The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Spring 2006

Predictions of Tragedy vs. Tragedy of Predictions in Northeast Asian Security

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Abstract

The main argument of this article is that most structure-oriented IR predictions about the future of Northeast Asia in the aftermath of the Cold War have been overwhelmingly pessimistic, thereby projecting a tragic regional order. They have failed to assess the progressive trends of regional interactions, mainly because their projections were blinded by the structure-oriented theoretical conjectures. My paper has three objectives: First, I attempt to empirically identify the diverging gap between the pessimistic predictions about the future of Northeast Asia made by the mainstream IR analysts and scholars during the post–Cold War era and the reality of the past 15 years, which has been relatively well–coordinated, cooperative, and surprisingly peaceful. I unpack the logical structure of these predictions and theoretically explain the reasons why there has been an increasing gap between the two. Second, I argue that conventional arguments about the future of Northeast Asia tend to overemphasize a few structural variables dictated by their theories, while underspecifying regional factors such as regional states' conscious efforts to manage the regional order. Lastly, I draw analytical implications that the actual choices made by state leaders of Northeast Asia must be the target of empirical examinations, not analytical assumptions.

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, numerous International Relations (IR) scholars have been intensely discussing the future of Northeast Asia (NEA). Utilizing the general theories of international relations such as neorealism and liberalism, and to some extent, constructivism, IR scholars envisaged a pessimistic future coupled with rivalry and even potential mass-scale conflicts among regional powers in Asia. However, when actually comparing these pessimistic predictions with the unfolding trends of the region for the past 15 years, the region has actually showcased more cooperative, relatively peaceful and stable interactions among regional actors. NEA states, despite different and antagonistic historical perceptions of each other's past, have promised, and consciously tried to achieve, improved political cooperation through strengthened consultations and collaboration. Moreover, these regional levels of interaction exhibit multidimensional and complex characteristics that constantly seek to secure regional stability. In short, the region has been much more conscious about managing regional stability and cooperation, and displayed more progressive directions toward regional stability.

For the past 15 years since the end of the Cold War, despite persistent North Korean nuclear ambitions, the pan-Asian financial crisis in 1997 and rise of historical and territorial disputes, the region has maintained regional stability and intra-regional cooperation that goes far beyond and is much more progressive than the extent to which many IR scholars have predicted—then one must ask why the mainstream IR theorists have failed to foresee the past 15 years of relative peace, security and prosperity in the region. Is a decade and a half too short a period to evaluate the predictions made throughout the post–Cold War era? Even if it is so, then why could we not see the relative peace with an increasing level of interstate cooperation and security management in

* The author would like to thank Richard Herrmann, John Mueller, Alexander Wendt, Chung Min Lee, Tongfi Kim and Jason Carmichael for offering critical comments and constructive advice. He is also grateful to the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at the Ohio State University for generous research support.

the region, and how can we explain it? Lastly, what theoretical implications are there from unpacking their logical structure and what analytical lessons should we take in analyzing regional politics?

I argue that IR analysts have looked at factors that their theories only allow them to see. What they have done is to nail the same factors over and over again essentially producing the identical argument—that is through mechanical application of structural theories by *underspecifying* indigenous regional factors such as the intentions and perceptions of the actors in the region, while *overemphasizing* structural variables. The crucial question that they never asked was how leaders of the NEA states responded to changes in regional structure (i.e. the end of the Cold War), and formulated their visions for the future.

What Future for Northeast Asia?

More than a decade has passed since the world celebrated the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and ultimately the end of the Cold War, which meant the demise of the bipolar–competition that once overshadowed the superiority of ideology each side believed in.[1] It also meant the end of the U.S.-Soviet confrontations that constrained behaviors of regional states within the bipolar alliance structure of containment and counter-containment. This global transformation of the world politics generated uneven and (un)pleasant impacts on peace and security of different regions. Some regions underwent bloody ethnic conflicts while others celebrated successful economic transitions and linkages with globalization trends.

Meanwhile, many IR scholars and policymakers have continuously insisted that East Asia is characterized by flashpoints of ideological, ideational and military confrontations.[2] If "order" can be defined as patterns of interaction among states, many analysts conventionally

1 John Mueller, *The Quiet Cataclysm: Reflections on the Recent Transformation of World Politics* (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1995).

2 East Asia in this paper is defined as the region of Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia comprises Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia.

depicted that the East Asian regional order was distinctively different from Europe and was more prone to conflicts. In 1998, the U.S. East Asian Strategy reports by the U.S. Department of Defense concluded that:

> . . . instability and uncertainty are likely to persist in the Asia-Pacific region, with heavy concentration of military force, including nuclear arsenals, unresolved territorial disputes and historical tensions, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery serving as sources of instability.[3]

At the heart of the East Asian regional order lies Northeast Asia, which consists of the Korean peninsula, China, Japan, Taiwan, the Russian Far East—and the United States as an extra-regional power. NEA may have been the driving engine of global economic growth during and after the Cold War, but it has been also a region of intractable and bloody geopolitical conflicts, deep-rooted historical animosities and strategic suspicions among regional actors. Northeast Asia, which used to be a region of the Sino-centric regional order for more than 2,000 years, underwent "the age of extremes"[4] after the arrival of the European imperial powers, and during the Cold War. It went through brutal struggles for power and survival. It was in this region where great powers reciprocated their imperial resolves, power and prudence and where all great powers of the century waged war against each other (i.e., the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, the Opium War, the Pacific War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War).

Furthermore, there are lingering debates about the ancient and recent history between states that do not "regret" and states that do not "forget,"[5] whereas fast-growing trade, investment and human resource-exchanges are pulling these states into ever-closer contacts in NEA. In short, NEA states have an ancient and continuous history, while retain-

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3 The United States Department of Defense, *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region* (November 1998), p. 62.

4 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).

5 Yoichi Funabashi, ed., *Reconciliation in the Asia Pacific* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2003).

ing a respective sense of national identity reinforced by not only the high level of ethnic homogeneity but also the persistent historical memories about each other. That's why many analysts in the United States and Europe have argued that this is an area for dangerous strategic calculus between the United States and China, and China and Japan, and contains the potential for abrupt domestic conflicts (i.e., North Korea and China) and deep-seated animosities among all the regional states. In short, NEA has been and continues to be perceived as full of conflict-prone elements from material, historical and ideational perspectives.

Predictions of Northeast Asian Tragedies

IR scholars looking at the future for Asian security have attempted, and continue to provide a preview of what would unfold in the aftermath of the Cold War through their theoretical lenses—as if NEA has become the last frontier of IR theory testing.[6] The general trends of these predictions have been pessimistic, envisioning unstable regional interactions among the NEA states that would eventually generate security rivalry and even potential mass-scale conflicts among regional powers in Asia.

For the realist school of thought in international relations, the concept of material power and distribution thereof is the centerpiece of its logical formulation within the scope conditions of anarchy, which generates states' self-help strategies. Thus, drastic changes in the distribution of power itself cause structural uncertainties by activating states to engage in power competition that would create more unstable external environments.[7] In this vein, the mainstream IR theorists have

6 This article adopts the definition of prediction by John R. Freeman and Brian L. Job, namely "The linkage of known or accepted generalizations with certain conditions (knowns) to yield a statement about unknown phenomena." Freeman and Job, "Scientific Forecasts in International Relations: Problem of Definition and Epistemology," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 1979), p. 118.

7 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979); Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, eds., *The*

argued that the concern for relative power and prestige by the NEA states would cause conflictual power politics due to the demise of the USSR and rise of China.[8] On the other hand, the mainstream institutional liberalists argue that economic interaction among states gradually creates stronger and peaceful international relationships that would gear toward more mutual cooperation while reducing prospects for interstate conflicts.[9] They also emphasize that international regimes or institutions are necessary to minimize the likelihood of defection and maximize the benefits of cooperation.[10] For inducing regional cooperation, neo-liberal institutionalism finds that institutions need to become "institutionalized" by embodying the rules and norms that govern state interactions.[11] In NEA, however, they have argued that the lack of a concrete basis in building regional institutions, as well as the absence of any pan-regional institutions would make the NEA unstable and conflictual; there was no regional template through which many multilateral interactions and customs of cooperation and consultation had accumulated.

When these structure-oriented arguments were introduced to the NEA region, the apparent demise of the bipolar structure at the system level was believed to compel regional-level competition among regional actors who had been artificially constrained by their patron-allies (i.e.,

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Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

8 Aaron Friedberg, "Will Europe's Past Be Asia's Future?" *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 147–59; James Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "A Tale of Two Worlds," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 467–92; Barry Buzan and General Segal, "Asia: Skepticism about Optimism," *The National Interest* (Spring 1995), pp. 82–84.

9 Ernst Hass, *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Glenview, Il: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989).

10 Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regime as Intervening Variables" and Arthur Stein, "Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World" in Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 1–23, 115–41.

11 Helen Milner, "International Theories of Cooperation Among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses," *World Politics*, Vol. 44 (April 1992), pp. 466–96.

the United States and the USSR) over indigenous security issues that had remote and recent historical roots in the region. The major realist argument posited that the demise of the Cold War had produced an uncertain situation that the challenges of structural adjustment posed for the regional stability in NEA.[12] In the early 1990s, the trends of predictions made by the realist school indicated that given the unstable distribution of power, which seemed to look like multipolarity in the early aftermath of the Cold War,[13] many structural indicators became surely predictive of an unstable future. The decline of the USSR, the steep rise of Chinese economic power, the possible nuclearlization of North Korea, Japanese economic predominance and uncertainty about the U.S. security commitment to the region—all led to thinking that it would be difficult to achieve a stable NEA.[14]

At the forefront, in 1993, Friedberg saw NEA as "a cockpit of great-power conflict" and concluded, "What is unfolding in Asia is a race between the accelerating dynamics of multi-polarity, which could increase the chances of conflict, and the growth of mitigating factors that should tend to dampen them and to improve the prospects for a continuing peace."[15] Richard Betts asserted these as "a bad combination, precisely the opposite of that in Western Europe"[16] that should generate instability in Asia. In this vein, many pondered how this region of uncertainty would unfold. Gerald Segal emphasized structural uncertainty that would generate systemic instability by claiming, "East Asia has never known an indigenous pattern of international relations that was not dominated by China. The states of maritime East Asia

12 Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), pp. 5–41.

13 John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 13–18.

14 Michael T. Klare, "The Next Great Arms Race" and William J Murphy, "Power Transition in Northeast Asia: U.S.-China Security Perceptions and the Challenges of Systemic Adjustment and Stability," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Winter 1994); Gerald Segal, "'Asianism' and Asian Security," *The National Interest* (Winter 1995/1996), pp. 58–65.

15 Aaron Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Winter 1993/4), p. 7.

16 Richard Betts, "Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Winter 1993/4), p. 34.

surely have no nostalgia for their region before the Cold War and the coming of European imperialism."[17] Klare also envisaged, with a neo-liberal touch, that without regional institutional arrangements, "the Pacific Rim could be the site of periodic military convulsions in the 21st century, as Europe was in the 20th century."[18] Walden on the same note characterized NEA as a region that resembled "inter-war Europe: a society of strong nation-states, increasingly well armed and in possession of conflicting visions of the future, and in the shadow of an erratic and sometimes menacing power."[19] Evaluating these arguments about the future of Asian security and stability, Buzan concluded, "The fear is that the pessimists may be closer to the truth."[20]

These pessimistic prospects about NEA stability continued throughout the late 1990s. And the common factors associated with these pessimistic scenarios were institutional weakness, persistent security flash points (the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Strait), historical animosity among NEA states and the balance of power between China and Japan. In particular, rapid economic and technological development, which has led to the vast accumulation of national wealth in the region, was believed to produce shifts in the regional distribution of military power. Asia observers interpreted increases in defense spending and arms acquisition as a fitting evidence for their arguments and treated the regional arms build-up as an arms race, which would generate a security dilemma situation.[21]

Given these structural uncertainties, the risk of misperception-fueled by historical animosity—has been interpreted to produce miscalculation and eventually confrontation. Nicholas Kristof, former New York Times Bureau Chief of Japan and a veteran observer of Asian affairs, characterized peace and stability in Asia as "a fragile one, con-

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17 Gerald Segal, "A Riskier East Asia for Lack of a New Security Order," *International Herald Tribune*, July 8, 1994, available at http://www.iht.com/cgi-bin/search.cgi?query=ByGeraldSegal&sort=swishrank.

18 Michael T. Klare, "The Next Great Arms Race," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), p. 152.

19 Arthur Walden, "Deterring China," *Commentary* (October 1995), p. 21.

20 Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, "Rethinking East Asian Security," *Survival*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer 1994), p. 3.

21 Paul Bracken, *Fire in the East* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), pp. 71–94.

cealing dormant antagonism and disputes that could still erupt" in NEA.[22] Mearsheimer also added that "Northeast Asia is multipolar, a configuration more prone to instability," and "there is potential for serious trouble involving the great powers."[23] In other words, the defenders of the status quo, such as Japan and the United States, would increase its defensive capabilities as reactions to a rising China, which in turn should encourage China's aggressive impulses. Thus, from the realists' perspective, NEA was a volatile region, "in which all the major players—Japan, China, Korea, Russia and Vietnam—are candidates to become involved in a large-scale war."[24] In 2003, Ikenberry and Mastanduno pictured this region as "a mosaic of divergent cultures and political regime types, historical estrangements, shifting power balances, and rapid economic change," and pondered, "It is plausible to imagine security dilemmas, prestige contests, territorial disputes, national resentments, and economic conflicts swelling up and enveloping the region."[25]

A rising China has also generated numerous pessimistic predictions that it would become a long and mid-term danger to Asia security.[26] Their theoretical premise is such that a rapidly rising power would think it necessary to change the current regional order to suit its power status and interest.[27] This so-called "China Threat" prediction has operationalized its logic of arguments on a rapidly-growing national capability, which is believed to reflect its expansionary intentions. Roy pre-

22 Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Problem of Memory," *Foreign Affairs* (Nov./Dec. 1998), p. 38.

23 John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 362, 382.

24 Christopher Layne, "Less is More: Minimal Realism in East Asia," *The National Interest* (Spring 1996), p. 72.

25 G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, "International Relations Theory and the Search for Regional Stability," in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 2.

26 For the most recent review on this subject, see Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 7–45.

27 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 208–209.

sented in 1994 the China-threat argument by saying, "If behavior reflects capabilities, China's potential to build a larger economy also makes it likely to be assertive and uncooperative."[28] Mearsheimer again predicted a very pessimistic NEA in 2005, while debating with Brzezinski, who argued for a peaceful China, by asserting, "*China* cannot rise peacefully, and if it continues its dramatic economic growth over the next few decades, the United States and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war."[29] They argued that a rising China would challenge the U.S.- centered regional and international order, that a rising China would aggressively seek to resolve territorial disputes with the other Asian states, especially with Japan, and that a rising China would promote itself to a regional hegemon that desired to regain its prestige.[30]

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28 Denny Roy, "Hegemony on the Horizon: China's threat to East Asian Security," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), p. 165. For assessing the future of Asian security in regard to a rising China factor, see Joseph S. Nye, "China's Re-emergence and the Future of the Asia-Pacific," *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (1997), pp. 65–79; Gerald Segal, "The Coming Confrontation Between China and Japan," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 1993); Paul Dibb, "Towards a New Balance of Power in Asia," *Adelphi Paper* 295 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies / Oxford University Press, May 1995).

29 Zbigniew Brzezinski and John J. Mearsheimer, "Clash of the Titans," *Foreign Policy* (Jan. / Feb. 2005).

30 Nicholas D. Kristof, "The Rise of China," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 5 (Nov. / Dec. 1993), pp. 59–74; Gerald Segal, "Does China Matter?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 5 (Sept. / Oct. 1999); Bernstein Richard and Ross H. Munro, "The Coming Conflict with America," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (March / April 1997), pp. 18–32; Brad Roberts and Robert Manning, et al., "China: The Forgotten Nuclear Power," *Foreign Affairs* (July / August 2000), pp. 53–63; Phillip C. Saunders and Jing-dong Yuan, "China's Strategic Force Modernization: Issues and Implications for the United States," in Michael Barletta, ed., "Proliferation Challenges and Nonproliferation Opportunities for New Administrations," *Occasional Paper #4* (October 2000), pp. 40–46; Charles Wolf, Jr., K. C. Yeh, Anil Bamezai, Donald Henry, and Michael Kennedy, *Long-Term Economic and Military Trends, 1994–2015: The United States and Asia* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1995); Eric Strecker Downs and Philip C. Saunders, "Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998 / 99), pp. 114–146; Andrew Scobell and Larry M. Wortzel, eds., *China's Growing Military Power: Perspectives on Security, Ballistic Missiles and Conventional Capabilities* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002).

On top of these structural variables, historical memory has been often inserted as a flaming factor to the already conflict-prone structure. Thus, in their actual logic-formulations, both realists and institutionalists, looking at the behaviors of South Korea, China and Japan, have often argued that historical animosity would function effectively as a prevalent intervening variable that would govern their foreign policy behaviors in the region. The conventional argument points out that this "historical factor" would intensify mutual distrust and misperception, and produce conflict-prone situations.[31] Thomas Christensen in particular utilized this variable between China and Japan as the critical intervening factor that would intensify descending spiral effects in security dilemma as pre-existing antagonistic memory may cause spirals of persistent suspicions manifested in a regional arms race.[32] Thus, historical memory would generate negative perceptions with intrinsic mistrust, which would become an impediment to forming a stable regional order. On the same note, historical factors have enforced the liberalists' predictions that mutual suspicions of the motives of respective NEA states and the absence of regional institutional mechanism as well as the experience itself would lead to a more conflictual future.[33] Likewise, a permutation of uncertain distribution of power and the absence of regional institutions fueled by historical animosity, both realist and liberalists would essentially agree that this would make the regional order patterns ripe for Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese rivalries.

In sum, the mainstream IR scholars have thus far considered that this is a region of potential tragedies where (1) A rising China should be perceived as the potential challenger to U.S. hegemony; (2) the rise of emotional animosity would loom large in the three core states—South Korea, China[34] and Japan; (3) North Korea has constantly threat-

31 Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), ch. 3.

32 Thomas Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 49–80.

33 Robert A. Manning and Paula Stern, "The Myth of the Pacific Community," *Foreign Affairs* (Nov./Dec. 1994), pp. 79–93; John Duffield, "Asia-Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective," in Ikenbery and Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, pp. 243–70.

34 Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley,

ened the United States through nuclear-brinkmanship; (4) territorial and history disputes would become the major inter-state issues; and (5) formal security multilateral institutions have not emerged.

Reality-Check: Surprising Peace in Northeast Asia

As seen from the scholarly prospective about East Asia in general and NEA in particular, the prevailing view was one of a pessimistic future. Has this future been realized? When actually compared—despite these pessimistic predictions, compared with the unfolding history of the region over the past 15 years—the region has actually enjoyed more cooperative and stable interactions among regional actors. The NEA region has expectations and predictions made by the IR scholars and observers.[35] In fact, surprisingly, the region continues to prosper and tends to stabilize after sporadic crises. Most regional leaders have been cautiously optimistic about Asia's future. Among the NEA states, despite different and antagonistic historical perceptions on each other's past, frequent summits among the regional powers have promised, and consciously tried to achieve, improved political cooperation and trust through strengthened trade and cultural exchanges. Since 1979, no major war has broken out, although security challenges still exist in the region. As for the strategic relationship between the United States and China, these two states have been strategically cooperating on such critical issues as Taiwan's independence bids and North Korea's nuclear ambitions through bilateral and multilateral approaches.[36] These regional interactions exhibit multi-dimensional and complex characteristics that have produced regional dynamics within which NEA states constantly seek to secure regional stability.

It is, however, not to say that the region has been harmoniously peaceful. Rather, for the past 15 years since the end of the Cold War,

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CA: University of California Press, 2004).

35 Muthia Alagappa, ed., *Asian Security Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

36 Richard Bush and Catharin Dalpino, eds., *Brookings Northeast Asia Survey* (Washington, DC; Center for Northeast Asian Studies, 2003), p. vi.

NEA has in fact experienced many security crises that might have otherwise destabilized the region. Nevertheless, despite sporadic conflicts and tension, the NEA region has managed to withstand external and internal shocks, and exhibited a tendency toward coordinated solutions and avoidance of major war throughout the post–Cold War era. The NEA states have maintained their commitment to peace and the ability to tolerate crises, in a way that decreases the probability of military conflict. As the following Table 1 indicates, the region itself

Table 1. Chronology of Major Security Crises in NEA

Year	Event	Results
Oct. 1994	USS Kitty Hawk and Chinese Hans-class nuclear submarine clash in the Yellow Sea	The maritime military cooperation agreement between the U.S. and China
1994	North Korean nuclear crisis	U.S.-NK bilateral agreement creating KEDO
June 1995	China tested short-range missiles in protest of Lee Teng Hui's visit to the U.S.	Sino-U.S. tension rose but no diplomatic breakdown
March 1996	China conducts war games off the coast of Taiwan that involve missile tests and live-fire drills	U.S. responded by dispatching two carrier groups to the region
Aug. 1998	North Korean fired a long-range missile over the Japanese Islands	Japan terminated its $1 billion contribution to KEDO and perceived North Korea as an actual threat to its security
May. 1999	U.S. accidentally bombed the PRC embassy in Belgrade	U.S. issued a formal presidential apology
Jun. 1999	South Korea-North Korea naval skirmishes in the Yellow Sea	High-level ministerial talks leading to inter-Korean summit
Apr. 2001	U.S. Navy EP-3 electronic spy plane collided in mid-air with a Chinese F-8 and was forced to make an emergency landing on Hainan Island	U.S. offered a letter in which it said it was "very sorry" for the loss of the Chinese pilot and that the aircraft landed in China without permission
Jul. 2002	The 2nd SK-NK naval clashes in the Yellow Sea	Direct military talks between South and North Korea
2004	2nd NK nuclear crisis	Ongoing within the six-party negotiation framework

might have experienced episodic crises but in fact has stabilized, thus highlighting the self-restraint of each of the actors. In essence, flashpoints did actually arise sporadically, but have fortunately been resolved effectively. It would appear that there is some (natural) unique regional tendency in NEA toward a stability–equilibrium that pulls states away from conflictual behaviors and interactions.

No single exclusive and formal regional institution in the region has emerged that could serve as a template for multilateral cooperation and coordination. However, the difference from the European case is the proliferation of consultative diplomatic arrangements that are issue-specific efforts to resolves regional problems, as well as to strengthen cooperative relationships, among regional actors. As Table 2 illustrates, the NEA states have formed webs of mini-lateral institutions, some of which are specific task-oriented (i.e. four-and six-party talks for the North Korean nuclear challenges, KEDO and TCOG), track II and consultative (i.e., CSCAP and ARF) and periodically routine (i.e., APEC and ASEAN+3). Though less formalized and legalized in comparison with those found in Europe, these mini-institutions have functioned as confidence-building measures and preventive-diplomacy forums where states have actively pursued negotiations for specific trade-offs to manage their differences. NEA's loose regional institutionalism—networks of informal and formal consultations—reflects the Northeast Asian regional dynamics. The recent past memories of distrust, one may argue, have deterred the NEA states initially from concentrating on confidence-building measures.[37] Thus, NEA regional institutions have grown incrementally, as "events [for formalizing the regional institutions] evolve gradually and subtly, rather than in a series of dramatic breakthroughs."[38] As part of the Confucian culture that underlies the region, informal consultations and friendship among key actors are more prevalent than formalized regional institutions.[39]

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37 Fu-Kuo Liu, "East Asian Regionalism: Theoretical Perspectives" in Fu-Kuo Liu and Philippe Regnier, eds., *Regionalism in East Asia: Paradigm Shifting?* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 4–29.

38 Ibid., p. 21; Rodolfo Severino, "The ASEAN way in Manila," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Dec. 23, 1999, p. 27.

39 Amitav Acharya, "Culture, Security, Multilateralism: The 'ASEAN Way' and Regional Order," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1998), p. 58.

Table 2. Multilateral Arrangements in NEA[40]

		S. Korea	China	Japan	USA
APEC (1989)	Consultative	*	*	*	*
CSCAP (1992)	TRACK-II	*	*	*	*
ARF (1994)	Consultative	*	*	*	*
KEDO (1995)	Consortium	*		*	*
ANEARG (1996)	Consultative	*	*	*	
Four-Party Talks (1997)	Negotiation	*	*		*
ASEAN+3 (1997)	Consultative	*	*	*	
TCOG (1999)	Consultative	*		*	*
Six-Party Talks (2004)	Negotiation	*	*	*	*
Tripartite Committee (2004)	Consultative	*	*	*	

APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation; CSCAP: Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific; ARF: ASEAN Regional Forum; KEDO: Korea Economic Development Organization; ANEARG: The Association of Northeast Asia Regional Governments; ASEAN+3: Association of Southeast Asian Nation plus NEA States; TCOG: Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group.

As for a region of export-oriented states, how intensely each state trades with one another is a viable way of measuring how intra-regionally interdependent they are. Trade Intensity Ratio (TIR), a formal measure of the changing strength of trade relationships among trading states, shows the extent to which each state is becoming more (or less) dependent on the other as trading partners.[41] The following graph

40 The style of this table was adapted from Samuel Kim, "North Korea and Northeast Asia in World Politics" in Samuel S. Kim and Tai Hwan Lee, eds., *North Korea and Northeast Asia* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2002), p. 14.

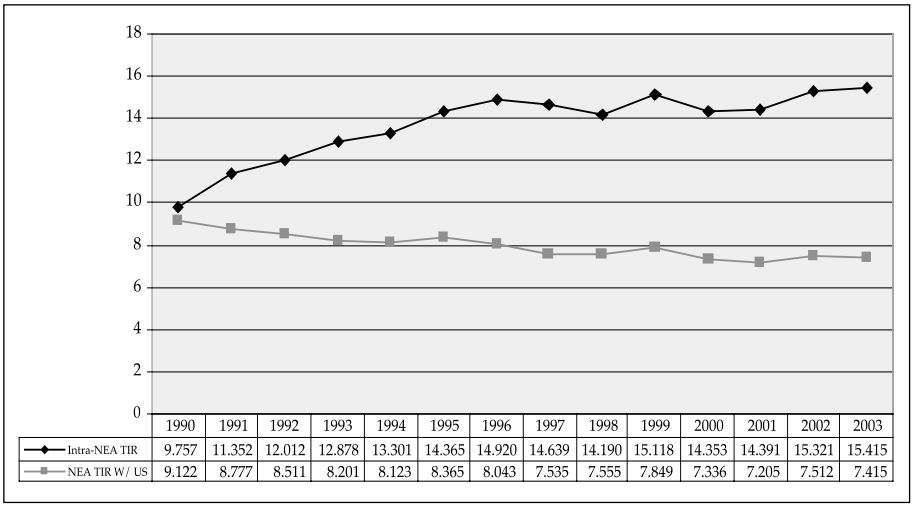
41 The larger the value of TIR, the stronger the trade links between two trading states. Trade Intensity Ratio is given by the following formula:

$\frac{X_{ij}}{X_i} \div \frac{M_j}{M_w}$ where X_{ij} are the exports of country I to country J; X_i are the total exports of country I; M_j are the total imports of country J; and M_w are global imports. This method is adopted from Robert F. Ash and Y.Y. Kueh, "Economic Integration within Greater China: Trade and Investment Flows Between China, Hong Kong and Taiwan" in David Shambaugh, ed., *Greater China: The Next Superpower?* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.

shows changes of TIR between the intra-NEA trade intensity among China, Korea and Japan and NEA with the United States.[42]

The level of NEA regional economic and trade interdependence among China, Japan and South Korea has increased in unprecedented fashion. Northeast Asia's TIR with the United States decreased from 9.12 in 1990 to 7.415 in 2003, meaning that NEA states' trade dependence on the United States has decreased by 18 percent. On the other hand, NEA intra-TIRs have steadily increased from 9.757 in 1990 to 15.415, showing a 58 percent increase over 13 years. The gap between

Figure 1. TIR Estimates: Intra-NEA vs. NEA with U.S.[43]



	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Intra-NEA TIR	9.757	11.352	12.012	12.878	13.301	14.365	14.920	14.639	14.190	15.118	14.353	14.391	15.321	15.415
NEA TIR W/ US	9.122	8.777	8.511	8.201	8.123	8.365	8.043	7.535	7.555	7.849	7.336	7.205	7.512	7.415

66–67.

42 NEA TIR is given by the sum of each state's TIR with each other annually, which is NEA TIR=TIR (CH EXPORT TO SK)+TIR (SK EXPORT TO CH)+TIR (CH EXPORT TO JP)+TIR (JP EXPORT TO CH)+TIR (SK EXPORT TO JP)+TIR (JP EXPORT TO SK). NEA's TIR with the U.S. is given by the sum of each state's TIR with the United States, which is NEA TIR WITH U.S.=TIR (U.S. EXPORTS TO CH)+TIR (CH EXPORTS TO U.S.)+TIR (U.S. EXPORTS TO JP)+TIR (JP EXPORTS TO U.S.)+TIR (U.S. EXPORTS TO SK)+TIR (SK EXPORTS TO U.S.).

43 The raw data from 1990 to 1996 is from Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS) Yearbook, 1997 while the data from 1997 to 2003 is from DOTS Yearbook 2004. Both are published by the Real Sector Division, International Statistics Department, and International Monetary Fund.

the intra-NEA TIR and NEA TIR with the United States is only getting wider, implying that NEA states' trade dependence on the U.S. market is decreasing, while the intra-regional interdependence is being intensified and their economic interdependence as trading partners has solidified. At any rate, these three powerful engines of the global economy have interlocked themselves[44] and produced a very condensed trading zone that in turn is critical to each state's economic development.

Regarding Japan's recent recovery from the economic recession, were it not for China's growth, Japan could not have come out of it. In 2002, the growth of Japan's exports to China accounted for 60.8 percent of the total growth of Japanese exports and in 2003, 92.4 percent.[45] Intra-regional flows of trade, capital, direct and long-term investments, and technology-transfer have produced a regional fusion effect, spurring modernization of China, economic recuperation of Japan, market-restructuring of South Korea, and steady economic growth for all.[46]

The NEA states do not see a rising China as a threat; unlike the predictions made by IR scholars. Rather they see a rising China as an opportunity.[47] Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan proclaimed, "Some see China as a threat. I do not. I believe that its dynamic economic development presents challenges as well as opportunity for Japan."[48] Regional economic development fueled by a rising China is considered a non-

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44 "North-East Asian Diplomacy: Ties that Grind," *The Economist*, April 7, 2004, available at http://www.economist.com/World/asia/displayStory.cfm?story_id=2577551.

45 Economic Research Division, Bank of Japan, "Trade Between Japan and China: Dramatic Expansion and Structural Changes," *Economic Commentary*, No. 2003–03, Aug, 2003, pp. 1–2; Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, *White Paper on International Economy and Trade 2004*, p. 14; "Dragon and the Eagle," *The Economist*, Sept. 30, 2004, available at http://www.economist.com/surveys.

46 For a geo-economic perspective of NEA, see Gilbert Rozman, "A Regional Approach to Northeast Asia," *Orbis* (Winter 1995), pp. 70–71.

47 David Kang, "The Declining U.S. Role in Asia: The Theoretical Roots of Hierarchy in International Relations," a paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of APSA.

48 Koizumi's Speech made at Boao, China, April 2002, available at http://www.Kantei.go.jp/foreign/koizumispeech/2002/04/12boao_e.hyml.

zero sum game whose benefits can be mutually enjoyed.[49] Along with increases in trade flows, even movements in human resources have intensified. In May 2003, the number of Chinese students studying in Japan (70,814) exceeded the number studying in the United States (64,757).[50] The number of South Korean students earning college degrees either in China (23,722 in 2004) or Japan (16,992 in 2004) has rocketed and they are soon expected to surpass the number of South Korean students studying in the United States (56,390).[51]

However, this is not to say that NEA states coordinate their problems perfectly. This region frequently suffers from intensified diplomatic disputes, upheavals of nationalist sentiments, historical animosity and internal balancing through military build-ups.[52] And NEA states still disagree upon the past and frequently engage in diplomatic disputes that seem to destabilize their close relationships. But in the end, NEA leaders have shown restraint and wanted to resolve differences gradually. President Roh of South Korea captured this approach well, saying, "If we do not resolve our differences in historical representations, the relationship between South Korea and Japan will inevitably become explosive and more distrustful. The leaders of South Korea, China and Japan need to take epochal measures to achieve peace in Northeast Asia unless we want to face a historical responsibility for our failure to do that. Exchanges and cooperation alone will not be enough to achieve peace unless they are accompanied by correct recognition of past history."[53] The following Table 3 illustrates the historical disputes

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49 With this logic, Japan was the first G-7 state to lift its sanctions against China after the Tiananmen Square massacre. See Tohiki Kaifu, "Japan Throws China a Lifeline," *The Economist*, July 14, 1990, p. 35.

50 Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, "On Enhancing Student Exchanges" (June 30, 2005), available at http://www.mext.go.jp.

51 Figures are obtained from National Institute for International Education Development, South Korea, available at http://www.studyinkorea.go.kr/ENGLISH/G100/G100_Co.jsp

52 Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, *The Armies of East Asia: China, Taiwan, Japan and the Koreas* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc., 2001).

53 Hwang Doo-hyong, "(5th LD) Roh, Koizumi fail to narrow differences over history dispute," *Yonhap News Agency*, June 20, 2005, available at http://english.yna.co.kr/Engnews/20050620/610000000020050620225322E2.html.

Table 3. History Disputes in NEA

States	Disputes	Results
China–Japan	Nanking Massacre	China demands apology and Japan asserted it did enough
S. Korea–Japan	Comfort women; return of South Korean treasures; History textbook	S. Korea and Japan formed a History Re-Evaluation Committee of history scholars for finding the common grounds; Nothing has been done for the comfort women issue
N. Korea–Japan	Apology on the Japanese annexation and compensation	Negotiations have been repeatedly held and halted
S. Korea–China	History of the Goguryeo Kingdom, an ancient Korean ethnic kingdom that reigned in Manchuria and the northern part of the Korean peninsula that China considers as part of its local history	Foreign Affairs ministerial talks concluded and produced mutual understanding of each side

among the NEA states as persistent flashpoints of disputes. All are ongoing but some are resolved. This aspect of the Northeast Asian regional order further should generate empirical puzzles about what the underlying forces of the regional order would be.

Obviously, NEA states, just like every state in the world, do engage in power politics through internal and external balancing. They have invested part of their wealth to increase and modernize their defensive capabilities.[54] All states of NEA are committed to military-technological advancement and defense-strategies comparable to the U.S. national security strategy for preparing for interstate conflicts and regional crises. This, however, neither describes all of the regional order nor explains the uniqueness of the region.

Northeast Asia is a complex region of "an increasingly complex mosaic of actors and factors."[55] The region has shown normalcy as well

54 Kent E. Calder, *Pacific Defense: Arms, Energy, and America's Future in Asia* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1996); Tim Huxley and Susan Willett, *Arming East Asia, Adelphi Paper* No. 329 (New York: Oxford University, 1999).

as distinctiveness. NEA states rivals, competes and consults with each other, just like the rest of the world does. They have also proved adept at managing intrinsic regional issues, containing crises, and achieving interdependence, all of which have led to regional interdependence and stability that resonate with some of Europe. To some extent, the interactions among internationalism under the slogan of globalization, nationalism frequently hyper-sensitized by the remote historical memory, and communalism that seeks to survive and prosper, characterize the regional interactions in NEA.

Certainly, there apparently exists a diverging gap in the trajectories between the expectations and predictions made by the mainstream IR analysts and the realities of the region. These literatures have certainly missed the mark—since differences, disputes and crises in the region have not degenerated into the projected military conflicts but been adjusted through consistently coordinated manners. Moreover, the NEA regional order has been at least non-violent, and sustained normal political, diplomatic, and economic and security interaction.

Tragedies of Predictions: Theoretical Implications

Unpacking of the pessimistic predictions and checking of the NEA reality reveals some theoretical and empirical problems in analyzing the NEA regional interactions. And these problems may be, to a great extent, the reasons why there is an increasing gap between overly theory-driven analyses and the trajectory of NEA regional interactions.

First, too much concentration on historical lessons drawn from Europe,[56] and the parallel comparison with NEA have resulted in blinding observers to the issues and questions that are of fundamental importance to understanding the patterns of interactions in NEA. Borrowing balance-of-power and power-transition theories, the mainstream IR analysts have consistently prescribed that a rising China

55 David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping Regional Order," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 2004/5), p. 66.

56 James L Richardson, "Asia-Pacific: The Case for Geopolitical Optimism," *The National Interest* (Winter 1994/1995), pp. 28–39.

would trigger balancing behaviors among other regional powers and in turn create a classic security dilemma that worsens the already existing mistrust and animosity in the region. The neo-liberal perspectives have also argued that because of lower, if not absent, levels of institutionalization, cooperation would be difficult to achieve. These scholars in fact heavily relied upon the parallel comparison between Europe of the 19th century from which major IR theories were drawn, and the late 20th and early 21st century of the NEA. Apparently, for these European-rooted theories to be generalizable as they claim to be, it should be thoroughly examined whether the core theoretical premises, such as structurally-driven state intentions, are relevant to understanding other regional actors' strategic calculations. But the problem with this approach is the underlying assumption that regional states would act upon the structural configurations given by theories. They do not simply recognize maneuverability of regional states vis-à-vis changes in structural configurations.

Second, these structure-oriented arguments about the future of Asian security in general resulted in hammering essentially the same variables for the past decade and a half and in producing identical predictions of the NEA future, regardless of the unfolding peaceful history of NEA. In other words, structural variables have been over-emphasized. This over-emphasis has led many analysts to under-specify not only the causal process but also indigenous factors at work in the region, resulting in the diverging gap between the realities of the region and the theory-based predictions for the region. States act according to the perceived threats to and needs of national interest, and are constrained by both domestic political processes and the external environment.[57] In other words, overemphasis on structural variables, if not

57 Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policies," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (1988); William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Power Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of American's World Role* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, "Domestic

abstract, has led to writing off indigenous factors that may have affected the course of regional dynamics including perceptions and national goals of NEA states. These analysts overemphasized permissive factors and ironically under-specified indigenous factors, such as the intentions and perceptions of the actors in the region. In this vein, structural argument may be less able to explain the divergence in perception or historical memory in each regional state, which is vital to understanding states' intentions. Within these structural perspectives, historical animosity, that is associated with negative images of each other, does not vary, and is presumed to produce balancing behaviors toward each other. Thus, in order to overcome this, cross-level integration is necessary.

Third, historical animosity factually exists in NEA. It is not, however, the presence of these animosities per se, but the manner in which they are perceived, interpreted and fed into their vision for the future of which they seek to maximize their national interests. Then the negative effect of the historical animosity on the making of regional order is to be treated as an empirical question for actual investigations rather than a theoretical axiom. In this vein, one needs to specify why and how the NEA states have so far pragmatically dealt with each other in the name of regional cooperation. In other words, the goals and preferences of the NEA states in their own terms may affect patterns of regional interactions. All NEA states are export-oriented states that prefer more stable and predictable external environments and understand the necessity of reducing the probability of internal and external conflicts.[58] At agent-levels, NEA leaders have linked their political legitimacy to economic development as well as national security.[59] Their motives are to secure these two national goals, which in turn, at regional level, may result in a greater degree of collaboration among regional leaders who may also promote a more secure and predictable regional order. After all, this is

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Source of Alliances and Alignment: The Case of Egypt, 1962–73," *International Organization*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 369–95.

58 Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 62–71.

59 Alice H. Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 8–18; Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

a region consisting of a group of states that went to many wars, constituted a distinctively hierarchical pattern of regional interactions long before the arrival of the Western dominations, achieved the most remarkable economic development through export-oriented strategies, and finally seek to outperform economically the West. In sum, the high priority given to prosperity through market-driven and export-led growth may have resulted in strong preferences for a more predictable, and thereby more manageable, regional environment, which should create a stability-oriented regional order.[60]

Fourth, interesting as well as problematic is the timing of these predictions. These predictions were consistently made when IR scholars fiercely debated the theoretical validity of structuralism (i.e. neorealism) against its failure to predict the end of the Cold War and doubted the relevance of neorealism for understanding the unfolding post–Cold War era.[61] Even though IR scholars actively engaged in self-examination about why and how IR theories failed to project the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR and what should be done to improve the theories,[62] the main stream IR scholars, on the other hand, employed indiscriminately the same structure-oriented arguments in predicting the future of regional politics in NEA. In essence, the litera-

60 Steve Chan, *Growth, Order, and Security in the Pacific Region* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990).

61 John Lewis Gaddis, "International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Winter 1992/93), pp. 5–58; Stefano Guzzini, "Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis," *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 443–78; Charles W. Kegley, Jr., "The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (June 1993), pp. 131–47; Friedrich Kratochwil, "The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-realism as the Science of Realpolitik without Politics," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (January 1993), pp. 63–80; Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, *International Relations Theory and The End of The Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

62 Richard Herrmann, "Conclusions: The End of the Cold War—What Have We Learned?" in Lebow and Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations Theory and The End of the Cold War*, pp. 259–84.

ture about the NEA regional orders has advanced their arguments based on the deductive reasoning out of their theories by employing a few elements that fit their theoretical grounds and make determined predictions. Theory-driven assessment is a natural tendency when theorists observe the world and try to explain parsimoniously. This in fact is a valuable endeavor for advancing theoretical edges.[63] However, although IR theories cannot predict the specific behaviors of individuals and states, they should be able to "offer the promise of reliable prediction"[64] by specifying "the conditions under which the characteristic behavior of the international system will remain stable, the conditions under which it will be transformed, and the kind of transformation that will take place."[65]

The predictions made about the future of Northeast Asia point to the critical theoretical issue of whether the overly theory-driven or abstract level of so-called grand-theories have utility, if not relevance, in not only understanding but also identifying the forces and patterns of regional interactions in NEA since the end of the Cold War. In this sense, the theoretical challenge in illuminating regional orders of NEA is not about identifying the areas where realism or liberalism cannot adequately explain states' foreign policy behavior and their regional interactions. Rather more challenging is to identify the underlying forces that generate patterns of state interactions in NEA that the past prevailing anticipation of the future failed to see. To meet this challenge, we may need a new explanatory framework that effectively incorporates regional factors.

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63 Philip Tetlock, "Theory-Driven Reasoning about Plausible Pasts and Probable Futures in World Politics: Are We Prisoners of Our Preconceptions?" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 335–66; Cheryl Koopman, Jack Snyder, and Rober Jervis, "Theory-Driven versus Data-Driven Assessment in a Crisis: A Survey of International Security Readers," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (December 1990), pp. 694–722.

64 J. David Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (October 1961), pp. 79–80.

65 Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1957), pp. xvii–xviii.

A Never-Asked Question and a Path to Better Analyzing NEA Regional Politics

Theory-driven predictions about regional orders in general tend to suffer from the lack of actual evidence on how regional states formulate external strategies and actually interact with each other, because over-emphasis on one or two structural variables for maximizing explanatory parsimony may obscure the local and regional dynamics of conflict and cooperation in the region. The current literatures lack the empirical identification of their preferences held by regional actors (i.e., how state actors assess their perceived regional environment and utilize their resources). This may impede one from understanding the deeper dynamics of the regional security—namely the ability of regional states to choose, act on their choices and create environments suitable for their national goals.

External structure matters but they do not come with "an instruction sheet." Rather the degree to which it matters depends on how states—or more precisely, state leaders—invent their own strategic formulas and implement them. We should not assume that regional states would be overwhelmed, if not dictated, by the systemic factors. The Cold War structure that had generated tight hierarchical alliance structures in regional states repressed different domestic interests and political visions. Therefore, one can suppose that the demise of the Cold War may have meant different things to state leaders of different regional states. Regional leaders could have perceived the end of the Cold War either as challenging uncertainty or as opportunities to realize more indigenous national goals. Between a path to achieve a prosperous future and a path to clear up the legacies of the past historical legacies that may endanger regional states' national goals of achieving prosperity, leaders may choose the latter to the former. Or maybe not! In other words, the actual choices made by state leaders of the NEA must be the target of empirical examinations, not analytical assumptions.[66]

In this vein, what was never asked and incorporated in these pre-

66 For a very general review of the Asia security discourse, see Andrew Mack and Pauline Kerr, "The Evolving Security Discourse in the Asia-Pacific," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Winter 1995).

dictions was how the leaders of the NEA coped with both the long-term and short-term national goals and produced their strategic choices to establish more viable external environments so that their national goals could be better facilitated. In other words, a more illuminating question in explaining the past 15 years of the NEA regional order is to ask how leaders of NEA states responded to their representation of the end of the Cold War and regional configuration of patterns of interaction, and formulated their vision for the future in a moment which was drastically different (or uncertain) from their recent and remote past. Therefore, we need to shift our analytical gear from merely examining the structural factors to how regional actors perceive these, represent them into the vision of the future regional interactions, and formulate their regional strategies in order to maximize their national interests.

One analytical path in analyzing NEA is to identify recurring patterns of regional interactions by empirically investigating how each state's construction of regional environments has affected regional interactions in critical issues such as security, economic development and identity. More precisely, one should examine the origins and recurring patterns of regional interactions in the NEA by focusing on how state elites have envisioned regional order at critical junctures in time; that is how states compromised historical representation of other regional actors with strategic interest considerations and produce visions of regional order—their construction of viable patterns of interaction and their conscious efforts to change them. Considering and incorporating this ideational factor may yield more satisfactory explanation as they give more precise shape and meaning to actual behaviors and the understanding of national interests and security threats that each state may perceive.

Regional politics may be products of layers of multiple interactions by deliberately chosen strategies by regional states who implement their visions for the optimal regional order. This means that configurations of regional security dynamics (i.e. distribution of power, alliance) or regional economic interdependence or even cultural exchanges are consciously pursued by states. This is not something that emerges automatically. States pursue their goals; for their goals, they constantly aim for creating the best possible regional environment. Different constructions of what constitute ideal regional orders and how leaders

perceive them to be achieved make regional politics dynamic and flexible (i.e. conflictual and peaceful). In other words, "regional order" does not emerge from the objectively assessed evaluations of external environments by analysts. In the end, theories must link to evidences, not build on weak assumptions about the actors.[67]

67 Richard K. Herrmann, "Linking Theory to Evidence in IR," in Walter Carsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 123–26.