

The Asia-Pacific in the New Global Governance

*Keynote Address by Rodolfo C. Severino,
Head, ASEAN Studies Centre,
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies,
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The Realities of the World

- Global governance: no such thing for all international endeavours; no single institution at present; not desirable at present and in foreseeable future
- Maybe, for individual areas: finance, trade;
- Little coordination among sectors
- Global security architecture: things don't work that way in the real world

The World of the Early 1990s

- Cold War ended
- Germany reunited
- USSR broken up
- Vietnam forces withdrawn from Cambodia
- Political settlement of Cambodia conflict
- Uruguay Round concluded, GATT being transformed into WTO
- China rising, opened to and plugged into the global system
- India initiating both political and economic reforms

ASEAN response

- While resisting Vietnam's incursion into and occupation of Cambodia, led diplomatic efforts for political settlement of conflict
- Reached out to Vietnam and Laos
- Admitted Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia – 1995-99
- Sought to keep US engaged while engaging China
- Decided to integrate regional economy, both to strengthen SE Asia's competitiveness and promote its political cohesion

The World Today

- No more clear-cut alliances
- Sovereign nations in pursuit of own national interests
- Rivalries and mutual suspicions have marked bilateral relations – US-China, China-Japan, Korea-Japan, India-China, etc.
- But also close economic ties as well as economic imbalances
- Alliances and antagonisms shift according to issues

Asia-Pacific Today

- No clear-cut alliances and blocs
- US role uncertain
- China's rise – diplomatic, economic, military
- Diversity to the fore – ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, political, historical
- Diversity also – national interests, strategic outlooks

ASEAN response

- Initiated ARF to build confidence – keep US engaged, engage China, otherwise bring together potential antagonists, rivals
- Enlarged Dialogue System (1996) to reflect strategic, not just economic, considerations
- Set up ASEAN+3 (1997) and ASEAN+1s – to engage with NE Asia and to help promote good relations in NE Asia and, therefore, in E Asia as a whole
- ASEAN+3: cooperation in 20 areas driven by more than 40 mechanisms

ASEAN response

- EAS
- Promote accession to TAC by non-regional states and adherence to its norms:
 - Rejection of use or threat of force;
 - Peaceful settlement of disputes;
 - Non-interference in internal affairs.

Current “order” in Asia-Pacific

- No more division into “blocs”
- Sovereign nations in pursuit of individual varied, sometime clashing, national interests
- Sides align according to issues in question
- Most schemes in Asia-Pacific driven by and centred on ASEAN

Role of ASEAN

- No alternative to ASEAN
- ASEAN has done good job in managing and administering the process
- ASEAN should truly lead by taking stronger common positions?
- ASEAN should be careful in doing so

What is and is not possible

- One overarching system running security, economic and other cooperation not possible
- Only brick-by-brick construction of “order” is possible – each brick or forum dealing with different issue
- Anything else will raise questions of functions, participation, legitimacy
- This is what has evolved in response to today’s changed circumstances; anything else not possible at this time

Equilibrium and Dynamism

- Current delicate equilibrium has kept region at peace, making progress in prosperity possible
- Must maintain equilibrium
- But must ensure dynamism: shifts in response to changing circumstances
- Thus, over the years, ASEAN has changed itself and its Asia-Pacific neighbourhood – Dialogues, ARF, ASEAN+3, EAS

Equilibrium and Dynamism

- But not possible to create single structure for global governance, especially in Asia-Pacific
- Today, ASEAN and Dialogues, ARF, ASEAN+3, EAS
- Also, APEC, PECC
- WTO and regional FTAs
- All dealing with different issues
- Creation of single structure would be divisive because not inclusive

Global Governance

- “In a sense, the greatest challenge confronting us today is that of effective global governance. We do not want a global government but we do need better coordination, cooperation and enforcement in many areas.”
 - George Yeo: “The Challenge of Global Governance” at UNGA, 28 Sept. 2009
- Security, trade, climate change, global economy

Example of G-20

- George Yeo gave G-20 as example: “For the G-20 process to be effective and legitimate, however, it is not enough for leaders to confer and make general exhortations. Ministers and experts must also meet and go into details. These should not be confined to the same G-20 countries all the time. We need variable geometry in membership. For different subjects, there could be different groups of participants, including both G-20 and non-G-20 countries. The views of small states, which comprise the majority of UN members, must not be ignored. The meetings should be transparent. There must be wide consultations so that those not included in specific meetings can still table their views.”

Example of G-20

- “As most members of the UN are not in the G-20, it is important for us to have a say on the role the G-20 should play as an agent of change in global governance. While we should support the G-20 process, we should do so in a way which ensures that our own interests as smaller states are taken into account.”

Governance in Asia-Pacific

- If comprehensive governance is not possible on global scale, neither is it possible in Asia-Pacific (diversity, different interests)
- Flexibility and inclusiveness, and thus resilience, needed for dealing with specific issues (not possible with single structure)
- One forum should not dominate others
- However, better coordination needed