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International Relations of East Asia in Transition, and ASEAN, China, the United States and Japan

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International Relations of East Asia in Transition, and ASEAN, China, the United States and Japan^{*}

(東アジア国際関係の変容とアセアン・中国・アメリカ・日本)

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Introduction

With the Cold War finally coming to an end by the end of 1991, together with the rapid economic growth of the People's Republic of China (China) in the 1980s, East Asian international relations in the early 1990s seemed to be experiencing a great transition and instability. Since then, academics and journalists have tried to predict how the East Asian international relations in the twenty-first century would look like, on the assumptions that the end of the Cold War and the rise of China would change international structure of the region to a great extent and China would come to play a larger role than before in the international affairs.

Pessimists predicted that Asia after the Cold War would become a multipolar and unstable region. To take one example, Aaron L. Friedberg, a political scientist at Princeton University, the United States, presented this kind of pessimistic view in the early 1990s [Friedberg 1993/1994]. Some even proclaimed that war between the United States and China would be inevitable [バーンスタイン, マンロー]. Optimists, on the other hand, argued that East Asia would be a more stable region than before for the variety of reasons. FUNABASHI Yoichi (船橋洋一), a highly acclaimed journalist of Japan, in his award winning book, *Asia-Pacific Fusion*, published in 1995 illustrated dynamic moves toward the regional integration of Asia that were changing Asia-Pacific international relations and the whole region, the dynamics which Funabashi called "Asia-Pacific Fusion" [船橋]. Amitav Acharya, a political scientist at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, argued the international order of Asia in the twenty-first century would become stable. He pointed out that the development of human and other networks, the increased level of economic integration, as well as the increased number of nations that share norms in international relations in the region were shaping more stable Asian international order [Acharya]. Experiences in the nearly two decades since the end of the Cold War have not yet succeeded in providing hard evidence to make conclusive judgments on these two diversified views on Asia [Lampton; Christensen 2006; Friedberg 2005; Shambaugh 2005; Mahbubani; Kang; Ross; Goldstein; Lieberthal].

Adding on to those already presented findings and arguments, this paper, yet as another effort to answer to the question mentioned earlier, tries to portray changing faces of international relations in East Asia in the past two decades, with focus on key actors, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, the United States and Japan, and interactions among them. Sections and discuss increasingly growing roles of China and ASEAN in new international order in East Asia. China responded to the structural changes of East Asia and managed to change its policies for the region in the mid-1990s, and China began to engage itself more actively than before in multilateral frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region. China's policy changes, in reverse, have helped to bring China and ASEAN in the center of international order of East Asia. Sections and take a look at the U.S.-China-Japan triangular relations and inquire into the implications of Taiwan on the relations.

. The New International Order of East Asia

International order in East Asia witnessed significant changes in the past two decades. With the Cold War coming to an end, expanding diplomatic relations among East Asian nations at the bilateral level and efforts to bring multilateral frameworks in East Asia firm in place paved the way for new East Asian international order. In 1990 China normalized its relationship with Indonesia and Singapore, while the Republic of Korea (South Korea) established a formal relationship with the Soviet Union. In 1991 South Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) joined the United Nations simultaneously, and the next year China and South Korea established a formal relationship between the two. The beginning of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) unofficial summit meetings in 1993 indicated the historic tide moving toward the integration of the Asia-Pacific region reached to a higher level. ASEAN in 1994 organized the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in order to provide opportunities with the foreign ministers of 17 nations in the Asia-Pacific region and the representative of EU to talk about security issues in the region. Two years later, ASEAN hosted the first ASEM meeting, the summit meeting among nations in Asia and Europe, in Bangkok in 1996. These developments helped to create an East Asia covered with multilateral and multi-layered regional frameworks and dialogue opportunities in which ASEAN was supposed to play significant roles [Leifer].

In spite of great setbacks the Asian currency crisis of 1997-1998 brought to the region's economy, ASEAN has continued to pursue the integration of Southeast Asia, and has committed to expand multilateral frameworks on a broader basis with non-ASEAN actors since the late 1990s. ASEAN impressively expanded itself and strengthened the regional integrity. ASEAN, originally created in 1967 by 5 Southeast Asian nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand), added to its membership Brunei Darussalam in 1984, Viet Nam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and finally Cambodia in 1999. After more than 30 years since its foundation, ASEAN accomplished its goal to become a truly regional organization that included all the 10 nations in the Southeast Asian region (ASEAN 10). In 1997, ASEAN adopted ASEAN Vision 2020, which promised to establish "ASEAN Community" by 2020. In the same year, in an effort to accomplish that goal, ASEAN began to invite China, Japan and South Korea to official/unofficial summit conferences and related meetings of ministers (ASEAN+3). It has also hosted East Asian Summit meetings (ASEAN+3, India, Australia and New Zealand) three times since December 2005. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of ASEAN, all the ASEAN nations signed the ASEAN Charter in November 2007 [Narine; Simon].

The development of multilateral and multi-layered frameworks in East Asia after the Cold War changed the region to a great extent. East Asia is becoming a region covered with the web of frameworks with ASEAN in its center. When one remembers that East Asia in the Cold War years was a region with bilateral "hub and spokes" security arrangements (the "hub" being the United States) and the significance of ASEAN was still limited, one needs to admit that this change is highly remarkable [山本].

. China Changes its East Asian Policies

Faced with China's rapidly growing economic and military power and regional disputes over territory and national borderlines involving China, states in East Asia in the early 1990s voiced growing concern that China might become a military threat and a destroyer of the regional international order. However, the views that portrayed China as a threat to the security of the neighboring nations seemed to have receded. What changed the way the nations in the region look at China was China's policy changes. Responding to international structural changes at both global and regional levels after the Cold War, China has managed to adapt its policies for East Asia to the newly emerging international environment.

Changes in China's foreign policy were indicated in its new posture toward regional multilateral frameworks. China seemed to begin to engage itself to regional multilateral arrangements more sincerely in the late 1990s. At the third working session of the ARF held in July 1996, China abandoned its previous position that a multilateral framework should not deal with territorial disputes, and agreed to set up a multilateral arrangement to discuss territorial disputes such as one over the Spratly Islands. China also proposed in the same meeting that additional measures should be taken to improve mutual inspection of military exercises conducted by member nations. In addition, China announced for the first time its new security concept (NSC), which emphasized "to conduct dialogue, consultation, and negotiation on an equal footing...to solve disputes and safeguard peace. Only by developing a new security concept and establishing a fair and reasonable new international order can world peace and security be fundamentally guaranteed" [Shambaugh 2004/2005: 69; 高木; 『朝日新聞』; *Southeast Asian Affairs* 1996]. These were clear signs that China would actively participate in multilateral institutions created and supported by ASEAN.

The Asian currency crisis of 1997-1998 marked another turning point for China to create better relations with ASEAN. China keenly understood that the economic prosperity of China was deeply related to that of other East Asian nations when the crisis hit the region. Acting upon this understanding, China never devalued its currency during the crisis, but offered low-interest loans and aid packages to some Southeast Asian nations, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was reluctant to respond to the crisis as bold as China did. The governments of Southeast Asian nations highly appreciated the responsible actions taken by the government of China during the crisis, and the behavior of China helped to create better images of itself among Southeast Asian states. On the other hand, the success of their responses to the crisis gave the leaders of China confidence as a regional leader. Thus, the Asian currency crisis of 1997-1998 brought a good opportunity to make a better relationship between China and ASEAN [Shambaugh 2004/2005].

China moved to strengthen its ties with ASEAN. Eventually in 2002, five years after China joined ASEAN+3 summit conferences, China and ASEAN signed four major agreements, including the

Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. At the summit meeting of the next year 2002, China signed ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, becoming the first non-ASEAN state to do so. On the same day, China and ASEAN signed the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity. By signing the treaty and the declaration, China committed itself to the principles of nonaggression and noninterference, principles ASEAN had long advocated. These developments reflected the perception on the Chinese side that China's involvement in the multilateral institutions and building a friendly relationship with ASEAN would be China's interest. ASEAN, on the other hand, found it their interest to engage China in the rules of behavior ASEAN endorsed [Narine; Jones and Smith; Shambaugh 2004/2005; 青山].

China's interests in "confidence building" with the ASEAN member states increased. At the ARF-Inter-Sessional meeting in November 2003, China presented a "concept paper" which proposed that various measures aimed at confidence building be taken. The concept paper indicated China's willingness to discuss security issues which it had been unwilling to do so previously in the ARF. China proposed to discuss such issues as military strategies and doctrines of member nations, the revolution in military affairs (RMA), and other related issues. ASEAN realized the importance of China's proposal and immediately agreed to it. As a result, high-ranking military officers from twenty-four ARF member states and dialogue partners met in November 2004 in Beijing to talk about security policies. This was an unprecedented conference within the ARF framework [Shambaugh 2004/2005].

While it has been enhancing its ties with ASEAN, China earnestly engaged itself in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Six-Party Talks on the Korean Peninsula. The SCO was organized in 2001 with a permanent secretariat headquarters in Beijing by six member nations: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. It mainly focused on the threat of terrorism, but expanded its scope to include economic cooperation [青山]. China has played instrumental roles in the Six-Party Talks on the Korean Peninsula, too. Since August 2003, six nations (China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States) have occasionally met in Beijing with China as the chair nation. North Korea, which conducted nuclear tests in October 2006, in the Six-Party Talks in February 2007 promised to stop its nuclear weapons development programs on some conditions. Later in October the same year, North Korea agreed to make the full disclosure of its nuclear programs.

Since the late 1990s China's policies for East Asia have put more emphasis on enhancing its ties with nations in the region and engaging itself more actively to multilateral frameworks and to "confidence building" measures. Partly reflecting China's interest in balancing the influences of the United States in the region [Mederios], thus China responded to the structural changes of East Asian international order and helped to underpin the new order.

. China-the United States-Japan Triangular Relations and the Unresolved Issue of Taiwan

Even though China and ASEAN have established friendlier relations than ever and East Asia has become a region covered with multilateral and multi-layered frameworks, still some security issues related to the difficult relationship between China and Taiwan, including the possibility of armed conflicts between the two nations with the United States militarily involved, are something the ARF and other existing multilateral frameworks cannot effectively resolve. This is partly because Taiwan is not a member of the ARF or any other frameworks ASEAN established (North Korea joined the ARF in 2000) [松田]. The Taiwan issue will remain unresolved for some time to come as a bone in the throat for states in the region, the United States, China and Japan in particular, whose triangular relations will shape the international order of East Asia in the twenty-first century to a great extent.

To the contrary to worries presented by some observers that serious conflicts might arise between rapidly rising China and the United States before long, the leaders of China seem to assume that time is on their side, and they probably believe avoiding serious conflicts or war with the United States until China achieves the real "great power" status serves the best interest of the nation. As long as the first priority for China up to the year 2050 is to become an economically developed and civilized socialist nation, China would avoid serious conflicts or war with the United States until it accomplishes its national goal. This attitude of the Chinese leaders largely results from their acceptance of the U.S. hegemony as inevitable facts of life in the world in general and in the East Asian region in particular. They seem to assume that though the U.S. superiority would not last forever, the U.S. hegemony in the region will stay in the place for sometime [Jisi; Bijiang].

In fact, the United States and China have kept good records in their relations since 9/11, 2001. China wasted no time in indicating her willingness to support U.S. efforts in the "war on terrorism." China not only supported the United Nations resolutions which would allow the United States to conduct military operations in Afghanistan, but also gave pieces of information on terrorist activities in Afghanistan to the United States. After the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) admitted in October 2002 its renewed efforts in developing nuclear weapons, the United States actively worked with China inside and outside of the Six-Party Talks to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons (Though it conducted nuclear tests in October 2006, North Korea agreed to halt its nuclear weapons development programs in February 2007). In addition, China, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, was not opposed to the U.S. attacks on Iraq in March 2003 [秋田].

The moment which highlighted the good relations between the two states came when the leaders of the United States and China seemed to agree that they would not welcome the independence of Taiwan. At the press conference with PRC Prime Minister Wen Jiabao (温家宝) on December 9, 2003 in the White

House, U.S. President George W. Bush indicated the United States did not support the course Taiwan was taking at that time toward independence. "We oppose," he stated, "any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo" [Bush and Wen]. Wen Jiabao did not disagree. This was an unprecedented occasion on which the leaders of the two nations agreed to explicitly warn Taipei not to seek independence unilaterally.

Yet, the United States is increasingly concerned about the rapid development of the Chinese military power. In its report presented to Congress in March 2008, U.S. Department of Defense observed that "China's expanding and improving military capabilities are changing East Asian military balances; improvements in China's strategic capabilities have implications beyond the Asia-Pacific region." However, it admitted that China had not yet acquired "the military capability to accomplish with confidence its political objectives on the island" of Taiwan [U. S. Department of Defense 2008].

In preparing for contingencies that might arise in East Asia, the United States has enhanced security ties with Japan since the end of the Cold War. In April 1996, one year after the publication of the so-called Nye Report, U.S. Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, the United States and Japan "reconfirmed" their security relations, and expanded the scope of U.S.-Japan security cooperation from one focused on Far East to another focused on the much larger Asia-Pacific region. The revised U.S.-Japan defense guidelines of 1997 aimed to give Japan a much more active role than ever in helping U.S. military activities in contingencies on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait. They also stated that the scope of the U.S.-Japan security alliance would cover "situations in the areas surrounding Japan," leaving the definition of the areas be determined by "situational" terms rather than "geographic" terms [U. S. Department of Defense 1995; 梅林]. The transformation of the U.S.-Japan security alliance alarmed China. President Jiang Zemin (江泽民) announced that China would be on "high alert" [Midford: 114; Christensen 1999: 63; Wu] immediately after the release of the revised U.S.-Japan defense guidelines.

In China's perspective, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was something like "a cap in the bottle" to prevent Japan from becoming a military threat to East Asian nations again. This was the very reason China eventually came to see the treaty not as a threat, but as an asset for China. Yet, the transformation of U.S.-Japan security relations in the past almost two decades might have changed this kind of Chinese perception of the U.S.-Japan relations [Midford; Wu].

U.S.-China-Japan triangular relations are likely to experience difficult time over the unresolved issue of Taiwan for years to come. As noted earlier, the United States and China came to share the view that Taiwan should not obtain independence "unilaterally." The United States does not oppose the independence of Taiwan as a goal, but it opposes any change of the status quo of Taiwan by force. Therefore, as long as Taiwan remains in the status quo, the United States would live with it. Japan holds the same position on Taiwan. On the other hand, China maintains that Taiwan is an indispensable part of the nation, and it has aimed to bring Taiwan under its sovereignty since the communist party established the PRC government in 1949. China would not hesitate to use military forces to accomplish the national

goal if necessary, and it might take a risk of facing a military showdown with the United States for that purpose or stopping Taiwan becoming an independent state.

Nevertheless, China, the United States and Japan do have one thing on Taiwan in common: they all agree that there is only one China. The three governments share the idea that the government in Beijing, not one in Taipei, is the legitimate government of China. Given this is the case, as long as the status of Taiwan remains the same, and China and Taiwan are satisfied with it, then no serious conflict is likely to occur among the three nations over Taiwan. What is needed is an international environment helpful to bring China and Taiwan to an agreement through peaceful means and process on the future relationship between the two.

. Moving to Improved Relations?

Recent developments seem to indicate that the key nations concerning the Taiwan issue are on the right track. Relations among China, the United States, Japan and Taiwan are improving for the moment at least.

Political changes in Taiwan in 2008 marked the beginning of the new era in the China-Taiwan relations. The new Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), who entered the office on May 20, 2008, is likely to change the provocative course his predecessor took toward the independence of Taiwan. President Ma had promised to improve relations with Beijing while he was on his election campaign, and he seems to be working on his promises. At Great Hall of the People in Beijing on May 28, President of China/Secretary General of the CCP Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) met Taiwan's majority party (Kuomintang, KMT) leader, Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄), to exchange their views for the first time since 1949, when the Kuomintang fled to Taiwan. In June, China and Taiwan agreed to expand direct-chartered flights across the strait on a regular and broader basis. To be sure, these are good signs which imply that tensions across the strait are decreasing and the two nations are trying to establish friendlier relations between them.

The China-Japan relations are also improving. After the cold years between the two nations when neither head of the two governments visited the other's capital for 5 years until October 2006, the ice began to break. Surprisingly enough, after long disputes between Beijing and Tokyo, in June 2008 China and Japan finally agreed to co-develop natural gas resources in the East China Sea.

The United States has managed to reduce to some extent the threat it was worried about: nuclear weapons development by North Korea. In accordance with its pledge North Korea made in the Six-Party Talks in October 2007, the government in Pyongyang with some delay in June 2008 made what was supposed to be the "full" disclosure of its nuclear development programs. After this disclosure, the United States announced its intent to remove North Korea from its list of terrorism-sponsoring states, and it actually did so in fall 2008. The United States and China cooperated to a great degree inside and outside the official Six-Party Talks to bring North Korea to halt its nuclear weapons programs.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to illustrate changes in East Asian international relations in the past two decades with emphasis on the role ASEAN and China played. The responses of ASEAN and China to the structural changes of East Asia caused by the end of Cold War and the expanded power of China, have helped to bring on a firm basis the emerging new international order of East Asia with ASEAN (probably ASEAN and China in the near future) in its center. Rapidly rising China is likely to play the role of a status quo power, and not a destroyer, of the East Asian international order in the first half of the twenty-first century.

This paper has also examined U.S.-China-Japan triangular relations, and has discussed that the basic workable understanding on which the three nations can work together to resolve the Taiwan issue do exist. The three nations and Taiwan seem to be heading for better relations among them for the moment at least. Improved relations between China and Taiwan and good relations among the four states in the region are the necessary condition to establish international environment helpful to solve the Taiwan issue, and to bring out the eventual peaceful unification of China and Taiwan in the future, no matter how distant it really is.

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東アジア国際関係の変容とアセアン・中国・アメリカ・日本

山田 康博

要 旨

冷戦終結後の20年間における東アジア国際関係の変容を素描して、ASEANと中国が、生まれつつある新しい東アジア国際秩序の核となっていることを強調した。また、主として台湾をめぐるアメリカ=中国=日本の三国間の関係に焦点をあてて、これら三国間には台湾をめぐる協調関係を築いていく基盤が存在していることを指摘した。

東亞國際關係變遷中的東盟、中國、美國與日本

山田 康博

提 要

本文通過整理和分析冷戰結束後20年間東亞國際關係內涵的變遷過程，提出了東盟與中國已經上昇為漸成氣候的東亞國際關係新秩序的核心力量。另外，本文進一步考察了圍繞臺灣問題上美國、日本與中國之間呈現的互動局面，闡述了三國之間共建協商關係的外交基礎。

担当委員（秋田茂）

<http://www.law.osaka-u.ac.jp/~c-forum/box2/discussionpaper.htm>