

East Asian Regionalism and Sinocentrism

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Regionalism is far more than free-trade agreements (FTAs). After all, NAFTA is an FTA that had no impact on the formation of North American regionalism, given tensions over immigration, drug gangs, and conflicting national identities. No matter how extensive economic interdependence is, the essence of regionalism is a sense of a shared community. This has at least three components: (1) social networks that bridge national boundaries; (2) strategic thinking that recognizes common security interests; and (3) a regional identity capable of overriding national identities on matters of shared significance. Boosters of East Asian regionalism recognize the need to forge an East Asian Community, which has been regarded as a goal of ASEAN + 3 for more than a decade, but rarely do they offer tangible suggestions for realizing any of the above components. Vague ideas to advance are sandwiched between two alternatives. On the one hand, China is becoming more forthright about the sinocentric nature of its plans for regionalism. On the other, the United States and some of its allies are countering with a vision of what former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd called an Asia-Pacific community (reconceptualized as the logical outcome of the pursuit led by Barack Obama in 2011 for a Trans-Pacific Partnership). The latter idea drew rapid criticism by ASEAN states loath to lose their organization's centrality and remains little articulated, while Chinese thinking about regionalism has increasingly coalesced and warrants close attention.

China is the driving force in Asia. It initiated the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and remains the host as it presses to set an agenda. While Japan's Obuchi Keizo had a role in starting ASEAN + 3 and ASEAN insists on being the host and setting the agenda, after President Kim Dae-jung in 2000–01 in the East Asian Vision Statement and East Asian Study Group, and then Koizumi Junichiro in a Singapore speech in early 2002 called for invigorating the organization, China has clearly been the principal booster. The Six-Party Talks were not China's idea in 2003, but lately it has taken the lead in promoting their revival with a much broader agenda for regional security. In the trilateral Sino-Japan–South Korean summit, China also stands in the forefront in appealing for a FTA and other mechanisms of increased cooperation. Yet, a close look at China's thinking about regionalism demonstrates that on the three

dimensions identified above it lags in supporting initiatives for building trust. A façade of multilateral regionalism fails to reassure other countries.

As part of their 'Introduction to Ideas of Asian Regionalism', Baogang He and Takashi Inoguchi develop three propositions on the relationship between geographical Asia and Asia as a cultural, strategic, and globalizing entity.¹ In this response, I consider these concepts from the perspective of China. In the process, I differentiate the prevailing mood in Chinese writings about regionalism in the early part of the 2000s from the dominant viewpoint in 2010. If Japanese and South Korean writings about regionalism have decreased and grown less specific, a close look at what vocal Chinese consider to be articulation of a blueprint for Asian regionalism deserves close attention.²

Chinese ideas for regionalism in comparative perspective

Early in the 2000s, Chinese writings about regionalism described a gradual process with signs of multipolarity and cultural heterogeneity under a framework of political deference to ASEAN. Authors portrayed a win–win situation as a rising China and a rising Japan each found an outlet for their aspirations in ASEAN + 3. There was little indication that the Chinese considered Southeast Asia to be part of China's sphere of influence – a concept widely derided. Instead, emphasis was put on the diversity of the region as a factor requiring great powers to eschew efforts to impose control, deferring instead to ASEAN as the sole political embodiment of regionalism. Whether depicting the merits of multilateralism in 2000–02, the promise of 'new thinking' toward Japan in 2003, or the bankrupt nature of American notions of hegemonism as a staple of Chinese analysis, authors highlighted China's deferential approach to a region characterized by diversity and complexity.

Negotiators with other states, academics attuned to the thinking of Asian neighbors, and those intent on boosting China's soft power all championed the multilateral character of regionalism, but they faced an irreconcilable dilemma. Chinese leaders were determined to pursue regionalism that excluded the United States even as China's growing power drove US allies and most of the states of Southeast Asia to seek a format inclusive of the only state that could balance China in the future.

¹ Baogang He and Takashi Inoguchi, 'Introduction to Ideas of Asian Regionalism', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 12(2): 165–77.

² I have traced Chinese views of regionalism over the past two decades through the following publications: 'Flawed Regionalism: Reconceptualizing Northeast Asia in the 1990s', *Pacific Review*, 11(1) (1998): 1–27; *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism: Bilateral Distrust in the Shadow of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); 'Post Cold War Evolution of Chinese Thinking on Regional Institutions in Northeast Asia', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19(66) (September 2010): 605–20; and 'Chinese Strategic Thinking on Multilateral Regional Security in Northeast Asia', *Orbis* (Spring, 2011): 296–311. I draw on these materials for this response. I also draw on Ch. 7, 'Chinese National Identity and East Asian National Identity Gaps', in my edited book, *National Identities and Bilateral Relations: Widening Gaps in East Asia and Chinese Demonization of the United States* (Washington, DC and Stanford, CA: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, forthcoming).

The Chinese case for regionalism in 2003–05 persisted against the background of the backlash against the Bush administration's unilateralism and obsession with the war against terror. Ties to the SCO strengthened as Russian President Putin grew wary of US intentions, including US bases in Central Asia that appeared to be linked to US support for 'colored revolutions'. Accusations of US designs for regime change in North Korea allowed China to claim the strategic high ground as the state steering the Six-Party Talks toward pragmatic compromises, which were supported both by Putin and by South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun. In Southeast Asia, Japan's reduced interest in regionalism appeared to be linked to Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's provocative annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which poisoned the atmosphere for Sino-Japanese summits and even cooperation, and fueled wariness to exclusive regionalism consonant with US reservations. With these targets of criticism in the forefront, China had success in sustaining its image as an innocent supporter of ASEAN-centered regionalism. Yet, suspicions of its intentions were growing, leading to ASEAN's decision to establish the East Asian Summit, adding India, Australia, and New Zealand. In 2005, China had no choice but to accept this enlarged organization, while succeeding in leaving ASEAN + 3 with the mandate to form the East Asian Community. This kept Chinese hopes alive for a narrower regionalism it could dominate, even if the mainstream was not admitting to this aspiration.

China's approach to regionalism in the mid-2000s had many positive consequences, and it was in line with Deng Xiaoping's call for keeping a low profile for a considerable time. As Baogang He argued, 'China's regional cooperation with ASEAN is aimed towards accruing economic benefits from the regional free trade regime, and towards defusing the fear of a threat from China in the Southeast Asian region.'³ Having served those purposes, its cautious nature fell out of step with Chinese thinking. It was deferential when growing Chinese confidence encouraged an assertive posture. Limited to economic goals, it fell short of rising aspirations for cultural and political coordination. Above all, it left unclear how China's relations with other great powers would proceed, not delimiting the functions of narrow ASEAN + 3 regionalism in regard to the US role in the region and not resolving differences with Japan over the balance between this organization, the East Asian Summit, and US interests.

In the first half of 2009, there were still writings appealing to a cautious approach, but they were little more than a desperate defense of what was in the process of being rejected.⁴ In their place were numerous publications advocating a different approach. Some centered on the United States, attacking its interference in regionalism.⁵ Others

³ Baogang He, 'East Asian Ideas of Regionalism: A Normative Critique', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 58(1) (March 2004): 115.

⁴ Zhang Yunling, 'Dongya quyì hezuo de xīn qushi', *Dangdai Yatai*, 4 (2009): 4–16.

⁵ Li Dongyi, 'Dongya quyìhua ruhe quli yu Meiguo de guanxi: yu Oujou yitihu de duibi fenxi', *Waijiao pinglun*, 2 (2010): 82–92.

chastised Japan for its attitudes standing in the way of regionalism.⁶ The theme of regionalism figured importantly in articles on culture as on security. A sharp contrast was drawn between regionalism and globalization. Prevailing recent Chinese thinking on regionalism stands in sharp contrast to earlier images and to the propositions that He and Inoguchi presented in their introduction. Indeed, it lends itself to the three alternative propositions that I develop below based on an examination of Chinese publications.

- 1 Cultural Asia is equivalent to geographical Asia for purposes of regionalism
- 2 Geographical Asia stands in opposition to globalizing Asia.
- 3 Strategic Asia will be reconstituted through geographical Asia.

Cultural Asia is equivalent to geographical Asia for purposes of regionalism

Earlier Chinese writings made the argument that US intolerance of diversity was not amenable to inclusion in East Asian regionalism. It was intent on imposing so-called universal values drawn from Western tradition on an area with widely divergent cultural backgrounds. This contradicted the ASEAN Way. During the Bush era, this argument resonated well with many audiences. Yet, in a new wave of writing on regionalism that gained ascendancy in 2010 a different case was made in favor of shared Eastern civilization bringing coherence to the East Asian Community, parallel to Western civilization in the EU. Given the decision in 2005 to vest ASEAN + 3 rather than the East Asian Summit with the task of forging an East Asian Community and the target of 2015 set by ASEAN for establishing an ASEAN Community, China may have considered that a mandate existed to advance plans for an exclusive community without any Western state.⁷ Closer economic ties, especially in the wake of the US-caused global financial crisis, gave China more clout and cast the West in a more negative light, emboldening a more assertive cast of Chinese officials and writers to advance a different agenda for establishing the East Asian Community. The goal of increasing Chinese soft power had been replaced by determination to flex China's rising hard power, both economic and military, even if it would alienate the United States and many Asian neighbors.

After the demise of the socialist bloc at the end of the 1980s, the Chinese began to replace the old dichotomy of socialism and capitalism with Eastern civilization and Western civilization. This was not a response to Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*, since it preceded this publication. If it initially seemed to cater to idealists in Japan and South Korea as well as the advocates of Asian values in Southeast Asia, there was little follow-up in identifying a common denominator. Instead, Chinese discussions of Eastern civilization embraced Confucianism, as it was twisted in support

⁶ Ba Dianjun, 'Cong wenhua shijiao touxi Riben waijiao zhengce de zhanlue xuanze', *Riben xuekan*, 4 (2010): 93–106.

⁷ Zhang Xiaoming, 'Meiguo shi Dongya quyi hezuo de tuidongzhe haishi zuaizhe', *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, 7 (2010): 4–13.

of continuity with communism. When the Beijing Olympics gave a powerful boost to pride in the long cultural history steeped in Confucianism the groundwork was laid for an upsurge in appeals to the concept of Eastern civilization as the foundation of regionalism through an East Asian Community. In 2009–11, much was written about the contrast between harmonious Eastern civilization, which was manifest in China's benevolent tribute system, and imperialist Western civilization.⁸

As the battle was joined in 2009–10 against the much criticized US 'return to Asia', presumed to be for the purpose of containing China, supporters of exclusive regionalism through ASEAN + 3 wrote that it is based both on geographical propinquity and cultural commonalities.⁹ US interest in becoming part of a democratic Asia-Pacific community is belittled as an attempt to impose an alien cultural orientation while interfering with the natural course of China's rise. Convergence in values is not considered possible. Instead, Asian states are faced with a stark choice: either accept China, the traditional origin and future embodiment of Eastern civilization, as the basis of a new community or be trapped in a US plot to impose Western values, which were introduced through imperialism and would stand in the way of the natural emergence of an Asian community able to put the legacy of imperialism behind it. Writings about history, culture, international relations, and bilateral relations are replete with references to this argument in one form or another.¹⁰

Replacing cultural multilateralism with a civilizational dichotomy, Chinese writers insist on a simplistic choice between US-led universal values and Chinese-led, supposedly traditional, values. This distorts the cultural diversity of Asia, denies the appeal of universal values in the region, and blurs the line between socialism and Confucianism in Chinese values. This perspective ignores the strong resistance across East Asia to China's civilizational arguments. Yet, acknowledgment that other states are not yet receptive falls far short of forthright admission that China is the target of deep suspicions and that universal values are already well rooted in China's Asian neighbors.

Geographical Asia Stands in Opposition to Globalizing Asia

Another revelation about top-down Chinese thinking in 2009–11 was the way the advancing financial crisis and the weakening image of US leadership of the international community enabled China to draw a sharp distinction between a geographically limited Asian community and the US dominated world order. Chinese views of regionalism had evolved over the past two decades, as they became more specific about the region's geographical scope and its links to the world order.

⁸ Wang Yuechuan, 'Houdongfangzhuyi yu Zhongguo wenhua shenfen', *Lilun yu chuangzuo*, 3 (2010): 4–9.

⁹ Ju Hailong and Ge Hongliang, 'Meiguo "chongfan" Dongnanya dui Nanhai anquan xingshi de yingxiang', *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi luntan*, 1 (2010): 87–97; Wang Yuechuan, 'Houdongfangzhuyi yu Zhongguo wenhua shenfen', *Lilun yu chuangzuo*, 3 (2010): 4–9.

¹⁰ Gilbert Rozman, 'Chinese National Identity and the Sino-US Civilizational Gap', in Gilbert Rozman, ed., *National Identities and Bilateral Relations*, chapter 8.

Through most of the 1990s, China was very hesitant about regionalism, as the United States embraced APEC as the starting point of a trans-Pacific community and Japan vacillated between support for APEC and some sort of exclusive East Asian regionalism. While many in Japan regarded their country's 'reentry into Asia' as critical to constructing a new identity for a 'normal Japan,' neither Chinese nor Americans particularly focused on Asian regionalism.¹¹ The Clinton administration favored globalization inclusive of human rights and opposed Asian values or crony capitalism rife with protectionism, and the Jiang Zemin leadership advocated the rise of multipolarity with its implied emphasis on balanced great power relations, including within East Asia. The Asian financial crisis appeared to be the culmination of financial globalization triumphing over narrow nationalism.

Even as ASEAN + 3 was taking shape in 1997–99, East Asian regionalism drew suspicious responses from both US and Chinese leaders. Washington had frowned upon Mahathir's 1991 idea of an East Asian Economic Caucus and in 1997 opposed Japan's proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund. Whether the goal appeared narrowly economic or added an unmistakable political and cultural agenda, Americans were inclined to detect an assault on their ideals for an international community, ending the cold war divide between two opposing blocs and the injustice of protectionism without opening markets wide, while failing to show international responsibility in trade negotiations, the Persian Gulf War, and the containment of 'rogue states'. For Chinese leaders multilateralism carried risks of reinforcing US unipolarity and the alliances that sustained it. There was also concern that Japan's aim was to establish a formal body for converting economic power into political or, eventually, military power as the leader of East Asia. In 1997, China joined in denying Japan's appeal for an Asian Monetary Fund, although it was warming to ASEAN-centered regionalism capitalizing on resentment of the United States and the International Monetary Fund for their handling of the Asian financial crisis. The fact that China joined Japan and South Korea in ASEAN + 3 was a sign of evolving views.

During the presidency of George W. Bush, tensions over regionalism grew as the Six-Party Talks and the East Asian Summit were added to the organizational mix. In addition to Southeast Asia, Japan and South Korea stood on the frontlines in new maneuverings over the impact of a rising China and an assertive, unilateral United States. Koizumi Junichiro and Roh Moo-hyun turned in different directions, while China's effective soft power minimized the divide within ASEAN over regionalism.¹² The US agenda was narrowly centered on terrorism or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), while China capitalized on intra-Asian economic integration making FTAs more beneficial.

¹¹ Gilbert Rozman, *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism: Bilateral Distrust in the Shadow of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹² Gilbert Rozman, 'Northeast Asian Regionalism at a Crossroads: Is an East Asian Community in Sight?', in Martina Timmermann and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama (eds.), *Institutionalizing Northeast Asia: Regional Steps towards Global Governance* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2008), pp. 196–220.

By 2001, China strongly embraced multilateralism without committing itself to either a security community or a vision for regional identity. It found the ASEAN Way convenient as a loose guideline for regional integration, fostering cooperation centered on economic ties and political symbols of friendship with scant pressure to address sovereignty issues. Moreover, in 2003 the launching of the Six-Party Talks put China at the center of diplomacy over the future of North Korea. Welcoming the prospect of prolonged negotiations in which Washington and its allies would have to make concessions to Pyongyang as well as the decision taken in ASEAN + 3 to forge an East Asian Community, Beijing saw openings to capitalize on divisions among the allies. Yet, it was constrained by the narrow focus on denuclearization at the Six-Party Talks and the tensions with Koizumi over history that spilled into views on the scope of regionalism, when Japan succeeded in getting ASEAN to agree to an expanded East Asian Summit (EAS) including India, Australia, and New Zealand.¹³

In 2007–08, Chinese leaders appeared to have reconciled themselves to living with a balance between ASEAN + 3 and the EAS and compromising with Bush on the 2007 Joint Agreement as a way forward in the Six-Party Talks. This was the time when China's soft power peaked, as relations with Japan warmed while the glow of close cooperation with Roh Moo-hyun did not seem to be fading even as the conservative Lee Myung-bak took office bent on solidifying US and Japan ties.¹⁴ As the champion of East Asian regionalism, China had put the United States on the defensive. It appeared that US leaders were preoccupied elsewhere, that China had the initiative in Southeast Asia, and even that a new triangular summit with Japan and South Korea would advance an exclusive grouping. Chinese optimism rested on several assumptions. One, the United States was overcommitted elsewhere, to the point it was seeking accommodations on Taiwan, North Korea, and all contentious issues in East Asia. Two, China's position kept growing stronger, giving it economic clout with all of its neighbors. The momentum favored regionalism led by China excluding the United States. Yet, this reasoning did not take into account the backlash against China's aspirations if it shifted from soft power priorities to pressuring other states and if US leadership challenged China. Just as China's leaders grew confident enough to shift their strategy, the potential for a backlash was growing.

The Obama administration took office just as Chinese leaders interpreted the world financial crisis as a golden opportunity for forging an East Asian Community. They pressed Southeast Asian states on territorial disputes in the South China Sea, insisted that ASEAN agree to regionalism based on ASEAN + 1 if Japan and South Korea refused

¹³ Gilbert Rozman, 'Post Cold War Evolution of Chinese Thinking on Regional Institutions in Northeast Asia', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 19 (66) (September 2010): 605–20; Gilbert Rozman, 'Japanese Strategic Thinking on Regionalism', in Gilbert Rozman (ed.), *Japanese Strategic Thought toward Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 243–68.

¹⁴ Gilbert Rozman, 'Narrowing the Values Gap in Sino-Japanese Relations: Lessons from 2006–2008', in Gerrit Gong and Victor Teo (eds.), *Reconceptualizing the Divide: Identity, Memory, and Nationalism in Sino-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 25–51.

to support ASEAN + 3, and demanded that Obama concede that the United States is an outsider with no right to intervene in rising regionalism. While Obama spent the year 2009 striving to find common ground, Chinese drew a sharper dividing line.

Writings in China in 2009–11 were obsessed with the threat of US interference in the natural course of closed East Asian regionalism. They linked this unjust involvement to three factors: (1) hegemonism, based on stereotypical cold war thinking about the US right to be in control of not only the international community but also regions such as East Asia; (2) containment, rooted in refusal to accept any rising power as a challenger for regional leadership; and (3) cultural imperialism, centered on the belief that Western civilization must continue to have ascendancy and undermine all other civilizations. The United States is accused of being behind Japan's repudiation of ASEAN + 3 as the natural unit for the healthy growth of regionalism and the decision in ASEAN to support expansion of the East Asian Summit.¹⁵ Both moves are deemed harmful to cooperation in East Asia and intended to deny China its anticipated leadership status.¹⁶ Chinese depict the US stand as an outsider's ambition to undermine long-term regional stability for the selfish desire to maintain its own leadership even as conditions no longer are conducive to that. If most observers focus on the clash between Chinese and US hard power as a natural dispute of a rising power and the established power, they miss the clash centered on the shape of regionalism and its clashing relationship to the international community.

Strategic Asia will be reconstituted through geographical Asia

Strategic Asia consists of US alliances and defense agreements, Sino-Russian arms cooperation in a context of an ambivalent strategic partnership, and three states striving, as fast as possible, to build nuclear weapons for purposes of destabilizing surrounding areas. China seeks to weaken US military ties in the region, to strengthen ties to Russia, and to capitalize on the disruptive behavior of North Korea, Pakistan, and Iran. By building up regionalism exclusive of the United States, it is looking for a new strategic environment. This was clearly seen in 2010 when North Korea twice attacked South Korea without China criticizing the North or agreeing to a United Nations Security Council response that would show common resolve in the international community. Instead, China reserved its wrath for US–South Korean military exercises meant to deliver a message to the North that further acts of this sort would be met by a military response. In the case of the South China Sea, China likewise was adverse to a multilateral framework for dealing with rising tensions, blaming the US response.

In contrast to arguments that the US military presence has provided the stability for prosperity in East Asia, Chinese writings from 2009 repeatedly accuse this presence

¹⁵ Wang Yuzhu, 'Yazhou quyiy hezuo de lujing jingzheng ji Zhongguo de zhanlue xuanze', *Dangdai Yatai* (4) (2010): 73–87.

¹⁶ Zhu Tingchang, 'Lun Zhongguo zai Yatai diqu de quyiy zhongxin diwei', *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi luntan* (1) (2010): 76–86.

and US hegemonism of being a negative force. They argue that military alliances are a relic of the cold war. A different approach to regional security is necessary, requiring the United States to pull back. While this is obviously a path for China to secure reunification with Taiwan on its terms, China's aims are more far-reaching. US bases in Central Asia, US troops in South Korea, and US defense relations in Southeast Asia are all criticized. Once an exclusive region gains momentum, it seems likely that China would press for a new security arrangement conducive to its rising power. In the meantime, North Korea helps to neutralize the US presence in South Korea and Japan, Pakistan complicates the US transition in Afghanistan as troops will be withdrawn, and Iran weakens US power in the Middle East. In the transition period as China's military overcomes its weaknesses in relation to US military power, these destabilizing states are convenient for exposing the limits of US power, even if they serve to consolidate US alliances.

The essence of the current prevailing Chinese approach to regionalism is sinocentrism. This harks back to the worldview in imperial China of China as the 'middle kingdom.' It had no rivals. It set the norms for interaction on a hierarchical basis. Priding itself on benevolence, China developed a tribute system with political, cultural, and economic implications. The new sinocentrism purportedly renews a 'harmonious' environment, in which other states defer to China's political and cultural sensitivity while expecting favorable economic terms. It excludes balancing great powers or hedging against China's rise as well as advocating universal values as a basis of criticism of China's behavior.

The problem with Chinese calculations of how to achieve a transition to a new security order is that challenges to the existing order provoke a backlash that strengthens US alliances and US resolve to remain fully engaged in the region. Instead of South Korea letting down its guard toward North Korea, it is redoubling its cooperation with the United States. Despite its economic troubles, Japan is resolved to expand its defense capabilities and work more closely with the United States. In Southeast Asia, the threat of China's moves to secure sovereignty over the South China Sea has led many states to tighten security ties with the United States. Indo-US ties have also advanced. Rather than making progress in replacing the US-led security order on the basis of exclusive Asian regionalism, China's actions cause other states to rely more on the United States. This was the case in 2010, and China's relative caution in 2011 was insufficient to reverse the trend at a time of deepening security concerns in East Asia.

In redoubling its diplomacy in Southeast Asia in 2011, China shows no signs of accepting real US involvement on critical matters such as security in the South China Sea or forging open regionalism. One sign of this was the insertion of the following words in the October 15, 2011 joint statement with Vietnam. 'Before achieving a definite settlement of the sea-related disputes, the two sides will together preserve peace and stability in the East Sea, maintain a cool-headed and restrained attitude, avoid taking any acts that can complicate or expand the disputes, prevent hostile forces from sabotaging

the relationship between the two Parties and two countries.¹⁷ Treating the United States as a ‘hostile force’ suggests that the Hu-Obama summit of January 2011 has not changed matters. Sino-US tensions pervaded the November 2011 East Asian Summit.

Conclusion

Sinocentrism offers a different blueprint for regionalism in Asia. It contrasts with what Chinese had claimed was their multilateral approach, reflecting new confidence in their country’s rise and ability to displace the United States in Asia. The essential starting point is to establish an exclusive region in which Chinese power is increasingly dominant. Economic and military prowess is necessary, but only cultural power will ensure a form of regionalism that is conducive to China’s aspirations. This means a geographical expanse amenable to Chinese differentiation of Eastern civilization from the West. It also requires a sharp distinction from globalization as a source of universal values. Convergence is denied as a process that serves the established Western values. If cultural commonalities are reinforced, next in line is a strategic community in opposition to US alliances. Chinese writings in recent years vary in the timetable and explicitness of their acknowledgment of this agenda, but they do not contradict it. In recognizing the negative effects of the agenda, which produces a backlash, they also are not forthright. The more China openly and actively pursues the type of regionalism it has lately advocated, the more likely that the result will be a spur to the very trans-Pacific regionalism it most assertively opposes.

China is not succeeding in establishing social networks conducive to regionalism. Official exchanges are conducted in a manner that does not facilitate the sort of academic and governmental trust that can lead to regionalism. It has become clear that the principal Chinese experts on regionalism are not positioned to articulate ideals able to build confidence. Strategic thinking in China has veered toward exacerbating differences rather than encouraging cooperation. North Korea served as a litmus test for demonstrating this shift in 2009–10. Finally, while China’s support of regionalism in 2000–08 was not clear about its vision, afterwards China’s rhetoric dismissed any prospect for a shared vision. Unless there is an abrupt change in what China envisions, one can anticipate a protracted standoff between a sinocentric ideal and a trans-Pacific ideal with ASEAN-led cautious steps navigating between them.

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¹⁷ ‘Vietnam–China Joint Statement’, 15 October 2011, *People’s Army Newspaper Online* http://www.silobreaker.com/vietnamchina-joint-statement-5_2264922215453556814 (accessed 22 November 2011).

North Korea and the United States (2007, rev. edn, 2011), and *Chinese Strategic Thought toward Asia* (2010), and co-edited books on *Korea at the Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia* (2006), as well as *Russian Strategic Thought toward Asia* (2006), *Japanese Strategic Thought toward Asia* (2007), and *South Korean Strategic Thought toward Asia* (2008). He has also edited *US Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia* (2011), *East Asian National Identities: Common Roots and Chinese Exceptionalism* (2012), and *National Identities and Bilateral Relations: Widening Gaps in East Asia and Chinese Demonization of the United States* (2012).