# 1 Setting the context

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Asia has arguably become the most critical region in an evolving international order. Geopolitically, the region includes three of the world's great powers – China, Japan and India – and two others, the United States and Russia, lie just beyond its peripheries and interact with it extensively. Demographically, over half of the world's total population is Asian and that total is forecast to reach 60 per cent by 2050 (United Nations 1999). Economically, it is projected that China and India alone will account for more than 50 per cent of global growth between 2005 and 2030 (*Economist* 2006a).[1] Militarily, four key players in the broader Asia-Pacific – the US, Russia, China and North Korea – are nuclear weapons states. Asian defence budgets constitute the world's largest arms market (US$150 billion in purchases between 1990 and 2002) and the region's 'defence transformation' programmes are growing (Bitzinger 2004; IISS 2006b: 398–401; Tellis 2006a). The combination of spectacular regional economic growth, the cultural and religious diversity of its massive population base and the sheer material resources it will generate and consume over the course of this century justify the observation that '(t)here is now a broad consensus that the Asian continent is poised to become the new center of gravity in global politics' (Tellis 2006a: 3).

Security analysts are increasingly concerned with how Asian security politics will affect international security or will, in turn, be influenced by global events and structures. 'Offensive realists' such as John Mearsheimer, for example, view global security as a precarious power equilibrium between states exercising hegemony in their own regions but obsessed with precluding any one of them from exercising outright global hegemony. China and the United States, Mearsheimer argues, will inevitably vie for global predominance with Asia as the major arena, precipitating a hegemonic war (Mearsheimer 2001). Intensified competition

[1] Between 2001 and 2005, Asia contributed 21 per cent to the world's total economic growth compared to the United States' contribution of 19 per cent. Also see *Asia Times Online* (2006).

between an expanding NATO that now cultivates links with four Asia-Pacific 'contact countries' (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) and a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation led by a geopolitically resurgent Russia and an increasingly self-confident China would appear to authenticate this scenario. A more optimistic variant of great power balancing strategies (i.e., adapting a concert approach) for East Asia anticipates the need to implement a judicious mix of diplomatic and institutional pathways to stabilise regional relationships (Goldstein 2003; for a more sceptical assessment, see Acharya 1999).

Others, including regional security complex theorists, insist Asia's regional security structure can be distinguished from global security dynamics (although admitting that the two levels often overlap) and that the regional-level structure is at least as important as the global level in determining the region's relative stability. Barry Buzan has insisted that because Asia contains great powers, 'Asian regional security dynamics have stronger links to the global level in both directions than one would expect in the global-regional links of a standard region where the global level might well penetrate stronger into the regional' (Buzan 2003: 149). The *degree* or *intensity* of global penetration, however, is contested. Various analysts have noted, for example, that the United Nations has often been an 'adjunct' rather than a primary force in shaping the Asian security order. This has been due to superpower competition in the region during the Cold War marginalising the UN's roles and influence, Asian states' postcolonial scepticism about Security Council motives, and lingering irredentist disputes in the region. Yet extra-regional powers such as the US and Russia often have and still do intervene in Asian regional security issues without the *imprimatur* of international institutions or regimes if they perceive their own national security interests and their particular visions of 'global stability' threatened by such issues. Given the perceived weakness of regional institutions such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in alleviating past and present major Asian disputes, that such incursions by both regional and external powers have occurred is hardly surprising (Foot 2003; Harada and Tanaka 1999: 324).[2]

Another school of thought contends that a growing array of 'transnational security' threats and challenges defies any arbitrary delineation between 'regional' and 'global' security politics. Demographic pressures,

[2] Harada and Tanaka (1999: 324) assert that great powers will not enter regional conflicts on their own or via international institutions unless their own national security interests are directly involved. Hence, 'Asian countries . . . are confronted with the challenge of devising some mechanisms to resolve regional conflicts on their own.'

resource depletion, forced migration, climate change, international crime, pandemics and global terrorism constitute 'human security' problems that challenge us all and bestow the onus of security management directly upon those elites who must decide which specific issues will be prioritised or 'securitised' on our behalf.[3] None of the major and contending approaches in international relations theory – realism, liberal-institutionalism or constructivism – is sufficient to effectively embrace this range of transnational security dilemmas. This is not just a matter of integrating these approaches into an effective conceptual hybrid (see the discussion of analytical eclectism below). Rather, transnational security and its human security derivatives underscore the primacy of individual security and welfare in an increasingly globalised interdependent world.

In contrast to this 'seamless' or 'boundary-neutral' version of security politics, however, East Asian elites have often embraced transnational security to reinforce their own style of collective decision-making and to achieve their own nationalist and regionalist visions. The 'ASEAN way' of reaching consensus via low-key and highly private consultations between Asian elites on such issues as climate change, pandemic management or forced migration is illustrative. Establishing whether security is best considered from a 'top-down' (global or state-centric hierarchical-based) or 'bottom-up' (individual or non-state actor-based) perspective remains a core problem for approaching contemporary security politics and it is particularly difficult when addressing transnational security challenges.[4] Ascertaining what specific framework is best used to reconcile the inherent levels of analysis question posed by these challenges reflects the overall importance and difficulty of reconciling regional and

[3] The definitive source on transregional security politics in East Asia is Dupont (2001). Also see Tow, Thakur and Hyun (2000). The 'securitisation' concept was developed by the so-called 'Copenhagen School' and can be regarded as society or its representative elites viewing an issue as a threat to its constructed identity and responding to such a perceived threat with specific policies. See Wæver (1995) and Buzan and Wæver (1997). Critics of this concept accuse its adherents of misrepresenting 'social identity' as a fixed construct rather than as a constantly changing process. See McSweeny (1996). The concept of securitisation is defended as a relevant approach to Asian security politics by Emmers (2004), but is criticised by Sato (2005) who deems it as little more than an alternative constructivist approach to historical interpretation that offers little new to our understanding of why Asia may be 'different' from other regions in choosing what to regard as a security issue.

[4] T. J. Pempel notes, however, that the 'top-down/bottom-up' perspective over-simplifies the more complex realities that drive both economic and security politics in Asia. The problem, he asserts, is squaring 'regionalism' where states decide at the top which elements of their national autonomy can be amalgamated from 'regionalisation' which is comprised of 'societally driven processes' (markets, interest group movements and so on) generated from below to derive explanatory power. Indeed, many such processes contain both top-down and bottom-up elements. See Pempel (2005: 13, 19–28).

global security dynamics in an increasingly complex international security arena.

While understanding of the 'regional–global nexus' as it applies to the Asian security approach remains elusive, the importance of such comprehension is undisputed. Both Asia and the world are at a historical crossroad, undergoing monumental structural change. In this context, a group of experts in Asian and international security politics convened a workshop at the Australian National University, Canberra, in August 2006. The workshop had the objective of building on previous efforts to understand how Asian security issues link with their global equivalents. Such knowledge is increasingly compelling as international security problems are more and more shaping the dynamics of Asian security politics.

The regional and international security environment that materialises from this evolution will be forged by Asia's interaction with global security issues. To project the shape of that environment, a brief summary of recent efforts to conceptualise Asian security politics by applying standard international relations theory will be initially offered. A discussion follows on how the 'regional–global nexus' – this book's primary concern – derives from and adds value to these efforts. The final section justifies the book's analytical framework.

## Integrating theory and Asian security: precedents

Contemporary literature on Asian security has yielded extensive and profound insights on how such key security concepts as 'order', 'stability', 'polarity' and 'community' interrelate at various levels of analysis. Yet its collective relevance and application to a regional–global security nexus remains elusive. This is due to the murkiness that invariably emerges when contending security paradigms are addressed somewhat randomly or in the spirit of eclecticism. This volume is intended to ascertain with greater clarity why these two levels of analysis are central to understanding and assessing Asia's security politics. Before outlining how it will do so, however, a brief review will be offered of several widely discussed studies that have been conducted to understand how the greater 'Asia-Pacific' relates to and affects the overall post-Cold War international security environment and how this process can be explained in both theoretical and empirical terms.[5]

[5] 'Asia-Pacific', of course, is a contested term (see Pempel 2005: 24–8). The problem of overcoming ambiguities in striking a definition for the region is discussed by Kang (2003a: 60). For purposes of this study, three distinct 'subregions' and one overlapping geographic sector that includes part of the 'broader Pacific' and the eastern part of

Two books edited by Muthiah Alagappa (1998, 2003) confronted this fundamental question by considering how international relations theory can help explain the interrelationships of material power, ideational perceptions and order-building dynamics within Asia. Both books were landmark and comprehensive efforts to explore why competing theories of international relations could be discriminately but collectively employed to help explain and understand the management of security policies and order in Asia.[6] Alagappa's edited works were designed to be pathbreaking efforts to bridge international relations theory and area studies supported by in-depth empirical evidence. 'Security' in an Asian context was also treated in both volumes as a dichotomous trend: combining analysis about a regional preoccupation on order-building and hierarchy with a relatively flexible tolerance by Asian elites for 'conceptual traveling' if it could eventually generate the important result of demarcating effective approaches for shaping credible and enduring security norms and practices. Critically, the regional level of analysis was clearly assigned priority over global security dynamics because of Asian regional powers' greater salience in a post-Cold War setting and because of interdependence intensifying at the regional level below the purview of the world's single remaining superpower, the US.

The Alagappa compendiums have been subject to only mild criticisms and these have been constructive in generating additional questions on how even a more integrated conceptual consensus might be achieved.

Russia are included for reasons of both demarcation and conceptualisation. The three subregions are Northeast Asia (China, Japan and the Korean peninsula along with those parts of Russia contiguous to this particular sector); Southeast Asia (including the ten ASEAN member states); and South Asia (including India, Pakistan, the other members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and those parts of what is commonly known as 'Central Asia' that impact upon the dynamics of both Russian, Chinese and South Asian geopolitics, and what could be termed as the 'broader Pacific zone' that include maritime powers such as the US, Australia and New Zealand who adopt highly active economic, diplomatic and strategic postures towards the region). I prefer 'Asia-Pacific' as the fundamental geographic descriptor because, as will be argued below, American material power and ideational influences together constitute an integral maritime component of and linkage to any 'regional–global nexus'. By contrast, Muthiah Alagappa prefers to delineate 'Asia' rather than 'Asia-Pacific' as the most analytically pertinent regional nomenclature based on China providing a common linkage for interdependence between various subregions. 'Extra-regional actors' such as the US, he concludes, are not the 'primary drivers' of tensions, conflicts and cooperative initiatives. Yet he acknowledges that Asia, as a distinct region in its own right, is open to external influences and is becoming increasingly integrated into 'global systems'. See Alagappa (2006).

[6] As noted by Alagappa in a roundtable organised in Taiwan to discuss his second book. The book, he noted, 'was not designed to advance a general theory of international politics . . . Instead, taking a problem-oriented approach, we sought explanations from the insights of competing theories' (Alagappa 2005: 262).

Concerns raised in relation to the second Alagappa book, in particular, focused around: (1) the limited context in which the notion of Asian 'order' is developed and explained; (2) a perhaps over-optimistic tone adopted by the book in describing Asian 'stability'; (3) a tendency to underplay the role of the US in the shaping of Asian 'regionalism'; and (4) a perceived failure to sufficiently reconcile the disparate theories used to describe different aspects of Asian security. The fourth concern has perhaps been the most enduring: others who have followed Alagappa in favouring an 'inclusiveness approach' to understanding Asian security nevertheless have decried both volumes' tendencies to 'fit too many explanatory variables under one cover, without an overarching intellectual theme that ties the variables together' – a tendency that has been labelled 'additive complementarity' (Carlson and Suh 2004: 231–2; Kihl 2006: 6–7).

Alagappa responded to many of these points in a special workshop convened in Taipei to discuss his second volume in late 2004. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that additional work is required to understand the nature and consequence of changing distributions of economic and political power and resultant patterns of hierarchy or interdependence, the patterns of institutionalisation as they work within and beyond regional confines, and how such institutions incorporate 'socialisation and learning functions' that may emanate from extra-regional sources. One of the workshop commentators observed that while 'multiple pathways' are needed to explain Asia's contemporary security environment, both state-level factors (i.e., national economic growth and the development of military power) and extra-regional variables such as American global hegemony, alliances and international multilateral mechanisms must be integrated in a system-level analysis of Asian security (Zhang 2005: 240). Despite the comprehensiveness of Alagappa's analytical sweep, the levels of analysis clearly remained an impediment to consensus on the Asian security paradigm.

Another influential and constructive study of Asian security was edited by G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno and appeared in 2003. It offered alternative 'images' of the Asian security order as they related to the increased role that Asian states are playing in 'the larger international system' (Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003a: 422). More structurally oriented, and less concerned with the nature and interworkings of regional order than the Alagappa volumes, *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* focuses on regional power relations as a component of the global security environment. Its basic concern is to assess the extent that three major powers – the US, China and Japan – form the core security cluster driving Asian security dynamics and how that cluster relates to

prospects for American post-Cold War hegemony. They employ what they term five 'frames' that comprise relevant theoretical approaches to understanding stability in the Asian security environment: (1) balance of power; (2) styles of hegemony; (3) history and memory; (4) domestic and international institutions; and (5) economic interdependence. Incorporating the work of some of the same analysts that contributed to the Alagappa texts, most of its chapter selections pursue the question as to whether Western or 'European-centred' international relations theory is useful in evaluating Asia-Pacific politics and security. David Kang's chapter represents a notable exception insofar as it appeals for the development of a localised-hierarchical 'Asian' model to explain Asian security politics (Kang 2003b: 164).

The Ikenberry/Mastanduno book differs from Alagappa's volumes, however, by underscoring the ongoing weakness of existing Asian security institutions relative to their European counterparts. It posits that the United States' early postwar decision to manage power in Asia not by institutionalisation (along the lines of NATO) but by hierarchy (through its bilateral system of alliances there), established 'path dependence' that has since inhibited the establishment of more robust Asian security institutions (Duffield 2003: 256–8). If this interpretation is correct, American power has imposed constraints on Asian order-building that impede an Asian capability to shape and manage regional order autonomously, refuting the arguments of Kang and others who insist that more region-centric models can be applied to this process. On the other hand, American power endows the Asian region with 'breathing space' for developing more self-reliant institutions and processes for achieving security. That power applies distant but useful 'offshore balancing' that is devoid of the historical and cultural baggage that could otherwise impede the successful application of indigenous models.[7]

As noted by one of its reviewers, *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* renders an invaluable service by testing the contending American policies of engagement and containment of China against the theoretical perspectives that drive the actual choices and risks involved in opting for either approach (Stuart 2004). Those few critiques that have been directed towards this book focus on what they deem to be an interpretation of Asian security politics that is arguably too 'American-centric' (Carlson and Suh 2004: 231). In reality, the editors simply identify the US role as a 'crucial variable' in successful conflict management and future regional stability in Asia. This is a 'top-down' perspective; it underplays how US power intersects with emerging regional

[7] The US balancing role in the region is developed by Layne (1997).

institutions affecting the evolving international security order (Carlson and Suh 2004: 232). Indeed, one could make a strong case that American power has been as much a source of regional insecurity or instability as solidity, that American hierarchy has been at least partly overcome by the growth of regionally indigenous diplomacy minimising the path dependency factor.[8] The book's nearly exclusive emphasis on the US, China and Japan reflects an American 'globalist' perspective that risks marginalising South Korea's and ASEAN's role in region-centric order-building, despite Alastair Iain Johnston's fine chapter on the 'ASEAN way' (Johnston 2003; Stuart 2004). That chapter focuses primarily on the China–ASEAN dyad; it is less concerned about how ASEAN and the ARF shape institutional politics in Asia. If Alagappa's edited studies can be accused of being overly 'region-centric', the Ikenberry/Mastanduno compendium (and especially its concluding chapter) might be regarded as over-emphasising the future course of US geopolitical behaviour as the cardinal determinant for how the Asian security order will be determined.

J. J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein and Allen Carlson have argued in their recent study on *Rethinking Security in East Asia* that the problems outlined in both the Alagappa and Ikenberry/Mastanduno studies are largely overcome by 'analytical eclecticism': the selective merging of competing realist, liberal and constructivist research traditions to form a set of observations or 'explanatory sketches' to generate 'a causally significant understanding of empirically significant outcomes' (Katzenstein and Sil 2004: 13). If applied effectively, analytical eclecticism will enrich the study of Asian security by expanding its parameters of reference beyond those currently imposed by separate, predominant, realist, liberal and constructivist research traditions (Katzenstein and Sil 2004: 21–2). It will overcome the 'naturally' pessimist realist assumption that in the absence of robust norms and institutions, Asia is destined to be a war-ridden area of the world (if this has not happened yet, 'just wait').[9] It will safeguard against overly optimistic liberal prognoses of regional economic development that were in effect prior to the Asian financial crisis. It will modify constructivist predictions about the cultivation of a sufficiently homogeneous regional identity to realise security community-building or (more pessimistically) to sustain long-standing historical-cultural animosities. Analytical eclecticism thus can serve as a useful braking mechanism for modifying the excesses of each paradigm but also nurture

[8] This perspective is developed by Sugita (2005).
[9] Fairly or unfairly, the writings of Aaron Friedberg (1993/94) during the mid-1990s are most often cited as the culprit in restricting realism's ability to think outside the zero-sum box in this regard.

the particular strengths of each approach in ways that can interrelate to draw better analogies, comparisons and conclusions about Asian security trends.

To at least some extent, the arguments projected in *Rethinking Security in East Asia* are reflected in Katzenstein's (2005) commensurate and seminal work, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*. Both studies have been widely and properly acclaimed. Yet both have incurred similar concerns to those engendered by the Alagappa and Ikenberry/Mastanduno books, notwithstanding Suh's and Carlson's arguments found in their concluding chapter of *Rethinking Security* aimed to overcome such criticism.

First, while those employing the 'explanatory sketches' of analytical eclecticism may intend it to be a safeguard against the excesses of single-theory application, they are so 'risk-averse' as to preclude the adoption of *any* theoretical elucidation for understanding Asian security's empirical dynamics. In the vernacular, explanatory sketches may 'tie one up in knots' via 'nitpicking' and thus inhibit conclusions being soundly reached on an otherwise valid basis of evidence supporting a realist perspective in one area of enquiry or liberal or constructivist orientations in another. Kang has captured the essence of this problem as part of his appeal for deriving more 'Asia-centric' theories for explaining Asian security: more than a pot-pourri consisting of 'a touch of realism, a dash of constructivism and a pinch of liberalism' is required if contemporary questions of regional security are to be addressed in ways that acquire meaning for those policy-makers that must deal with them on a time-urgent basis and in an inevitably prioritised context (Kang 2003a: 59). 'Hybridising' paradigms under such conditions with the leisure normally related to the evolution of academic discourse are simply inadequate. What may be more promising is an 'action-oriented' model recently proposed by Young Whan Kihl – a 'syncretistic' approach that combines theory-building with field observation over specific timeframes and 'participation analysis' such as policy elite interviews. Integrating empirical data that emerges from such observation and data acquisition with a theoretical 'fit' seems a desirable method of deriving causal explanations (Kihl 2006).

A second concern stems from *Rethinking Security in East Asia*'s somewhat controversial preference for sustained US policy ambiguity in Asia as a necessary precondition for regional stability and order-building. As a global power, the US must project explicitly defined interests and order-building preferences that, whenever possible, avoid misperceptions and reflect leadership through engagement. The book's editors observe that '[regional] stability stands on a precarious, unidimensional foundation'

that successive American administrations often (and unconsciously?) attempt to disrupt by imposing a 'narrow, binary framework of force', presumably in the form of reinforcing alliance politics or imposing the doctrine of strategic pre-emption against sceptical unwilling Asian societies (Carlson and Suh 2004: 230–1). However, the dangers of China misinterpreting American 'imperial' intentions, of ASEAN not being allowed to sustain its soft balancing strategies against larger powers so as to negotiate their own interests and identities and of the US confusing its role on the Korean peninsula between extending deterrence and pre-empting North Korea, all combine to mitigate those 'subtle sources of Asian stability' that are sustained by strategic ambiguity.

Resigning oneself to the permanent condition of ambiguity in the Asian security environment appears to be a tacit concession to the realist vision of permanent anarchy as inherent to international security relations. It allows little room for institutionalist or constructivist approaches to supplement interest-oriented diplomacy in Asia from either a regional or American vantage point and thus is hardly 'eclectic'. It also reflects a subconscious anti-American bias to the extent that policy flowing from Washington is viewed as inevitably problematic. This tendency also emerges in Katzenstein's other works: although globalisation is represented as making regionalism more 'porous' or open in nature, US primacy nevertheless is characterised as impeding a genuinely mutual process of interaction between the imperial power and the region of concern (Lewis 2006: 282). In fact, as the recent formation of ASEAN+3 (ASEAN plus China, Japan and South Korea), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) all clearly demonstrate, regionalism in Asia is not under the control of the US or its bilateral alliance system but may be facilitated by them through the latter providing sufficient 'breathing space' for the mechanisms and identities underwriting these initiatives to mature over time. As Alagappa (2006) has noted, 'a concept that captures the mutuality of interaction between actors and processes at the two levels would be more useful in understanding the global–regional nexus and its implications.'

*Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* written by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver and published in 2003 is a monumental work that argues that the world and its security are best understood by envisioning it as a series of 'regional security complexes' that are distinct from both the international security system and from 'local' (intra-state or state-centric) units within that system. Because it devotes substantial analysis to understanding the interrelationship between regional and global security components, of all the works assessed in this section it comes closest to addressing the issues that are the central