

# An Emerging Security Triangle? A Japanese View (Part 1)

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## Introduction

Three primordial structural features that underline regional security politics need to be briefly touched on before examining an emerging security triangle in broader East Asia (Blackwill & Dibb, 2000; Inoguchi, 2002). By broader East Asia I mean Northeast and Southeast Asia, Oceania and the South Pacific. The three primordial structural features

means the United States predominance, deepening global integration and resilient “transnational” forces (Inoguchi, 1997). Asking a rhetorical question, “Could you tell me the most powerful air force and the second most powerful air force in the world?” can highlight the first feature. The most powerful is obviously the U.S. Air Force. The second is neither the Russian, nor the Chinese, nor any other country’s air force but the U.S. Navy. In an intermediate term projection, one might as well take a glance at weapons research and development expenditure. The United States expenditure in research and development of weapons has exceeded 85% of its world total. Projected into the future military array of the United States, the figure makes it

nearly certain that the United States will keep its predominance for the next 20-30 years given the lead time necessary to materialize weapons R&D expenditure.

Global integration deepens year by year. When Richard O’Brien published the book, *Global Financial Integration; The End of Geography*, in 1992, he argued that the tyranny of distance had vanished at least in global finance. In other words, global financial integration spearheaded the end of geography and made a leap forward at the time of the Plaza Accord of 1985. In 2004, when the Madrid Agreement was reached with respect to the pledges of major powers and international institutions to help Iraq to reconstruct itself, Anne-Marie Slaughter published a book arguing that global governance has been already practiced. By global governance she means something that is akin to the functioning mechanism of handling major issues on a global scale, relying heavily on the transnational consultations and coordination of the professional units of many governments.

Resilient “transnational” forces mean those that are encouraged to assert themselves through transnational diffusion and networks when the national integrative forces wax in tandem with globalizing trends. Those forces were played down by national centripetal forces in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They include all the subnational, transnational and supranational actors, groups and institutions with distinct messages. What Robert Cooper calls pre-modern forces were merely played down in much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by the strong nationalism and nation-state formation during that period. Those forces were strong in the pre-nationalist period of human history and they have regained their strength somewhat at a time when globalizing trends are gathering in force by disaggregating the national policy and economy and linking their disaggregated forces across national borders.

These three structural forces are

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The U.S. Navy is the second most powerful air force in the world

strong and ubiquitous. They are not confined to broader East Asia. I want to stress these structural features do matter when regional security politics is examined in the broader East Asian context.

### The emerging security triangle—Tokyo, Canberra and Washington

There have been two periods when Tokyo, Canberra and Washington formed a virtual alliance or a very weak form of de facto policy alignment. The first period was the regional economic integration during the late 1960s and the 1970s. It was the period when Japan and Australia had an enormously big profile in the region in terms of per capita gross national product (GNP) and trade volume. Edwin Reischauer, the United States Ambassador to Japan (1961-66), was fond of using a world map in which the size of a country is proportional to its per capita GNP. In the Asia-Pacific region, the United States, Japan and Australia looked really enormous. The countries sandwiched between them were rather weak players at least economically. This was a virtual alliance between Tokyo and Canberra aimed at forging a trade-focused regional framework. As long as security issues for Tokyo and Canberra were shouldered more or less by the United States in the region, what was regarded as a real necessity was to make its vast space a region of something. Given the strident tide of the Japanese economy in the 1960s it was quite natural for the enlightened leaders in Tokyo and Canberra like Okita Saburo, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs and John Crawford to come up with such a vision and an action plan. The vision was also natural when the region did not look tidy at least when it was viewed from Tokyo and Canberra. The Vietnam War continued between 1965 and 1975. China was in turmoil from the Cultural Revolution through the rule of the Gang of Four.

In the security realm, there was not much Tokyo and Canberra could do to augment the needs of the United States except that both gave strong commit-

ment and facilities that have been indispensable to the United States in the region. Only the United States had an alliance with each of them. But in economics both envisaged a bright future for the region, focusing on the elementary stage of regional integration Bella Balassa theorized. The first stage is that of free trade on a regional scale. Non-governmental regional organizations were a driving liberalizing force. This was also natural since the inter-governmental organization called the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was meant to be the universal global organization to monitor international trade and promote free trade. The Kennedy Round of GATT (1964-67) focused almost exclusively on the Atlantic trade regime. It is ironic that inter-governmental trade liberalization on a regional scale came only a few decades later in the 2000s.

The second period of a virtual alliance between Tokyo and Canberra is only recent. In sharp contrast to the first period, it does not focus on trade and economic regimes. It rather eyes regional security. This does not mean to say that trade and economic dimensions have been played down, trade and economic dimensions are being played separately from security dimensions this time. Nowadays, trade and economic discussions do not touch on security dimensions largely because the economic development of those regional countries were believed to be the most important to regional security enhancement a la W.W. Rostow (1956). Free trade was deemed to be a sine qua non for economic development according to the neoclassical persuasion of economics. Besides GATT was a universal liberalizing agent of world free trade. Any talk on regional FTAs would have been a heresy to the economic orthodox of the period. Bilateral or regional regimes would rather distort the universal principle and



The GATT Kennedy Round, held on May 16, 1967. Minister Miyazawa Kiichi and Ambassador Aoki Morio (center-right)

structure and therefore benefits accrue from universal free trade. This time, given the difficulties associated with the World Trade Organization (WTO), bilateral and regional FTAs are in vogue in the region. Yearning for the ever-liberalizing trade and market opportunities, global capital flowing in massive amounts tenaciously and aggressively seeks the eradication of barriers to its freedom. As one of the few regions of the world, which have been a sort of latecomer, in the game of free trade regimes, bilateral or region-wide, a broader East Asia has been of late almost frantic in making the best use of bilateral and regional FTAs. China's vigorous economic development for the last 25 years has been driving China to ever-expanding market opportunities, and so do China's economic partners in the region and beyond. It is as if the Chinese market visibly lures China's partners, nearby and from afar alike. A huge amount of foreign direct investment has been accumulated in China. The China factor has been important in terms of China's high economic growth performance and its ramifications for its economic neighbors and partners. **JS**

(Continued in Part 2)

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