. foreign policy since the demise of the Soviet Union. During the cold war the U.S.-Japan alliance possessed a generic sense of purpose vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Similarly the U.S.-ROK alliance focused on the North Korean threat, with the Soviet Union looming in the background. Absent the Soviet Union, the U.S.-Japan alliance tended to drift, propelled by momentum, in a search for a new vision. The U.S.-ROK alliance remained on firmer ground than the U.S.-Japan alliance after the end of the cold war because North Korea remained as a tangible threat. If anything, the DPRK's threat stature grew in comparative terms in an environment of diminished global threats, exaggerated by its use of the nuclear card. Nonetheless, even the U.S.-ROK alliance suffered in the wake of the cold war because the North Korean threat's ability to escalate tensions to global dangers that would imperil the United States lost its immediacy. Moreover, South Korean anxiety about American responses to North Korean actions created a sense of uncertainty within the alliance. At best, the Korean situation imbued Northeast Asia with a remnant of the cold war to help sustain U.S. commitments to the region.

Something was missing, however, in terms of a firm foundation for U.S. relations with Japan and Korea. In its place the Bush and Clinton administrations dwelled on the need to preserve generic peace and stability with the United States as the core player. Although both administrations stressed their respective innovations, in many respects both were intent upon pouring cold war wine into post-cold war bottles because of their desire to retain an emphasis on an American coordinating role. A major difference between the Bush and Clinton approaches to the Northeast Asian allies was the degree to which each was prepared to share strategic burdens through power sharing. In short, the Bush approach was more

unilateralist and the Clinton approach is more tolerant of a kind of multilateralism. This is not to suggest that the Clinton administration is committed to full-fledged multilateralism that could reduce American power and prestige in the region via a process of gradual marginalization, but it is willing to experiment with modest forms of multilateralism and to entertain Asian ideas for new forms of multilateralism.[1]

As Americans and Asians attempt to adapt their policies to the post-cold war era, there are a number of themes that shall influence them which will be addressed here. First is the question of whether American leaders know what they want and how to go about achieving it. Or, conversely, are American leaders as inept as some in Asia and the United States think they are? After examining that fundamental question, this paper shall evaluate the status of, and prospects for, the two regional alliances. Therefore, the second and third themes this paper shall address are the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances' impact on the prospects for Northeast Asian multilateralism. Next, this paper shall examine three future circumstances that could influence Northeast Asian multilateralism as the context for U.S.-Korean security relations. These are, on the positive side, some ways that multilateralism could be enhanced and institutionalized. On the negative side, this paper shall examine one way that the economic interdependence which sustains strategic interdependence could be severely undermined by economic events. It also will explore the potential impact of a return to U.S. unilateralism in future administrations. Finally, it will suggest means to improve U.S.-Korean security cooperation.

Ambiguous Hegemonism

One key component of the U.S.-ROK security relationship is the level of consistency and predictability of Washington's position in Asia. U.S. policy toward Asia in the post-cold war period is subject to widespread criticism for lacking a clear agenda and often being out of focus.[2] This accusation applies to both the Bush and Clinton administrations which struggled with formulating a post-cold war foreign policy capable of meeting the disparate challenges of the new era. Neither were able to discern a viable central organizing principle that could act as a surrogate for the anti-Soviet animus of the cold war. These circumstances fostered sometimes strident criticism because the United States tries to perpetuate many of the same central roles it played in Asia during the cold war but does so without truly clear objectives or policy instruments to achieve them. As a result of these residual policy behaviors without readily evident goals, the United States has been described by Asians and by Americans who are frustrated by their own policy-making shortcomings as an "incompetent hegemon."[3]

That description appears to be apt because the United States regularly acts like a hegemonistic power, trying to shape both the environment and outcomes of policy-making. Many people in the U.S. foreign policy and national security bureaucracies treat their post-cold war functions as carry-overs from the cold war, requiring the United States to lead and be responsible for much of the world.[4] To many people in Asia if Americans walk the walk, and talk the talk of hegemonists, then that must be what they are.

China is particularly blunt in its denunciations of U.S. hegemonism, seeing it as an effort to create a de facto neo-containment policy aimed at the PRC.[5] The Chinese are not alone, however, because many other Asians consider the United States to be the self-selected leader of the Asia-Pacific region. This is not to suggest these other Asians share China's criticism. On the contrary, most want the United States to remain a combination of diplomatic ringleader, political cheerleader, economic benefactor, and provider of a strategic safety net for the region. Virtually all South Korean and Japanese security specialists share that perception. In short, they wish the United States would be a benevolent hegemon without using the title.[6] American leaders and bureaucrats who deal with Asia are the recipients of these wishes and let them influence U.S. choices to remain committed to post-cold war Asia on a direct continuum with former U.S. policies.

There is a fundamental problem inherent in this situation. As much as many American elites behave like hegemons toward Asia, and some may think that role is the United States' noblesse oblige mandate, the overwhelming majority of Americans have no more desire to be hegemons in late 20th and early 21st century Asia than an earlier generation of Americans wanted to be authentic imperialists in late 19th and early 20th century Asia. A well-known book, *Sentimental Imperialists*, examined the reasons Americans were decidedly reluctant imperialists who ultimately failed because our national heart and will simply were not in it.[7] A similar principle is at work in U.S.-Asian relations at this watershed point in the post-cold war era.

Americans cannot accurately be considered "incompetent hegemons" because the people of the United States and the great majority of their leaders have no more desire to be hegemonistic than our forebears did to be imperialistic. Americans have evolved from being "reluctant imperialists" to being "ambiguous hegemons" who cannot get their act together policy-wise, despite serious efforts, because they do not really want the job.

Americans frequently fumble and stumble in U.S. policy toward Asia since creating a truly coherent policy would require us to accept totally a role we

are not emotionally or intellectually ready to tolerate. It goes against the grain of American experience and instincts. Americans do feel a tenuous obligation today to perpetuate many of the commitments the United States has in Asia. Moreover, there are logical economic and strategic reasons why a great power would want to dominate a zone of influence. But this logic is more than offset by profound American ambiguity about the costs of leadership in human and financial terms.

In fact, much of that ambiguity existed during the cold war as well, but it was concealed by the anti-communist rationales that drove the cold war and generated a sense of internationalist duty among Americans. That mission ended with the demise of the cold war which revealed starkly the ambiguity of Americans about being Asia's de facto hegemon. Cumulatively this often causes Americans to behave ineptly, lack coordination, and seem essentially incompetent to both Asians on the receiving end of U.S. policy and to Americans who are frustrated at their inability to be more cohesive and coherent in deciding what we want to do in Asia and how we want to do it.

While Asians may continue to suspect Americans of being incompetent hegemons, they and Americans would be far better off if we all adjusted to the reality that Americans are ambiguous hegemons who are so reluctant to fulfill an unwanted role that we are unable to achieve any meaningful consensus on what to do or how to do it. This explains the poor planning, poor organization, and poor implementation evident in post-cold war U.S. policy in Asia, all of which are exacerbated by domestic U.S. budget problems, anxiety about a national "decline," and the resurfacing of a prewar strain of non-interventionism that often is described as "neo-isolationism."[8]

None of this augers well for any attempt to regenerate a new sense of U.S. mission to be a strongly motivated hegemon for the Asia-Pacific region—even a "hegemon" that is more than willing to share limited geopolitical power with regional cohorts as the United States clearly is today. In short, we were lousy imperialists and we are equally lousy hegemonists.

Recognition of this reality is not bad news for Asians or Americans. It is obvious that the level of U.S. dominance in postwar Asia was an aberration in the context of Asia's long history that could not last. The kind of obvious and subtle power shifts that are occurring today in the Asia-Pacific region are natural and inevitable. They, too, feed the American sense of ambiguity about being a hegemon of any sort.

As Americans try to come to grips with their problems in formulating a viable Asia policy, an old saying is often used to criticize the apparent drift

of U.S. leaders, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." It is clear that Americans, leaders and masses, are experiencing great difficulties figuring out where the United States is "going" vis-à-vis a quasi-hegemonistic leadership role in Asia because we are so ambiguous about it. In this context, and until Americans make some profound decisions about the real directions of U.S. foreign policy for the future, it is not so terrible to be on "any road" or on several roads simultaneously because that kind of flexibility connotes an innovative and reactive posture in U.S. foreign and national security policies which permits Americans to prudently muddle through from problem to problem as we seek a sense of vision about a yet-to-unfold grand strategy. This is a hallmark of the Clinton administration for which it receives much unwarranted criticism. Moreover, it is likely to remain a characteristic of U.S. foreign policy toward Asia in subsequent administrations for the foreseeable future.

Since that evolving national strategic vision is unlikely to be hegemonistic, there is nothing wrong with Americans being ambiguous hegemons whose reluctance produces a less than clear U.S. policy for Asia. All those Asians and Americans who press for much greater clarity and purpose in a U.S. agenda for Asia are destined to be disappointed because the times and circumstances are not propitious for generating such a renewed vision.[9] Most importantly, the half-hearted hegemonism of U.S. self-imposed obligations is destined to frustrate ambitions for a more coherent U.S. policy toward Asia. This is evident in U.S. relations with both Japan and Korea.

U.S.-Japan: Mixed Signals[10]

This policy blandness seems to be contradicted by President Clinton's summit with Prime Minister Hashimoto in April 1996. There has been a spate of analyses interpreting its consequences for U.S.-Japan security relations. Virtually all of it has been positive in the United States, praising Washington for its creativity and boldness. Greater reservations have been expressed in Japan where some critics of the Hashimoto government believe it may have walked into a trap, unwittingly or knowingly. For Japanese critics it is difficult to decide which is worse—whether their government was consciously duped by the Americans to start down a path which could lead to greater Japanese involvement in regional collective security or whether Tokyo was Machiavellian in the ways it maneuvered the Clinton administration into seeking an expanded Japanese strategic option that some Japanese conservatives desire but which cautious Americans long have been reluctant to sanction for Japan.

The intricacies of that debate have been lost on most Americans because it is being poorly reported in the United States. Furthermore, when the debate is raised for discussion it seems patently hypothetical since Japan's actual commitment to do more for mutual U.S.-Japanese defense any time soon remains nebulous and rhetorical. The latter facet of the Clinton-Hashimoto summit is at the core of one trenchant American critical analysis by Cato Institute defense policy analyst, Ted Galen Carpenter. He accurately described it as an exercise in "smoke and mirrors" with changes that are "tepid" and "cosmetic."[11] The difficulty is that Carpenter and Cato are often discounted unfairly by more orthodox U.S. analysts of Japan as libertarian neo-isolationists who are out of the mainstream. Nonetheless, he and critics who are better known in Japan, such as Professor Chalmers Johnson of the University of California, are highly skeptical about Japanese commitments to really do anything to defend the United States and the interests in Asia which it shares with Japan to an extent remotely approximating the level of long-standing American commitments to defend Japan and its interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

As someone who in the past has been just as critical of Japan's defense policies, and of U.S. acquiescence to Japan's reluctance to engage in truly mutual defense, I am tempted to join the critical chorus once again. This time I am constrained from doing so by several factors. Not the least is the emphasis in the Clinton-Hashimoto summitry and associated documents on the concept of reciprocity in U.S.-Japanese defense. As the author over a decade ago of a volume called *U.S.-Japan Strategic Reciprocity*,[12] use of this concept in this contemporary context must elicit a positive response from this analyst. Nonetheless, cynicism remains warranted about the genuine commitment of Japan to reify its rhetoric. Only time will tell, of course.

What is most intriguing about the results of the Clinton-Hashimoto summit and nascent actions in its wake is that both the United States and Japan may have maneuvered themselves into a new type of relationship that neither actually intended. Inadvertently the generally liberal Clinton administration has begun using a very conservative approach to this specific defense issue. By "conservative" I am not referring to the type of defense conservatism usually associated with Hoover, the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, or other conservative think tanks normally considered to be on the cutting edge of the Republican Party's policies. They are generally more cautious about doing anything which might diminish American control of regional defense strategies in any part of the world. Bill Clinton was not emulating Bob Dole in this instance, unlike some of the recent presidential campaign's other issues. In that case, what is so "conservative" about this liberal administration's overtures to Japan?

On the face of it Clinton administration officials certainly do not consider their defense policies in Asia to be conservative. Their emphasis on multilateralism, an instrument for reinvigorating internationalism and globalism, is intended to be an antidote to the dual strategic tracks that characterize contemporary American conservatism—a strong unilateralist wing and a resurgent non-interventionist wing (often erroneously labeled "isolationist"). As the United States copes with the diverse challenges of the post-cold war era with no clear blueprint to guide it, the Clinton administration is creatively recycling the liberal internationalist notions that have been the foundation of U.S. foreign policy since the Second World War.

In adapting these notions to the uncertain new era Washington has tried to make them fit the times by demonstrating respect for the accomplishments and stature which U.S. allies during the cold war accrued over the years. In short, some effort is being devoted to moving beyond the rhetoric of burden-sharing to put teeth into the security arrangements through power-sharing. It is problematical whether there is genuine substance in these modified arrangements or merely improved rhetoric with better spin. In the case of the U.S.-Japan security relationship the Clinton-Hashimoto summit was supposed to convey real movement on both sides toward authentic substance. While Ted Carpenter is correct to express cynicism about the level of diplomatic obfuscation and spin that was evident, and to call for a move toward bilateral "burden shifting," it is clear that neither Tokyo nor Washington intended to go that far. This is what seemingly warrants Carpenter's call for a new U.S. policy toward Japan.

Although neither Japan nor the United States appears ready to make such a dramatic step, both may have inadvertently created a joint policy agenda which will foster more than greater coordination of alliance leadership. The consciously non-revolutionary moves by Tokyo and Washington designed to reassure each other and the region have unleashed an evolutionary transition calculated to produce what might be called "leadershift," in a play on words. Americans are transferring local leadership incrementally to Japan, whether it wants it or not. This is a de facto conservative policy stemming from liberal geopolitical motives. In the name of creating greater parity in regional security leadership and responsibility that is commensurate with the relative economic and political status of the United States and Japan as they prepare to cope with the 21st century, both countries have taken steps that promise to inject a new and very conservative dynamic into their respective roles in world affairs.

In effect the United States and Japan after the Clinton-Hashimoto summit are rearranging the United States' global policeman's role in favor of an

Asian variant of what Americans in a domestic context call "community policing." Normally this, too, is a liberal theme, because it connotes an emphasis on a local community's control of its police force's activities in ways that help assure ethnic and racial diversity and make the police more sensitive to community needs and aspirations. It is considered in the United States to be a very "politically correct" approach to police work. But when this paradigm is transferred out of its domestic context to international affairs, it assumes decidedly conservative proportions because it represents a means for Washington to devolve the United States global policemen's role downward to a regional power which can assume burdens, costs, and responsibilities that Americans no longer want to bear to the extent they did in the cold war. This does not suggest that a regional power will assume all the former roles played by the United States, because America expects to remain as a nexus, coordinating global policing, but it would be substantially supplemented by a "regional cop." In this case, Japan is being maneuvered into being Asia's regional *omawari-san* sitting in its neighborhood *koban*, keeping an eye out for trouble.

This devolution of strategic power toward regional community policing is a very conservative theme because it entails several of the hallmarks of contemporary American conservatism. It is a move away from a centrally controlled form of governing, with its rigid and stifling authority patterns, toward local engagement and responsibility. In terms of the "leadershift" concept, it represents the strategic version of corporate or bureaucratic downsizing and rightsizing because essentially the same geopolitical goals are achieved in a streamlined fashion by outsourcing the necessary defense tasks to another entity—namely Japan.

This process has injected something new into the long-term debate occurring in Japan about its security options. Against the background of growing legitimacy for an expanded Japanese defense role, overt expressions of concern about developments in North Korea (and a future united Korea) that may threaten Japan, post-Gulf War pressures on Japan to do more than engage in rhetoric, and renewed appreciation for the role of the military portion of Japan's comprehensive security doctrine, the Clinton-Hashimoto summit reinforced the notion that Japan might be expected to undertake greater strategic responsibilities than it has previously within the confines of the U.S.-Japan alliance. This does not mean that Tokyo is ready to precipitously accept an expanded role, but it does mean that mutual sanctioning of such a role is now on the record. That could be a crucial event if one bears in mind the tendency of the Japanese not to devise grand strategies as blueprints for future policies. Instead, the Japanese tend to wrap new labels on successful ongoing un-labeled policies that evolve

gradually. It is this process of gradual evolution that has been nudged in a significantly different direction by the Clinton-Hashimoto summit. Fortunately for Japan's neighbors in Asia, this new direction shows no signs of being a radical departure from the present. Almost certainly a Japanese "regional cop" would be concerned with the same elements of comprehensive security Tokyo today stresses and would seek to build regional stability through enhanced confidence and interdependence.

A perverse aspect of this evolving form of cooperation is that it perpetuates in the U.S.-Japan alliance a new variant of the peculiar form of psychological co-dependency called *amae* in Japan.[13] In the past the alliance's *amae*-style interdependence was characterized by U.S. strength and Japanese deference. While stressing the positive virtues of cooperation among partners, it displayed the classic signs of co-dependency marked by external referencing to measure credibility, sacrificing ones interests for the sake of others who often are ungrateful, controlling behavior in order to manipulate others, and generating a sense of importance by being needed by others. In the aftermath of the Clinton-Hashimoto summit and gradual movement toward a stronger regional cop's role for Japan, it is very uncertain what impact "leadershift" will have upon U.S.-Japan co-dependency. Before both countries go too far down this path, Washington and Tokyo should pay closer attention to this troubling issue and its consequences for Northeast Asian regional stability.

U.S.-Korea: Anxious Times

There is little doubt that South Koreans will keep an attentive eye on these shifts in U.S.-Japan security ties because they cause considerable anxiety among the Korean allies.[14] One of the deep-seated fears long motivating South Korean strategists is the prevention of undue Japanese influence over American defense and foreign policy specialists in Asian affairs. Most pointedly, Seoul has sought a level playing field where South Korean interests and opinion would receive a roughly equal hearing from Americans. This is a major incentive for Korea to pursue multilateralism. ROK officials and security-oriented scholars have chafed at an American preoccupation with the U.S.-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of U.S. policy in the Asia-Pacific region. That frustration has been underscored by a long-standing Korean belief that the ROK is a far better ally than Japan is for the United States because South Korea is more cooperative and flexible than Japan.[15] That Korean perception has great validity, but so does the American perception of Japan as a "cornerstone" for the United States in Asia.

During the post-cold war period prior to the Clinton-Hashimoto summit South Koreans were uncertain about U.S. intentions, but remained confi-

dent that events were unfolding in ways overwhelmingly advantageous to the ROK. Seoul knew it was part of the winning coalition in the cold war. As important, Seoul knew that North Korea was a major loser in the cold war, albeit a state that survived the cold war's termination. The strategic pendulum has swung decidedly in South Korea's favor. Even the North-South Korean military tensions that loomed larger in global terms after the cold war ultimately served the ROK's strategic purposes because the nuclear threat, increased risks of renewed warfare, concerns about North Korean domestic instability, and the means used to cope with all three helped to focus American attention on Korea in ways that gave the ROK greater parity with Japan. Also entering into these calculations were South Korea's economic ascendancy, Seoul's creative diplomacy with many countries (but especially vis-à-vis China), and South Korea's expansive strategic thinking.[16] The latter encompasses a greater readiness to become a more viable regional partner for the United States through enhanced sea and air power, development of an omnidirectional defensive mindset that put a hint of distance between Korea and the U.S.-Japan alliance, exploration of various multilateral options for the future (that shall be assessed below), and contemplation of a range of strategic contingencies for a united Korea.

All of these factors seemed to place South Korea in an excellent position to deal with a dual-pronged American policy for Northeast Asia. In short, there were ample reasons for Seoul to think that the ROK was approaching parity with Japan in American eyes and could aspire to regional equality as a partner of the United States.[17] It is, of course, still possible to visualize South Korea or a united Korea evolving toward that sort of regional role. However, the Clinton-Hashimoto summit and its impact on U.S.-Japan relations diminishes Korea's prospects for level playing field treatment by Americans. Unless a future U.S.-Korea summit devises comparable revitalization formulations for Korea, it will be increasingly difficult for Seoul to compete with Tokyo for Washington's attention.[18]

Fortunately for Koreans, neither Americans nor Japanese appear to be in any rush to fulfill the intensification of U.S.-Japan cooperation, much less the kind of strategic "outsourcing" noted above. This provides Korea with several opportunities. Foremost today, especially with a second Clinton term in office, Seoul can contemplate various forms of multilateralism as vehicles for Koreans (and other Asians) to dilute the dominant influence of Japanese over Americans. It is much easier for Koreans to appear important and useful to Americans if Korea is measured on a broader international spectrum and not compared only to Japan.[19] Furthermore, given the likelihood of a "muddling-through" reactive process in U.S. policy-making and an absence of an overriding strategic threat, Seoul has additional opportunities to shape the context in which it will be treated by Washington.

As anxious as Koreans are about Americans' reinvigoration of the U.S.-Japan alliance, which can be seen as occurring at Korea's expense, there are two more problematical prospects on the horizon. One is the perennial problem of North Korea. As much as South Koreans would like to be rid of that danger and enjoy the fruits of unification, there are enormous uncertainties surrounding the strategic questions of how (and when) Korean unification shall occur, and what comes next after unification. Korea has been a front burner issue for the United States and Japan precisely because it is a divided nation whose tensions endanger the entire region. Once its division is resolved, will Korea matter nearly as much? To be sure, Korea's location assures that it will always matter in the regional balance of power. But there is much less reason for confidence about how Americans will perceive a united Korea versus U.S. interests in China and Japan. Therefore, Seoul has strategic reasons to want to drag out the resolution of Korea's division long enough that Seoul can try to cultivate post-unification arrangements and to hedge its bets against the day when Korea may not be able to rely as much on the United States in the context of a Sino-Japanese dominated Asia.[20] This could be a major conditioning factor in the evolution of U.S.-Korean security relations. Seoul's uncertainty about American plans and intentions can be seen in ill-concealed South Korean suspicions about U.S. motives. It also may be a factor behind South Korea's unseemly espionage against the United States, apparently intended to acquire more accurate information about the United States' policies than South Koreans thought they were receiving from American officials.[21]

In another variation on that theme Korea also has to be concerned about signs that Asia may confront a new form of coalition containment focused on China. While that prospect might seem desirable as a means for Seoul to reinforce its importance to Washington, perhaps at Tokyo's expense, there are many risks associated with such a development. It is not clear that South Korea or a united Korea would want to line up against China in cooperation with the United States and Japan, making itself an instrument of U.S.-Japanese policy.[22] That option would fly in the face of everything Seoul has been doing diplomatically and economically in recent years to ingratiate itself with China. It also would pose great risks to any Korean hope to rely on China in the future should the United States not be there to buffer Korea from Japan.

In short, as the post-cold war era begins to encompass the 21st century, Korea faces a series of daunting challenges. They all point to a Korean need to develop a relatively autonomous Korean national strategy. Moreover, Korea needs to cultivate a cadre of capable strategists, rather than tacticians.

This formidable task is complicated by the dependency characteristics of the U.S.-ROK alliance with its frequent overtones of *sadae jui* (subservience). Unfortunately, Korea's relations with its Asian neighbors do not offer brighter alternatives. As much as Korea has changed over the past half century, one factor remains surprisingly constant. There is a Korean saying about Korea being a "shrimp between two whales." South Korea's successes, and the prospect of a still stronger and larger united Korea one day, allow Koreans to joke that it now a "jumbo shrimp." But the reality remains that China and Japan are disproportionately more powerful than Korea. There is scant likelihood of that truism ever changing. This shall compel Korea to be as creative as it can be and to consider not just the next decade or two, but how it will get along with the two "whales" for many generations to come.[23] This constraint is a crucial variable for Koreans and Americans to bear in mind as we try to adjust to unfolding circumstances, and to Korean efforts to assert leadership.

Future Factors

Clearly one of the key conditioning factors that will shape Northeast Asian security will be the degree to which multilateralism becomes institutionalized. At present the main model of the region is the Southeast Asian experiment in multilateral security cooperation being carried out by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This entity is "institutionalized," but just barely. It is, as its name suggests, a forum for discussing security concerns rather than resolving them or taking coordinated action. At best it is evolving toward a regional concert of powers. It is a far cry from NATO or even the CSCE. The basic reason for ARF's diffuse nature is the loose character of ASEAN as a parent organization. As much as Koreans and Japanese who would like to pursue some kind of regional security organization are critical of the shortcomings of ARF and would prefer something more substantial, such as a CSCA, they have had great difficulty achieving any unity of purpose.[24] Despite ASEAN's looseness and ARF's diffuseness, the Southeast Asians have at least created them and made them work, more or less. Northeast Asia is not yet close to that level of success. The best prospect today would seem to be some variant of what is now called the Northeast Asia Security Dialogue (NEASD).[25] This plus various second-track efforts, such as those which spin off from economic cooperative measures, more specific efforts at regional arms control,[26] and security-related confidence-building measures[27] provide reasons to hope that multilateral security agendas may be able to be more thoroughly institutionalized.

As much as advocates of multilateralism want to build stable Northeast Asian security on the foundation of the region's lasting economic interde-

pendence with the rest of Asia and the West, there are reasons to be cautious about such projections. Interdependence may be more perilous than is commonly thought today by the partners in the U.S.-ROK alliance. As the 21st century approaches, conventional wisdom holds that it may be the "Pacific Century" because of Asia's vaunted economic growth. East Asia, Southeast Asia, and—increasingly—South Asia are growing rapidly, elevating several regional economies to world class proportions. If these trends continue, many analysts expect by 2020 or so that China and Japan will become the world's largest economies, ahead of the United States, and a few others in Asia—notably Korea—will surpass some European countries accustomed to being near the top of the heap. This adjustment process may be difficult psychologically for the West, but an even more troubling prospect is the uncertain outlook for Asia's adjustment to capitalist economic cycles—booms and busts—that Western economies have experienced repeatedly. This uncertainty poses a genuine risk for security bonds such as the U.S.-ROK alliance.

For most of Asia the widespread adoption of capitalist ways under Asian, rather than foreign imperialist control, is a post-Second World War phenomenon. Even for Japan which practiced an imperialist form of capitalism in the pre-war era, Western-style free market-based capitalism is largely a postwar development. In this past half century Asia's economies have experienced the ups and downs of market forces, periodic stock market "adjustments" plus less frequent but more prolonged bear markets that spawn recessions. However, they have been relatively minor fluctuations compared to the severe crashes and lengthy depressions Western capitalist economies have lived through for many generations.

In the wake of the Great Depression several national and international governmental instruments have been devised to try to modulate the market cycle and prevent extreme bottoming out. Despite those efforts and other preemptive mechanisms that probably will be devised over time, the odds are very strong that we have not seen the last of radical economic busts. While troubling enough when they occurred amongst nations which share substantially similar values, perceptions, and traditions, the modern world economy has not experienced an economic crash encompassing peoples of vastly divergent cultures. Certainly the U.S.-ROK alliance, maturing in an age of prosperity, has not yet confronted one of these extreme cycles. As the world economy grows and prospers, praise is routinely heaped on the merits of interdependence.[28] Clearly, we are far more integrated economically today than has ever been true for the West and Asia. To paraphrase Kipling, the "twain has met." The global economy today has three conjoined motors in Europe, North America, and Eastern Asia. Arguably the most

dynamic of these is in Asia, centered in Northeast Asia. If prosperity continues long enough for Asian leaders and masses to truly internalize Western capitalism's economic values into their cultural and intellectual make-up on a widespread basis, there should be no reason to worry unduly about Asia's different reactions to a future economic depression. Unfortunately, this full-fledged socialization of economic values could easily take several generations. Moreover, this process may never occur if Asians do not fully accept Western forms of capitalism. Instead, they may continue to adapt free market capitalism to local circumstances, modifying the associated values to conform with the group-oriented interests of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China versus the individualism which undergirds Western capitalism.

Were an international depression to erupt without most Asian capitalists marching to approximately the same drummer as Westerners, East-West interdependence and harmony could be shaken to its roots. Asian, American, and European reactions to such a severe downturn in the economic cycle could prove highly destabilizing for the global economy that would already have been buffeted severely by the crash itself. These differing reactions could exacerbate the next major depression and wreak havoc with global security. The repercussions likely would be particularly severe in Northeast Asia where the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances could be devastated.

This is not to suggest that Western responses to a prospective depression would necessarily be more efficacious. It is certainly possible that the Asian predisposition to doing what is best for their own group could yield effective solutions. What is far from certain, however, is the ability of Asian and Western leaders to work together harmoniously for the well being of the pan-national/pan-ethnic group that is the result of global economic interdependence. It is all too easy to visualize the members of this still unwieldy clutch of partners engaging in mutual scapegoating because of past episodes of recrimination over far smaller crises. Similarly, one can readily imagine the consequences for alliance cohesion and the impact on multilateral security arrangements. American-Japanese relations have weathered minor versions of such impugnments without damaging the U.S.-Japan alliance, but it is uncertain whether depression-induced blame would permit that alliance to survive. It is far less certain that the U.S.-ROK alliance could survive such a traumatic event.

Against this background it is in the interests of Asian and Western political and economic leaders to pay far more preemptive attention to the disruptive potential of economic cycles in a cultural and strategic context that has

not attained the level of interdependence reached by the economies. Just as presidential candidate Bill Clinton was noted for his 1992 campaign slogan, "It's the economy, stupid!", the leaders of diverse societies that are interdependent—whether they like it or not—should post a similar motto, "Depressions happen, stupid!" to sensitize themselves to the new dangers posed to regional security by Pacific Century economic cycles.

Continuing on that political note, much of what has been discussed in this paper could be influenced significantly were any future U.S. administration to steer the United States back toward greater unilateralism, backing away from the Clinton experiments with multilateralism. Senator Dole's campaign statements clearly suggested that a Dole administration would have stressed unilateralism and bilateralism and minimized multilateralism on the global level, with special scorn reserved for putting U.S. forces under UN command. Although the Dole campaign did not make any explicit comments about multilateralism in Northeast Asia, there is no reason to assume a Dole administration would have been more receptive to the notion than the Clinton administration. On the contrary, any conceivable Republican administration in the next decade would likely reemphasize its bilateral ties with Japan and Korea, in keeping with the party's principles. While that brand of conservatism and its stress on strengthening U.S. commitments to long-term allies would be welcome by many contemporary Japanese and South Koreans as a sign of U.S. steadfastness, it also would be a mixed blessing for them. After all, any administration over the next 10-15 years will inherit the legacy of a revitalized U.S.-Japan alliance (post-Clinton-Hashimoto summit) and might well perceive the regional cop role for Japan as an asset enabling the United States to guide a more efficient system.

Were a more conservative administration to succeed the Clinton administration, this could pose unanticipated problems for Tokyo and Seoul because they probably would face a more proactive U.S. administration with new tools available to it. That prospect is underscored by the virtual certainty that Republicans in Congress will push an agenda incorporating regional theater missile defenses and a much harder line toward North Korea. For South Korea, in particular, these prospects could cause consternation. On the one hand, were these elements in the United States to take the lead, South Korea would gain greater attention by the United States, but that might be more than offset by the increased risk of war, greater U.S. emphasis on Japan's regional leadership, fewer opportunities to use multilateral forums as means to diffuse Japanese influence, and—perhaps most unsettling—far greater chances of a U.S. effort to contain (rather than engage) China. In contrast to the past when South Korean leaders auto-

matically could be expected to prefer conservative U.S. politicians, that may no longer be true.

Any U.S. administration also will have to contend with non-interventionist tendencies among Republicans in Congress. It is highly speculative to estimate with any specificity what the consequences of their influence might mean for Korea, but there are some signs worth noting. Given their desires to cut costs, avoid gratuitous strategic entanglements, and encourage strong regional allies to fend for their own interests, were the non-interventionists to enjoy a dominant voice, there is no guarantee that the long-standing U.S. commitment to the ROK against its North Korean enemy would be automatically transferred to a new long term commitment to a united Korea under Seoul to defend it against whatever threats it might perceive.

U.S. policy toward Korea also will be influenced by inter-Korean politics and policies. In the short term, as American policy toward a reuniting Korea takes shape, there remains a real chance that the elimination of North Korea will not be a peaceful event. Were war to erupt again in Korea en route to ending the Korean version of the cold war, most analysts believe it would not last very long. Whether short or more prolonged in duration, a new war in Korea poses dangers well beyond the damage that would be inflicted on the Korean nation. The main danger for regional security is that the other U.S. ally in Northeast Asia would do little or nothing on behalf of what Americans widely perceive to be a common cause.[29] Were Japan to abstain in those circumstances, tremendous damage will be done to American support for a U.S. commitment to Northeast Asia. One need only recall the anxieties aroused by Japan's weak initial responses during the Gulf War and its wishy-washy attitudes toward cooperation during the spring 1996 U.S.-PRC confrontation over Taiwan to get a sense of what could occur if Japan does not actively offer military support to the U.S. and ROK against the DPRK in a crisis that will end the Korean cold war in ways that directly serve Japanese interests. Conservative congressional reactions to such prospective events are very predictable, regardless of who occupies the White House, but they would be particularly acute if non-interventionist Republicans were to control the Congress and the White House.

Outlook

Without making any predictions about U.S. or Asian politics, it is nonetheless important to note that there is a chance that during the next five years the United States, Japan, China, and either both Koreas or one Korea could be led by a new cast of characters. Because of that political volatility all parties should carefully consider their options, weigh the alternatives, and pre-

pare contingency plans. The Asian parties in this delicate balance shall do so as their interests dictate and probably will be able to perceive relatively clear-cut agendas. For the reasons outlined above with regard to warranted American ambiguity about a hegemonistic role, the United States is less likely than the others—no matter who leads in Washington—to create a clear policy blueprint. Because of this evolving tendency to pursue a reactive policy rather than set the pace and tone for the Northeast Asian region, the states of the region need to adjust to a more accommodationist America and to pay greater attention to their own strategic visions that will in the long run shape East Asia's balance of power.

In that light and in order to close on an upbeat note, these circumstances may be conducive to an indirect American initiative supportive of Asian initiatives. If Americans are unlikely to pursue bold initiatives and run risks for Asian peace, and that seems to be a prudent assumption, there is no reason why the United States cannot make a virtue out of its relative passivity by indicating its receptivity to leadership initiatives from Asian countries. Such a reactive policy of indirection actually would be very "Asian," giving potential proponents enough wiggle room to avoid losing face. Were any country in Asia to devise such a proposal, put it on the table for consideration, and work toward fostering a consensus about its desirability and feasibility, it could work. Moreover, it could yield an Asian form of stability without undue overt dependence on the United States.

The possibilities in this regard are as diverse as the imagination of Asia's leaders. For present purposes, however, the United States could—and should—indicate its readiness to consider and support ideas from Korea (South and North) about resolving tensions on the peninsula, and creating new security structures, developing broader and more flexible approaches to regional security. Given the uncertainties about Korea's future status as a unified country, and what that may imply for the United States' commitment to its security,[30] it is important that Koreans and Americans be prepared to contemplate a wide range of contingencies. Leadership in that process is best shared, rather than imposed by one side.

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notes for chapter two

1. For a review of that transition, see Edward A. Olsen and David Winterford, "Asian Multilateralism: Implications for U.S. Policy," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Summer 1994): pp. 9-40.

2. The most cogent and persuasive critique is Chalmers Johnson and E.B. Keehn, "The Pentagon's Ossified Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1995): pp. 103-114.

3. This pungent phrase was used by a panel of experts to summarize the prevailing view held by Asian critics of U.S. policy toward Asia at a U.S. Air Force-sponsored conference on Asian Regional Security Issues, Airlie House, Warrenton, Virginia, 26-27 June 1996.

4. The leading proponent of that view in the Clinton administration was Joseph Nye. See his "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1995): pp. 90-102, and *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990). See, also, Joshua Muravchik, *The Imperative of American Leadership, A Challenge to Neo-Isolationism* (Washington: The AEI Press, 1996).

5. For analyses of Chinese policies that could precipitate a new containment policy by the U.S., see the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (13 April 1995): pp. 24-30; *The Washington Post Weekly* (31 July-6 August 1995): pp. 16-17; and Ron Montaperto, "China as a Military Power," *NDU Strategic Forum* (December 1995).

6. For an example of Americans who share this desire that the United States pursue a role as a "benevolent hegemon," see William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward A Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996): pp. 18-32.

7. James C. Thompson, Jr., Peter W. Stanley, and John Curtis Perry, *Sentimental Imperialists: The American Experience in East Asia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

8. The author examined the crucial differences between these labels in "In Defense of International Abstention," *Strategic Review* (Spring 1996): pp. 58-63.

9. For a recent example of American advocacy of greater clarity in U.S. policy toward Asia, see Daniel I. Okimoto, Henry S. Rowen, Michel Oksenberg, James H. Raphael, Thomas P. Rohlen, Donald K. Emmerson, and Michael H.

Armacost, *A United States Policy for the Changing Realities of East Asia* (Stanford: Asia/Pacific Research Center, Stanford University, 1996).

10. Portions of this section appeared in the *Nikkei Weekly* (19 August 1996), under the title "Liberal U.S. Motives Have Conservative Results in Security Pact."

11. Ted Galen Carpenter, Cato Foreign Policy Briefing No. 41, 16 May 1996.

12. *U.S.-Japan Strategic Reciprocity* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985).

13. For an explanation of the nuances of this kind of dependency, see Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1971).

14. For an overview of those anxieties, see Song Young-sun, "Korean Concern on the New U.S.-Japan Security Arrangement," *Korea and World Affairs* (Summer 1996): pp. 197-218.

15. For a cross-section of South Korean views of Japan's place in a U.S.-guided Asian security system, see Rhee Sang-woo, "Japan's Role in New Asia Order," *Korea Focus* (May-June 1996): pp. 22-36; and Han Sung-joo, "New U.S.-Japan Security Ties, *Dong-A Ilbo*, 28 April 1996 (reprinted in Korea Focus, May-June 1996, pp. 126-127).

16. For examples of innovative Korean strategic thinking, see Rhee Sang-woo, "New Defense Posture for Next Century," *Korea Focus* (March-April 1995): pp. 59-69; and Park Yong-ok, "Korea's Defense for the 21st Century," *Korea and World Affairs* (Spring 1996): pp. 22-35.

17. Analysis in support of a growing partnership is presented in Kim Hong-nak, "The United States and Korea: Dynamics of Political and Security Relations in the 1990s," *Korea and World Affairs* (Spring 1995): pp. 5-28; and Jonathan D. Pollack and Cha Young-koo, *A New Alliance For The Next Century, The Future of US-Korean Security Cooperation* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1996).

18. One Korean analyst, even prior to that summit, stated "the era of the United States giving top priority to South Korea in its policy toward the Korean Peninsula seems to be fading," Park Bong-shik, "Changing Korea-U.S. Relations," *Korea Focus* (September-October 1995): pp. 13-23.

19. For analysis of the pros and cons of a broader spectrum, see *Evolving Multilateral Security Regime in Northeast Asia* (Seoul: Institute of Foreign Affairs

and National Security, 1994); and Ralph A. Cossa, "Multilateral Dialogue in Asia: Benefits and Limitations," *Korea and World Affairs* (Spring 1995): pp. 106-120. For a Korean perception of Asian multilateralism, see Ahn Byung-joon, "Regionalism in the Asia-Pacific," *Korea Focus* (July-August 1996): pp. 5-31.

20. This issue is evaluated in Thomas H. Henriksen and Kyongsoo Lho, eds., *One Korea? Challenges and Prospects for Reunification* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1994); Nicholas Eberstadt, *Korea Approaches Unification* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995); and Ahn Byung-joon, "Korea-U.S. Alliance Toward Unification," *Korea Focus* (March-April 1996): pp. 5-19.

21. For an analysis that is sympathetic to South Korean perceptions that U.S. policy toward North Korea verges on "appeasement," and—while noting with regard to the alleged spying that "there is no justification for such unfriendly action by South Korea"—is empathetic toward Seoul's desire for more candor by American officials, see Daryl M. Plunk, "Weak-Kneed On North Korea," *The Washington Post Weekly*, 7-13 October 1996, pp. 22-23.

22. For an explanation of that reluctance, see Kim Sung-han, "The Future of Korea-U.S. Alliance," *Korea and World Affairs* (Summer 1996): pp. 184-196.

23. For an example of creative Korean thinking about ROK geopolitical and diplomatic alternatives, see Paik Jin-hyun, "New Direction for Korean Diplomacy," *Korea Focus* (January-February 1996): pp. 12-17.

24. For analysis of these alternatives, see Lee Hyock-sup and Reinhard Drifte, "The Internationalization of the Korean Security Issue: A Way Forward?", *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Winter 1995): pp. 167-192.

25. For coverage of the NEASD, see *The Korea Herald*, 12 May 1996, p. 2.

26. Examples are assessed in Owen Greene, *Confidence Building in North-East Asia* (Bradford: University of Bradford, Arms Register Studies, 1996).

27. The author examined these in "Post-Cold War Confidence Building Measures in Northeast Asia," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (Summer/Fall 1995): pp. 252-287; see also Edward J. Laurence, "Promoting CBMs on the Korean Peninsula: The Role of Building Institutions," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Winter 1995): pp. 193-216.

28. For a sound example of such positive "spin," see Ungsuh K. Park, "The Impact of APEC: A Private Sector View," *Korea and World Affairs* (Winter 1995): pp. 632-645.

29. Press reports suggest that Washington and Tokyo are reconciling their levels of cooperation in the event of another major conflict in Korea, *The Korea Herald*, 18 September 1996, p. 1, citing the *Asahi Shimbun*. Nonetheless, there is ample reason to be skeptical about any Japanese commitment to help rescue Korea militarily.

30. For evaluations of that future, see Paul H. Kreisberg, "Threat Environment for a United Korea: 2010," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Summer 1996): pp. 77-109. See also the author's "The Role of Major Powers in Creating Peace on the Korean Peninsula: A U.S. Perspective on the 21st Century" (presented at the 7th International Defense Conference, Korean Institute for Defense Analyses, Seoul, 4-6 November 1996).