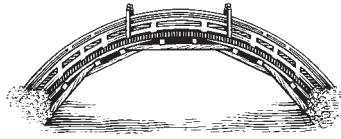


SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE

Pursuing Security in a Dynamic Northeast Asia



*Aaron L. Friedberg*

*Michael J. Green*

*Robert A. Scalapino*

*Kenneth B. Pyle*

*Francis Fukuyama*

*Dwight H. Perkins*

*Nicholas Eberstadt*

*Richard J. Samuels*

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*Chae-Jin Lee*

## Pursuing Security in a Dynamic Northeast Asia

*Aaron L. Friedberg*

In November 2006 the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) convened a two-day conference entitled “Pursuing Security in a Dynamic Northeast Asia” to mark the launch of its new Kenneth B. and Anne H.H. Pyle Center for Northeast Asian Studies.<sup>1</sup> The Center is named in honor of NBR Founding President Ken Pyle and his wife, Anne.

Professor Pyle is widely recognized as the leading American interpreter of modern Japanese foreign policy. His work is characterized by an extraordinary combination of depth and breadth; by a rich and sympathetic understanding of Japan, its culture, language, and history; and by a broad and comprehensive vision of that country’s changing role in the international system. Together with his wife, Anne, Professor Pyle has made significant contributions throughout his distinguished career as an institution builder, scholar, educator, and intellectual ambassador. The new Center aspires to follow their lead, both by supporting a comprehensive program of research on the dynamics of Northeast Asia and by building strong personal and institutional links between the United States and the countries of that vitally important region.

Among the questions that the Pyle Center’s new research program will seek to address are the following: What forces will shape the evolution of Northeast Asia over the course of the coming decade and beyond? How will the states of the region relate to one another and how will the region as a whole interact with the rest of Asia and the world? What policies, programs, and institutions can increase the probability that Northeast Asia will remain peaceful, prosperous, and stable?

There are no simple or obvious answers to these questions, nor is there a master historical analogy or political science theory capable of providing such answers. One reason the study of Northeast Asia is so interesting and so

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challenging is the sheer complexity, diversity, and fluidity of the region. These qualities are apparent in the nine essays that follow, all drawn from papers delivered at the Center's inaugural conference.

As a first step toward imposing a measure of order on a complex reality, I would suggest sorting the relevant issues into four categories: structure, societies, strategies, and shocks.

### *Structure*

The structure of an international system is defined both by the distribution of wealth and power among the units of which the system is comprised and by the nature of the interconnections among them. The most obvious and important questions about the distribution of power in Northeast Asia have to do with China. Will China continue to accumulate wealth and power at anything resembling recent rates—and if so, how will others in the region respond? There are questions as well about the trajectories of the other major regional powers. Japan has recently been experiencing a resurgence in economic dynamism and political confidence, but faces significant long-term internal and external challenges. In the past several years Russia, too, has enjoyed a partial economic recovery (thanks to higher energy prices) and is attempting to reassert itself as a regional—if not a global—power. Finally, the current American focus on the Middle East, and recent setbacks to U.S. policy there, have led to uncertainties about America's future role in other regions, including Northeast Asia.

Regarding the interconnections among the states of the region, these too have been evolving rapidly albeit at varying rates. As Michael Green notes in his essay in this volume, intra-regional trade and investment flows have expanded greatly in the past decade. The political consequences of this deepening could be significant. For example, some observers have suggested that the growth in trade and investment between the mainland and Taiwan could ease the way for an ultimate political settlement between the two. It is also conceivable, of course, that recent economic trends may be altered by politics. For example, if diplomatic relations between Japan and China were to deteriorate, the present close economic relationship between those countries could well be disrupted. In his essay, Dwight Perkins identifies a number of the overarching economic trends that will shape Northeast Asia in the years ahead and examines some of the possible political implications.

The strategic linkages among the nations of the region have also been evolving, albeit at a somewhat slower pace. Broadly speaking, the patterns

of diplomatic alignment and antagonism in the region, as well as the axes of emerging military competition, have been moving toward a greater, continental-maritime division. In his contribution to this roundtable, Robert Scalapino discusses the evolving pattern of relations among the states of Northeast Asia. China and Russia have clearly grown closer, as have the United States and Japan. The biggest questions concern those areas where the continental and maritime theaters overlap: the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. Will the Republic of Korea continue to move away from the United States and perhaps toward some sort of closer alignment with China? Will relations between the PRC and Taiwan improve, thereby easing a major source of potential tension between Beijing and Washington (and Tokyo)? Or will that long-standing conflict intensify, sharpening the division between maritime and continental East Asia? Turning to axes of military competition, states in the region are beginning to size their forces and develop their doctrines with an eye toward potential conflict with one another. The U.S.-China military rivalry is obvious and undeniable but, while still quite constrained, could grow considerably more open and intense. A military competition between Japan and China is already underway, although in its early stages. There is also a possibility of some kind of military rivalry between Japan and Korea.

The last type of interconnection within the system is institutional, and here the development has been slowest of all. Many regional institutions have sprung up and many more have been proposed, especially in the security realm; but the institutional architecture of Northeast Asia and of Asia writ large is still a work in progress. From an American perspective, the key question is finding the proper mix of inclusive mechanisms, in which all states would participate, and exclusive mechanisms such as an alliance of Asian democracies that would encourage cooperation on strategic matters among the United States, Japan, Australia, the Republic of Korea, and India.

### *Societies*

The second basket of issues concerns the internal, societal dynamics of the countries of the region. Northeast Asia continues to be characterized by a striking diversity of regime types. The region contains everything from one of the last truly totalitarian systems in the world (the DPRK) through varieties of authoritarianism (China and Russia) to relatively young and still evolving democracies (Taiwan and the Republic of Korea) to established, stable democracies (Japan and—across the Pacific—the United States).