

The

International Politics

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Derek McDougall

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PREFACE

This book studies international politics in the new Asia Pacific—that is, Asia Pacific in the aftermath of the Cold War. The discussion of events covers the period from the late 1980s up to the end of 1996. The assumption underlying the book is that one way of coming to terms with the international politics of the new Asia Pacific is to focus on the roles of the major powers, defined here as the United States, China, and Japan. Although essentially a power in decline during this period, the USSR and post-Soviet Russia are also given attention. So much political, economic, and military power is concentrated in these states that a study of their roles and relationships can provide important insights into the dynamics of international politics in the region.

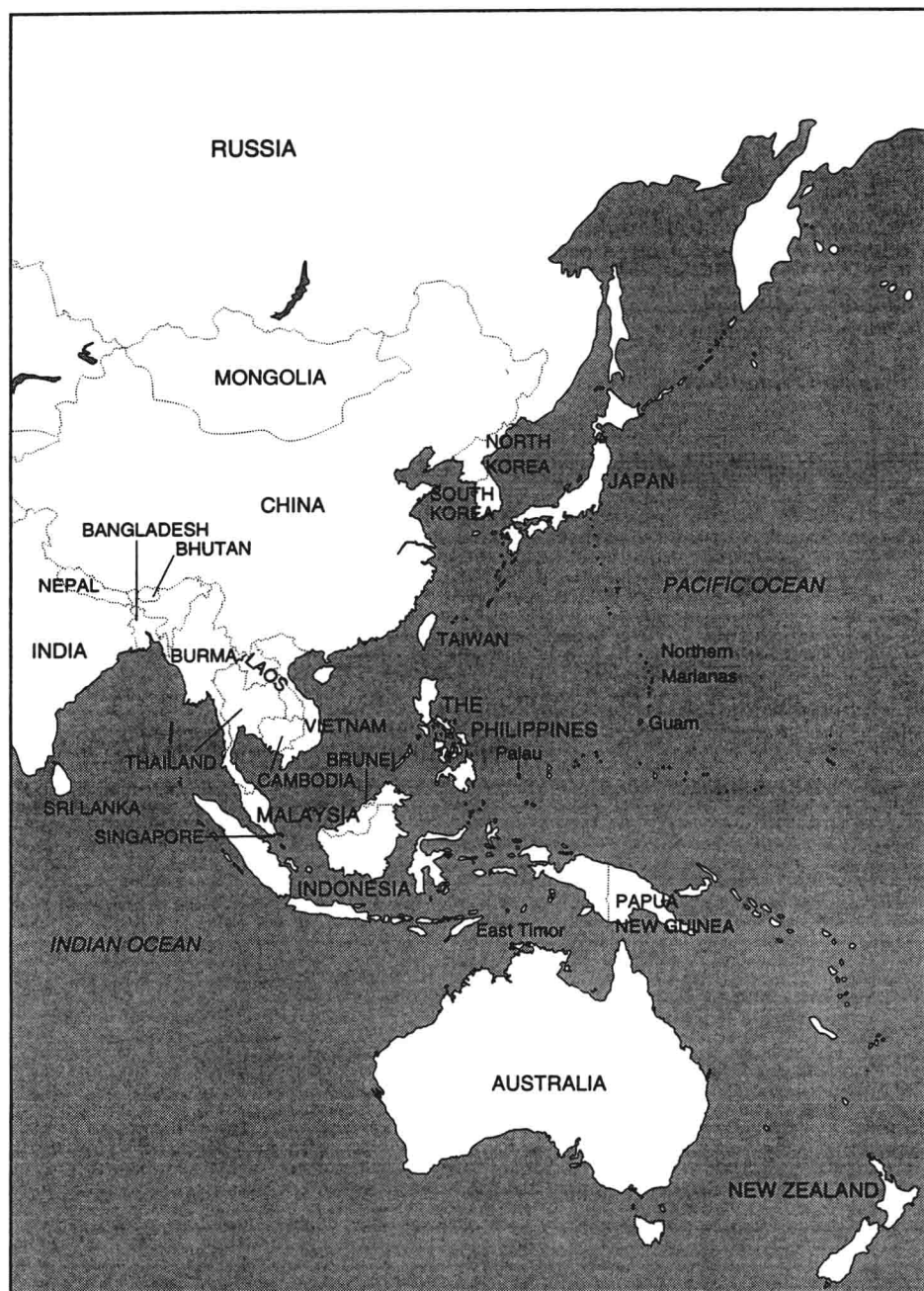
The definition of Asia Pacific used in this book covers Northeast Asia (Japan, China [including Taiwan], North and South Korea, Pacific Russia); Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma); Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and other South Pacific island states and territories; and the United States and Canada in their Pacific aspects. In practice the emphasis is on East Asia, but the term “Asia Pacific” does allow for a broader orientation.

The book is organized as follows: The introduction sketches the broad international context relating to the end of the Cold War and the pattern of international politics in the post-Cold War era, with particular reference to implications for Asia Pacific. Theoretical perspectives that might have a bearing on the roles of the major powers are introduced—realism, liberalism or liberal institutionalism, and a culture-based approach. Part II considers the general roles played by the United States, China, Japan, and the USSR and Russia in post-Cold War Asia Pacific, and Part III takes up the key major power relationships in the region. Part IV examines the involvement of the major powers with other actors in the region, particularly North and South Korea, Vietnam, and the ASEAN states. Issues such as Korean reunification, the North Korean nuclear issue, the Cambodian peace process, and the South China Sea are discussed in these chapters. The conclusion considers how the themes emphasized in the three main sections of the book relate to the theoretical perspectives outlined in the introductory chapter.

Inevitably, not every international issue in the new Asia Pacific can be covered in a book of this scope. The Taiwan and Hong Kong issues, for example, are examined only in the context of broader relationships. Similarly, regionalism is not dealt with as an issue in its own right, although there is some discussion of ASEAN as a regional organization and also reference to more recent developments such as APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum. From the perspective of the roles played by the major powers, however, most of the significant issues are addressed.

In a project such as this, there are many people to acknowledge. I would like to thank Lynne Rienner Publishers for the confidence they have shown in me in publishing the book and for their assistance during the production process. Joseph Camilleri (School of Politics, La Trobe University) and Colin Campbell (Public Policy Program, Georgetown University) enabled me to have visiting status with their institutions when I first embarked on the project. Mark Considine was helpful in his role as head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Melbourne during the time I worked on this book. Other people in the department who helped me directly or indirectly were Jamie Anderson, Chris Barrett, Nick Bisley, Justin Bokor, Ann Capling, Katrina Gorjanicyn, Andrew MacDonald, Philomena Murray, Grant Parsons, and Peter Shearman. Craig Lonsdale, David Lutz, Rita De Amicis, Wendy Ruffles, and Natalie Madaffari came to my rescue on numerous occasions. I would also like to thank my students in 166-208/308, The International Politics of the Asia Pacific Region, for helping me to think about a lot of the issues discussed in this book. Last but not least, my family (Anne, Kirsty, Ros) have managed to put up with me while I worked on this book and I thank them for that.

—D. McD.



East Asia and Neighboring Countries

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A NEW WORLD AND ASIA PACIFIC ORDER

The focus of this book is the changing pattern of international politics in the Asia Pacific region in the period after the Cold War, with particular reference to the roles of the United States, China, and Japan. Attention is also given to the role of Russia and to regional situations involving Korea, Indochina, and the member states of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). To place the changing pattern into a broader context, this introductory chapter sketches some of the major changes at the global level that have had implications for Asia Pacific, as well as theoretical perspectives that are helpful for understanding the international politics of the region in the post-Cold War period.

The End of the Cold War

How did the end of the Cold War affect the Asia Pacific region?

The major arena at the onset of the Cold War was Europe. Although the ostensible reason for the adoption of the containment doctrine (Truman Doctrine) by the United States in March 1947 was the situation in Greece, the broader context of this development was the post-World War II situation in Europe as a whole. The USSR dominated Eastern Europe and controlled an occupation zone in eastern Germany. The countries of Western Europe were democratically ruled but were seen as vulnerable to Soviet pressure because of straitened economic circumstances and, in some instances, the political strength of local Communist parties. The containment doctrine was an indication that the United States would commit itself to resisting any extension of Soviet influence; substance was given to the doctrine by the announcement of the Marshall Plan in June 1947 and the establishment of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in 1949.

Europe played the central role in the onset of the Cold War, but Asia Pacific was soon affected. The civil war between Communists and Nationalists in China came to be seen in a Cold War perspective. Although

the United States did not intervene early or decisively in favor of the Nationalists, it came to offer overt support for Chiang Kai-shek. The punitive policy of the early occupation in Japan was superseded by a more lenient approach designed to make Japan a bastion of support for the U.S. policy of containment. Following the Communist victory on the Chinese mainland in 1949, containment in Asia was directed primarily against China. This was reinforced with the onset, in June 1950, of the Korean War, which could have been interpreted as a local conflict, but which the United States chose to see in terms of its broader Cold War strategy. South Korea was preserved as one of the mainstays of the U.S. military presence in Asia Pacific.

In Southeast Asia, the Philippines had historically been the linchpin of U.S. involvement, and this involvement was broadened considerably during the Cold War period. In Vietnam, containment led to U.S. support for France in its war with the Communist Vietminh, particularly after 1950. The United States was reluctant to accept the Geneva Agreement of 1954, which had provided a basis for settling the conflict, and instead took steps to establish SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) as an anti-Communist regional organization. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the United States undertook a major war in support of the embattled Saigon government in South Vietnam.

When the United States failed to achieve its objectives in Vietnam, the Nixon administration in particular became more open to attempts to provide a new basis for U.S. strategy in Asia Pacific. The Guam doctrine of 1969 was an indication that the United States would avoid direct involvement in major ground wars in the future, and at the same time there was an attempt to come to an accommodation with China, which had previously been viewed as the most important adversary of the United States in Asia Pacific. The Shanghai communiqué of February 1972 symbolized the new basis of that relationship.

While these changes in U.S. strategy in Asia Pacific were occurring, the Nixon administration was attempting to achieve détente on a broader level with the USSR. SALT I, in 1972, regulating U.S. and Soviet intercontinental nuclear arms, was an attempt to stabilize the nuclear relationship between the two powers, and the Helsinki Accords in 1973 and West Germany's Ostpolitik in the early 1970s also contributed to a reduction of tensions in Europe. But by the late 1970s, the attempt at détente had been superseded by a return to Cold War tensions. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in late 1979 was perhaps the clearest evidence of the deteriorating Soviet-U.S. relationship at this time. Ronald Reagan assumed office in early 1981 intent on standing firm against the "evil empire."

In the Asia Pacific region, the "new" Cold War reinforced the Sino-U.S. accommodation: A concern about Soviet expansionism gave China and the United States an additional interest in common. Vietnamese inter-

vention in Cambodia in late 1978 was the main manifestation of the new Cold War. Although Vietnam instigated the intervention to overthrow the Pol Pot regime, China in particular saw Vietnam as an ally of the USSR. Over the next decade, China, the United States, and the ASEAN countries acted together to oppose Vietnamese intervention.

The end of the Cold War is often associated with the emergence in 1985 of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev's commitment to democratization made it untenable for the USSR to continue its domination of Eastern Europe. Released from their obligation to maintain Communist governments, the various countries of Eastern Europe underwent a transition to post-Communist governments throughout 1989. November 1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall, the most powerful symbol of the Cold War division of Europe. By October 1990, German unification had been achieved. Democratization in the USSR did not bring the economic renewal Gorbachev had hoped for; instead, it released pent-up forces of ethnic nationalism. By December 1991, the USSR had collapsed and was replaced by a number of independent states, the most important of which was Russia.

In Asia Pacific, the end of the Cold War was less dramatic. The Soviet-U.S. confrontation—a particular source of tension—was no longer relevant, and the nature of Soviet (and subsequently Russian) involvement in the region changed. Gorbachev began to give more attention to relationships that might bring economic benefits to the USSR. The Soviet Union continued its attempts from the early 1980s to improve relations with China, but its dispute with Japan over the Northern Territories remained an obstacle to improved Soviet-Japanese relations. South Korea was able to develop a better relationship with the USSR, but Vietnam, previously aligned to the USSR, became less important to Moscow in the new scheme of things.

The end of the Cold War also had an effect on various multilateral situations in which the USSR was involved. It was a significant factor, for example, in facilitating a settlement of the Indochina conflict, and on the Korean peninsula, North Korea could no longer look to Moscow as a possible source of support. In terms of the broader strategic patterns in the region, the United States assumed a stronger position vis-à-vis the USSR, as did Japan and China. With its various economic and political problems, post-Soviet Russia could not be regarded as a major power in Asia Pacific in the way that the USSR had been.

After the Cold War

With the end of the Cold War, new patterns have emerged in international relations at the global level. One feature particularly relevant to international politics in Asia Pacific is the diminished significance of Russia as the

major successor state to the USSR, and more broadly, the nature of great power relationships in the post-Cold War world. The collapse of the USSR has not necessarily meant that the United States has become the dominant power in a unipolar world. Although the United States is clearly the single most important power, other powers play a major role both at a regional level and on the broader international stage. Most important among the Asian countries are China, Japan, and India; Germany, France, Britain, and Russia (which is primarily European) are the most important European powers.

To say that the relationships among these powers are characterized by multipolarity would be an oversimplification. "Multipolarity" implies the existence of adversarial relationships, and although these countries differ on a number of issues, they have not necessarily been engaged in long-term conflict. "Multipolarity" is only a satisfactory term if it recognizes the fluidity of many of these relationships. "Uni-multipolarity" has been suggested as a better term because it allows for both the primary role of the United States and the existence of multiple power centers.¹

"Concert of powers"—a term that recalls the Concert of Europe, which functioned for much of the nineteenth century after the Congress of Vienna in 1815—has been suggested as another way of characterizing the relationships of the major powers in the aftermath of the Cold War. Without major long-term adversarial relationships among the great powers, it has been possible to achieve a certain level of cooperation among them in dealing with international issues. The most obvious example of such cooperation is the 1991 Gulf War. The support (or, at the very least, acquiescence) of the other great powers enabled a U.S.-led coalition to take military action against Iraq under UN auspices and to thus force Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait.

This suggests another feature of international relations in the post-Cold War era: the much more prominent role of the UN. During the Cold War, the conflict between the superpowers meant that they were unwilling to support UN intervention in various situations if such intervention was seen as detrimental to their own interests. The fact that each superpower in the Security Council possesses a veto provided an effective means to frustrate UN intervention. UN military intervention ("peace enforcement" under Article VII) occurred in Korea in 1950 only because the USSR was boycotting Security Council meetings at the time. Peacekeeping under Article VI was usually confined to situations in which the superpowers deemed such involvement not contrary to their own interests.

The concert of powers that has emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War has opened the way for more extensive UN involvement. The Gulf War is a major example of the UN's peace enforcement, but there are many more examples of its peacekeeping efforts, among which Namibia (1989)

and Cambodia (1992–1993) might be rated the most successful. UN intervention in support of humanitarian operations, as in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, has been more problematic. Whatever their outcomes, these operations would far less likely have been mounted without some consensus among the major powers. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the faith placed in the UN during the early years of the post–Cold War era will continue.

Another dimension of the changing relationships among the major powers is the increased emphasis on the role of economics. Some commentators speak of geopolitics being superseded by geoeconomics. Traditional military power appears less important as economic factors loom increasingly large. Whereas the United States is the leading power in both fields, the rising importance of geoeconomics has enhanced the roles of both Japan and Germany. The importance of geoeconomics is also reflected in a shift toward regional economic groupings. The European Union is the most integrated of the regional economic blocs, but APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) also have the potential to emerge as blocs should the liberal international trading system come under threat.

The emphasis on regionalization is also relevant to the countries previously termed “the Third World.” In the post–Cold War period, this term has become increasingly less appropriate as many of these countries can no longer be described as poor or developing. The most obvious indication of the regionalization process in Asia Pacific is the emergence of the NICs (newly industrializing countries). Some Latin American countries have experienced similar economic growth, but African countries have generally been less successful. Each region tends to have a range of countries at different levels of economic development, and there is less to hold the developing countries together than in the past (through such organizations as the Nonaligned Movement). Regionalization has meant that extraregional powers are far less likely to become involved in developments within particular regions than they were during the Cold War.

A major cause of conflict in the post–Cold War world has been ethnic nationalism. In many cases, the Cold War caused such conflict to be suppressed, particularly in the USSR and Communist-ruled Eastern Europe. Democratization has unleashed the ethnic conflicts that authoritarian governments could more easily control. The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia are the most obvious example of this phenomenon, but there have also been many conflicts in parts of the former USSR, such as the Caucasus, including Chechnya. A number of situations requiring UN involvement have been caused by ethnic conflict.

The extent to which Asia Pacific has been affected by these various trends in the post–Cold War world has varied. In terms of its relationships

with major powers, the region is most affected by the United States, China, and Japan, the powers directly involved in Asia Pacific. The shift to geoeconomics in the region is evident in the role that Japan is playing there. The nature of the emerging security relationships in Asia Pacific is one aspect of the dynamics of regionalization. The most obvious example of UN involvement in Asia Pacific in the post-Cold War period is in Cambodia, but such involvement has not been a pervasive feature of the region's post-Cold War international relations. Finally, Asia Pacific has been less affected by ethnic nationalism than has Europe.

Theoretical Perspectives

An examination of Asia Pacific's relationships with the United States, China, and Japan suggests three possible perspectives on the general character of international politics in the region: realist, liberal, and culturalistic. The first and second perspectives have developed in the context of the Western study of international relations. The third attempts to take into account the impact of particular states' cultures on the conduct of international relations. I will elaborate briefly on each approach before considering its application to the Asia Pacific region.

Realism

One version of realism can be traced back to the writings of people such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. A leading exponent of its modern version was Hans Morgenthau.² Realists focus on power and conflict as the dynamic elements of international politics and pay particular attention to the military dimensions of power. States are seen as motivated by the pursuit of their national interests; in pursuing those interests, states are influenced by the prevailing "balance of power." Although the concept of "balance of power" can be interpreted in various ways, it may be defined as the way in which power is distributed within international politics, particularly among the major states. The concept also has a prescriptive dimension, in that a state might try to improve its position in relation to the existing balance.³ (The term "balance" here is clearly a misnomer.)

A more recent version of realism is "neorealism." Kenneth Waltz is often considered its leading exponent.⁴ Neorealism is not so much concerned with the alleged metaphysical dimensions of power as with the logical character of state behavior in an anarchical world. This theory contends that a major influence on a state's behavior is the fact that it has to look to its survival in a state of anarchy. Neorealists believe that the structure of the system enables them to predict the likelihood of a state's actions given that particular state's location in this anarchical world.

Liberalism or Liberal Institutionalism

One can consider liberalism or liberal institutionalism as an alternative to realism and neorealism.⁵ This approach puts more emphasis on the economic dimensions of power. The state remains important but less so than in the realist paradigm, and more attention is given to the ways in which states cooperate as well as compete. In this view, “anarchy” is too simplistic a term to use to characterize international politics; “complex interdependence” is suggested as an alternative. The latter term points to the way in which the various actors in the world (including states) are linked in a variety of ways. Because liberalism emphasizes the role of “low politics,” liberal theorists pay more attention to the “everyday” character of these interactions and distinguish them from the more dramatic developments in the “high politics” of realism. The term “institutionalism” suggests liberals’ belief that the development of international institutions will lead to new configurations in international politics. This development is seen as further evidence of the complex character of international interdependence.

A “Culturalistic” Approach

Both realism and liberalism focus primarily on the roles of various actors in international politics. Realism presents a “billiard board” model of international politics; neorealism even more so. Liberalism has a more complex view of the way in which actors interact in international politics; the state tends to be less reified than it is in realism and neorealism. At the same time, liberalism’s focus is still very much on the general character of the relationships within the system. Both approaches allow little room for the role of factors that might be specific to particular actors. For this reason, a third, “culturalistic” approach might be suggested.

The culturalistic approach draws attention to the way in which factors specific to particular states exert an influence on their international behavior and thus have some bearing on the general character of international politics. Although the term “culture” suggests the general nature of the factors at work, issues concerning domestic politics and the economy may also be grouped under this heading. Lucian Pye has suggested that contrary to the view that power is “a single basic phenomenon which operate[s] according to universal principles, regardless of time, place or culture . . . people at different times and in different places have had quite different understandings of the concept of power.”⁶ The implication for international relations is that the interaction of states will be affected by the assumptions that the people conducting their policies bring to the task. International relations thus becomes more than working out the “logic of the system” or determining the consequences of increasing interdependence. The character