

The New Geometry of Asian Architecture

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KEY FINDINGS

- Conventional wisdom is that there is no regional architecture in Asia and that the United States remains isolated from recent attempts to create one.
- This study finds that there is an architecture that is emerging – it is not one in which the U.S. is excluded, nor one in which China is dominant
- What works in terms of regional architectural efforts:
 - Adhoc and informal multilateral efforts are more effective than a single formal umbrella institution.
 - Groups that organize around the addressing of a specific problem/function are much more effective than so-called “talk shops” designed for confidence-building
 - Multilateralism in Asia does not work at odds with bilateralism. Multilateral groupings are more successful when they draw their strength and capabilities from pre-existing deep bilateral relationships in the region, many of which include the American alliance system
- These arguments are illustrated with regard to the following case studies: Tsunami Core Group, Six Party Talks, Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD), Quadrilateral (U.S., India, Japan, Australia), Chang Mai Initiative, ASEAN Plus-three, Proliferation Security Initiative, Container Security Initiative
- The paper concludes that the “new architecture of Asia” is not the East Asia Summit or East Asian Community, but is constituted of a complex geometry resting on three components:
 - APEC
 - Deep U.S.-ASEAN engagement
 - “Network” or “Patchworks” of interlinked bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral groupings including TCOG, TSD, Quad, ASEAN plus-three, SCO, Six Party talks, etc.
- This is necessarily a more complex geometry for Asia than a NATO or EU-type model of architecture for Europe.