

LETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

Although it may be true that the United States has “never left” Asia, there certainly has been a renewed focus on the region since President Barack Obama took office in January of 2009. The administration officially calls it a “rebalancing” policy, but most students, academics and policymakers have come to know it by its more common reference: the “Asia Pivot.” Two documents stand out as particularly reflective of the new US strategy in the region: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s 2011 article in Foreign Policy entitled “America’s Pacific Century,” and the 2012 US Department of Defense strategy guidelines document entitled “Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense.” Both indicate that the US is deploying a new strategy

focused on re-engaging Asia. They differ, however, in emphasis.

Secretary Clinton's piece reads more like a speech, with an intentional focus on the broader ideational issues that underpin American grand strategy. From the perspective of an American looking westward toward the vast Pacific and into Asia, Clinton proclaims, in a very Americanesque way, that the source of US power is found in "more than our military might or the size of our economy." She goes on to note that the "most potent asset as a nation is the power of our values — in particular, our steadfast support for democracy and human rights [...] which speaks to our deepest national character and is at the heart of our foreign policy, including our strategic turn to the Asia-Pacific region."

The defense paper, on the other hand, is much more explicit about America's hard power interests in the region, noting that the US "will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region" in order to advance "US economic and security interests inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia." Together with Secretary Clinton's speech, a new economic and security approach underlined by classic American values — at least in rhetoric — is clearly discernible.

As these two documents indicate, we have entered into a new age. How will Asia look in the coming years as a refocused America looks to engage a region that is becoming increasingly dependent on China for economic growth, leading to what some have labeled a new "bi-furcated" regional order, where countries in the region look to China for trade and investment but to America for security? This is the new Asia, or, stated alternatively, "Asia in the Age of the Pivot," the theme of this issue of Papers, Essays and Reviews. Between the covers of this issue, readers will find a multitude of perspectives on pertinent topics spanning a host of issues concerning Asia in a new and exciting age. There are five papers contributed by graduate students from all across the world, two essays submitted by professors with extensive knowledge and expertise in Asia, one interview with a renowned Yonsei professor and six reviews written by members of the PEAR staff.

In the first paper, "A Conspicuous Absence: Balance of Power Politics in East Asia and Their Challenge to International Relations Theory," Benjamin Knight critically reexamines balance of power theory in East Asia. Through his examination of security trends in East Asia, he finds that balancing is "conspicuously absent." By using theories grounded in the distribution of geo-

political power, Knight attempts to find an explanation for the lack of balancing against a rising China. He finds that neither US military presence nor structural inhibitions based on national power discrepancies are the reason for an absence of balancing and suggests an alternative explanation and additional empirical work is needed to understand the balance of power in the region. The second paper, "Institutionalizing East Asia: South Korea's Regional Leadership as a Middle Power," José Guerra Vio looks at the role South Korea plays as a middle power in the ongoing process of regional institutionalization in Northeast Asia. By looking at Korea's foreign policy choices and the approaches taken by recent administrations, he finds that Korea's impact as a hub between larger powers in the region is a very positive one. The third paper, although not specifically related to Asia, provides readers with a unique and alternative way to understanding Wallerstein's world-systems theory. Author Brendan McQuade, in his piece entitled, "A Critical View of Counterinsurgency: World Relational State (De)Formation," argues that counterinsurgency can be understood as a world-relational process because "it connects the varied outcomes of state formation across the wide gulfs of power and wealth that characterize capitalism." For our readers who are familiar with the history of rule in the Philippines and other Asian nations, like Indonesia and Vietnam, McQuade's piece will provide a new way of seeing how strong states and colonial rulers used counterinsurgency to expand and consolidate their power.

In the fourth piece, "Capability Approach to Street Vendors in Vietnam," Ly Nguyen uses the well-known "capabilities approach," advocated by Amartya Sen and other developmental economists, to argue for better policies for street vendors in Vietnam. She also looks to the experiences of other countries as a guide to suggesting better street vendor policies for Vietnam. The last paper makes an interesting connection between film and subversive political activity during the reign of authoritarian regimes in South Korea. Author Susan Menadue-Chun, in "The Subversive Strain in Modern Korean Film," finds that Korean film, which reflects certain political, economic and social factors of society, has served as a conduit through which Koreans have exercised a collective voice in opposition to oppressive policies of authoritarian regimes.

Both essays in this issue cover topics relevant to Asia, one specific and the other generally. In the first essay, Professor Adam Cathcart explores "the transformative power of music in diplomatic relations" during President Richard Nixon's visit to the People's Republic of China in early 1972. By focus-

ing on the “encounter and struggle” of two fundamentally different musical schemes, Cathcart reveals the way music transcends the realm of harp and chord and enters the realm of diplomacy. The second essay, written by Professor Joel Campbell, provides readers with a critical review of two dominant 20th century theories: dependency theory and world-systems theory. Contrary to mainstream academic opinion, Campbell finds that by pointing out problems of uneven development and economic domination, these two theories can provide building blocks for constructing a more robust economic development theory in the 21st century. Given the rapid economic development currently underway in many countries in Southeast Asia, notably Vietnam and Indonesia, there are plenty of lessons that can be drawn from dependency theory and world-systems theory.

In the interview section, Professor Chung-in Moon provides readers with an insightful take on a breadth of issues facing countries throughout Asia. Professor Moon’s comments provide readers with a perspective from someone who has been active in many realms of Asian affairs, spanning many years and several different administrations. In addition to his myriad of posts, government and academic, Moon has traveled twice with the South Korean delegation to Pyongyang. His opinion on the “Asia pivot,” Korea’s role in a new regional order, power transition in North Korea and the politicization of the North Korean refugee issue leaves no topic untouched.

The reviews section contains contributions by the PEAR staff on a multitude of timely issues. A review of Michael Beckley’s article about the unipolar era and China’s rise, a critique of Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi’s monograph on Sino-US “strategic distrust” and an overview of Eamon Fingleton’s alternative interpretation of Japan’s so-called “lost decade” are ideal reads for anyone interested in contemporary issues in Asia. Other reviews include a critique of undercover reporting in North Korean analysis and two book reviews: one on *The Dictator’s Handbook: Why Bad Behavior is Almost Always Good Politics* by authors Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith and the other on *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* by Iain Johnston. All the reviews, even the few that are not related specifically to Asia, carry great significance for the region and provide many lessons and analogies that will help readers better understand “Asia in the Age of the Pivot.”

This is my second semester as Editor in Chief of PEAR. The time spent on this semester’s issue has been as good, if not better, than last semester’s. I want to thank the entire PEAR staff for their hard work and dedication to mak-

ing this issue a great success. I also want to thank Professors Jennifer Oh and Matthias Maass for their continued support as faculty advisors. Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to all the contributors for providing the excellent material that will surely give PEAR readers plenty to think about!



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