

Security Structure Transformation in the Asia-Pacific Region and the ASEAN Role

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Abstract: After the end of the cold war, the Asia-Pacific security structure has experienced great changes, especially on the occasion of the current "power-sharing" and "power-shifting" between China and the United States in the Asia-Pacific region, the Asia-Pacific security structure adjustment is especially significant. On the one hand, the Alliance structure with the United States as the pivot has experienced transformation from a hub-spokes system to a network, has formed the hierarchical layout of new alliance, quasi-alliance and potential alliance, On the other hand, emerging economies represented by China and Russia, while reinforcing the existing coordinate security framework, reshape the Asia-Pacific and even the whole Eurasia geopolitical posture through strategic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union. As the third force in the Asia-Pacific security architecture, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the construction of a series of multilateral security mechanisms provides dialogue platform for the two security architectures led by major countries, and has also become one of the feasible paths to realize the future holistic security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. Meanwhile, the major countries strategic competitions have intensified, which has gradually eroded the ASEAN 's cohesion, neutrality and even the central position in a holistic security architecture. The future's reconstruction of the Asia-Pacific security architecture needs to find new strategic consensus and reconfirm the ASEAN central position .

Security structure is an important part of a regional security order, also is an important point to start research study on security and regional order. As Peter J. Katzenstein puts it that the end of the cold war has promoted the study at regional level and the importance is more and more highlighted compared to global level.¹ Research study papers on a regional security structure and a regional security order come out one after another since the cold war. Especially in the Asia-Pacific where residual of the cold war still exists, the security situation is complicated and constantly changing, domestic and overseas academic circles research study on security order and the security structure in the East Asian and the Asian-Pacific regions has entered a period of rapid growth.² Since 2008, a series of new security issues have emerged continuously, China's rapid rise is bringing about the change of regional power structure, coupled with the old and new security concept, and is woven with security mechanisms, which jointly drive the transformation of the Asia-Pacific security

structure and vigorous research activities of the Asia-Pacific security.

Currently the Asia-Pacific region is in transition, whose security is facing unprecedented challenges. The most long-standing traditional security issues, such as sovereignty, increasingly prominent non-traditional security problems such as terrorism and transnational crimes, the gradual loss of strategic mutual trust between major countries, continuous spreading of nationalism in some countries, etc., the uncertainties faced by development in the Asia-Pacific region continue to increase. Many American scholars worship "offensive realism", become pessimistic about the prospects for the Asia-Pacific region, even come up with an idea that China and the United States is facing more and more fierce military competition in the region, it is hard for them to get out of the "security dilemma", so there is the possibility of military conflict.³ In the views of many, one of the important reasons for the "disorder" or even "order-shortage" of the Asia-Pacific

regional security order is that the regional security architecture needs to be improved.

As major countries with vital roles in the Asia-Pacific region, both the United States and China put forward the necessity and the urgency to build a new regional security architecture. From the U.S. perspective, to build a new regional security architecture is an important part of "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy of the Obama Administration. On January 12, 2010, then U.S. Secretary of State Hillary D. R. Clinton in a speech in Hawaii put forward a principle and priority of constructing security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region,⁴ which opened the prelude for the United States to "return to the Asia-Pacific". In April 2014, former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, talking about how to realize the "Asia-Pacific rebalancing", bluntly pointed out that relying on its special status, the United States can continue to help the Asian countries to establish a dynamic regional security architecture.⁵ While Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, on October 10, 2013 at the 8th East Asia Summit held in Brunei, said that economic cooperation frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region are numerous, it is imperative to establish a regional security architecture to meet the regional reality and satisfy needs of various parties concerned. This is the head of the Chinese Government who proposes to establish a security architecture for the Asia-Pacific region for the first time, not only showing China's issue-setting ability is strengthened, also reflecting China's will to shoulder regional security responsibility more actively. Despite the regional security architecture being mentioned, obviously the United States and China focus on different directions, and pursue different goals.

For a long time, ASEAN plays an advocate, communicator, and even guide role in the Asia-Pacific regional security architecture. In a series of existing security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region, from the "10 + 1" and "10 + 3" to the East Asia Summit, from the ASEAN Region Forum (ARF) to an enlarged ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM+), though ASEAN is only in the position of "driver seat", apparently its role cannot be

neglected. The competition for the regional security architecture, and differences on many security issues between China and the United States lead to the academic worries about ASEAN's role being weakened.⁶ So against this major backdrop of the current competition among major countries, deteriorated regional security situation, and ASEAN community development entering a new stage, what role will ASEAN play in the Asia-Pacific regional security architecture? What are the factors restricting its further influence? How to look at the future ASEAN's position and role in the Asia-Pacific regional security architecture? These will be discussed by this paper.

I. The current characteristics of security structure adjustments of the Asia-Pacific region

If structure is regarded as the comparative relative strength, architecture is the institutional form of structure. Security structure is a kind of overall unity of opposites restricting and influencing each other formed by countries on the security relationship between them. To maintain stability is important characteristics of security architecture. Security structure according to its nature can be simply divided into three categories. The first category is antagonism and confrontation, countries due to foreign threats and in line with their security needs, formulate confrontational alliance between them, which are met with competitive and antagonistic contradictions often formed between two alliances, such as the rivalry and conflict between the two major military blocs during the two world wars and the cold war. The second category is convergence, countries in a region share common security interests with each other, pursue collective security cooperation, and establish a security cooperation mechanism in order to realize the regional security situation relaxation, and achieve the purpose of maintaining regional stability and peace, such as the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The third category is complex, the security interests of countries in a region is not in coordination, but is not completely confrontational either, cooperation and competition coexist, thus

different types of security relationships are formed, and mutually check each other and influence each other, shape a relatively stable structure, and ensure the region to maintain peace.⁷ The security structure in the Asia-Pacific region belongs to the third category. Nowadays, in other parts of the world there exist different levels and forms of collective security mechanisms, formulating a relatively unified security structure. But in the Asia-Pacific region, security architecture is not always so inspiring.⁸ Regional security structure, in realist view, is the direct embodiment of "power allocation". Security relationships in the Asia-Pacific region is relatively complicated, the national security policies always change profoundly, the security structure and major power relations rise and fall together.

Since the cold war, to build the system of military alliance with the United States as the core has always been an important composition of the Asia-Pacific security structure. We can call it the multi-level "alliance" security structure. The Mutual Security Act passed by the U.S. Congress as early as on October 10, 1951 as well as its effective implementation of the Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act made it clear for the United States through strengthening the common security of the free world, individual national defense and collective defense to help these countries real and effective participation in the UN collective security system.⁹ Since then, the United States establishes a series of bilateral and multilateral military alliances in Europe, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and even in South Asia and the Middle East regions. In the Asia-Pacific region, the alliance system is referred to as a "hub-spokes system", with the United States in the center of the wheel, and the Allies at the end of the spokes. This system is characterized by the bilateral cooperation between the United States and the Allies that is the lack of horizontal linkages between them. For the explanation of this system, American scholars often use the paradigm of "threat - response", i.e. the alliance system is rational response based on the common threats. Robert Blackwill, senior fellow at the Council on

Foreign Relations said that the United States is to maintain bilateral alliance system in order to "hedge" the impact of the rise of China and revival of Russia on the American hegemony in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁰ Furthermore, China's growing military strength leads to the expansion of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and the strengthened strategic relationship between the United States and Southeast Asian Allies. While DPR Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile threats are obviously the main reason for the United States to provide a nuclear deterrent to Japan and South Korea.¹¹ Of course, the formation of the U.S. alliance with other countries is also similar to that of Japan and South Korea.

After the end of the cold war, this architecture gradually finds it difficult to adapt to the needs of American security interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The 2001 Strategy Report released by the American RAND corporation clear states that the United States should deepen and expand the bilateral security alliance in order to establish a comprehensive partnership. This multilateral arrangements could, eventually, include the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and perhaps Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand as well.¹²

In order to achieve this goal, the United States proceed from two aspects. One is through absorbing the Allies to participate in TMD development and deployment to connect these Allies into a network from a technical perspective. Two is to straightforwardly gather together its Allies for multilateral negotiations on regional security issues and strive to institutionalize it, then forming de facto multilateral alliances arrangements. Having experienced strategic shift under George w. Bush Administration and "neglect" of the Asia-Pacific region, the Obama Administration views the strengthening of alliance as the essential "pillar" from "returning to the Asia-Pacific" to the "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy. It can be noted in recent years that the U.S. Asia-Pacific bilateral alliance system more and more obviously presents a networking development trend, namely security cooperation mechanism between Allies is institutionalized, horizontal connection is

increased, mini-multilateral cooperation is carried out between the United States and the Allies, and between Allies, making the "hub-spokes system" of the single-line contacts crisscross freely, interweave into a network.¹³ This network has not only strengthened the original U.S.-Japan, U.S.-South Korea, U.S.-Australia bilateral alliance, but also built the U.S.-Japan-South Korea, U.S.-Japan-Australia, U.S.-Japan-India, U.S.-Japan-ASEAN trilateral cooperation frameworks among the Allies and the "semi-Allies". Some scholars called it the Obama Administration's "edgeless" diplomacy.¹⁴

Professor Victor Cha at Georgetown University argues that the U.S. bilateral and multilateral alliance system is an integral part of the formation of regional security architecture in Asia.¹⁵ After Obama's two terms of "meticulously" working, the U.S. original structure of alliance has achieved transformation and upgrading. First of all, the original Allies have seen layers. Japan's status has been rapidly rising, and become the sub-hub of the U.S. geo-political security pattern in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁶ Australia, the Philippines have their status in American Asia-Pacific military rebalancing risen somewhat.¹⁷ After Park Geun-hye in office, South Korea is trying to keep a smart balance between China and the United States. Secondly, upgrading the strategic position of the "semi-Allies" and partner countries. The most obvious example is the United States upgrades its relationship with India and Indonesia. In October 2015, Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited the United States, the two sides upgraded the "comprehensive partnership" to the "strategic partnership". The Indo-U.S. strategic partnership has also been gradually raised to a new level. Finally, the U.S. security relations with countries of the different ideology or being sanctioned in the Asia-Pacific region has quickly improved. Among them, the most prominent is Vietnam. In recent years, with the rapid warming of U.S.-Vietnamese relations after the jump out of antagonism, there are more and more U.S. and Vietnamese scholars discussing the possibility

of the U.S.-Vietnamese alliance.¹⁸ Although in the near future this possibility is small, yet from the need to "hedge" China, Vietnam is bearing more and more weight in the U.S.-woven Asia-Pacific alliance network and the future security architecture. Some scholars describe Obama's Asia-Pacific strategy as the "flying-geese security mode", in this security model, the leader is the United States; the second tier is the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances; the third tier is the U.S. allied relations with Australia, Thailand and the Philippines; the fourth tier is the U.S. relations with Vietnam, Indonesia and India.¹⁹ The author is not in complete confirmation of the specific countries' strategic positioning in this security model, but we can clearly see that the United States has nearly finished its reshaping of the alliance, semi-alliance and strategic partnership system, which will completely change the original form of the Asia-Pacific security architecture.

Meanwhile, the traditional land major countries represented by China and Russia, after the end of the cold war through a series of adjustments and coordination on security relations, have gradually formed a "partners" security architecture different from the U.S. alliance system, but also constantly deepened institutional building and made progress continuously. This paints another picture of the Asia-Pacific regional security architecture.

In terms of concept, this coordinate security architecture is very different with the U.S. alliance security. Some scholars refer the process to realize regional order and peace in accordance with the most countries intention as "Chinese-style cooperative security". This includes the concept of community, the practice by actors vigorously working to maintain or promote this order goal and the basic institutional framework of society in order to coordinate the interactions of various actors.²⁰ Despite a certain idealist color, it conforms to the needs of the complicated security relationships in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the "New security concept" is put forward in 1997, China's leaders have on many occasions expressed the proposition on the Asian security

architecture concept. On May 21, 2014, at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (hereinafter referred to as the CICA) 4th Summit held in Shanghai, President Xi Jinping puts forward in his keynote speech that we should actively advocate the Asian security concept of the common security, comprehensive security, cooperative security and sustainable security, innovate security concept, build a new architecture for regional security cooperation, and work hard to blaze a trail for building and sharing Asian win-win security. To this end, some western scholars argue that in the Asia-Pacific region the clash of security concepts has emerged, and China is redefining security.²¹ Security concept is the foundation and guidance of a security policy, The proposal of Asia's new security concept provides theoretical support and the goal orientation for the transformation of the Asia-Pacific regional security cooperation framework.

In terms of concrete practice, the security relationship between China and Russia is continuously strengthened and improved, which is prominent. After the end of the cold war, China and Russia share common pursuit and consistent goal to promote world multipolarization and realize the democratization of international relations, the bilateral relations have made great progress in all aspects from politics to economy, to security, etc.. From Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin, the common security interests of the two sides are increasingly growing and constantly expanding, the two countries in political and security relations gradually rise to the height of mutual trust and friendly cooperation. Along with the U.S. implementation and continuous progress of the "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy, both China and Russia are facing pressure and even security threats of a U.S.-led alliance system. And as representatives of developing countries and emerging economies, the two countries should also shoulder a responsibility together with other countries to build a more just and rationally regional security architecture that represents the interests of the developing countries. In September 2010, the two countries

in the Joint Statement on Deepening the China-Russia Comprehensively Strategic Partnership of Coordination proposed building the Asia-Pacific regional security and cooperation architecture, and advocated to follow the internationally recognized basic principles. In March 2013, during President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia, the published Joint Statement between China and Russia on the Win-win Cooperation, Deepening Comprehensively Strategic Partnership of Coordination points out that on the basis of following the basic principles of international law, to establish in the Asia-Pacific region security and cooperation architecture featuring opening-up, transparency, equality and inclusiveness is the top priority currently in the region.... the two sides agreed to continue to work in order to adopt the East Asia Summit Declaration of Principles on Enhancing the Asia-Pacific Regional Security Cooperation.²² Since then, in October 2013, at the 8th East Asia Summit, China and Russia officially proposed building the Asia-Pacific regional security and cooperation architecture. Of course, the design of the new security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region by China and Russia is still in its infancy, but has important strategic significance for the construction of a new order in the Asia-Pacific region.²³

For a long time, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization established by China and Russia as well as Central Asian, South Asian countries and others is also a direct reflection of a "coordinate" security architecture. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is not a military alliance, nor a league nor a security organization either. Even China and Russia become closer and closer, but are not Alliance, nor have an intention to build one²⁴ This multilateral security cooperation is not targeted at any other country, nor intervenes directly into the internal affairs of other countries with armed forces, but maintains regional security through coordination and cooperation between countries. Pan Guang summarizes the important strategic significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the Asia-Pacific security architecture: (1) Can enhance mutual

trust; (2) Having provided experiences for solving the complicated historical problems; (3) Having promoted counter-terrorism and energy security cooperation.²⁵ In fact, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should not be viewed simply as a regional security mechanism, it ensures member states within the framework realization of common interests, pursuit of cooperation in political, military, economic and other fields. Its purpose, through the coordination and cooperation, stability and development between member states, is to maintain the peace in the Central Asian region, and eventually promote the economic development and the social prosperity. Only properly handle the relationship between security and development, can sustainable security be achieved. These are the important reasons why the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can have steady development and continuous expansion through mechanism building.

In recent years, China's Belt and Road strategy and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union strategy have become a try-out and start of reconfiguring and adjusting "coordinate" security architecture under the new geopolitical strategic posture. Although the intersection of the two strategies is mainly concentrated in the areas of the economy, focusing on the docking and cooperation between the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "Eurasian Economic Union", however, under the background of Russian implementation of its "towards the east" strategy, response to the U.S. returning to the Asia-Pacific strategy and cooperative maintenance of maritime rights and interests, China and Russia within the framework of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road also have great potential and prospects for cooperation, the initiative will become the new platform for China and Russia to develop comprehensive strategic and co-ordinate partnership. These new strategic initiatives mark the geo-economic and geopolitical reshaping of the Asia-Pacific region and even the whole Eurasia continents by the emerging economies such as China and Russia.²⁶ On the basis of further economic integration, China-proposed relevant security concept and institutions design will also strike

root in the hearts of people, and promote the Asia-Pacific security architecture to adjust continuously.

Regional security structure stability has very big correlation with the strength balance of the core countries, and their security strategies and policies. The current changes in the Asia-Pacific regional security structure find an important reason, i.e. the rapid rise of China impacts the existing power structure. The classical international relations theory believes that institution provision is actually supported by power, the changing power structure inevitably leads to the transformation of regional security structure. Whether it is a "power shifting" or "power sharing" between China and the United States indicates the changing Asia-Pacific power structure. Accompanied by the two countries growing strategic competition in the Asia-Pacific region, some people begin to worry about the "new cold war".²⁷ The security relationship between the "Alliance model" security architecture and the "partnership model" security architecture is also interpreted as the fate between "defending power" and "rising power", and the structural contradiction between sea power and land power, etc. In the Asia-Pacific region, however, there are small actors building and leading the international institutions.²⁸ ASEAN, through construction of a series of multilateral security mechanisms, has become the "third force" in the Asia-Pacific regional security structure, providing a dialogue platform for the security architecture led by the two different type of major countries, and has also become one of the feasible paths to realize the future integral security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region.

II. ASEAN's Role in the Asia-Pacific Regional Security Structure

For a long time, the ASEAN countries have played a unique role in the Asia-Pacific multilateral security cooperation, the "weak" multilateral security cooperation system built around the ASEAN mechanism has become a bridge to connect the "alliance"-type architecture and "partner"-type architecture. If the Asia-Pacific security structure is regarded

as a "dumbbell", then one end is the U.S.-led bilateral security alliance, the other end is the security coordination in the East Asian region, the regional cooperation security arrangements centered on ARF as the main body; because the major countries of these two ends are involved in the process of regional cooperation security, thus forming the connection in the middle between the two ends.²⁹ With the changes of the Asia-Pacific security structure, the ASEAN role in the Asia-Pacific security cooperation will also change.

Founded in 1967, ASEAN was the only sub-regional international organization in the Asia-Pacific region during the period of cold war, internally among member states promoted cooperation and peaceful solutions to some territorial and maritime disputes, avoided from touching on sensitive and delicate international political and security issues, and ensured that member countries in dealing with the common threats should carry out effective cooperation, and that ASEAN maintains consistency, independence and flexibility in its diplomacy. This idea continues to this day. In November 1971, ASEAN five member countries passed the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration, decided to make the ASEAN region a "peace, freedom and neutral zone". In February 1976, ASEAN first summit signed the Treaty on Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the ASEAN Declaration of Consensus of consultations, the former becomes ASEAN code of conduct on dealing with the relations between them, the latter emphasizes the unity spirit and peaceful path in political affairs.

After the end of the cold war, under rapid transformation of the strategic posture, Asian countries begin to consider the importance of establishing multilateral security mechanisms. The Asia-Pacific security cooperation begins to present a "unique characteristic of combining power politics and institution building."³⁰ ASEAN, in order to maintain the proper balance of power in the region and ensure the situation of regional peace and stability, begins to actively explore ways of establishing regional multilateral security dialogue mechanisms, and tries to play a leading role.

The ASEAN main contribution to regional security architecture embodies in the building of ARF. On July 25, 1994, the ARF first meeting was held in Bangkok. ARF is currently the most important official channel of multilateral security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, and has held the 21 sessions of foreign ministers' meeting since its establishment. Regional major countries, including China and the United States, are all involved, with the first track and the second track cooperation levels, and covering many areas including the traditional security and non-traditional security and other aspects. Arguably, it is currently the most influential trans-regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. Although it is still difficult to completely get rid of the identity of the "talk shop", yet for the current unoptimistic security situation in the Asia-Pacific region, its importance obviously rises.³¹

As early as 2008 during the Shangri-la dialogue, the hosting country Singapore put forward an idea of the ASEAN-led security architecture. Singapore prime minister and defense minister in their speeches included the ARF, the Shangri-la dialogue and the East Asia Summit in the pan-Asian cooperation mechanism, classified the ASEAN, the SCO, and the SAARC as sub-regional cooperation organizations, classified the Six-Party Talks, maritime search and rescue, patrol of the Malacca strait as a functional mechanism of dialogue and cooperation. Based on the ASEAN defense ministers' meeting, Singapore also laid stress on carrying out defense dialogue with other countries, forming "ASEAN defense +" new dialogue mechanism in order to gradually establish a "Southeast Asia security architecture". Then, the idea is put into practice gradually.³² Since being launched in 2010, the influence of the enlarged ASEAN defense ministers meeting (ADMM +) keeps expanding. Today, still facing some obstacles though, the ADMM + in the Asia-Pacific region has become the most important defense dialogue mechanism.³³ Besides, the regional cooperation mechanism centering around the ASEAN such as the ASEAN + 1, ASEAN + 3, the East Asia

Summit also has the important strategic positioning on security dialogue, reflecting and affecting the current integrity of Asia-Pacific security architecture.

Looking at the raised ASEAN status, we should also realize the transformation of the Asia-Pacific security architecture brings unprecedented challenges to ASEAN.

First of all, the limitations of ASEAN itself will be further highlighted. Comparing European Union with ASEAN, many scholars are unoptimistic about ASEAN. David Martin Jones and Michael L R Smith described ASEAN as a "fake" regional mechanism, and an institutional "shell", will not have any substantial move, diplomatic relevance of decision-making with various countries' reality is becoming more and more weakened.³⁴ At the end of 2015, ASEAN community was officially formed, but it is hard to be called EU's Asian version. Now, the ASEAN community is mainly economic community, further integration in politics and security is not easy. Transformation faced by ASEAN is structural, and influenced by various countries' attitude. Few ASEAN countries themselves see it as a mechanism they can rely on for their own key interests.

Secondly, ASEAN's role in regional architecture is under the influence of major countries security relations. ASEAN plays a "mechanism" leadership role. Though it is not like the U.S.-led alliance network, and the China and Russia-led partnership network that have major countries' power extension, yet the ASEAN successfully brings the regional relevant countries together, carries out continuous dialogue and negotiations in view of the very complex and difficult problems to be solved, and tries not to choose side, and promotes all parties concerned to achieve results satisfied to all. It can be seen as one kind of "leadership". While more economists believe that ASEAN is the center of these mechanisms, but not a leader, because the further internal integration of ASEAN is the premise of East Asian regional cooperation. In simple terms, it is whether these multilateral security mechanisms are valid or not is the important factor that decides ASEAN status in

the regional security architecture. At present, the strategic competition between China and the United States causes great distress to ASEAN, making the original multilateral security mechanism a stage for major countries competition. Kishore Mahbubani clearly points out that naturally, ASEAN countries are being guided into a different direction, and must redouble efforts to maintain itself under the new geopolitics.³⁵

A Canadian famous scholar Amitav Acharya is also worried about a weakening trend of the current ASEAN in regional security architecture. He in an article warns ASEAN that major countries in Asia are lack of mutual trust, ... it is difficult to see the situation of major countries coordination,... countries including China and the United States have embraced the center position of ASEAN. ... Therefore, ASEAN should act as a honest, neutral broker as major countries are lack of mutual trust between them.³⁶

Finally, the ASEAN status in regional security architecture is restricted more and more by its own changing strategic orientation and the strategic adjustments of major countries. Academia use several different choices such as "free-rider", "balance between major countries" and "hedging" and so on to portray the strategic orientation of Southeast Asian nations. Now in the face of changes of the regional security pattern brought about by the rapidly rising China and the U.S. "Asia-Pacific rebalancing" strategy, East Asian countries respond by taking "soft balance" or "institutional balance" strategy.³⁷ Southeast Asian countries are also more likely to introduce the "offshore balancer" into the regional security architecture, which fits well with the Obama Administration's Asia-Pacific strategy.

On the one hand, Ms. Clinton, in her Hawaii speech in 2010, took ASEAN as a "fulcrum" for the Asia-Pacific regional architecture, which greatly upgrades the status of ASEAN in regional architecture. Former national security adviser Thomas E. Donilon in a speech mentioned that the United States is seeking Asia-Pacific internal rebalancing, which gives more attention to Southeast Asia and ASEAN, ... and ASEAN is at the core in

President Obama's new Asia policy.³⁸ Along with the U.S. deepening intervention in the Asia-Pacific region and development of the relationship between the United States and ASEAN, ASEAN on this account also begins to re-examine its relations with China. The deepening and expanding "hedging strategy" is the feature of ASEAN countries foreign strategy during this period.

On the other hand, the strengthening of the U.S. alliance network has played a role in "desolving" "consistency" of the ASEAN security policy, and caused great distress to ASEAN featuring "consensus of consultation", most of the U.S. non-Allies hate to be "kidnapped" by the U.S. alliance strategic interests. While China in recent years emphasizes Asian security architecture construction on the basis of the CICA, and uses the Belt and Road strategy to reshape the Eurasian security order and builds "strategic fulcrum" countries in the peripheral security, which makes ASEAN worry about its status gradually weakened in the Asia-Pacific security architecture.

On the whole, the ASEAN role in the current security structure transformation of the Asia-Pacific region is also in transition. This is both a passive response to the changing power structure, and the natural result of ASEAN to adapt to its own idea and the practice in the new strategic environment. In the past, the important reason ASEAN could shape and dominate the regional multilateral security cooperation is because it was difficult for any country to lead security cooperation process, meanwhile, there existed the basic strategic consensus and cooperation intention. Currently, under the circumstances of a possibility of sliding into a "new cold war",³⁹ the ASEAN status in regional security architecture is also facing new significant challenges.

III. The development direction of the Asia-Pacific security structure and the ASEAN strategic choice

In summary, the current academic circles have come up with three kinds of views for the development prospects of Asia-Pacific regional

security structure: (1) The exclusive bilateral alliance system will eventually collapse, thus forming a common security architecture based on partnerships.⁴⁰ (2) The Asia-Pacific alliance system will be further integrated with multilateral security architecture.⁴¹ (3) The future Asia-Pacific region will implement "peaceful coexistence" of a variety of security architectures, forming a "Mosaic" on the basis of the existing mechanisms, and continuously maintaining a variety of original system elements.⁴²

There is a little possibility for the first view to be realized in the future. Along with continuous deepening of the U.S. Asia-Pacific strategy, "alliance fanatics" increasingly dominate the Asia-Pacific security discourse system. Especially many western scholars view China's growing military strength together with the "aggressive" diplomatic actions will actively "push" more and more countries into the U.S. alliance system, and also further cement the network. However, some western scholars began reflection on whether the region's alliance network is still suitable and useful as the Asia-Pacific countries increasingly have closer economic ties with China.⁴³ Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, for example, Australia, sees a big difference between the purpose of its maintaining the alliance and the purpose of establishing the alliance at the beginning. As far as the second-tiered ally countries like Australia is concerned, the main reason to support the American hegemony is the "worry that the future hegemonic states may not be as good as the United States".⁴⁴

For Advocates for the "convergence" theory, how to properly deal with the relationship between the two major countries -- China and the United States -- will be the core matter calling for solution. Well-known American strategist G. John Ikenberry argues that the future Asia-Pacific region should find a grand architecture that is acceptable to both China and the United States, can accommodate the U.S. alliance system and multilateral security mechanism, is not controlled by either China nor the United States; Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN will determine the U.S.

interventions, the Chinese actions, and the two countries constructive attitude.⁴⁵ The U.S.-led Asia-Pacific alliance system and the ASEAN-guided multilateral security mechanism share certain complementary effects from the perspective of members and functions. And a part of China-advocated "partner network" is also supported by the existing multilateral security mechanisms. There naturally exists a possibility of integration of these several architectures in the future. According to professor Su Hao conception, to seek security structure appropriate to the Asia-Pacific region, the confrontational military alliance arrangements should be cancelled, the mid-part security cooperation of the "dumbbell" structure be extended, mutual security among major countries be assured with "mutual security" concept, so that China and the United States gradually promote regional security cooperation with the "comprehensive security" concept, and eventually "common security" is achieved in the entire region, and a security community of mutual coordination and cooperation be built.⁴⁶ Now, of course, this is an idealistic design, but the core of whether it can be realized depends on a new stable strategic consensus China and the United States can establish.

In the short-term view, the third idea is more likely to remain for a longtime to come. The existing security structure will also maintain a fairly long period of time, and the institutional arrangements based on this structure will continue. Multi-level and cross-roads type like "spaghetti" regional security architectures will be developed in parallel. And with increasing importance of some concrete security issues such as marine security, new functional multilateral security mechanisms will also emerge constantly. In this complex security system, ASEAN's center position will continue to be maintained and strengthened.

The ASEAN-led multilateral security architecture is a good try by small and medium-sized countries to play a role in the field of security in the Asia-Pacific region, the ASEAN-advocated consensus of consultations,

step by step, and catering to comfort, have provided a theoretical support for the further institutionalized construction of Asia-Pacific regional security architecture.⁴⁷ But under the current conditions of strategic competition among major countries, the challenges to ASEAN continue to increase. Some scholars take a pessimistic view on the ASEAN future role, and argue that the ASEAN-led model is a security dialogue platform that currently the Asia-Pacific countries can still actively use, but its future development potential is limited, and is difficult to form the foundation for future regional security architecture.⁴⁸ And in view of major countries, support for the multilateral security mechanism with ASEAN as the center requires two premise conditions: The first is major countries interests need to be protected; and the second is ASEAN needs unity. An ASEAN actually at variance is impossible to occupy a place in the Asia-Pacific security architecture, neither conforms to the interests of regional major countries.

When analyzing ASEAN countries' strategic behaviors, we often use the wording "duality", namely, their national security relying on the United States while their economy relying on China. In the long run, that will weaken the ASEAN strategic reputation and leadership needed to lead the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. Recently, more and more ASEAN members worry about the U.S.'s strengthening the alliance network, and the negative impact of strengthening military deployment on regional stability and ASEAN cohesion in the Asia-Pacific. As early as in 2011, political adviser for Indonesia's vice President, Dewi Fortuna Anwar warned that the ASEAN countries hate to return to the cold war and particularly hate to see its own backyard become a battleground for major countries.⁴⁹ Now, the situation clearly develops in the pessimistic direction, and the negative strategic assets brought about by the "duality" becomes more obvious.

In this case, the "reconfirmation" of ASEAN central position in the regional security architecture by China and the United States is very important. China's ambassador to ASEAN Xu Bu contributed an article to the

Straits Times in 2015, especially expounding the importance of maintaining ASEAN central position for East Asian and the Asia-Pacific regions.⁵⁰ U.S. ambassador to ASEAN Nina Hachi-gian pointed out that U.S.- ASEAN Summit in February 2016 in California reflects the "new normal" of Obama's Asia-Pacific strategy.⁵¹ As the ASEAN community was formally established at the end of 2015, ASEAN countries naturally wish to play a more important role in the process of regional integration. And the recognition of ASEAN centrality by China and the United States determines what role ASEAN can play. At present, continuously maintaining a system builder and rule maker is not the ASEAN primary way to play a role, whether ASEAN can become a faithful broker and "coordinator" between major countries is another challenge to the ASEAN role.

III. Enlightenments to China

With the changing security situation and the security relations in recent years, to establish a set of integral security architecture adaptable to the Asia-Pacific regional interests is of vital importance to China. The Chinese Government has made many policy announcements in this regard, but the specific operational system design still has a long way to go. From the theoretical perspective, the design of the security architecture can be done in three ways: One is to keep the existing security architecture; two is strengthening and upgrading on the basis of the existing architecture, for example, some scholars propose to upgrade ARF "ministerial" meeting to "summit"; three is to completely restart, build a new regional security architecture and security order. For China, to constructively improve and upgrade the existing security architecture will be the rational choice in the future.

To make this choice, first of all, China and the United States need to reconfirm each other's strategic goals, especially to enhance mutual trust in the field of military. Although

the current China-U.S. relations face a series of difficulties, yet interaction between the two sides in the field of military has never stopped. For two consecutive years China's participation in the U.S.- dominated "Pacific rim" military exercises is a very good start. Secondly, it is necessary to note that the U.S. alliance network is neither monolithic, nor completely aimed at China. Especially need to have a clear understanding to the "hedging" strategy of Vietnam, Singapore and other countries.⁵² In the Asia-Pacific region, we should continue to build the "partnered but non-aligned" security cooperation model, practice the "anti-hedging strategy", and seek institutional exchanges and cooperation with the U.S. alliance network. Meanwhile, always support the ASEAN center position in the regional security cooperation and actively participate in the ASEAN-led various security dialogue mechanism, in order to promote China-advocated security concept and policy, show China's major country image to shoulder responsibility, and maintain contact and interaction with the United States in these institutions; continue to promote the non-traditional security institutions building, prioritize the Asia-Pacific security cooperation, construct a multi-level and all-dimensional cooperation system of trans-regional, regional and sub-regional combination. And in some traditional security fields, avoid impatience for success and pursuit of premature mechanism, step by step, accumulate consensus. Especially the Belt and Road Initiative is now in the implementation stage, the future China's design of the Asia-Pacific security architecture should also be closely integrated with the Initiative, and realize the security architecture built mutually, security issues discussed mutually and security outcome shared mutually by countries in the Asia-Pacific region and along the routes at large.

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Footnotes:

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