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The United States in Multilateral East Asia

Dealing with the Rise of China

Chika Yamamoto

The rise of China as an economic and military actor has rapidly gained attention from the United States and elsewhere in the world. Whether China will challenge US hegemony and leadership has been at the forefront of international political debate, and many scholars and researchers have attempted to answer the question from various aspects. However, there is no easy answer. Not only does a deepening economic relationship between China and the United States pose difficulty for Washington to clearly determine its view of China as a rival or threat, but to a lesser extent there is also uncertainty in the emergence of China itself. Debates continue over whether China's development in economic and security fields will be sustainable. Former US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage observed in 2009, "Until China can be more transparent, we will continue to have questions."[1]

Yet a deeper concern has remained—Is Washington fundamentally capable of dealing with China? One must wonder if US leadership is too inflexible to grasp the dynamics and complexity surrounding the rise of China. Francis Fukuyama points out that while Washington may have been attentive, such behavior may arise from its inability to adjust its view to comprehend the emergence of China. He doubts there is a "well-thought-out, long-term strategy."[2] Washington simply may not know how to respond to China. Marc Beeson posits, "The fact that the United States finds it too difficult to react to China's rise with any consistency tells us much about the constraints on and counterproductive nature of American leadership in the contemporary era."[3] He raises a similar question to Fukuyama—whether or not Washington is capable of understanding what exactly the rise of China is and how it may impact US policy. These questions

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are worth considering—not to directly suggest a practical policy but to provide greater understanding and awareness of latent issues of US leadership in dealing with China.

The central argument compares the contemporary, power-oriented leadership role of Washington to Beijing's multilateral approach toward East Asia and maintains that the difficulty of Washington to draw a practical policy toward China is attributable to a conceptual difference in thinking about how leadership is obtained and exercised.[4] Beijing's multilateral approach toward East Asia demonstrates the profound impact of China, which Washington may not have been able to fully capture. This implicates Washington's insufficient attention to how Beijing exercises its leadership role in a relative and indirect manner, while tending to give greater diligence on power projection at a bilateral level.

US Power Politics and Unilateralism

According to previous works, Washington views the emergence of China as a hegemonic rivalry between the United States and China. It primarily has encountered policymaking toward China as if the rising China urgently and solely relates to a competition for *who will lead the world*. The principal analysis compares power capabilities—both tangible and intangible, such as military capability, economic size, and ideational powers to influence others—which are the main sources determining a nation's strategic choices. Right or wrong, much of the current literature on China has supported such an analytical framework.[5] One way to think of this trend is as a long-existing influence of realist thought on the discipline of international relations. As one of the mainstream ideas of Western scholarship, realism assumes that the primary purpose of states is to strive for power and to survive in an anarchic world. Neorealists, in particular, draw attention to the idea of balance of power. States are likely to measure power capabilities to secure their interests and maintain influence so they can pursue their interests.[6] John Mearsheimer explains that hegemony is an ultimate form of power balancing. He argues that "states recognize that the best way to survive in such a system is to be as powerful as possible relative to potential rivals."[7] Mark Beeson notes, "One state will assume a paramount position" because hegemony can "organize political, territorial, and especially economic relations [globally] in terms of their respective security and economic interests." Consequently, hegemony will "try

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and suppress rivals."[8] As the United States has reached such a hegemonic status, a large volume of literature has, thus, been linked to realist insights. One outcome is a spread of conventional wisdom not only within a circle of political scientists, but also to many observers across the world—a rising power (China) would inevitably challenge the existing hegemon (the United States).[9]

Washington's power-oriented view toward China is not merely a theoretical matter. Modern history has revealed a continuous clash between great powers. Mearsheimer points out that Britain in the nineteenth century, Imperial Germany (1900–18), Imperial Japan (1931–45), Nazi Germany (1933–45), and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (1945–89) have all confronted the United States, in particular, for the purpose of obtaining supreme authority.[10] Beeson also argues that such competitions between great powers, along with a few cases that have shown cooperation between these powers, have increasingly become accepted as a "cyclical" trend—one power will be replaced with another because they cannot coexist with each other on the same status quo.[11] Joseph Nye adds that the source of American power then had to be predominantly based on its military capability.[12] Hence, it is plausible for Washington to think that a hegemonic power and a rising power would always confront each other for greater influence; it is inevitable for it to view China within a context of a hegemonic rivalry.

The US unilateral practice as hegemon in East Asia after World War II not only gave legitimacy to the power-oriented nature of US politics, but also built such practice as a crucial element necessary for successful foreign policy. The regional order of East Asia has been strongly influenced by American power since 1945, characterized as the US unilateral, military-dominant, "hub-and-spoke" system embedded in the region today.[13] The core of such a regional order was a bilateral tie between the United States and its various allies. This arrangement not only enabled the United States to be engaged in both security and economic matters of the region but also involved it in critical moments that determined much of the geopolitical fates of East Asian nations and regional order. For instance, the United States was a major actor in military conflicts in the region—the Korean War (1950–53), the Vietnam conflict (1960–75), and a series of Taiwan Strait crises (1950–95). The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union further exemplified the power-oriented nature of the US hub-and-spoke system in East Asia. A consequence of the US desire to contain communism in the region resulted in a clear divide between US

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allies and nonallies as well as a continuous belief that the existing counter hegemons would always confront each other for paramount authority.

Equally important, US unilateral leadership gained substantial support from its allies in the region. Through bilateral ties, the United States has been separately involved in several countries' developments; for example, it initiated Japan's postwar reconstruction in extensive ways, from drafting a new constitution to developing its capitalistic economy as well as those of South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Japan's growth to become the world's second-largest economy by the 1980s is one example that proved to East Asian allies that the US model of development in economies and politics was the key for success and prosperity. US involvement in regional organizations to date—such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Six-Party Talks (SPT) regarding North Korea's nuclear issue—has also consolidated the positive view of US unilateral leadership, as other regional organizations without such involvement have continuously failed. John Ikenberry notes that China was well aware of the US hub-and-spoke system, essential to maintain the political stability of the region, and even tacitly supported the system.[14] The collapse of the Soviet Union helped strengthen the positive view of US leadership; the US security regime and American values, such as democracy and capitalism, were not only legitimized but also embraced. Hence, Washington learned that the way to practice leadership was to act overtly and unilaterally with, for the most part, a militaristic approach and has continuously sought the hub-and-spoke relationships in East Asia. It was reasonable for Washington to consider its status primarily based on power. Its unilateral leadership practice was coherent with the regional order.

Washington's power-oriented view has continued into the 2000s. The Bush administration (2001–9) strongly sought maintenance of the US-led security system of East Asia, especially through the US-Japanese bilateral alliance. The rise of China was largely seen as another Soviet Union because China reflected a "classic power transition" through Washington's eyes.[15] Today President Obama seems more open to multilateral leadership shared with a rising China. For instance, a strong condemnation on the lack of transparency in Chinese economic and military development policies was removed from a US white paper in 2009, shifting to a more cooperative and closer relationship with China. Addressing the US-China relationship as one of the most important diplomatic relations for the administration, President Obama visited Shanghai and Beijing immediately

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after his inauguration in 2009. The current Chinese leader Hu Jintao reciprocated by attending the Nuclear Security Summit as well as bilateral talks with Obama.[16] However, as Scott Snyder finds, while the administration avoids unilateral rhetoric, it still emphasizes policies to retain "bilateral ties with traditional allies."[17] Mistrust between Washington and Beijing is apparent at a certain level as Washington seems to consistently hold what China calls a "Cold War mentality."[18] Washington has a mindset that it is highly possible for China to become an enemy or threat to the United States. The collision between a Chinese fishing vessel and a Japanese patrol boat on 7 September 2010 near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands in the East China Sea revealed the lack of a needed structure for multilateralism while reinforcing the hub-and-spoke system. When Japan arrested the captain of the Chinese boat, China halted the export of critical materials to Japan and the United States. This resulted in the new, tighter US-Japan security agreement, which specifically points to how to deal with China.[19] In short, it is understandable that Washington's contemporary thoughts on leadership have been influenced largely by great-power politics. It has learned to exercise a leading role by overtly claiming and securing its interests through power.

China's Multilateral Approach

Is China likely to take such a leadership role? Studies on Beijing's "peaceful rise" or strategy of "peaceful development" have demonstrated that it is unlikely. Research indicates an alternative course for Beijing—to appear as a recognizable power, if not to challenge US hegemony. Put simply, Beijing's approach is seen as multilateralism in contrast to US unilateralism. Denying an overt claim to obtain sole leadership in the world or in East Asia implies that China's motivation is to develop its own economy and security, which intends not to harm or pressure other nations. In practice, China has attempted to emerge within the international community by becoming a *responsible* member and participant in liberal organizations and communities.[20]

One way to analyze Chinese strategy is through its history and political culture and the significant differences in comparison to the West, of which Washington may not be fully aware. Kuik Cheng-Chwee argues that China has viewed the history of the twentieth century through a different lens. Although it recognizes that US unilateral leadership was essential to

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the extent that it stabilized the region at a bipolar level, the history China experienced was "a century of humiliation."[21] China was rather a witness and victim of rises and falls of regional powers, including the Soviet Union and Imperial Japan. In this sense, China is opposed to overtly claiming unilateral leadership. It is aware that doing so can be not only conflictive but also cruel to states that are forcibly involved in competitions between great powers.

Similarly, studies on the origin of the rise of China have given greater attention to philosophical ideas advocated by Deng Xiaoping, who first coined the term "peaceful rise." Deng pictured a peaceful rise of China since the 1970s. Communism was soon to die out in 1978, and Deng began to seek "four modernizations," which list "China's industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology."[22] This concept specifically leads China's economic and, later, military development in a reciprocal manner such that both are meant to serve subordinately to enhance each other. As Kuik noted, one significant idea of Deng was to deny traditional realist thinking that "world war is inevitable" for a nation to rise.[23] The history of the twentieth century revealed an endless competition between great powers. Steve Tsang and Neil Renwick concur that Deng found it unwise to play traditional power politics because great powers would attempt to prevent a rising power from affecting the status quo.[24]

Chinese white papers on national defense in the 2000s have continuously carried the legacy of Deng Xiaoping. Current Chinese leader Hu Jintao stated in 2008, "We will continue to follow the guidance of Deng Xiaoping Theory."[25] Recent reports, titled "China's National Defense," released by the Chinese government in 2008 and 2010 have continuously emphasized "peaceful development" as the principal theme that denies China's intention to challenge US leadership or its hegemonic position.[26] In 2011, China released an additional report called "China's Peaceful Development." It attempts to clarify what is meant by listing "scientific," "independent," "open," "peaceful," "cooperative," and "common" aspects of the strategy, assuring that, once again, this peaceful strategy is primarily designed to develop China's own economy and defense, securing its own favorable environment that is intentionally not hostile toward other nations. Recognizing itself as an important global player, China has also stressed in the report its emergence through organizations and institutions, or within the international community, by becoming a responsible and trustworthy member of these organizations and institutions.[27] Since the 2000s, China has joined

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multiple organizations and concluded cooperative regional agreements, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), APEC, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[28] It has become active particularly in constructing closer relationships with neighboring states in East Asia as well as promoting regional cooperation and integration, so-called East Asian regionalism. Fukuyama adds that China has not interfered in any affairs of others as a main actor or militarily, nor has it imposed the Chinese model of political and economic development on other nations.[29] Christopher Dent also recognizes that Beijing has not claimed to obtain leadership, allowing it to focus on its own economic development and stability, as Deng's philosophy posits.[30]

Coping with the *Hedged* Chinese Aspiration

> *Observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly, hide our capacities and bide our time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership*.[31]
>
> —Deng Xiaoping (1988)

There are interpretations that Beijing has deployed the multilateral approach as a strategic tool to indirectly weaken or limit US hegemony. There is an increasing apprehension in Washington that China has directed its multilateral approach to drive out US influence in East Asia, offering intergovernmental cooperation and building closer relationships with East Asian nations, including US allies. According to William Tow, Beijing has used fine-tuned words and behaviors to *hedge* its actual aspiration, which may involve the will to challenge the hegemony.[32] Hidetaka Yoshimatsu indicates that Beijing's devotion to emerge from liberal institutions and the international community therefore serves to mitigate the "China threat" in the world.[33] Beijing wants to pursue its own goals without triggering a plausible reason for Washington to condemn its rise, which could hinder China's path to achieve its goals and interests. Similarly, Beijing's multilateralism may attempt to distract Washington's attention to investigate China's capability of becoming the hegemon, as Deng's guidance advises to "hide our capacities and bide our time." Zhang Yunling and Alan Alexandroff have stated that as "an insider in the international system . . . China has thus far escaped a more searching examination as a challenger and possible threat to the United States."[34] If Beijing wanted to pursue a supreme position, it would hide this intent

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until it was comfortable and confident to demonstrate the capability to do so. Equally important, China has taken a clear stance toward the United States in the security area. An official report from the Chinese government in 2008 has specified, "In particular, the United States continues to sell arms to Taiwan in violation of the principles established in the three Sino-US joint communiqués, causing serious harm to Sino-US relations as well as peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits."[35] "China's National Defense in 2010" stated that the US alliance with Taiwan will be "severely impeding Sino-US relations." This report added, "Relevant major powers are increasing their strategic investment. The United States is reinforcing its regional military alliances, and increasing its involvement in regional security affairs."[36] These documents clearly indicate that "peaceful development" does not mean that China would never militarily confront the United States in the future. It is important to acknowledge that security relations between the United States and China will remain conflictive, especially as long as the US-Taiwan alliance is kept strong.

However, the real challenge is neither how Washington copes with the hedged realism of China's aspiration to become a unilateral leader nor how it confronts China's clear suspicion toward the United States in security matters. As long as Beijing refrains from explicitly claiming such an intention to take unilateral leadership and does not wage an actual military confrontation with the United States, there are no legitimate reasons for Washington to be assertive—nor does it want to be, considering its close economic interaction with China. Rather, scholars argue that a principal problem centers on a limited scope of US thoughts on leadership. Although China's closer relationship may be directed at constraining US influence in East Asia, scholars are more concerned that a whole region may be moving away from US unilateral leadership.[37] They believe that, as mentioned, a "Cold War mentality" is still deeply embedded into Washington's view. Nye points out that Washington lacks an ability of "getting others to want what you want," when "military force plays no role in international politics."[38] Gerald Curtis also notes that such a tendency of Washington limits it from understanding East Asian regionalism along with China. He states, "East Asia does not need a new security architecture. It needs an attentive US government that engages with countries in the region flexibly and with imagination."[39] While previous studies reveal that the continued presence of US leadership was partly due to support

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from East Asian allies, East Asian nations today are mindful of the benefits of accepting a rising China in constructing economic ties and delivering spillover benefit on political issues. In other words, China's closer relationships may be due not only to its practical effort but also to the willingness of East Asian nations to work with China, not the United States.

The promotion of East Asian regionalism since the late 1990s is particularly indicative of this fact. Wu Xinbo has noted, "A rising China must be conceived in the context of East Asian integration, rather than putting East Asian integration in the shadow of a rising China."[40] He suggests that, as discussed, East Asia as a whole has moved toward multilateralism, though China plays a crucial part of the progress. According to the Asian Development Bank, East Asian regionalism refers to a regional cooperation and an attempt for integration, meaning to address issues "that are inherently regional in scope. . . and cannot be solved at a global or national level."[41] After the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98 revealed a lack of intergovernmental communication and cooperation, East Asian nations have sought improvement in their capability and capacity to handle their issues, possibly aside from US leadership. It is a mutual effort of East Asian nations, including China and Japan, to embrace multilateralism, bringing hope that the intergovernmental cooperation in economic/business and political fields integrates state and nonstate actors; these players together make economic prosperity and political stability possible.

This view also argues the consequence of China's great emergence. A process of East Asian integration finds a valuable role that China could play, while the role of the United States as a non–East Asian nation is unclear. It is also uncertain that the United States would be in accordance with multilateral governance of the region, since Washington has a tendency to expect unilateral governance. Congressional analyst Bruce Vaughn has worried that "fundamental shifts underway in Asia could constrain the U.S. role in the multilateral affairs of Asia. The centrality of the United States is now being challenged by renewed regionalism in Asia and by China's rising influence."[42] His idea indicates the profound impact of the rise of China and the relative influence of its practical policy on US leadership such that the sustainability of that leadership is now in question. In a particular case where Washington desires to maintain the current regional order and leadership, this idea then suggests it pay greater attention to the whole region of East Asia, particularly the process of integration called East Asian regionalism.

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The Role of China in East Asian Regionalism

China has become a leading actor in promoting so-called East Asian regionalism in the last decade. It has now played crucial roles in regional organizations, particularly ASEAN Plus Three (APT) and the East Asian Summit (EAS). China has also put a large amount of effort into building closer ties with neighbors in both Southeast and Northeast Asia, offering free-trade agreements and other cooperation in political, economic, and security fields.

In Southeast Asia, China alone has held a series of meetings with ASEAN to ameliorate political and economic relations. In 2000, China and ASEAN agreed to launch the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA). The FTA between China and six nations of ASEAN—Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand—was concluded in 2010, and another among China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam is planned by 2015. China has also arranged the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI)—now called the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM)—with Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.[43] In response to the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the bilateral currency swap arrangement among APT countries was launched to provide liquidity that can ease issues of balance of payments and monitor the flow of capital. As China grows into a major economic power, it has increased its contribution from $4 to 30 billion to the CMI and has also offered a similar bilateral swap that can be worth $26 billion. Similarly, China has given a larger contribution in official development assistance (ODA) to ASEAN, especially Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. It promised $10 billion to the China-ASEAN Fund on Investment and Cooperation as well as "$15 billion for commercial credit, $200 million to Asian Bonds Market Initiative, and $100,000 to the ASEAN Foundation in strengthening cultural ties."[44]

In Northeast Asia, China created closer cooperative ties with Japan and South Korea. A trilateral summit among China, Japan, and South Korea has taken place since 2000 to construct a horizontal network within Northeast Asia, especially with the idea of a Northeast Asia Free Trade Area (NEAFTA).[45] In 2003, these three countries agreed to study the architecture of NEAFTA and have extensively discussed greater cooperation in a variety of areas, such as security, technology, environmental issues, and human resource development. In 2010, China also concluded the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA)

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with long-standing rival Taiwan, putting aside the issue of who is the *true* China.[46] In this respect, China's close work with another rival, Japan, is also worth highlighting. Despite their rocky relationship fraught with historical tension, especially due to wars in the twentieth century, China and Japan are now both members of various regional institutions, including the APT, the EAS, and the APEC. Since 2006, Beijing and Tokyo have repeatedly announced strengthened cooperation in various fields. In 2008, Chinese president Hu Jintao spoke at Waseda University in Japan, announcing that China and Japan must "increase strategic mutual trust . . . deepen mutually beneficial cooperation . . . [and] promote Asian rejuvenation."[47] In practice, China and Japan launched a joint study in 2006 on the different interpretations of modern history—especially the era of Japanese aggression during World War II—aimed at establishing a common history that China and Japan can share while resolving controversies over Japanese textbooks. Beijing and Tokyo have also promoted cultural exchanges of students, films, and music to ameliorate their relations at a fundamental level.[48]

The Role of the United States in East Asian Regionalism

While these cases show the active role of China in promoting cooperation in East Asia, the United States had little to do with the process. Put simply, the process of East Asian regionalism seems not to favor US engagement, and it exposes the issue of unilateralism that the United States has long exercised in the region. While the 1997 financial crisis revealed a lack of intergovernmental cooperation within the region, the United States failed to respond to the crisis by acting as a leader in the region, as noted by David Hale.[49] This brought East Asian nations not only a vulnerable hope of relying on the United States but also a reluctance to follow US-led initiatives, namely the IMF and the APEC. In other words, inadequate responses of the United States, the IMF, and the APEC to the crisis have become inevitable causes for East Asian nations to pursue cooperation strictly within the region and have accelerated their reluctance of welcoming US involvement.

While the United States has insisted that the APEC should be the platform for Asia-Pacific regional cooperation, East Asian nations have vigorously sought regionalism based on the APT and the EAS, in which the United States has never participated. Poor functions of the APEC as a

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regional forum crucially shifted East Asia's view from what Ming Wang calls "open regionalism" to an exclusive one.[50] The APEC has grown as a transregional organization that includes East Asian, Pacific, and North and South American nations and imposes no legal rules or enforcement to maintain negotiations. It was chiefly designed to "facilitate wider global processes."[51] It was not meant to cope with regional affairs and issues. Having the APEC alone to represent East Asia was, therefore, compelling for East Asian nations to seek a smaller but more practical regional grouping to manage regional matters. The former minister of finance of Japan, Eisuke Sakakibara, stated in 2001,

> I think that the era of APEC was already over. This is because APEC includes the US. However, APT does not include the US. Regional co-operation including the US is rarely meaningful, because the inclusion of the US is nearly a synonym of global co-operation. The role of such a framework is merely to supplement the ongoing international system owned by the US.[52]

So the US push for the APEC is critically challenged, and it has further invited a bitter critique to Washington's insufficient attention to APT and the EAS. A main criticism is that Washington has primarily been seeking a consolidation of the US-Japanese alliance as an integral approach to East Asia. The United States has assigned Japan to ensure US interests in summits of APT and the EAS, insisting that a process of a regional co-operation and integration, or East Asian regionalism, should not exclude the United States. However, this US bilateral approach does not seem to be dependable. As China plays a significant role in the process, Japan's bargaining ground is contested with that of China. Since the United States is not qualified to join APT,[53] Japan alone proposed to utilize the EAS for the basis of the regionalism and to include the United States as an observer in the first meeting in 2005. However, Shintaro Hamanaka finds that the concluding report of APT and EAS meetings in 2005 adhered to APT as the platform of regional integration in the future, partly showing Japan's compromise. China advocated an exclusive APT grouping for the main vehicle.[54] Kazuhiro Togo also points out that Japan is well aware that some degree of agreement with China is necessary to advance the multilateral process.[55] This indicates that Japan's effort to contribute to East Asian regionalism could dilute US influence. Lately a debate has emerged over the reliability and duration of Japanese resistance to US pressure to sustain its interests in the presence of China's consolidation influence.

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Concluding Remarks

This analysis has revealed a gap between Washington's and Beijing's thinking on the acquisition and practice of leadership. It has recognized a realist and power-oriented consensus of Washington to embrace a hegemonic position in contrast to Beijing's multilateral approach in gaining leadership in East Asia. Previous literature has acknowledged a realist insight in Beijing's approach that multilateralism could be used to *hedge* its real aspiration to pursue a hegemonic position. However, examining East Asian regionalism demonstrates that, regardless if Beijing's intention is possible, its multilateral approach has had a practical and profound impact on the region. As the region recognizes the important role of China, this fact points out a limitation of Washington's view toward China. While the United States waits for China's confrontational attitude to claim leadership, the impact of China on the current US leadership grows in a relative and indirect manner. Increasing interest in regional integration among East Asian nations assists the growth of China's influence. This suggests that Washington need not only pay greater attention to promoting regional cooperation, but also actively engage and contribute to building a cooperative mechanism in the region.

To be sure, East Asian regionalism is by no means a single factor that alone can determine the decline of US leadership in the region and replacement by Chinese leadership. There are numbers of challenges for East Asian nations to overcome in the process of regional cooperation, as well as a need of further research on how to resolve these challenges. The Sino-Japanese rivalry, for example, while showing a cooperative aspect not only impedes the process at early stages, but also divides nations. Although efforts by China and Japan to cooperate are seen, they are as yet noncommittal—the Sino-Japanese rivalry of over a century will not die overnight. In this sense, Nye points out that US leadership is necessary for other East Asian nations to maintain regional stability.[56] In addition, the latest incident between Chinese and Japanese vessels, as mentioned, has halted the top-officials' meetings and further emptied a national-level interaction creating the "worst spat in years," as noted in the *China Post*.[57] In other words, none of the developments in the newly emerging East Asian regionalism are concrete enough to mean the exclusion of the United States, nor do they mean a dismissal of US leadership.

Nonetheless, the profound impact of China's multilateralism on neighboring states is substantial; the shift in East Asian nations' mentality to accept the emerging China and to embrace multilateralism is recognizable in discussing an intraregional framework of integration. It poses a fundamental challenge to

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Washington, not because it posits that US leadership is at stake, but it invites a question of how Washington should adopt its leadership to the dynamically changing environment of the region. Realist insight is important; yet, East Asian regionalism has sparked a nonrealist aspect of the region to embrace a multilateral framework. The US unilateral hub-and-spoke system, then, does not seem to be a perfect match for the region. ASEAN announced at its 2010 meeting that it has invited the United States and Russia to the EAS meeting to be held in 2011.[58] This will be an opportunity for Washington to pay greater attention to the whole region by becoming actively involved in said regionalism, especially if it wants to maintain its leadership. SSQ

Notes

1. Richard Armitage, "Asia: Where Are We? Where Are We Going?" *Issues & Insights* 9, no. 6 (April 2009): 1–9.

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