

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the relationship as well as linkages between the internal and external foreign policy structures and foreign policy behaviour of the United States, Japan, China, and Russia. Indeed, the numerous foreign policy institutions in these countries interact in a complex process and produce a specific course of action (foreign policy behaviour) towards the others. However, domestic foreign policy institutions (internal structure) in Washington, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow, although critical to foreign policy formulation, are not the only determinants of foreign policy behaviour of the United States, Japan, China or Russia. For instance, factors outside the Continental United States and Mainland China, such as the national interests, capabilities, and foreign policy behaviour of Russia, Japan, and small powers in the Asia-Pacific region also influence foreign policy-making in Washington and Beijing. In any event, the influence of the external structure on foreign policy-making of the major powers discussed in this study is indirect as the external structure only influences and shapes the attitude and perception of the foreign policy-makers or “the ultimate decision-makers” in Washington, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow.

However, the level of influence of a given internal or external foreign policy structure on foreign policy-making in Washington, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow depends on a given issue. Certain internal foreign policy institutions (conceptualised as the “inner circle” in this study) exert more influence than other domestic structures (conceptualised

as the second and third or outer circles) on foreign policy decision-making in the United States, Japan, China, and Russia. For example, in the United States and Russia, the president and his close aides (advisers) dominate the foreign policy-making process, while in Japan, the politicians, bureaucracy, and business community collectively constitute the core of the inner circle. Nevertheless, in China the Communist Party Secretariat and the military control the formulation of Chinese foreign policy. Other institutions such as the American Congress, Russian Federal Assembly or Japanese public opinion are peripheral as they influence foreign policy-making when their vested interests are adversely affected, or they have a vested interest in the formulation of a specific foreign policy. For instance, the circle behind the scene becomes active in Japanese foreign relations only when diplomatic or official relations between Japan and other nations have deteriorated.

The national interests, capabilities, and behaviour of the major powers and the strategic role of small powers (conceptualised as external foreign policy structures) in the Asia-Pacific region also influence foreign policy-making in Washington, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow. The prospect of Sino-Russian strategic alignment, China's four modernisations and reorganisation of Russia's military establishment, for instance, are viewed by Beijing and Moscow, as well as by small powers as a reaction to the US-Japan security alliance and the growing power of the US and its readiness to use that power. However, small powers such as Taiwan, South and North Korea and ASEAN are given special consideration in Washington and Tokyo as policy-makers in these two capitals believe that they could provide them with opportunity to achieve their foreign policy

objectives vis-à-vis Russia and China. Similarly, China and Russia view the small powers as potential allies against the growing influence of the United States and Japan in the international affairs of Asia-Pacific.

This study has examined the foreign policy structures as well as the behaviour of major powers in the Asia-Pacific region. It treated foreign policy structures of the United States, Japan, China, and Russia on four levels. First, it analysed the power status of each major power. Second, it examined the respective interests of each power in Asia-Pacific. Third, the study discussed the interaction as well as the inter-relationship between the internal and external foreign policy structures of the major powers, and finally it examined their impact on the foreign policies of the four powers. Therefore, some general observations based on this research related to regime formation and the pattern of relations among the four powers in Asia-Pacific in the post-Cold War era are presented below.

First, a new configuration of power is taking shape in Asia-Pacific with the balance of power system as its operational instrument. However, the post-Cold War balance of power mechanism is different from the balance of power that existed traditionally before World War II or during the Cold War era. The post-Cold War balance of power system is different from its predecessors in that it is characterised by preponderance, or what Kaplan regards as a hierarchical balance of power system. In a preponderant or hierarchical balance of power system, the pattern of relations is basically defined by one power. In this system, the superior power acts as a self-designated global

policeman unchallenged by any other power. The international order in which a preponderant balance of power system operates is one-power dominant and therefore unipolar. At present, the international order in Asia-Pacific is unipolar or one-state dominant—a trend that has conditioned foreign policy behaviour of the major powers since the end of the Cold War.

Second and closely related to the above, the United States, Japan, China, and to some extent, Russia, are essential powers in Asia-Pacific. The United States, however, has a preponderant role. America is the sole first-rank power in Asia-Pacific in terms of its economic and strategic capabilities and interests. It is the United States which is the rule formulator—defining if not dominating patterns of relations on a regional and global scale. Though Japan, China, and Russia aim to become rule formulators at least in some aspects of regional affairs, they could do so in the regional context if American interests are not jeopardised. Therefore, any regime that is created in Asia becomes effective and operative on the basis of prior approval by Washington—the best example being US rejection of Malaysian Premier, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's proposal in 1990 to establish the East Asia Economic Grouping (EAEG). Washington's negative reaction to the EAEG (later renamed EAEC, for Caucus) underscores the principle of regime formation under unipolarity—any economic, political or security order should not be seen to threaten APEC which is amenable to US national interests in Asia-Pacific. Thus, the international order in Asia-Pacific is unipolar and dominated by the United States, and this pattern of distribution of power may continue to exist at least for the next decade.

Third, Russia and China hold that the United States poses a challenge to their interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, they attempt to reduce or rather remove the American hegemony in the post-Cold War era by promoting a balance of power mechanism in which Moscow and Beijing could also play “essential actor” roles in the international affairs of the region. However, Moscow and Beijing envision a balance of power with all essential actors treating each other as equal. They believe their interests could be best protected in a multipolar world without any dominant power. The prospect of Sino-Russian strategic partnership for the next century tends to support the aforesaid argument.

Fourth, Asia-Pacific is undergoing a regime transformation. The existing economic, political, and strategic institutions may some day be transformed into some kind of new arrangements. Though all the powers are attempting to manipulate patterns of interactions that may lead to formation of a new regime in Asia-Pacific, the United States is likely to dominate the pattern of relations in the new regime. Therefore, the prospective regime that is being shaped may be identical to the American vision of a Pacific Community. The United States has yet to unfold a blueprint of its vision of the Pacific Community. Revealing the content of the American vision of the Pacific Community is just a matter of time. In fact, as discussed in chapter three, some major themes of the Pacific Community have already been outlined by American representatives in their formal and informal discussions with leaders of Asia-Pacific nations.

Fifth, the interests of these powers in Asia-Pacific are at variance. Each power projects a vision for the region that is different from the others. The interests of each power require that it should assume a greater role in Asia-Pacific affairs even at the risk of eroding the interests of the other powers. Such engagement in "destabilising behaviour" obviously threatens American preponderance and the current unipolar system. This may disturb the preponderant balance of power system. The major powers having a stake in Asia-Pacific may fail to cooperate, and confrontation and competition may resurface. History may repeat itself once again as this is a genuine concern and presents a major challenge for the United States. It all depends on how American policy-makers might keep the powers with conflicting interests in Asia-Pacific engaged in some kind of cooperative enterprise. Given that systemic change occurs over time and space, the present preponderant system may also transform into a new kind of order. The transformation could be peaceful or otherwise. However, this writer tends to view the transformation of the present preponderant international order as not imminent. The change may occur over two or more decades. Until then, the current international order is unlikely to produce any major confrontation between these four powers for the reasons given below.

The major powers are likely to cooperate with each other in the creation of economic and strategic institutions in the region. They may cooperate despite their conflicting interests or visions. They are likely to cooperate because the distribution of power among them is relative. In a preponderant balance-of-power system, the power status of essential actors is not equal and marked by varying levels of economic and

security interdependence. China, Japan, and Russia would continue to cooperate with the United States, as they need for instance, the American security umbrella against each other. Cooperation may prevail as long as the United States is able to manipulate the relations among these powers. The question that remains open to debate is whether the United States is able to perpetuate the system. However, all major powers will cooperate because they have an underlying interest in maintaining stability, which will in turn create the necessary conditions favourable to the promotion of their national interests regionally as well as globally.

Sixth, and closely related to the above is the prospect of renewed US-Russian military confrontation resulting from failure to agree on certain confidence-building measures. US-Russian confrontation is even more likely if the United States fails to recognise areas of vital interests to the Russian Federation and design policies to deal with Russia accordingly. Indeed, the battle between openness and secrecy between the two nations is far from over especially in the area of military technology. This mistrust may lead to dangerous consequences especially if Russia becomes economically stronger. Some analysts have proposed the establishment of a US-Russian defence community as a confidence-building measure. The defence community could become a platform in which the two sides sincerely cooperate on security issues, sharing all classified information, and so on. This notwithstanding, that confrontation may likely resurface in Europe as Russian interests lie in Europe more than in Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, the conflict would naturally broaden to involve the Asia-Pacific region. Russia may threaten American interests everywhere including Asia-Pacific. The US attempt to establish a

national missile defence system (NMDS) despite Washington's ratification of the 1972 ABM treaty and Moscow's disapproval of NMDS, indicates that prospects of tension in Russo-American relations cannot be totally ignored.

Seventh, China and Russia may likely form a strategic alliance while the US-Japan security arrangements will continue to be an integral part of bilateral relations between Washington and Tokyo in the coming decades. Two key reasons for a Sino-Russian alliance may be offered: first, the Chinese and Russians have developed mistrust about American and Japanese intentions in providing economic assistance both to Beijing and Moscow in reordering their economies. Policy-makers in China and Russia believe that the West is all out to contain the entire land that was once the abode of Communism. China and Russia believe that neither the United States nor Japan would like to see the emergence of Beijing and Moscow as strong centres of capital and investment. Second, China and Russia may use the alliance as a leverage to extract more assistance from the West. Therefore, the Americans and Japanese are likely to be persuaded to engage China and Russia in some kind of bilateral or multilateral enterprise with the aim of containing some of the more critical anxieties originating from Beijing and Moscow.

Eighth, the Russo-Japanese territorial dispute is unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future, especially after Russia's military establishment declared that the disputed islands are strategically significant to Russia's security interests in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the impasse over the territorial dispute may not imply that the two nations may not cooperate in economic and security issues in the region. From an



optimistic viewpoint, Japan may foster bilateral cooperation by abandoning its “entrance theory” to resolve the dispute, and by beginning to adopt the “exit theory” in its relations with Russia. This means Tokyo may not link economics and politics in its relations with Moscow. Japan has already begun to evidence interest in investing in Far Eastern Russia. Tokyo does not want to lag behind and lose economic opportunities in Russia to American, European, or Korean business firms. Thus, Russia and Japan are likely to search for alternative mechanisms to enhance good neighbourly relations between them.

Ninth, China and Japan are aspirant great powers in Asia-Pacific. However, Russia’s aspiration to become a great power is restricted to the space of “Near Abroad” or former Soviet republics. Therefore, the real challenge to American hegemonism in Asia-Pacific may come either from Beijing or Tokyo. But this is unlikely to happen in the next two or more decades. The reason is that Chinese and Japanese aspirations are hampered by their lack of necessary strategic and economic capabilities, as well as resources and influence befitting a major power capable of regional or global leadership. Hence, they may remain aspirant great powers until China’s relative military strength is supported by a strong economy, or Japan’s economic strength is supported by viable strategic strength and political confidence to use military power to advance national interests.

Tenth, irrespective of its power status and capabilities, China may not compromise on its territorial claim over Taiwan. China’s territorial disputes with Japan and the ASEAN states may remain shelved as these overlapping claims have not yet

seriously threatened China's economic or security interests in Asia-Pacific. However, these issues may resurface anytime to enable Beijing to extract concessions from Japan or to urge small powers into a pro-Chinese alliance if systemic transformation were not favourable to China's interests in the region.

Eleventh, Chinese and Japanese relations may continue to be friendly. However, it is unlikely that China and Japan may develop a strategic alliance. This may disturb the equilibrium in the region, while the United States would be clearly opposed to such a development. Moreover, the two powers have historically been rivals or enemies.

Twelfth, foreign policy is an elite-centric behaviour. Foreign policy is the making of a small group of individuals or institutions both in democratic governments and non-democratic regimes. In actuality, foreign policy is greatly influenced by perceptions and attitudes, though conditioned by long-term national interests, of this small group of individuals. However, the short-term interests of a nation may vary as elite perceptions of the international environment change. The short-term national priorities do not necessarily remain identical over time. Therefore, the near-term foreign policy objectives of a nation are ever changing. What remains unchanged over a long period of time are foreign policy goals or long-term national interests.

Finally, the foreign policy trends of small powers in Asia-Pacific may not be properly articulated. Small powers may not develop coherent foreign policies towards the US, China, Japan, or Russia. However, there may exist some degree of consistency in

their policies towards American proposals. Elites in the capitals of Asia-Pacific countries may have to shift allegiance if they want their interests protected. In their own interests, policy-makers of small nations may relegate the proposals of all other major powers while according priority to Washington's global agenda—given America's ability and inclination to punish detractors. This tendency in small power behaviour is explicable in the context of ongoing unipolarity in the international relations of the Asia-Pacific region.