

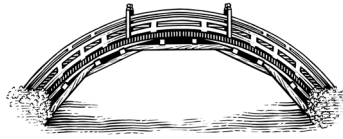
BOOK REVIEW ROUNDTABLE

Andrew Yeo's

*Asia's Regional Architecture:
Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century*

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019

ISBN: 978-1-5036-0844-3



Ralf Emmers

Alice D. Ba

Kei Koga

Renato Cruz De Castro

Andrew Yeo

Asia's Evolving Security Architecture

Ralf Emmers

In *Asia's Regional Architecture: Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century*, Andrew Yeo makes both a conceptual and empirical contribution to the existing literature on the evolving architecture in Asia since the end of World War II. The scholarship on the subject is vast and comprehensive, but it tends to be divided into two sets of approaches that have characterized the international relations of the region: on the one hand, bilateral alliances and other defense ties linking various Asian states to the United States, and on the other, multilateral arrangements mostly driven by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, the existing literature on the regional architecture has been further divided along economic and security lines, as only a few publications have so far explored the security-economic nexus in Asia. Finally, the literature on the regional architecture is dominated theoretically by constructivism (with its emphasis on norms and community-building) and realism (with its focus on hard and soft balancing).

Asia's Regional Architecture is insightful and ambitious. It seeks to bridge the different examples of bilateralism and multilateralism that together form the regional architecture as well as to cover both the economic and security sides of the overall cooperative framework in the region. The empirical evidence is well-known, as bilateralism and multilateralism in Asia have been extensively researched since the end of the Cold War. Other sources have looked at Asia's multilateral architecture in a topical and timely fashion, especially with the architecture's ongoing buildup and rapid evolution. It is true, therefore, that the empirical evidence presented in *Asia's Regional Architecture* is not particularly new. Yeo contributes to the literature by bringing all of this material together and analyzing it through the application of a less well-known conceptual framework—historical institutionalism. To my knowledge, this has never before been attempted, making the book both original and innovative. The end result is that *Asia's Regional Architecture* takes a long-term view that enriches the existing analysis and provides a sense of perspective.

RALF EMMERS is Dean of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and President's Chair in International Relations at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He can be reached at <isremmers@ntu.edu.sg>.

The book makes two significant contributions to the existing literature. First, scholarship has for too long studied the hub-and-spoke system and the ASEAN model of cooperative security separately and independently from each other. The author fills this lacuna by exploring the synergies between bilateralism and multilateralism in a historic and systematic way. Second, Yeo goes beyond the standard realism-constructivism debate that has dominated academic discussions of Asian architecture since the 1990s. Historical institutionalism, with its notions of endogenous change, institutional layering, and institutional drift, offers a convincing framework to explain stability and change in the regional architecture. Though some of this has been attempted before on a smaller scale, this book is comprehensive in its attempt to fulfill these objectives. Indeed, Yeo provides a rich, systematic, and detailed account of how the security and economic architecture has evolved since 1945. The importance given to providing a coherent conceptual framework that ties all this empirical evidence together is therefore critical.

Furthermore, *Asia's Regional Architecture* is well-researched. Yeo thoroughly reviews the existing conceptual and empirical literature. He comfortably switches from an in-depth discussion on historical institutionalism to illustrations of economic and security regionalism. Chapter 1 sets the stage by introducing methods and research design and articulating a series of propositions. The structure of the book flows logically and its organization is clear and well-conceived, with the chronological approach adopted in the chapters preventing too much repetition of empirical evidence. The overall writing style is coherent and engaging.

Some issues should be mentioned, however. First, as most of us do, Yeo struggles to make sense of the Trump administration and its position on the regional architecture, among other areas of its foreign policy. The book mostly ends with the Obama administration, although the concluding chapter touches on the “America first” principle and Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Trump has so far shown little interest in Asia’s architecture, especially in comparison to the Obama administration and its policy of a pivot toward Asia. The wider issue of a possible U.S. withdrawal from Asian multilateralism—to the benefit of a rising China—could have been further explored as well. Furthermore, the policy options of most Asian countries have narrowed due to the rising competition between the United States and China. The two great powers are unwilling to be locked in by diplomatic rules of engagement acceptable to

all, which undermines the attempt to institutionalize regional relations and build a resilient security architecture.

Second, there are times in *Asia's Regional Architecture* when the book seeks to cover too much empirical material at the expense of greater depth and conceptual analysis. In other words, the balance between analysis and empirics is not always quite right. For example, Yeo pays attention to subregional forms of minilateralism and trilateralism such as the Trilateral Security Dialogue and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat that have lost momentum and contributed little to the overall architecture in Asia. Instead, the book could have been structured around significant cooperative structures of the overall architecture to deepen its theoretical and analytical foundation. By being so ambitious in his selection of case studies, Yeo may have chosen breadth over depth.

Finally, as an ASEAN watcher myself, I feel that the regional body deserves greater attention in light of its so-called centrality in the multilateral architecture. ASEAN has long acted as a convening power by building an architecture that consists of overlapping multilateral bodies. Yet, as events unfold, it is clear that ASEAN's centrality and relevance are currently being tested. This raises questions about the regional body's trajectory and policy options in light of U.S.-China competition. A worst-case scenario for ASEAN would involve being forced to choose between these two great powers. This could result from a significant deterioration in the climate of regional relations or from domestic developments linked to either the Trump administration or Chinese party politics.

Irrespective of these minor shortcomings, Yeo's eclectic approach combines a broad historical and institutional perspective to offer a rich account of how Asia's security and economic architecture has evolved over the last 70 years. *Asia's Regional Architecture* will appeal to a specialist audience for its analysis of key aspects of Asia's international relations and efforts to bridge parts of the regional architecture. ◆

Making Sense of Asia's Crowded Space

Alice D. Ba

Asia has become a crowded space. A region once distinguished by the near absence of cooperative security mechanisms is now distinguished by the opposite. Indeed, once upon a time, this was a region where the only cooperative frameworks purposed for regional security were (1) the bilateral alliances between the United States and a select few regional states and (2) the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which until the 1990s did not even encompass all the subregion's states. In contrast, the region today consists of a mix of overlapping, crosscutting security frameworks of varying shapes and sizes.

Andrew Yeo poses two questions in *Asia's Regional Architecture: Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century*, his recent contribution to the debates about East Asian security. The first is how we explain "the robustness of U.S. bilateral alliances with the rapid proliferation of multilateral institutions in the region" (p. 4). The second is, broadly speaking, what Asia's different security arrangements constitute *in toto*. There is much to recommend about his discussion. I would emphasize two points, in particular. The first is the "historical institutionalist" perspective the book brings to a policy and analytical space that tends to reduce most outcomes to "strategy," especially the geopolitical and functional challenges faced by states. As Yeo argues, the historical institutionalist approach provides ways to highlight continuity, not just change, as well as the means to capture the complex mix of threat perceptions, ideas, institutions, and domestic politics that go into the construction of elite consensus and, in turn, what he and some others call Asia's regional architecture. The second is his effort to offer a framework that accounts for both the U.S. alliance and multistate institutional dimensions of Asian security.

In both instances, the book offers ways to bridge existing accounts that tend to be bifurcated between, on the one hand, those who focus on more conventional (i.e., realist) security drivers associated with traditional security frameworks like U.S. alliances and, on the other hand, those who focus on Asia's regional multilateral endeavors, especially their liberal and sociological drivers. This is important because to consider one without the other is not just to offer an incomplete picture of Asian security but

ALICE D. BA is a Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware. She can be reached at <aliceba@udel.edu>.

also, arguably, to miss something even more fundamental going on in the region's international politics. A more accurate picture of Asia consequently demands attention to U.S. bilateral alliances alongside the dramatic growth of nonalliance, multistate arrangements. Andrew Yeo's book thus offers a more complete account than most.

Yet, I do have questions. In the spirit of discussion, let me raise two. The first concerns the historical institutionalist approach. In a critical respect, this is the main value the book adds, given that previous studies have detailed similar empirics, processes, and logics of layering associated with Asia's institutions and alliances. One of historical institutionalism's more important insights is the way that past commitments (e.g., cognitive, material, institutional, and policy) bear on conceptualizations of interests (individual and collective), the realm of possible options, and, in turn, the choices made. What is, at times, less clear in the discussion under review, however, is what is doing the work. For example, historical institutionalist approaches highlight the effects of "lock-in" and "feedback" effects associated with particular institutional-ecological contexts, but the processes and mechanisms through which that happens in the cases presented by Yeo are often left underspecified beyond the need to be "cognizant" of the security arrangements created earlier.

Part of the challenge is one of scope. Yeo's book is inclusive of nearly all of Asia's actors and a wide range of diverse arrangements—from U.S. alliances to six-party talks to China-Japan-Korea trilateralism to ASEAN configurations. I appreciate the author's attempt. It is very difficult to highlight how past commitments constrain calculations and conclusions in each case over time and across actors without closer examination of either the international or domestic negotiation processes or of their accumulating lock-in processes that, in historical institutionalist accounts, bias one outcome over another. This is, again, a particular challenge given the many arrangements and actors the book covers, but the argument might have nevertheless been strengthened by paying greater attention to those intervening processes or limiting the scope of the argument, allowing closer attention to a select few.

Without such closer detailing, the book can consequently tilt to what may be characterized as a minimalist historical institutionalist reading, which is that states tend not to abandon past arrangements. The problem is that this conclusion is not necessarily a historical institutionalist one. Similarly, much attention is given to the resistance of domestic and international "veto actors" and "veto blocs" to explain constrained

institutional outcomes; however, less is said about how past domestic, bureaucratic, or normative commitments primed those actors to view their interests (individual and collective) in particular ways. Consequently, interests and veto powers can seem vested in the actors themselves rather than traceable to the institutional contexts that generated them.

My second question regards the decision to characterize the region's mix of "layered" arrangements as an "architecture" that, in Yeo's words, offers "an overarching institutional structure...and framework for governance" (pp. 5–7). My concern is mainly that doing so projects a debatable degree of coherence. At times, Yeo himself seems to challenge this coherence, such as when he refers early on to the "hodgepodge of overlapping bilateral, trilateral, minilateral, and multilateral institutions" that has emerged in Asia (p. 3). And while the hodgepodge characterization is an overstatement that misses important common threads running through some of these arrangements, the architectural metaphor nevertheless projects a similarity in governing purpose and in resultant effect that can be challenged. Others have also raised questions about this coherence, but, like Yeo, they mostly do so in reference to Asia's multilateral and minilateral frameworks rather than U.S. alliances. Yet these alliances themselves are also varied, especially in the purposes and priorities that U.S. partners attach to them (varied between allies and also varied in contrast with the United States). There is also particular disconnection between the United States and its Southeast Asian spokes. Such differences contribute to the recurrent challenges of elite and alliance cohesion in the region. As Yeo acknowledges, the book's conceptualization of the architecture's foundations is especially informed by "the standpoint of the U.S." (p. 26).

As noted, one of the most important merits of the book is that it tries to offer a conceptualization inclusive of both U.S. alliances and Asia's growing collection of nonalliance cooperative frameworks. Yet one may still ask whether Yeo's account—which makes the U.S. alliance system the starting point and the bedrock for the current architecture—privileges an overly comforting premise, one long held and upheld by Washington and those inside the Beltway, about the centrality of U.S. alliances in Asian security.¹

While it is true, as Yeo and others highlight, that those seeking new arrangements have generally sought to supplement rather than replace U.S. alliances, this can gloss over more fundamental differences during

¹ It may also be significant that Yeo's supplemental interviews were mostly conducted in Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore, and Washington, D.C.—actors that generally see U.S. alliances as more central. See fn. 92, chap. 1.

their genesis, as well as differences that have become entrenched or developed over time. This may be especially true of ASEAN-associated multilateral groupings, which despite well-known challenges remain the most prominent of Asia's nonalliance arrangements. Critically, they also vary from U.S. alliances in more than one respect. Born of different actors, geopolitical contexts, security conceptualizations, and originating purposes, U.S. alliances and ASEAN arrangements are governed by some very different, embedded institutional commitments that set them on distinct developmental paths. Put another way, while U.S. alliances and other security arrangements may "network," "patchwork," and even have some mutually reinforcing effects, it may be more accurate to say, as William Tow and Brendan Taylor (whose discussion provides a starting point for the book's architectural conception) also conclude, that there have emerged two distinct architectures at work in Asia, each with its own set of "blueprints" and leading "architects."²

These questions aside, Yeo offers a discussion that, more than most, tries to account for Asia's different moving parts. It is because I take his contribution seriously that I offer these questions. *Asia's Regional Architecture* is a worthwhile contribution to the debate about Asian security and especially the U.S. role in the region. This debate about how to conceptualize Asian security and its management is one that has moved the pursuit of new arrangements as well as reassessments and adaptations of more established ones. It is also a debate that is far from over. ♦

² William T. Tow and Brendan Taylor, "What Is Asian Security Architecture?" *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (2010): 95–116.

Path Dependence, Resilience, and the Gradual Transformation of Regional Architectures in Asia

Kei Koga

Andrew Yeo's new book, *Asia's Regional Architectures: Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century*, provides a comprehensive overview of Asia's regional security architecture in the post-World War II period, exploring why Asia's regional institutions have overlapped and coexisted for so long and how they have been shaped and are shaping regional actors' ideas and behavior. Just as international relations scholars have begun looking at historical institutionalism to explain international issues, ones ranging from interstate relations to regional security institutions to nonproliferation regimes, Yeo employs its theoretical approach to analyze the establishment and evolution of regional architecture from the postwar period onward. He provides detailed yet succinct accounts of the main political, economic, and security regional institutions in Asia.¹

A plethora of insights are contained in this book, and among them three elements stand out. First, the book's definition of "regional architecture" allows readers to look at the big picture of regional institutions and governance in Asia. According to Yeo, regional architecture refers to "an overarching, comprehensive institutional structure within a geographic region that facilitates the coordination, governance, and resolution of a range of policy objectives of concern to states within that area" (p. 8). This broad definition is important because it does not solely focus on "multilateralism" or "bilateral alliances" in Asia, which is a tendency in conventional studies on this subject. Rather, the definition enables us to understand the dynamic interaction of two main regional institutional frameworks: the U.S. hub-and-spoke network and the multilateral institutions led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Given that these institutions functionally overlap and contribute to maintaining regional

KEI KOGA is an Assistant Professor at the Public Policy and Global Affairs Programme in the School of Social Sciences at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. He can be reached at <kkei@ntu.edu.sg>.

¹ For other works employing historical institutionalism, see Orfeo Fioretos, *Creative Reconstructions: Multilateralism and European Varieties of Capitalism after 1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Kei Koga, *Reinventing Regional Security Institutions in Asia and Africa: Power Shifts, Ideas, and Institutional Change* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017); Wilfred Wan, *Regional Pathways to Nuclear Nonproliferation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018); and Orfeo Fioretos, ed., *International Politics and Institutions in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

stability, it is imperative to examine both in parallel. Yeo's definition is therefore an innovative way to comprehend Asia's regional architecture.

Second, the book's emphasis on the importance of regional institutions' historical development deepens our understanding of the nature and characteristics of the current regional architecture in Asia. Ahistorical theories in the international relations field, such as realism, too often overexplain the causes of institutional sustainability and development. For example, realists consider the U.S. bilateral alliance network as the outcome of common threats between countries and tend to see the network as a way to counter a particular state, namely the Soviet Union during the Cold War and China in the post-Cold War period. Though such strategic considerations are important, the ties that bind U.S. allies and partners together include not only common threats but also the promotion of economic cooperation and the management of nontraditional security issues like counterterrorism following the September 11 attacks. The book's treatment of the robustness of U.S. bilateral alliances and how consensus on the importance of being a U.S. ally was nurtured among domestic elites effectively illustrates the significance of the various engagements that bind partners together. History shapes the objectives and functions of institutions, and this nuanced understanding helps us discern why each institution in Asia has differential growth.

Third, the book articulates the underlying characteristics of Asia's regional architecture through a theoretical treatment of the "complex patchwork." This term, originally coined by Victor Cha, refers to "a regional architecture characterized by a variety of institutional arrangements, including bilateral alliances, trilateral relationships, mini-lateral meetings, and multilateral forums" (p. 6).² Indeed, most of Asia's regional frameworks have developed by building on the U.S. hub-and-spoke system and ASEAN. Yeo explains this phenomenon by using historical institutionalism's concept of institutional layering. Rather than create a new institution from scratch or one that displaces an old institution, sunk costs and positive feedback compel an existing institution to add new objectives, functions, or organs. The major institutions built in the post-Cold War era are based on U.S. bilateral alliances and ASEAN multilateralism, which are embedded in regional ideas and interests, explaining the robustness of these institutions.

² For more on the complex patchwork concept, see Victor Cha, "Complex Patchworks: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia's Regional Architecture," *Asia Policy*, no. 11 (2011): 27–50.

Despite the important insights that Yeo's book offers, there are several points that require some clarification. First and foremost, the book's perspective tends to be U.S.-centric. On U.S. bilateralism in chapter 2, Yeo admits this and states that "the rise of Asia's postwar regional architecture represented in this chapter largely reflects the standpoint of the U.S. and, to a lesser degree, the perspective of Asian allies tied to the U.S.-led hub-and-spoke system" (p. 26). However, this tendency seemingly continues and is rather overstated when he argues in chapter 5 that ASEAN "had little bearing on the conduct of Asian international relations, particularly outside of the Southeast Asia subregion" (p. 54). It is true that ASEAN did not have much influence over Northeast Asia's regional architecture during the Cold War and its geographical coverage was narrow, with only five members from its inception in 1967 until 1984. However, it is also true that ASEAN mitigated interstate rivalries and provided diplomatic reassurance among its member states, contributing to subregional stability. In 1976, for instance, ASEAN produced an institutional code of conduct—namely the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia—nurturing an institutional norm that it would contain intramember conflicts and maintain regional autonomy. As such, ASEAN created part of Asia's regional architecture during the Cold War, which should not be dismissed.

Some theoretical questions also remain. One is the concept of change. Change and the degree of change can only be identified when we have a reference point; otherwise, it is extremely difficult to articulate what has changed and by how much. ASEAN, for instance, created the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994, which exhibits both continuity and change. The ARF's consensus-based decision-making process represents ASEAN's long-lasting institutional characteristics, showing continuity. However, it was the first time ASEAN, let alone any group in Asia, established a regional multilateral security forum that went beyond the ASEAN+1 framework and thus clearly was a change. According to Yeo, although the "exogenous shock-critical juncture" thesis considers an external shock as the explanatory variable that causes an institutional change, the shock overexplains the change because the change can still be constrained by past decisions—path dependence—and institutions that can possibly produce a modified degree of change, such as institutional layering (p. 16). While this is true, it is always necessary to identify what aspect of regional institutions or architecture is being examined and to have a clear reference point for measuring change.

Another related question is the book's treatment of the level of analysis in determining the explanatory variables that help us understand the evolution of the U.S. bilateral alliance network and ASEAN-led regional institutions.

Theoretically speaking, the explanatory variables are not consistent in these cases. On the one hand, the stickiness of U.S. alliances in Asia is attributed to domestic factors, namely domestic elites' consensus; on the other hand, it is interstate agreements between ASEAN member states that determine the robustness of the existing institution (pp. 21–22). These differences blur the concepts of endogenous and exogenous, raising the question of whether the book attempts to answer two different questions and treats the U.S. bilateral alliance network and ASEAN-led regional institutions differently. If so, it utilizes the historical institutionalist approach without substantiating its effectiveness, requiring further clarification.

Despite these theoretical questions, the policy implications that this book provides are quite interesting. The Indo-Pacific is a new geographic concept that has gained political traction with the support of major regional powers such as Japan, the United States, Australia, and India as a tool to bind U.S. allies and partners together to counterbalance China. As Yeo argues, it is not solely U.S.-China relations that will determine the future of Asia, and the complexity of Asia's current regional architecture provides policymakers with a means to diplomatically engage each other, facilitate cooperation, and negotiate contentious issues. It is thus likely that despite the emergence of new institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the basics of the current regional architecture will remain the same and facilitate cooperation between institutions, as we currently see in the cooperation between the AIIB and the already entrenched Asian Development Bank. The question then becomes how resilient these institutions can be as the Indo-Pacific region starts to comprise areas much larger than those covered by the U.S. hub-and-spoke system and ASEAN-led institutions. Will these institutions overstretch if they extend their roles to the entire region? This remains to be determined, but the book raises these important geostrategic questions.

Yeo successfully discusses the evolution of Asia's regional security architecture. The book's theoretical orientation of historical institutionalism makes it historically detailed and analytically succinct; its geographic comprehension, including Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and to a lesser extent South Asia, provides a broad picture of the institutional complexity that has developed in the region since the end of World War II. Moreover, the book's broad definition of institutions—ranging from ASEAN-led regional multilateral frameworks to U.S.-led bilateral security alliances—opens up new research questions regarding the interactive dynamics within regional institutions. For these reasons, Yeo's book is worth reading, particularly in the emerging era of the Indo-Pacific region. ◆

Three Scenarios for Asia's Changing Regional Order

Renato Cruz De Castro

Prior to Donald Trump's presidential inauguration on January 20, 2017, several East Asian leaders were concerned about the fate of the Obama administration's rebalancing strategy toward the Asia-Pacific in particular and U.S. foreign policy in the region more generally. They suspected already that President Trump would ignore the region, given that one of his first official decisions was to withdraw the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Neither was their apprehension assuaged by a subgroup of White House national security officials who tried to soften or rectify the president's statements on a range of issues from the South China Sea to the notorious activities of extremist groups in Southeast Asia.¹ The public airing of discord within the administration also generated confusion and doubt about the credibility of U.S. foreign policy commitments in Asia.

Trump's decision to withdraw from the TPP, his quirky temperament, his lack of strategy for the Indo-Pacific region, and his personal concern regarding Islamic militancy in the Middle East made analysts and Asian statesmen doubt whether he would heed former president Barack Obama's advice that "engaging in the Asia-Pacific is critical to America's future prosperity and security."² Along with China's growing economic and strategic clout and increasing tensions in several regional flashpoints, all these factors made many pessimistic about the future of U.S. foreign policy in East Asia and the durability of the regional security order.

Andrew Yeo's recent work *Asia's Regional Architecture: Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century* offers a fresh and reassuring outlook on the future of Asia's security order and U.S. foreign policy in the region. In the book, Yeo argues that Asia's regional institutions are more powerful and resilient than the whims of the United States' current, eccentric president. He observes that political leaders' choices and actions

RENATO CRUZ DE CASTRO is a Professor and the Aurelio Calderon Chair on Philippine-U.S. Relations in the International Studies Department at De La Salle University in Manila. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Albert Del Rosario Institute of Strategic and International Studies. He can be reached at <renato.decastro@dlsu.edu.ph>.

¹ See Catherin Dalpino, "U.S. Security Relations with Southeast Asia in the Trump Administration," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 39, no. 1 (2017): 3.

² Mary Alice Salinas, "Obama: U.S. Interest in Asia-Pacific 'Reflects Fundamental National Interests,'" *Voice of America*, September 6, 2016 ~ <http://0-search.proquest.com.lib1000.dlsu.edu.ph/docview/181729443?accountid=28547>.

are framed within a larger temporal and historical context, making it difficult for new and inexperienced decision-makers to reverse existing ideas and institutions that were created to articulate states' core interests and values. He maintains that Asia's security architecture reflects greater stability and continuity; thus, it can withstand and even outlive the Trump administration's inconsistent signals regarding long-term U.S. intentions and policy toward the region.

Using historical institutionalism as a theoretical framework, the book examines the evolution of Asia's regional security order. Yeo explores the beginnings and development of U.S. bilateral security alliances as well as the modes of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) toward fostering multilateralism in Asia. He observes that while this system of bilateral alliances remains an important means of ensuring national security and regional stability, regional institutional structures are also being used by several states to organize and address emerging security and economic challenges. He assumes that bilateralism and multilateralism are complementary rather than contradictory. This raises two questions: how do bilateral and multilateral institutions interact, and how are old and new institutions layered and integrated?

Yeo traces how the emergence of the postwar bilateral alliance system in the 1950s and the formation of ASEAN in the late 1960s led to the creation of the complex patchwork of overlapping bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral institutions that currently constitute Asia's security architecture. However, despite the region's new multilateralism and the proliferation of several patchworks of regional institutions, Cold War relics such as the U.S. system of bilateral alliances and ASEAN remain at the core of this architecture. The book then examines how the Trump administration's actions and China's foreign policy goals can affect the regional order. Yeo notes that despite Trump's erratic statements on U.S. policy toward Asia, the actions of the United States appear to encourage some degree of stability and continuity in the regional architecture. Interestingly, he maintains that China does not actually want to overhaul this regional security architecture. Instead, it wants greater influence in the region and simply seeks to fill the void that the United States and its allies have left. Yeo is skeptical of the realist notion that China is bent on overthrowing the current regional security architecture. Instead, he is inclined to take the liberal/social constructivist view that a power transition in Asia will not result from a dramatic change in balance-of-power capabilities. Rather, it will be linked with questions of changing legitimacy, status, and leadership.

Based on this evolutionary view of change, the book provides three scenarios for the regional security architecture. The first is a modified liberal order still dominated by a U.S.-led alliance system and multilateral institutions such as ASEAN but with increased influence from China and other nondemocratic states loosely connected to the existing regional security architecture. The second is a China-dominated order, in which China ultimately accepts a modified liberal order and lays claim to a larger stake. And the third scenario is one of multiple orders, where the modified liberal order coexists with a China-dominated system representing a vertically structured order. In this scenario, hierarchy and power intersect with the prevailing rules and norms embodied in regional institutions. Yeo thinks that the growing number of complex patchworks of bilateral and multilateral institutions will likely push the region toward a modified liberal order or toward an order renegotiated with other regional powers such as China. He foresees the United States and China establishing the structure of the regional order. However, any renegotiation will still require acceptance by the other major and middle powers in Asia.

China's growing economic influence in Asia, its maritime expansion into the first island chain, the revival of the China-Japan rivalry, and the U.S.-China strategic competition, however, make this reviewer question the book's optimistic projection that the ongoing process of institutional change and continuity will foster more opportunities for trust rather than mistrust in Asia. Since 2017, the Trump administration has publicly considered China a strategic competitor rather than a potential, responsible stakeholder. For this administration, ensuring U.S. primacy in the Indo-Pacific appears to require doing away with any delusion of power-sharing or integrating China into the liberal world order. The administration sees China's actions and goals as the major destabilizing element in the region, leaving the U.S. no choice but "to compete, deter, and win in this environment."³ What is apparent is that the regional order is becoming more competitive and fragmented than is imagined in Yeo's account of a region containing a modified liberal order and an order renegotiated with China.

Despite its overly optimistic prognosis for Asia's future, *Asia's Regional Architecture* provides a comprehensive and timely account of the evolution, development, and operation of the various institutions

³ U.S. Department of Defense, "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge," January 2018, 1.

that compose the region's security architecture. The book is not a simple chronological account of the U.S. system of bilateral alliances and ASEAN. Instead, Yeo's use of historical institutionalism makes this text a coherent, dynamic, and theoretically insightful account of the beginning, development, and future of Asia's architecture. The book is thus a useful resource for any graduate course on U.S. foreign policy in East Asia and East Asian security. ◆

Author's Response: Revisiting *Asia's Regional Architecture*

Andrew Yeo

I am sincerely grateful to each of the roundtable participants not only for sharing insights and praise for *Asia's Regional Architecture* but also for using my monograph to spark further discussion regarding Asian security and the future of the Indo-Pacific order. I am pleased to continue a conversation that began as an “author meets critic” panel in Singapore at the International Studies Association's 2019 Asia-Pacific conference hosted by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

In my response, I will briefly summarize areas where the other participants and I are largely in agreement before addressing points of difference and disagreement. I identify three primary critiques. First, does the book sacrifice depth for breadth by covering too much ground and too many institutions? Second, does it make conceptual sense to describe Asia's regional architecture under a single, overarching framework? Third, is optimism for liberal internationalism misplaced in an era of “America first” and the “China dream”? I acknowledge the insights and shortcomings my colleagues note in their respective reviews, but in the “spirit of discussion” (to borrow Alice Ba's phrase), this response essay addresses their questions.

A Holistic Approach to East Asian International Relations

As Ralf Emmers notes, scholars too often treat East Asian international relations in a bifurcated manner. They tend to emphasize either multilateral processes and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or bilateralism and U.S. alliances. The former are more likely to incorporate the role of norms and nontraditional security issues, whereas the latter tend to focus on power and traditional security problems. Underlying this bifurcation is the regional subdivision between Southeast and Northeast Asia.

There are sound theoretical and empirical reasons for creating such analytical distinctions in the study of East Asian international relations. Nevertheless, *Asia's Regional Architecture* was an attempt to examine East Asia as a whole. The roundtable participants generally agree that

more synergies exist across subregions and functional issues than is often acknowledged.

The Trump administration's free and open Indo-Pacific concept and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) further reinforce the need for a "whole of Asia" approach. Both grand strategies identify linkages across subregions—including South Asia—and highlight the economic-security nexus across Asia and the Eurasian continent. For instance, a November 2019 report on the Indo-Pacific strategy released by the U.S. Department of State articulates how U.S. investments in energy, digital economy, and infrastructure support the goals of security, economic prosperity, and good governance in Indo-Pacific countries.¹ Likewise, BRI, touted by Beijing as a massive overseas investment and economic development strategy, carries clear implications for regional security.² In short, there is merit in investigating Asia's regional architecture from a whole-of-Asia perspective.

My roundtable colleagues also welcome the use of historical institutionalism to uncover elements of change and continuity in the regional architecture. The application of historical institutionalism allows room for interests, institutions, and ideas to become a part of a nuanced framework explaining Asia's evolving regional architecture. In that sense, the book provides a post-paradigmatic approach to Asian international relations.

Choosing Breadth over Depth

Even when adopting a holistic approach to the region, researchers must still make trade-offs between depth and breadth in their analyses. Two of the reviewers (Ralf Emmers and Alice Ba) suggest that empirical breadth outweighs theoretical depth in the book. As Ba writes, although the book is "inclusive of nearly all of Asia's actors and a wide range of diverse arrangements," its analysis does not dig as deep into the specific processes and mechanisms that result in Asia's complex patchwork of institutions. Without understanding "cognitive priors," or the bureaucratic or normative

¹ U.S. Department of State, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision* (Washington, D.C., November 4, 2019). See also Shayerah Ilias Akhtar and Marian L. Lawson, "Build Act: Frequently Asked Questions about the New U.S. International Development Finance Corporation," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report, R45461, January 4, 2019.

² Roy D. Kamphausen, "Hearing on China's Belt and Road Initiative," testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, Subcommittee on International Trade, Customs and Global Competitiveness, Washington, D.C., June 12, 2019 ~ <https://www.nbr.org/publication/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-testimony>; and Nadège Rolland, *China's Eurasian Century? Political and Strategic Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2017).

commitments of individuals shaping decisions, the argument leans on a minimalist understanding of historical institutionalism.

Perhaps a deeper focus on a few key ASEAN-related organizations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum or the East Asia Summit may have provided a more succinct narrative while also spelling out in greater detail the mechanisms that produce continuity and change within Asia's regional architecture. The trade-off in going deep and profiling the more "successful" institutions, however, is the pitfall of presenting a tidy regional architecture devoid of contention and failures. In reality, the hodgepodge of overlapping institutions serves as a more accurate characterization of Asia's regional architecture. Highlighting the lesser-known and even failed ad hoc arrangements such as the six-party talks better reflects the contingent nature of regional institution building in Asia.

The Concept of Regional Architecture

Does the metaphor of a regional architecture make sense for Asia? This is an important conceptual question raised by Ba, who finds that the use of the term "architecture" conveys a degree of coherence to Asian institutions which may not exist in practice. Although I define regional architecture as an "overarching institutional structure," like Ba, I do not presume a strong degree of coherence among variegated institutions. To clarify, at a broad level, a region's institutional architecture should provide some semblance of order, stability, and rules for governance, regardless of whether the institutions within that architecture are bilateral, trilateral, or multilateral. However, this does not mean the individual institutions that make up Asia's regional architecture conform to any master plan.

Ba challenges the architecture metaphor by suggesting the presence of two (or more) distinct architectures in East Asia. As she argues, U.S. alliances and ASEAN followed distinct developmental paths led by different architects and institutional commitments. Thus, it may make little sense to include intra-alliance networks and strategic partnerships derivative of the U.S. hub-and-spoke system within the same architectural plan as ASEAN-based security institutions such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus or the East Asia Summit. These different pathways undermine the notion of an overriding regional architecture for Asia.

The above argument, however, is more an issue of disaggregation than a problem with the concept of architecture. Perhaps one can think of Asia's regional architecture as involving multiple processes and systems,

even if existing within the broader structure of the “complex patchwork.” This might even account for the variation Ba notes among different U.S. alliances (for example, between Southeast and Northeast Asian partners of the United States). In short, the concept of regional architecture is able to subsume or account for different structures and processes existing within a given region.

The United States and the Future of the Asian Regional Order

Asia’s Regional Architecture makes a theoretical and political bet: the United States will remain highly relevant in Asia for at least the next several decades in a modified liberal institutional order. Some contributors to this roundtable have questioned this claim, critiquing either the book’s U.S.-centric perspective (Ba and Kei Koga), or its relatively benign interpretation of Asian security (Renato Cruz De Castro).

As an American scholar based in Washington, D.C., writing a book with an eye toward the U.S. perspective is somewhat unavoidable.³ I am mindful of this U.S.-centered bias in the book (p. 26). Nevertheless, readers may find some tension between the book’s purported aim to understand the evolution of East Asia’s regional architecture as a whole (i.e., not from the vantage point of any particular country or institution) and the discussion of U.S. bilateral alliances in every empirical chapter, as if these alliances trumped all other institutional features.

Biases notwithstanding, there is some theoretical justification for giving more attention to U.S. alliances (and by extension, the U.S. perspective). Given the book’s historical institutional framework, focal and first-move institutions bear a greater consequence on the sequence and future trajectory of Asian institution building. In this case, the hub-and-spoke system came first. Thus, every subsequent institution either directly or indirectly had to contend with the existence of strong U.S. bilateral alliances (a point I establish in chapter 2). That said, Koga’s interjection that ASEAN also “created part of Asia’s regional architecture during the Cold War,” and therefore should not be easily dismissed, is a fair point.

A separate but related question is whether and how one can place faith in U.S. bilateralism, multilateral organizations, and liberal internationalism when the current U.S. president regularly disparages alliances and

³ Three of the four reviewers state to varying degrees that I shortchange the importance of ASEAN. I would expect no less from my roundtable colleagues who either are based in Southeast Asia or conduct substantive research focused on ASEAN.

criticizes multilateral efforts. As a full disclosure, the first draft of the book manuscript was completed in 2015—seven years into the Obama administration's strategic rebalance toward Asia—when the prediction of a modified liberal international order appeared entirely reasonable. As I note in the first chapter (p. 2), Donald Trump's election to the White House heralded a new level of uncertainty regarding the direction of U.S. foreign policy.

On U.S. policy regarding Asia, the first eighteen months of the Trump presidency (around the time I submitted the final draft to the publisher) actually suggested more continuity than change with past administrations. Despite his rhetoric, President Trump's eleven-day trip to Asia in November 2017 and the actions taken by principals and senior officials in U.S. bureaucracies such as the Department of Defense and State Department all pointed to continued engagement in Asia.

Now three years into the Trump presidency, the U.S. role in Asia and the future of liberal internationalism appear bleaker. Defense burden-sharing discussions with South Korea and Japan have once again highlighted President Trump's transactional approach to alliances. In a region where showing up is half the battle, the administration sent Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross to represent the United States at the East Asia Summit and the U.S.-ASEAN Summit in November 2019, two forums typically attended by heads of state. Meanwhile, regional actors appear no closer to resolving outstanding issues, including the denuclearization of North Korea, tensions between South Korea and Japan, and territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Underlying these problems is the intensification of the Sino-U.S. rivalry, as noted by Cruz De Castro, which threatens to challenge, if not alter, the Asian regional order.

As I argue in my book and elsewhere,⁴ alliances and institutions carry a certain degree of flexibility and resilience. If institutions are embedded in ideas, values, and cognitive beliefs, they should persist beyond the whims of any particular individual. The Pentagon's *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* is thus a better gauge of U.S. thinking on Asia policy than the president's tweets.

The greater long-term challenge, of course, is the possibility of China taking a hard turn away from the path of liberal internationalism. The ways in which Beijing has handled the Uighurs in Xinjiang and protests in

⁴ See Stephanie C. Hofmann and Andrew I. Yeo, "Business as Usual: The Role of Norms in Alliance Management," *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 2 (2015): 377–401.

Hong Kong, as well as its wooing of other autocracies or weak democracies across the Eurasian continent, are troubling to advocates of democratic governance, open markets, and individual rights. This is not to argue that the United States (or the West) has it right. Rather, competing visions of regional order may lead to serious divisions, thereby reducing the prospects for peace, cooperation, and regional governance.

In a modified liberal order, then, the United States and its partners will need to address legitimate concerns that challenge China's strategic interests. The United States is unlikely to be able to accommodate China on its own. This is where middle and smaller powers such as Japan, South Korea, and the member states of ASEAN, as well as rising powers such as India, may help build or steer regional institutions in a direction that prompts great powers to find areas of common interest. I suspect that policymakers will continue to layer new institutions on top of existing ones, further driving the evolution of Asia's regional architecture. Despite mistrust and discord, this architecture can provide states with a framework for establishing a semblance of order that enhances regional security and stability. ♦

