

REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND ITS ENLARGEMENT

By Nguyen Hung Son

Regional architecture has become a buzz word in regional meetings and summits nowadays. However, not all of us understand what it is and how it is shaped ect... Regional (Security) Architecture is used in international relations to describe as a set of regional cooperation arrangements both bilaterally and multilaterally in all fields, including traditional and nontraditional security, trade and economic matters and others. In Asia and the Pacific, the regional security archenteron is now marked by a multiplication of regional cooperation arrangements across wide range of fields. It can be stratified into three layers with ASEAN in the driving seat. Regional security environment has changed with the emergence of Chianti and India. In addition, the US, Japan and Australia have all indicated change in their policies toward the region... The emerging regional architecture is a set of the followings, the bilateral relations between the US and regional countries, ASEAN-led multilateral cooperation, bilateral economic, trade and security relations among regional countries, security initiatives, new security initiatives and frameworks. In all this, the role of ASEAN can be maintained as major powers still need ASEAN as a mediator, ASEAN gains in strength and major powers still want to maintain peace and stability in the region. Proposals have been put forth in enlarging the current architecture. However, regional countries are divided over their enlargement and therefore enlargement is not round the corner yet.

ASEAN should strengthen unity and solidarity, and take a proactive role in all these so as to assert itself in the emerging regional architecture.

APEC AND THE ASIA AND PACIFIC FREE TRADE AREA

Dr. Pham Quoc Tru

Free trade areas have been formed in great number across the world, particularly in Asia and the Pacific. For the region, the most interesting FTA is the FTAAP. The idea was first proposed in 2003 but it was not until 2006 that it was seriously considered a possibility. The idea was brought to the attention of the Leaders at their 17th Summit. This was caused by the impasse of the Doha Development Round, the setting up of FTAs in other regions, strengthened economic cooperation and integration in the region.

The FTAAP would be the biggest free trade area, affecting the region and the world as it reduces transaction costs through common rules of origin, promotes trade through nontechnical barriers, contributing to economic development of the region. However, many thinks that the FTAAP can negatively impacted APEC while others share the view that The FTAAP is important in achieving the Bogor goals. APEC members are also divided on the FTAAP. The US, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong support the idea and think it is highly feasible while Canada Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and

Latin American countries think it is a good idea and supports it over the long term, still others are hesitant and afraid of the negative impacts. In the future, the FTAAP would be further considered at APEC and other forums in the region and the world.

THE ASIA AND PACIFIC COMMUNITY IDEAS AND POSSIBLE FUTURE

By Trinh Thi Tam

Economic strength has now shifted from the West to the East and from the Atlantic to Asia and the Pacific. This resulted in the shift of political and security weight. This process requires dialogue and cooperation among countries in the region, especially among big countries. Against such a background Australia proposed in 2008 the Asia and the Pacific Community (APC in short). The idea has attracted a lot of attention as the region embraces 60% of the world population, 54% of the world GDP and 44% of world trade. According to Australia, the APC would be a new institution with a large number of members and coverage of issues.

Australia has lobbied strongly for APC and hope it would become a reality by 2020. Many countries have been lukewarm toward the idea, thinking that the APC is not really necessary in the proliferation of forums and associations already. The APC is not highly feasible as it was an idea put forth in haste without prior consultation with regional countries and there is already a proliferation of effective organizations in Asia and the Pacific. Relations between Australia and other regional countries which can push forward the ideas are not good. However, from now to 2020 is a long time and if the APC can be built on the basis of existing institution it would be feasible.

THE ASEAN COMMUNITY IN RETROSPECTIVE

By Le Thuy Trang

The ASEAN Community should be examined from not only its targets but from a practical approach. The author approaches the subject in its components the Political and Security Community, the Economic Community and the Social and Cultural Community. The APSC is a community operating on the principles of sharing common standard and value in a peaceful, stable, resilient and cohesive region and a dynamic, outward-looking ASEAN in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world. ASEAN would have to make a great deal of efforts to move to the ambition, meeting challenges on the way. The ASEAN Security Community has to work on principles more binding than its current consultation, reconciliation etc. It should also be free from outside pressure.

The ASEAN Economic Community envisages a single market and production base, a highly competitive economy, a region of equitable growth and completely integrating into the world. Though moving toward the direction, ASEAN has not defined clearly its mode when the Economic Community is completed. ASEAN still operates on consensus and the ASEAN Economic Community may foresee a common market from a customs union. It does not look like the AEC is near.

The ASEAN Social and Cultural Community consists of human development, social protection, equality, environmental protection, ASEAN identity and development gap. As a new model, the building of the ASCC will meet with challenges. It involves too many branches and sectors and therefore complex coordination among them. Moreover the targets are not quantifiable. To build a socially and culturally cohesive community ASEAN needs the support of the civil society, non governmental organizations etc. Furthermore, the cohesion among the three Communities is not strong. The ASEAN Community based on three pillars is highly feasible; however, it will not be as institutionalized as the EU. There will be a lot to be done after 2015.

THAI POLITICAL SCENE IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

By Ass. Prof. Nguyen Phuong Binh

Thai political tension remounted in March 2010. This is rooted in the political crisis of 2005 and even in the bourgeois 1932 revolution which replaced absolute monarchy with constitutional monarchy. This and other following events have given birth to a new force embracing labourers and farmers. The political reform; through the 1997 Constitution and the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis have created premises for the current political crisis.

In the first decade of the 21st century, political parties proliferated with Thai Rak Thai coming on stage in July 1998, the Mahachon Party appearing in February 2005, the People's Power Party in 2007 and so on. The political crisis does not seem to end. 2009 saw the red shirts, supporters of UDD, demonstrating in Bangkok streets. The Government imposed curfew and invoked the Internal Security Act in response. In 2007, Thailand revised its Constitution and this divided the country politically. The country was plunged into disorder. Demonstration by the red shirts was then crack downed and Bangkok was once again calm. Yet, beneath the surface, there are deep social contradictions and the overlapping of functions of the executive and judiciary. Therefore, only time can tell what will happen in Thailand next.

OPPORTUNITY IN INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

By Prof. Vu Duong Ninh

Like in other countries, external relations play an important role in Viet Nam and are closely associated with political, military and economic affairs as well as others. Lessons have been drawn from the Modus Vivendi of 1946, the Geneva Agreement of 1954 and the Paris Agreement of 1973. Lessons of the post 1975 period are practical not only for the academics but also for the formulation of policies in response to the ongoing challenges. In 1970s, we failed to realize that contradictions among capitalist and socialist countries are, in real nature, conflicts of national interests. In international integration, we have been able to forecast correctly the development trends of the times and made timely adjustments to our foreign policy characterized by diversification and multilateralization.

We should from now on seize opportunities as they present themselves. Missing opportunities would not only mean slow economic development but also threaten our national territorial integrity and national existence.

VIETNAM'S POSITION IN THE POLARIZATION OF EAST ASIA

By Ass. Prof. Tran Khanh

It is important to position Viet Nam in the world as this would help formulate the country's national development policy. This article would only limit to Viet Nam's position in East Asia. Economically, Viet Nam is mediocre with GDP ranking at 60th. Among ASEAN countries, its GDP is low. Viet Nam still suffers a trade deficit and mainly exports raw materials and agricultural produces. The economic restructuring has been slow. All these and others put Viet Nam at a disadvantage in the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area effective on 1 January 2010. Politically and diplomatically, Viet Nam has been politically stable. The country's political and diplomatic voice is gaining in weight in ASEAN. The country has also become a US "potential strategic partner". Viet Nam's relations with China have seen great progress.

Culturally, Viet Nam has recently promoted its "cultural diplomacy" through efforts to "promote, catalyze, open the way for, lobby and absorb" cultures. More importantly, Viet Nam commands "a good geopolitical resources". This leads to the views popular among China, Japan and the United States that Vietnam is now more important. Therefore, Viet Nam should exploit more effectively its position as the gateway, the bridgehead.

PROPOSED MEASURES TO BOOST ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

By Dr. Nguyen Van Lich

Over the years, relations between Viet Nam and the Russian Federation have recorded remarkable achievements. However, in the new contexts, these relations should be improved in the interests of the two countries. Russia commands great economic potentials and has tided over the difficult period of 1990s. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese economy has been growing at an average of 7% a year. Economic successes in the two countries have helped promote their close relations. Political relations between them are on good footing, "Viet Nam is Russia's traditional friend and a reliable partner in Southeast Asia". Trade between the two countries has seen leap forward, increasing from US 400 million in 1990 to US 1.83 billion in 2009. On the other hand, the two countries have also seen difficulties in their economic relations. Russian economy is still in difficulty and this was compounded by the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis. Russia can yet to compete with other countries. Measures should be taken to improve economic relations between Viet Nam and the Russian Federation in developing their respective economies, formulating and agreeing on mechanism and incentives to encourage trade, finding ways to narrow differences in the business environment, payment etc.

THREE CHARACTERISTIC OF FIRST TWO DECADES OF 21ST CENTURY

By Dr. Nguyen Dinh Luan

The international system is a set of defined international actors and their interactions in a strategic environment. The international system of the first two decades of the 21st century is marked by three characteristics. (1) International security crisis and unsuitable development model. This is characterized by asymmetrical and nontraditional security. There have been no signs of solutions to nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula and in Iraq and countries are engaged in an arms race. The period is also characterized by two economic crises in 1997 and 2008-2009. (2) Polarization and stratification of the global economy. We have seen the emergence of Asia, particularly China and India. China's development in the last thirty years and more has begged the question of the coexistence of a market economy and democratic freedom and whether it would become a model for the future. India is the world third biggest economy in PPP. These two countries and others have formed the BRIC group which held its first Summit in 2008. This has led to the stratification of countries with the EU and America on top and BRICs below though this is contrary to the "flat world" idea. (3) The tug of war between unipolarity and multipolarity. Since the end of the Cold War, though there has been a relative decline in US national strength in comparison with the

emergence of powers such as China. The US continues to be the only superpower with its dominant mass media. Though the US is in disagreement with the EU and Japan in the protection of agricultural produces and the Iraqi war, they share common value. In the meantime, China and Russia actively pursue a multicolor world in opposition to the univocal world led by the US. This further aggravates the tug of war between unipolarity and multipolarity. These characteristics would certainly have great influence to exert upon the foreign policies in this decade.

COEXISTENCE WITH BIGGER NEIGHBOURS POLICIES AND PRACTICE

By Ass. Prof. Nguyen Vu Tung

For small countries, relations with bigger neighbours have always been fraught with difficulties. These are rooted in the differences in size and national understanding of identity of big countries. The author tries, however, to analyze the relations in geographical terms and strategies adopted by small countries.

Geographical factors can increase small- and big-nation psychology and behaviour. Moreover, geographical proximity even increases these elements more. It also increases asymmetrical relations between small and big nations, further complicating their relations. These are related to big-nation awareness and psychology, the behaviour of each countries involved and the lack of confidence in their relations. Living next to big countries, small countries should adopt policies of "supporting big countries" or policies of neutrality, which is similar to supporting them. Examples of these can be found in policies of Belarus and Kazastan toward Russia and that of Finland toward Russia. The least effective policy is confrontation. This policy can be seen in relations between Georgia and Russia.

The analysis shows that a reconciliatory foreign policy is much needed in dealing with big neighbours. In fostering relations with big countries, small countries should build confidence and agree on codes of conduct and improve relations with third countries as well as participate in multilateral mechanism to bin responsibility and behaviour of countries.

CENTERS OF STRENGTH AND TRENDS IN US - CHINA RELATIONS

By Ass. Prof. Le Van Cuong

2008 can be characterized by three events, the 5-day war between Russia and Georgia and Russia's recognition of South Osetia and Abkhazia, China's taking stock of 30 years of reform and opening up, the collapse of Wall Street and the resultant biggest

economic crisis since the Great Depression. These events send the following message that the Russian Federation has staged a comeback and the US and EU can no longer ignore Russia in solving world problems, and China has risen to the status of superpower, extending its activities and influence, and the US, albeit a superpower, is now in decline.

In the next 10-15 years, India, China and Brazil will not be superpowers. The Russian Federation will be one of the three centres of strength though it continues to have difficulties. It will be an important factor in the US-China relations as the US and China try to maintain relations with the Russian Federation. In these contexts, US-China relations will be (1) that of confrontation, (2) G2 cooperation, (3) that of cooperation and confrontation. The author believes that the last scenario is more likely to unfold.