
23. US–Russian relations in North-East Asia in the post-cold war period: a US perspective

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I. Introduction

Although Russia has been active in Asia in the 20th century, most Americans (and perhaps Russians as well) think of Russia as a European power and focus on problems of US–Russian relations in Europe.

However, in the states of Asia there is concern about their large neighbour which predates the end of the cold war. In the countries of North-East, South-East and South Asia the collapse of the Russian economy and the degrading of the Russian military presence are studied intensively. Those interested in national security matters keep a watchful eye on Russian activities and economic efforts, the relations between central and regional political leaders, the state of the Russian military and, of course, the management of the nuclear arsenal.

In the second half of the 1990s the focus has been on Russian political and economic stability. When will the chaos that seems to characterize the Russian political system and economy subside? When will Russia begin an economic recovery? Will the industrial powers continue to provide financial support? In the summer of 1997 Chinese foreign policy observers frequently asked visiting US counterparts when Russia would recover sufficient economic strength to play an important role in East Asia or perhaps in the world at large. Both Americans and Chinese agree that the Russian presence is currently severely limited, yet both seem to believe that in the future such a large country, with a highly educated population, vast mineral resources and a long cultural and political history, will inevitably return as a player in Asia–Pacific.

Even so, numerous qualifications need to be kept in mind. Ken Jowitt, writing in 1991, commented that ‘the extinction of a defined and bounding element of the international order is likely to create disorder both within its own boundaries and in adjacent areas’.¹ He spelled out the potential spillover effects of the ‘Leninist extinction’ in Asia (and elsewhere) and argued that the world should be alert to the possibility of new regional political actors and new territorial entities emerging, including an expanding Pakistan, a reunited Korea, and conflict in China between the centre and the regions also involving Hong Kong and Taiwan, even though these scenarios may not materialize or may be overtaken by new factors or realities.

¹ Jowitt, K., *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (University of California Press: Berkeley, Calif. 1992), p. 319.

Given these difficulties and the range of possible outcomes, the words of Under-Secretary of State Strobe Talbott at Stanford University on 19 September 1997 are worth noting: 'We need to make sure that we have a policy toward Russia that contains an indispensable feature: strategic patience. This means a policy not just for coping with the issue or crisis of the moment or of the week or even of the season or for getting through the next summit meeting: rather it means a policy for the next century'.² In the view of this author it is clear that the USA does not have such a policy, whether in Europe or in Asia. It is only possible to speculate on the decades to come. It is, however, possible to set out some of the problems and issues that seem likely to arise and outline the parameters of the US response from the perspective of 1999.

This chapter starts by accepting that the centre of US–Russian relations is not Asia, indeed that US–Russian bilateral relations in Asia rank low on the list of priorities, although US–Russian relations in general will be influenced by developments in Asia, for example, the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan in 1998. The reverse is also true: developments in Europe will inevitably spill over into Asia when either Russia or the United States shows anger or frustration at events in Asia while actually concerned about developments elsewhere. Finally, worldwide concerns such as environmental matters may well have focal points in the Asia–Pacific region.

Section II of this chapter discusses the parameters that shape current US foreign policy and illustrates them as reflected in policies in North-East Asia on a country-by-country basis. Section III does the same with respect to Russia in Asia. Section IV then sets out US–Russian relations and their congruence and possible conflict points in North-East Asia, examining them through the prism of third parties, specifically China, Japan and the two Koreas, with brief references to South-East and South Asia. The emphasis is not on direct bilateral relations between the USA and Russia but on policies with respect to China, Japan and the two Koreas where Russian and US interests have from time to time clashed or been in harmony.³

II. US foreign policy in Asia: priorities and constraints

Long gone are the days when bipartisan support for US foreign policy began 'at the water's edge'. With the exception of relations with China, there was formerly considerable bipartisan support for the decisions of the US Commander-in-Chief for most of the three decades after World War II. Individual patriotism and Americans' general lack of interest in foreign affairs contributed to public apathy. Moreover a certain elitism on the part of the US foreign policy leader-

² *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 3 Jan. 1999, p. 6.

³ In considering the relations of the USA and the Soviet Union/Russia, this chapter draws on a set of matched articles entitled 'The Soviet Union/Russia in Asia' and 'The role of the United States' published annually in the Jan. issues of the journal *Asian Survey*. The emphasis of these articles is economic, political and international relations in specific countries. They are useful for providing a time-line and comparative analysis of key themes not only for the USA and Russia but also for the other major players in the Asia–Pacific setting.

ship and personnel together with the strong anti-communist feelings of many Americans gave mostly a free hand to policy and decision makers. The Viet Nam War changed this. By the 1990s this freedom of action in foreign policy has been considerably constrained.

Human rights issues combined with a widespread suspicion of government action are now serious considerations for any US political leader. It is still true that the US public and the congressional leadership will support a decisive act that places US forces in harm's way, at least initially. The bombing of the training facilities of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan is an example of this: but within six weeks of the bombing many Americans were less certain of the rightness of the action. Shortly after the start of the US–British bombing campaign against Iraq in December 1998, the Senate Majority Leader in Congress criticized the timing of the decision even as the missiles fell.

Along with the elected officials' willingness to criticize a military act abroad there has been a fragmentation of the US electorate, with serious consequences for foreign policy. For some years, domestic politics has been increasingly riven by separate and often powerful single-interest groups who focus on a specific government policy that they seek to support or oppose. These groups organize their members to besiege policy makers, legislators and the president. Organized segments of the economy, religion or society have their lobbyists push specific policies, draft legislation, threaten to withhold campaign contributions or run an alternative candidate to advance their causes. For much of the cold war the strength of anti-communism muted the voice of many of these groups, but with the end of the cold war the situation changed.

In the past decade there has been a selective attention to and focus on specific foreign policies.⁴ For example, US Agency for International Development (USAID) programmes that contain any appropriations for family planning will be scrutinized and most likely withdrawn under pressure from anti-abortion lobbies. Importers of foreign-made textiles and clothing, much of it from factories in South-East and South Asia, are criticized for inethically supporting sweatshop conditions as well as purchasing goods which compete unfairly with US products. Some trade policies take on an anti-foreign colouring. The discussion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) when based on a heightened fear of Asia injected racism into the domestic US debate.⁵ Christian groups fight vociferously for the protection of Christians in Asia and elsewhere.

There used to be a belief that traditional analysis of treaties and agreements was a sufficient guideline to understanding US foreign policy goals. This may be the case elsewhere in the world, perhaps where foreign policy decisions are in the hands of a relatively small elite. It is not true for the United States. Traditional analysis based on treaties, memorandums of understanding and the like is helpful but not sufficient for US negotiators. In the USA civil society has developed parallel to the affairs of state.

⁴ Pollack, J., 'The United States in Asia 1995: the case of the missing president', *Asian Survey*, Jan. 1996, pp. 1–13.

⁵ Cronin, R., 'The US and Asia in 1993', *Asian Survey*, Jan. 1994, p. 100.

It is not sufficient to consider only the interests of the business and financial communities and agriculture when discussing foreign policy, important though they may be. This is true not only because of political and social restructuring but also because of technological change, which has enlarged the audience for a foreign policy event. Television clips and videos send out stark images and have the capacity to change the average person's view of a country, a war or an event. A classic European example is the destruction of the Berlin Wall. In Viet Nam the killing of a prisoner by a Vietnamese official was captured on camera. In 1989, the image of the single young Chinese man facing a tank in Tiananmen Square shaped the image of China for many Americans.

The graphic nature of television images together with the reporting by journalists in war zones has given an immediacy to casualties and fixed an important parameter for US foreign policy decisions, namely, the expectation and necessity for a 'clean' war with minimal suffering and casualties confined to the opponent. Bloody outcomes such as might have occurred in an invasion of Cuba or from the use of a nuclear device to rescue French troops in Dien Bien Phu, all in the past, and the risks implicit in some UN peacekeeping operations today are very difficult to 'sell' to the executive branch or the Congress. Now and for some time to come the US armed forces in proposing a course of action, the executive in approving a specific act and the Congress in approving and funding a programme will have their options narrowed.

The alteration in the image of Russia is also worth considering. It has been slow in coming. The media formerly characterized the Soviet Union as an enemy harsh, brutal, conniving and to be feared. The picture now is one of a Russian population beset by personal suffering, systemic corruption, danger and despair. Russian soldiers have come to be seen as a heroic if unsuccessful force which experienced in Afghanistan the same fate as the United States in Viet Nam. Russian industry is shown in sharp decline and in need of modernization, agriculture unable to support the citizens, and medical care so poor that Russia is the only industrialized state with declining life expectancy. Russian soldiers, once feared but respected, are seen to be in such desperate circumstances that they must either seek additional employment or sell their equipment; workers are unpaid, schools are in disrepair and life is 'nasty, brutish and short'; Russians are to be pitied and Russia is no longer a powerful opponent, although possibly a dangerous one. Even so, a degree of respect remains for Russian diplomatic prowess in the world and for other things, such as the USSR/Russia's achievements in space.

The existence of this view has positive and negative implications for bilateral relations. From the US perspective the removal of Russia as a factor in many political matters in Asia leaves a less complicated matrix for decision making. A more negative outcome appears to be the unwillingness or reluctance of US negotiators in the Middle East and Central Europe to engage and take account of Russian expertise and presence in resolving serious conflict situations, at least in part because of Russia's current weakness.

US foreign policy goals in Asia

Have foreign policy goals or instrumentalities in Asia changed in the past decade?

There have been changes in the terrain. Asian governments have focused on their individual state identities when threatened by dissident minorities, pushing forward with economic modernization and upgrading the quality of life of their citizens. Regional organizations in South-East Asia have worked to establish some consensual sense of purpose. In North-East Asia issues and conflicts remain in Korea and between China and Taiwan. Smaller border conflicts and unresolved disputes over sovereignty over islands mean that bilateral relations between the nations of the region are fragile.

But what of the superpower? In the bipolar world, international developments in a region had an impact on the stand-off between the USA and the USSR. When the cold war ended it might have been expected that the relatively tranquil Asian region would require less attention and present fewer challenges. The presence of the sole remaining superstate provides reassurance to Asian states of its willingness to intervene if necessary—but against whom?

Perhaps the most appropriate term for US policy in East Asia is ‘transitional’ following the end of the cold war and the 1997–98 financial crisis. Keeping this generalization in mind, US aims in general terms are: (a) to prevent conflict by maintaining ‘an effective security presence’ and preventing the domination of the region by any hostile power; (b) to assist in both the growth of the Asian economies and the development of democratic political systems while sustaining the US access to Asian markets; and (as elsewhere) (c) to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the systems that deliver them.⁶ Thus security in Asia, although retaining an important military component, also involves economic concerns which are almost as significant as the military presence.

With the ‘new world order’ following the end of the cold war, important changes in the bilateral relations of the USA with countries of North-East Asia might have been expected. They had after all been based on dependence, indeed a sort of patron–client relationship. In 1999 the United States, although a powerful state capable of influencing developments and projecting power in countries thousands of miles away, no longer had the traditional measuring stick of the cold war. After the cold war who were its enemies and who were its friends in Asia? As with Russia, the answer to this question has been clouded as each country re-evaluates its own national interests.

At the end of the 20th century the danger of a two-power struggle has disappeared. The USA has the means to support objectives that require armed forces and the willingness to use them, together with active economic policies that would facilitate economic progress and recovery and political modernization in the countries of Asia. Yet surprises do occur. India and Pakistan have

⁶ Institute for National Strategic Studies, *Strategic Assessment: US Security Challenges 1995* (National Defense University: Washington, DC, 1995), pp. 21–22.

tested nuclear devices. North Korea tested the long-range Taepodong I missile in Japanese airspace over the Japanese islands on 31 August 1998, reminding the world that a military component was still part of international politics in North-East Asia. Looked at in this way, the security commitments constantly reiterated by US representatives together with the actual forces stationed in North-East Asia represent specific assets designed to warn potential adversaries of the costs of hostile military activities.

The USA's bilateral relations in North-East Asia

The following paragraphs comment on core matters in the USA's bilateral relations with China, Japan and the two Koreas. They illuminate issues in the bilateral relationships that either explicitly or implicitly involve US economic policies and some military considerations.

China

Strategists in China and elsewhere have raised the issue as follows: Is a modernizing and self-confident China likely to be seen as a threat to the national interests of the United States? Putting the question another way, is it likely to be a hostile force seeking to dominate countries in the region and hence an entity which the United States should attempt to contain? Many Chinese have argued that the USA does not want a strong China.

Would the USA take steps to try to slow China's growth and deter the modernization of the Chinese armed forces? What would be the costs of such a policy? The answers to these questions are not at all clear but the questions are important.

Other questions follow. To what extent is it possible to shape developments in China and influence the rate of growth? If it is possible, at what cost? After the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, sanctions were imposed by the USA. They have been imposed elsewhere in Asia—on North Korea, India and Pakistan—often with some reluctance because of the collateral cost to the population and in South Asia to the balance of power in the region as well. Many would argue that the sanctions were of minimal effect and were lifted or ignored by most countries. China's economic growth may slow naturally without any intervention by other states.

Technology has been the vehicle for development for China and India and of course for US concern.⁷ In the post-cold war period, China's efforts to restructure, upgrade and modernize its armed forces have been abetted by Russia's need to seek additional income for its hard-hit economy. Weapon sales have become an important source of finance for Russia and meshed nicely with the Chinese search for more modern equipment, especially for the air force. The sale of Russian aircraft, spare parts and licences for co-production has served both countries' interests. Of equal importance have been China's efforts to

⁷ CNN Overview, URL <<http://cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/resources/1999/cox.report/>>.

upgrade its nuclear delivery and missile capability. Here serious problems now confront the US–Chinese relationship, as detailed in the US Congressional report by Representative Christopher Cox.⁸ It alleges an almost 20-year sustained espionage effort on China's part to achieve increased sophistication for a missile delivery system, thought by many (although not all) to have been successful.

It may be argued that the resources available to China to buy Russian aircraft and other items will not be enough to make a dramatic change in the level of modernization of the military until some 10–15 years into the next century. Still, given the shared anti-US feeling in Russia and China, some level of concern about the Russian–Chinese arms transfer relationship is to be expected. However, the costs to the United States of trying to forestall China's acquisition of advanced military equipment might be greater than the costs of attempting to channel the use of arms purchases. Moreover, the economic rewards for Russia, Israel and other arms-exporting countries may mean that attempts to divert or prevent arms transfers and co-production are of limited utility.

From the perspective of the USA as a sea power, strategists worry about the consequences of Chinese naval and air modernization but are still sufficiently confident of sustaining the current gap in military capability to continue to support military exchange programmes as confidence-building measures (CBMs). Russia may continue military exchanges and provide assistance in a manner that causes anxiety for the US counterparts, but will this materially alter the balance of power?

In the 1990s the USA has vacillated with respect to its relationship with China. At different periods contacts have declined, been frozen and been reactivated as the administration has tried to bring relations with China to a somewhat more harmonious state. From the late 1980s, US presidents have tried either to maintain a low-visibility relationship with China or (in the late 1990s) to incorporate a more cordial relationship. This has included reciprocal visits, largely symbolic, by Chinese President Jiang Zemin to the United States and by President Bill Clinton to China. The US Department of Commerce has tried to promote US business interests and loosen the rules or the interpretation of the rules in order to expand transfers of technology to China. Military exchange programmes have been developed at fairly high levels and efforts have been made to bring China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) despite domestic struggles over this matter both in the USA and in China. Policy with respect to human rights has oscillated between criticism of China's human rights record, on the one hand, and separation of trade matters from the human rights issue, on the other. This was exemplified in 1998 by the decision not to initiate a UN resolution criticizing China's human rights policies, followed by a reversal in 1999. All this indicates differing views in different agencies of the government, Congress and indeed on the part of successive presidents.

⁸ US House of Representatives, Select Committee on US National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China, 'US national security and military/commercial concerns with the People's Republic of China', [May 1999], URL <<http://www.house.gov/coxreport>>.

The continuing fragile relationship with China is a target for critics of the incumbent political party. Fund-raising scandals have been linked to reports of Chinese efforts to influence US elections,⁹ improprieties have been alleged with respect to the transfer of technology,¹⁰ and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, on a trip to China in April 1999, harshly criticized Chinese human rights policies. All this reflects the present state of instability.

The Chinese Government for its part has also shifted back and forth in relations with the USA. The strongest evidence of Chinese alarm at US policies is the hue and cry surrounding possible development and deployment of a Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system in Asia, with its obvious implications with respect to Taiwan and a more nationalist Japan (as viewed by Chinese eyes).¹¹

What theatres will be defended? The answer to this question leads to a review of US–Japanese relations.

Japan

US–Japanese relations remain both important and to some extent more at risk than they were in most previous years. Japan is the linchpin of the US presence in Asia. However, a review of bilateral relations during the post-cold war period does raise some warning flags with respect to Japan's continuing defence relationship with the USA.

For almost a decade Japan has been in recession. As the difficulties of Asia became more pronounced with the financial and economic crisis of 1997–98, pressure to further engage Japan in efforts for recovery increased. Some US policy makers and diplomats urged a reduction of pressure on Japan and respect for its large trade surplus with the USA in order to allow Japan to concentrate on its internal difficulties, while some other US representatives in the WTO forcefully tried to alter some Japanese trade policies. Since 1995 a stream of US advice on how to repair weaknesses in the Japanese economy has flooded Japanese administrators and the media.

A long-overdue review (September 1997) of the Guidelines for US–Japan Defense Cooperation¹² has been the subject of very considerable controversy with respect to several important matters, notably the scope of treaty application, the costs of maintaining US troops on Japanese soil and, most importantly, the scope of activities that are and should be considered part of Japan's responsibility. Does the revision of the guidelines bring Taiwan within the scope of US–Japanese military cooperation? China and North Korea will find the US military presence explicitly objectionable if the TMD programme progresses off the drawing board. The project, highly controversial and extremely expen-

⁹ 'After hours: debate on fund raising rages', *New York Times*, 20 July 1999.

¹⁰ CNN (note 7). The *New York Times* from 21 May 1999 ran a series of articles outlining the allegations.

¹¹ Cambone, S., 'The United States and Theatre Missile Defence in North-East Asia', *Survival*, autumn 1997, pp. 66–85. For the Chinese point of view, see 'US missile defence hysteria', *China Daily*, 30 Mar. 1999, p. 4; and 'Chin and Russia oppose US missile system', *China Daily*, 11 June 1999, p. 2.

¹² US Department of Defense, 'Guidelines for US–Japan defense cooperation', 23 Sep. 1997, URL <<http://www.defenselink.mil>>.

sive, is a question for the next century, both as to feasibility and as to countries in the region to be protected.¹³ Even so the initial discussion of these issues has started a debate in North-East Asia, where Chinese concerns include both Japan and Taiwan and the basic argument that defence technology is easily engineered for offensive purposes.

The US presence, Japan's commitments under the revised security guidelines and problems such as hostility to US bases in Okinawa have serious consequences for Japan (as do North Korea's 1998 missile test launch and the technological capability it represented) with respect to its constitutional commitment to peace.¹⁴ How can the spirit of the 'pacifist' clauses in its constitution be retained when Japan undertakes to share the burden of defence with the USA and participate in UN peacekeeping? The selection of aircraft, satellite monitoring and missile development raises questions that have been avoided for some time and these inevitably involve bilateral relations.

Setting aside the question whether the present force configuration in Japan is appropriate, virtually all discussion of the Japanese armed services and defence posture raises domestic political issues that are being fought out among the fractured political parties in Japan. As the navy modernizes, the capability of Japanese vessels to patrol and monitor the oceans, assessing Russian naval bases to the north and the deployment of Russian submarines, is valuable to the USA and is said to be part of the effort to equalize the burden of security shared by the USA and Japan under the new defence guidelines.

At the same time it has become difficult for the Japanese Government to separate business and diplomatic aspects in its relationship with the USA. The intermingling of economic considerations, technological development and defence strategy has made the US–Japanese relationship more tenuous than might have been expected. The congressional discussions with respect to TMD, the North Korean missile tests and the pitiful condition of some economies in South-East Asia, suffering not only from banking and financial services difficulties but also from the shrinking of the Japanese market, have conflated a number of issues for Japan and to a considerable extent the USA.

North and South Korea

There seems to be agreement between US and Russian analysts as to the centrality of relations with North and South Korea for peace in North-East Asia. There are several aspects to sustaining peace in this region.

The first is the ongoing transition in the leadership in both the north and the south. The development of a democratic political system is well under way in South Korea. President Kim Dae Jung is uniquely qualified to endorse and

¹³ Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network (NAPSNET), *Daily Report*, 24 Nov. 1998, URL <http://www.nautilus.org/napsnet/recent_daily_reports/11_98_reports/NOV24.html> provides selections from the Taiwanese press on Taiwanese missile defence.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the Japanese Constitution, see Takahara, T., 'Japan', ed. T. Findlay, *Challenges for the New Peacekeepers*, SIPRI Research Report no. 12 (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1996), pp. 53–56, 67.

implement policies to open up North Korea. His 'sunshine policy' has been accompanied by a call for a softer US policy with respect to North Korea, including increased food aid and movement towards the establishment of liaison offices in each other's capitals. The tactics of the North Korean Government, however, including the continued forays of North Korean submarines along the South Korean coast and the unannounced and highly symbolic missile test, have made it difficult for Kim to sustain the 'sunshine policy' while under criticism from his political opponents and with a less than enthusiastic US policy to accompany it.

The lack of Russian participation in these circumstances seems a positive benefit, reducing the number of players in the game and the complications that their presence might cause.

The US–South Korean relationship, however, has been shaken by pressure from the continuing economic upheaval and by the confused policy outlook of the United States, led by a president who has little interest in and pays insufficient attention to the political and diplomatic situations of the USA's allies.

Statistics of the military balance suggest that the dominance of South Korean and US forces should preclude a North Korean attack. However, weaker states may have limited agendas, namely, the survival of the state or the regime, and be more willing to take risks for the sake of survival than a larger state is, given that a larger state has a broader and longer list of commitments and goals. One analyst suggests that US military dominance may cause smaller states, such as North Korea, to consider the development of smaller-scale but potentially powerful mechanisms, such as missiles.¹⁵

For the present the United States watches with interest the South Korean dilemma with respect to reunification, enthusiasm for which is balanced against the extraordinary costs it would bring, especially in the present circumstances when economic retrenchment may not be over. The matter of US troop deployment in the event of reunification remains to be resolved. Furthermore, domestic realities in South Korea make the normalization of relations with North Korea increasingly difficult as incidents continue between the two armed forces.

The USA's relationship with North Korea is beset by difficulties and a long history of suspicion on both sides. It also involves Japan and South Korea. The agreement arrived at in Geneva in 1994 following North Korea's non-compliance with its obligations under the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) established, so critics have argued, a formula for the USA to buy peace on the peninsula by cooperating with South Korea, Japan and other states to build light-water reactors in North Korea, alleviating the serious energy shortages of the north and providing oil while the reactors are under construction in exchange for North Korea ending and then allowing verification of the effort to end its nuclear development programme. Construction is being directed through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). However,

¹⁵ *New York Times*, 5 July 1999.

the unexpected economic crisis made it difficult for South Korea to fulfil its part of the agreement, although it has tried to continue preparations for construction of the reactors. The domestic political struggle in Japan and the intense suspicion and divisions within the US Government have placed the policy under review, if not in jeopardy.

III. Russia in Asia: goals and policies

Some Russian interests in Asia have spanned many centuries. Russian traders and explorers were in the region 300 years ago. In the 20th century there have been military interventions with mixed outcomes. The Russian Navy suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese war. Diplomatic adventures in Asia were designed to ensure that Russia shared some of the special territorial rights of the imperialist powers.

With the establishment of the USSR and the Comintern new possibilities arose. In the 1920s and 1930s the Communist Party of the Soviet Union focused on finding, encouraging and training leaders who would establish Asian communist parties in order to weaken capitalism. Towards the end of World War II Stalin promised that the Soviet Union would enter the Pacific War after the defeat of Hitler and it did so. Some observers argue that the decision reflected a wish to re-establish a presence in Asia, renewing ties and perhaps influencing the future governments in China, Korea and possibly Japan. Meanwhile, on the Korean–Russian border guerrilla forces were supported and trained with Soviet assistance to enter Korea with the end of the war.

Elsewhere Soviet interests were pursued in part through support of socialist states. In the 1950s the approval of the Soviet Union was thought to have been behind the North Korean invasion of South Korea. In Indo-China in the 1960s military equipment and especially more advanced weapons were supplied by the Soviet Union and transported to Viet Nam.

Soviet efforts in South and South-East Asia often circumscribed US policy or channelled it. The danger of sinking a Soviet ship was a consideration when the US policy of mining the harbour that served Hanoi was considered. The Soviet naval bases from which ‘boomer’ submarines were dispatched were a factor in the deployment of US attack submarines, given the modest naval forces of other client states in the region.¹⁶ Especially important was the close relationship between India and the Soviet Union, which included the supply of weapons and aircraft. This friendship and the quality of the Soviet Union’s military assistance were sufficient to antagonize China and play an important part in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The Soviet Union began to repair the China relationship and seek an accommodation with China in the late 1980s.¹⁷

¹⁶ Sontag, S., Drew, C. and Drew, A., *Blind Man’s Bluff: The Untold Story of American Submarine Espionage* (Public Affairs New York: New York, 1998).

¹⁷ Dittmer, L., ‘China and Russia: new beginnings’, ed. S. S. Kim, *China and the World: Chinese Foreign Relations in the Post-Cold War Era* (Westview Press: Boulder, Colo., 1994).

From the 1960s the United States, through the development of alliance systems, and the Soviet Union, through friendship treaties and support to Third World organizations and countries, sought to counter each other's presence and political influence.

Certain common threads are apparent in Russia's actions throughout the post-cold war years which also apply to US policy. First, domestic problems and divisions have served to sharply constrain Russian foreign policy choices. In the 1990s the complicated internal political games in the transition from the Soviet Union to Russia¹⁸ have consumed the attention of the political elites. Among the contending units influencing foreign policy, as in the United States, are the Presidency, the Foreign Ministry and the Duma (the lower House of the Russian Parliament). The latter is universally characterized as a conservative and very nationalist body. Other Russian interest groups also prevail in certain circumstances, notably the military and science and technology units, as well as the largest of the national industries, Gazprom.

Second, Russia's policy choices are still constrained by deepening economic chaos. For example, relations with North Korea soured at least in part because of Russian demands for payment in cash for oil. Russian efforts to participate in KEDO were unsuccessful in part because KEDO was unwilling to buy Russian reactors. Although Russia would support the goal of a more peaceful and safe Korean Peninsula, it is currently unable to participate in the funding of KEDO.

Russia's interests in Asia have been or are expressed in roughly three ways.

First, as ideology has faded, it has relied on assistance and support to friendly socialist states in Asia and some assistance to the quasi-friendly or neutral states along the borders as means to sustain friendship. In some areas ideological considerations have been replaced by an emphasis on cultural and ethnic historical ties.

Second, Russia has protected and regularized its borders. The emphasis on this is connected with trade, which has become of substantial and growing importance both because of the serious difficulties of the Russian economy and because regional Russian interests see local trade as a means of remedying the steep decline in assistance from far-away Moscow. In the longer term the resolution of territorial disputes with Japan and other states would open the possibility of growth in commercial ties with and foreign investment in Russia's eastern territories. Some sectors of the economy have become especially active and crucial as a result of the financial downturn, namely, the defence industries. Economic pressures to export arms have become more intense. China's purchase of sophisticated military equipment at alleged bargain prices could not but strengthen the growing relationship between the Russian and Chinese authorities, just as sales to India serve to provide an income and reaffirm Russian friendship. For Russia arms sales are crucial for its economy and

¹⁸ Chuftrin, G., 'The USSR in Asia in 1991: domestic priorities prevail', *Asian Survey*, Jan. 1992, pp. 11–19; and Bazhanov, N. and Bazhanov, Ye., 'Russia and Asia in 1992: a balancing act', *Asian Survey*, Jan. 1993, pp. 91–103. These 2 year-end summaries of the previous year's experience are especially informative about both domestic and international developments in a tumultuous period.

perhaps equally important in their contribution to saving the defence industry in Russia. Here is security with an essential economic component, although the military threats of the cold war have largely vanished.

Third—more complex and equally important for Russia—it has resolved remaining border and territorial disputes and derivative issues concerning the treatment of Russian citizens by neighbouring countries and control of cross-border traffic. These problems are common to virtually all Russia's borders, and prominent between Russia and China.¹⁹

Specific developments in Russia's bilateral relations with China, Japan and North and South Korea illustrate a number of these points.

Russian bilateral relations in North-East Asia

China

The highest priority must be attached to Russian efforts to establish a cordial and developing relationship with China. Whether this can be done, given the potential areas of disagreement and conflict, is a matter of controversy but the effort is under way. No matter whether or not Russia and China share their anger at or opposition to some tenets of US foreign policy or specific acts, some of their policies merge with considerable ease.

Current Russian efforts to expand and develop commercial ties and market opportunities with China required attention to the settlement of border demarcation and formalities. This is not a trivial matter, as the armed incidents in the 1960s near the Amur River should remind us. In the more peaceful atmosphere of the 1990s continual negotiations have brought progress towards a resolution of differences.²⁰

The process is not, however, problem-free. Agreements made by the central government in Moscow are coming under intense criticism from some Russian local authorities. The Governor of the Maritime Province (Primorskiy Krai) in far eastern Russia opposed the ceding of even 12 km² of land that would have benefited Chinese traders and possibly detracted from services offered by Russian ports within the *krai*. While presidents Jiang Zemin of China and Boris Yeltsin of Russia might speak of a friendly atmosphere, officials on the ground often find daily matters complicated and potentially threatening. The disagreements are not merely a matter of ports but also of the economic benefits expected to follow the development of trade zones, transport and other local provision among three parties—Russian, China and North Korea.²¹

As border arrangements have been delimited, the flow of traders, peasants and merchants has led to problems in controlling the sale of goods and the

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this problem, see Lukin, A., 'The image of China in Russian border regions', *Asian Survey*, Sep. 1998, p. 821.

²⁰ See chapter 18 in this volume; and NAPSNET, *Daily Report*, 25 Nov. 1998, URL <<http://www.nautilus.org/napsnet/dailyreport.html>>.

²¹ Arase, D., *Economic Cooperation in the Region where China, Russia and North Korea Meet*, Working Paper no. 53 (Japan Policy Research Institute: Cardiff, Calif., Jan. 1999).

movements of people. The problem has been magnified when the goods bought and sold have been criticized as shoddy and of poor quality. Commercial matters on the border have been adjusted by agreements between the Russian Federal Border Guard Service and its Chinese counterparts in August 1995 to control illegal trafficking and immigration.²² These matters of border demarcation, control of expanding trade and control over the movements of people have developed over almost a decade and may take another decade to resolve fully.

The result of increased diplomatic activity, arms sales, reductions in border tensions and shared dissatisfaction with the unchallenged US primacy has been a 'strategic partnership' of sorts between Russia and China, despite the remaining difficulties between them. The relationship is not a military one, although arms sales are a 'plus'; it is a political meshing of interests to limit the US presence where possible and criticize it when the opportunity arises, but without a treaty between China and Russia. 'China, concerned with American hegemony, has entered into a strategic partnership with Russia. But such partnerships are weak and cannot be termed as alliances or even alignments.'²³

Japan

Russo-Japanese relations, although important, do not receive the priority attached to bilateral Russian–Chinese relations. Both Japanese and Russians speak of improved relations in recent years. Actual progress is more difficult to verify. In February 1999 the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, indicated that it was unlikely that the two powers would conclude a peace treaty in 2000, despite statements to the contrary by both countries' leaders. Moreover, the continuing inability to resolve the conflicting territorial claims over the southern Kuril Islands has consequences beyond the four small, rocky islands themselves.²⁴ The conflict leaves Japan with aspects of its security unresolved and hence potentially causes problems for its partner, the United States. For the near term the likelihood of the issue being resolved seems low. The end of the cold war has not reduced the difficulties between Japan and Russia; indeed it might be argued that the strong Soviet political leadership might have been better able to resolve the sovereignty issue and the political future of the disputed islands.

Despite the obvious potential for economic cooperation between Russia and Japan, the benefits from the development of mineral resources, oil and gas appear to be awaiting the resolution of this intransigent problem. Investment by Japan in the Russian far east, in these years of extreme economic need, is held hostage by the strong nationalist protests against any negotiations that might change the status of the Kuril Islands.

²² Lukin (note 19).

²³ 'Key features and explanations', ed. M. Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, Calif., 1998), p. 634.

²⁴ See also chapters 20 and 21 in this volume.

North and South Korea

Ironically, the Korean Peninsula, where Russian long-term planning readied the forces that have ruled North Korea since World War II, remains a most troublesome arena for Russia. Here the interests of the two Koreas, China, Japan, the USA and to some extent Russia meet. With the end of the cold war Russia has moved away from the state it helped create 50 years ago.

On the Korean Peninsula, where at least four powers are directly involved, the short-term dangers with respect to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are more apparent than anywhere else. Some developments have reduced tensions, notably the diplomatic recognition of China by South Korea and of South Korea by Russia. These diplomatic steps were to be accompanied by improved US–North Korean relations, moving towards the establishment of liaison offices if not formal mutual recognition, but failure to achieve this has brought criticism from North Korea and perhaps a sense of betrayal on its part. Earlier attempts to reduce tensions have had mixed results. Commercial efforts that were to benefit all have hit shoals. Efforts for debt reduction between South Korea and Russia foundered over payment or effective rescheduling of a long-overdue Russian debt to South Korea. In the tense days of the financial crisis of 1997–98 the sufferings of the South Koreans made them less sympathetic to Russian hardship, although discussions resumed in the spring of 1999.

IV. US–Russian relations

‘We have no eternal allies and no permanent enemies . . . Our interests are eternal, and those interests it is our duty to follow.’²⁵ Aphorisms are deceptive in their simplicity. Ideological conflicts during the cold war made tempting the view that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Such thinking at least initially brought the United States and China to consider improving their relationship. The rethinking of friendships and interests as a result of the end of the cold war seemed not to have been predicted in Asia. Suddenly not only have major powers had to readjust their thinking but all the small powers in the region have found themselves looking again at their relations with their neighbours. As the new millennium approaches, determining interests and friendship is as important as it is difficult.

The setting for the Russian–US relationship

Certain factors are crucial to the understanding of the Asia–Pacific region as well as the specific domains in which the Russian and US foreign policies are operative.

²⁵ Lord Palmerston, quoted in Briggs, A., *The Age of Improvement 1783–1867* (Longmans: London, 1959), p. 352.

Throughout Asia there has been a resurgence of three forces at play with respect to foreign relations: (a) nationalism; (b) communalism both within and between nation-states; and (c) internationalism.

The force of nationalism has been reaffirmed throughout the region, for example, in the internal struggles in Indonesia, along the borders of China, within Malaysia, in India and Pakistan, and in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. There was a scarcely concealed anti-Americanism in the questions put to US President Bill Clinton in a speech at Beijing University during his China visit in May 1998. There have been protests in South Korea as a consequence of forced changes in trade policy in the early stages of the financial crisis directed at the West in general and at the USA in particular.

Resurgent communalism is apparent in attacks on Christians, on Muslims, on ethnic Chinese and on various religious sects in India, and in many other examples throughout the world, and should not surprise an observer. Such violence reasserts boundaries and divisions within and between nation-states or dominant and minority groups within regions. Many current divisions have hundreds of years of conflict behind them. Conflicts may become quiescent, especially at times when economies and culture are flourishing, only to re-emerge at times of poverty or scarcity. They impinge on or limit the alternatives of governments subject to their pressure.

At the same time there has been a rapid expansion of globalization or internationalism, a competing and also powerful current. Today's technology permits financial transactions to cross national boundaries at the stroke of a computer key. International enterprises are bought and sold by citizens of other nations, sometimes regardless of the social distress of countries that have experienced the financial crisis of the past two years. Production lines are outsourced, leaving long-time employees bereft of employment, benefits and often self-worth. Many of these factors are beyond the capacities of governments to control. Both Russia and the USA feel these pressures and see the outcomes of hasty international economic action and forced reforms.

Certain other developments must be taken into account. First, economic strength as an element of security is increasingly important in Asia, as the period 1997–99 shows, both for moderating crisis and for initiating recovery.

The primacy of economics in the post-Cold War world warrants the placement of a higher premium on economic performance and less emphasis on military-oriented security. And the ability to sustain, expand, and modernize a nation's military capability is dependent on economic growth. The link between economics and military power is nowhere more evident than in Russia, whose military capability has declined significantly due to the economic morass confronting it. Internal chaos and secessionist rebellions have further undermined national authority to the point where Russian power is no longer taken seriously in Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia.²⁶

²⁶ Nathan, K. S., 'Malaysia: reinventing the nation', ed. Alagappa (note 23), p. 542.

Second, the Asia in which Russia–US interplay occurs includes widely differing political systems of which only three can be called socialist—China, North Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK) and the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. The other regimes of North-East and South-East Asia are better classified as authoritarian–democratic with differing degrees of government intervention in their economies. The interaction with the forces of nationalism, communalism and globalism is only imperfectly understood in any analysis.

There are similarities in the experiences of Russia and the USA in the region since 1992. First, the alliance system has undergone change, which has been more dramatic for Russia than for the United States but has brought changes for both. Second, along with the restructuring of the alliances, both have observed the military modernization and political reorganization of the states of Asia. This political restructuring and leadership transition engenders instability and tension. Third, and of interest to strategists, the proliferation of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in Asia–Pacific has opened opportunities for countries including the USA and Russia to enhance informal contacts between the states and their societies, to reduce tension by sending up ‘trial balloons’ with respect to compromise, and to proffer other means for the reduction of tension on controversial issues where state-to-state relations may be subject to very strong pressures.

‘Track two’ (non-governmental) organizations, such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia–Pacific (CSCAP)²⁷ and a number of working groups under its umbrella, often have close ties to their governments. Other NGOs such as Amnesty International or environmental organizations are more confrontational by the very nature of their goals and demand attention.²⁸ A Russian presence has been maintained in most NGOs, on a limited scale because of economic constraints on participation and its ability or willingness to accept some of their approaches to economic questions, but the scope of Russia’s activities may be enlarged when and if economic progress permits. US participation has been uneven given concern about the leadership or policies of some NGOs, worries that the United States could be targeted as a ‘bully’ when interacting with small and medium-size powers, particularly in South-East Asia, and political problems caused by the equivocal relationship with Taiwan.

There have, however, also been important differences in the policy concerns of Russia and the USA in Asia in the past decade. Although both countries have focused on China, the US emphasis has been on the Koreas and Japan. Russia has emphasized South Asia. Russian efforts in Asia–Pacific focus on resolving border disputes whereas US interests concern sea lines of communication around the Spratlys, negotiations for the repositioning of equipment, the

²⁷ *CSCAP: Dialogue Monitor of Multilateral Meetings on Asia–Pacific Security Issues* (University of Toronto–York University Joint Centre for Asia–Pacific Studies, York University, Toronto) lists meetings of organizations primarily concerned with security matters. See, e.g., no. 5 (Mar. 1998). For the membership of CSCAP, see appendix 1 in this volume.

²⁸ Sutter, R. G., *US Policy Toward China: An Introduction to the Role of Interest Groups* (Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, Md., 1998).

enforcement of agreements (with China and North Korea), and the maintenance of a semi-permanent US presence.

US–Russian relations in North-East Asia do not have the high visibility or importance they had in the 1970s and 1980s. Potential conflicts, such as over the Spratlys, Taiwan, perhaps the Korean Peninsula or Chinese Inner Asia with its ethnic quarrels, for the most part do not require Russian or US intervention. That said, the United States maintains almost 100 000 troops in South Korea and Japan, has a defence security treaty with the second most powerful economic nation in the world (Japan), guarantees the defence of South Korea and seeks to encourage a peaceful solution of the problem of the status of Taiwan. It places importance on sustained access to the shipping lanes in Asia.

Where Japan is concerned, US and Russian interests may part company. Russia's interests are more current than the USA's. The hardened conflict over sovereignty over the Kuril Islands remains largely outside the realm of US influence. It does not appear likely to translate into military incidents. The Russian armed forces, both naval and land-based, presently lack the resources necessary to project power. From the Russian point of view the problems of the US armed forces' interaction with Japanese civilians, the controversy over bases, and demands by Okinawa's populations for a more equitable distribution of US base assignments and troops may raise the costs for a continued US presence and perhaps eventually bring about calls for the redeployment of the US troops outside Asia.

Are the revised US–Japanese security guidelines a factor in the US–Russian relationship? Given Russia's weakened state, the current treaty arrangement might well be assessed positively since the lack of a US presence would almost certainly result in increased pressure for a broader military build-up in Japan.

To the relief of all, although the possibilities for mischief and more serious threat in either of the Koreas remain, both the USA and Russia see their interests as lying in a continuing peaceful atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula. That said, it is not clear that either power can ensure that peace continues, and the means at hand for either power to achieve its goals are sometimes of dubious value.

V. East Asia and the road ahead

US–Russian relations in Asia are of lower priority for the two countries than their relations in other parts of the world, although obviously not without significance. Emerging from colonial status, South-East, East and South Asia have slowly rid themselves of most of the colonial legacy and begun the long process of economic modernization. The financial crisis in Asia combined with the contrasting experiences of the incipient recovery makes it clear that nationalism is one tool being used for recovery.

Major portions of the discussion in this chapter have focused on the Soviet/Russian interests and policies, as seen from a US perspective. In contrast to those of the United States. The emphasis has not been on the direct bilateral

arrangements between the two powers but on the experience of situations in China, Japan and the two Koreas in which Russian and US interests have from time to time clashed or, more commonly, run a parallel course.

At the close of the 20th century the region remains relatively tranquil, despite a series of unresolved dilemmas over very complicated matters. There are island territories claimed by different states, in some cases reflecting controversies dating from World War II. There are clashes in the effort to affirm the independence of a political unit by force or negotiation. Korean reunification may come about in the foreseeable future, although the course it will take and the instrumentalities to bring it about are not discernible and therefore a cause for concern. The status of Taiwan is the most controversial issue in the region in the near and medium term.

Regrettably, the last decade of peace and reduction of tensions has been marred by the severe economic recession. The capacity of new states to sustain their political strength and vitality in these circumstances remains difficult to estimate and even the more optimistic fear some translation of frustration and social upheaval into domestic terrorism or even international conflict.

It seems likely that the countries of the region will proceed along the path to industrial modernization, the educating and support of society, and efforts to provide basic services for most of their citizens. Nonetheless some of the circumstances of the next 25 years are so extraordinary and new that it is difficult to set out reasonable scenarios. The fact that Japan in the year 2015 (like the United States some 15 years later) will have a population of which over one-quarter will be over 65 years old presents this highly modern state with an enormous problem, the solution of which is difficult to conceive without a combination of service development, the possible importing of foreign labour and some rethinking of the defence budget.

The modernization of China may well proceed at a pace viewed as threatening by some and too slow by others. Here, too, success will be accompanied by enormous difficulties, the outlines of which are already perceptible. Whether the achievements will counterbalance the urban and rural problems of China remains to be seen. It does seem clear, however, that the territorial claims will not disappear,²⁹ especially given the linkage between China's energy and resource needs and the petroleum resources believed to be located in the South China Sea and on the associated islands.

The roles of Russia and the United States are uncertain. Interaction between the USA, China and Russia may frequently be competitive but need not be conflictual.

Ongoing interaction in matters of trade, investment and markets cannot be problem-free. It is unlikely that economic recovery will be as smooth as some would like and it will certainly not progress as quickly as the USA will hope. When economic progress does occur, there is bound to be pressure from the

²⁹ Dupont, A., International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Environment and Security in Pacific Asia*, Adelphi Paper no. 319 (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), especially pp. 25–41, 75–80.

USA for increasing access to East Asian markets. The conclusions drawn from the period of 'Asian contagion' will make matters difficult.

Divisions within the leadership in Russia, the problem of the presidential succession and the need to address the human costs of the current efforts at reform are going to be barriers to cooperation with the United States. Divisions within the US executive and Congress, US fears of China and appeals of special interests will hamper or skew US policies with respect to trade and security, no matter which party governs. In China, although the leadership appears more stable than in the past, the outstanding issue of Taiwan, the enormous domestic difficulties and the continuing stress on stability have already slowed down the reform effort.

In this complicated scene the problems of the START negotiations³⁰ must take priority and will continue in various forms into the 21st century. On the US side there are already visible difficulties with support for the programme and divisions of opinion with respect to various aspects of the terms negotiated as Russian leaders continue to delay ratification.

In addition there is the need to control, preferably through persuasion rather than sanctions, the enlargement of the circle of nuclear weapon powers. The use of sanctions has not been productive and in the case of North Korea has possibly been quite dangerous. While Russia is not involved in many aspects of the Korean peace negotiations, a permanent settlement in the region together with reunification will surely require Russian involvement in some form.

For the foreseeable future Russia will need to focus on its serious internal difficulties of leadership and economic reform. It would, however, be a mistake for US observers to assume that they can therefore move without paying some attention to Russian sensibilities. Furthermore, Russian investment, both political and psychological, in parts of Asia may be of help in resolving some difficulties.

The USA will need to stay alert to the success of Russian efforts to develop satisfactory relations with the new countries along its borders, regional divisions within Russia as played out in Asia-Pacific, and the possibility of an implosion or fracturing of the Russian state. Such outcomes cannot be completely ruled out. Strobe Talbott's call for 'strategic patience' is worth keeping in mind.

Efforts to reduce the perceived threats from North Korea will require time and patience, the maintenance of surveillance, and North Korea's fulfilling the 1994 agreement. This is likely to be difficult. However, the efforts of Russia to improve its relationship with North Korea together with both Chinese and US offers of assistance may provide some assurance to North Korea that it can take

³⁰ The 1991 Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms between the USSR and the USA; and the 1993 Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms between Russia and the USA. On the status of negotiations for START II, see Kile, S., 'Nuclear arms control and non-proliferation', *SIPRI Yearbook 1999: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999), pp. 535–40.

some risks in altering its political structures and permitting somewhat more openness to the international community.

Both the USA and Russia will have to develop a relationship in a different world from that in which they interacted for over 30 years. With growing nationalism in Asia–Pacific, as elsewhere, with economic interests in each country clamouring for protection, and with political systems vastly different in the strains they can tolerate and the goals they seek, there are inevitable risks. In Asia–Pacific, however, as this chapter suggests, there is no longer so high a risk of conflict between the two powers as existed in the first half of the post-World War II period. This may be all that each state can expect.