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HISTORICAL LEGACIES IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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This introductory chapter, and the book in general, deal with the theoretical concept of overhangs or legacies in international relations. An overhang or legacy is a negative perception that derives from historical interactions and subsequently becomes embedded in the psyche of a state, both at the level of the elites and the citizen body. Specifically, the book examines legacies affecting important bilateral relationships in East Asia with a view to understanding the historical origins and how and why they have been utilized and refined for public and policy purposes. The ultimate aim of this chapter and the configurative case studies is to document overhangs or legacies in five sets of East and Southeast Asian bilateral relations and then deal with them on a comparative basis to see if any significant observations can be made. Naturally, such observations are likely to be useful for the political elites and those tasked with discharging policy if they are interested in bringing these bilateral relations to an even keel.

The chapter is divided into three broad sections. The first section briefly surveys international relations and the theoretical contours that have obtained since the conclusion of World War II. Subsequently, the chapter places the discussion within the much more narrow context of Asian international relations and bilateralism. Then the third section identifies and rationalizes the five sets of bilateral relations that have been chosen for this book. Additionally, it lists the common questions that were distributed to all the chapter writers in order to facilitate a comparative treatment in order to document the issues that are similar and dissimilar across the cases. Such an understanding is likely to nuance the findings of the book and assist in setting the agenda for future work on the same or related issues.

INTRODUCTION

The study of international relations has traditionally focused on three levels of analysis.¹ At the highest or global level, the terminology that is normally used is that of a system. This system is meant to be a reference to structural conditions that inform relations between states, providing in turn opportunities as well as constraints for action. Naturally, superpowers and great powers have overwhelming influence in determining the structural characteristics and attendant dynamics at this highest level.² The second level or sub-system is the mid-tier level of analysis. This second level obtains at the regional level and displays major characteristic features of the system while taking into account dynamics that are intrinsic or unique to it.³ Despite a confluence of forces obtaining at this level, it is generally understood that the system provides the basic structural features which are then overlain with a veneer of regional dynamics. At the lowest or unit level of analysis, international relations theorists essentially referred to the study of relations between states.

Within this three-tiered conceptual model, international relations scholars applied different constructs that were in turn underpinned by differing philosophical traditions. The most popular and influential of these was realism that surfaced after World War II and held sway for most of the Cold War and into the 1970s.⁴ Classical realism assumed a state of anarchy in international relations. And within this broader reference, states acted out of mutual fear and suspicion regarding the intention of other states. The early versions of this theory focused on the state as the primary

unit of analysis and understood international relations as essentially a competitive quest for power between states. It also regarded the political realm as independent and superordinate to all others and the practice of politics as an amoral activity. Systemic structures were thought to bear a disproportionate influence on medium and smaller states in realist theory since they typically had little leverage in the international system. Major criticisms of this school were that it was reductionist in its treatment of states and power as constituting the most important determinant and motivation of countries respectively. The evolution of international relations after 1945 and the ideological and strategic rivalry between the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other appeared to validate realism, and as a result the theory became intertwined with developments in Europe as well. U.S. hegemony in the social sciences in general and political science in particular was also helpful to the realist interpretation and enterprise.

Later on, however, realism underwent a metamorphosis of sorts and new and more revisionist versions of the theory evolved. Neo-realists, for example, sought to moderate this simplistic view of international relations and conceded the importance of transnational agencies and non-state actors within the broader system. This metamorphosis that realism underwent from the 1970s both accommodated developments in the real world and reflected the fissuring of the dominant school of thought. Structural realism or neo-realism became popular by the 1970s and this sub-school downplayed the centrality of states and their thirst for the acquisition of power in international relations. Kenneth Waltz was one of the foremost theorists from this school.⁵ His original contribution was to detail the state of anarchy as one without effective government rather than a state of disarray, and to introduce the three levels of analysis in international relations. Additionally, Waltz argued that the social sciences could not claim predictive ability like the natural sciences since they cannot conduct controlled experiments. Consequently, the best that can be hoped for is a cogent explanation of international relations.⁶ In this regard, offshoots of realism had a general tendency to emphasize structural norms or activities that transcended the state. Both neo-realism and structural realism emphasized such norms, although classical realism distanced itself from such looser interpretations. Other well-known proponents of structural realism include Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye.⁷ Given the theory's flirtation with international norms and cooperation, a strand of this school

branched off into regime theory as well.⁸ Notwithstanding these changes to the original school of thought, structural characteristics retained a certain pride of place within the realist and neo-realist traditions.

The earliest intellectual challenge to realism came from liberalism and occurred immediately after World War II. In fact, liberalism competed with realism as the dominant intellectual school of thought informing research in political science. However, it receded into the background by the early 1950s as realism became the dominant and hegemonic school of thought. Liberalism differed from realism in major ways in that it assumed a much more benign international environment and the general willingness of states to cooperate for mutual gain. In this regard, liberalism made fundamentally opposite assumptions from realism regarding the motivations and intentions of international conduct. Liberals tended to emphasize mutual cooperation and mutual gain rather than anarchy and mutual fear. Additionally, liberals tended to focus on political economy or gains arising from mutual economic cooperation rather than conflict arising from the competitive acquisition of power. In international relations theory, liberalism had a strong impact on the study of federalism, communications theory, integration theory, functionalism and systems theory. Some of the most pioneering work in these areas concentrated on the European experience in part because it was the natural landscape for the conduct of such research and also because liberals held out the hope that Europe could be persuaded away from conflict into more regularized and cooperative norms after two world wars.

Owing to realism's hegemony during the course of the Cold War, liberalism and its assumptions were often frowned upon. It was only after *détente* in the 1970s that interest in liberalism revived. There was also a much greater focus on political economy and liberal institutionalism that derived from the study of international cooperation. This variant of liberalism that is sometimes called neo-liberalism also had major differences from neo-realism. David Baldwin identifies six areas where there is general disagreement between the two schools notwithstanding their general agreement of focusing greater attention on international structures and norms.⁹ Neo-realists generally believe that international cooperation is the result of states exhibiting self-interest in a state of anarchy whereas neo-liberals emphasize the interdependent nature of international relations. Secondly, although both schools subscribe to international cooperation, neo-realists believe that such an outcome is harder to achieve and sustain

and is essentially dependent on state power and resources. Thirdly, neo-realists tend to regard gains arising from mutual cooperation in relative terms. In other words, there is always the lingering question of how the gains deriving from international cooperation will be divided between the states involved. Neo-liberals on the other hand generally subscribe to some notion of absolute gains and emphasize the mutual nature of gains deriving from international cooperation. In other words, neo-liberals regard cooperation as leading to gains compared to a situation where such cooperation and gains deriving from it does not obtain. Fourthly, arising from their core assumptions regarding the centrality of states in the international system and the competitive acquisition of power between states, neo-realists emphasize cooperative norms in security affairs. Neo-liberals on the other hand emphasize cooperation in economic and welfare issues. Fifthly, neo-realists tend to emphasize the capabilities of states as opposed to neo-liberals who emphasize intentions, interests and information. And finally, although both agree on the importance of regimes and international cooperative norms, neo-realists downplay the ability of regimes to seriously mitigate the state of anarchy that is assumed to exist. Neo-liberals on the other hand have a much more optimistic view of international regimes as establishing the template for more collaboration and cooperation in international relations and thereby mitigating the effects of anarchy.

The third and most recent major school of thought in international relations theory is constructivism. This school of thought that became vogue in the 1990s essentially sought to downplay the structural determinism of neo-realism. The school's major contribution to international relations is emphasizing the social nature of political constructions and their impact in turn on international relations. In other words, international relations as we understand it is a socially constructed phenomenon. As a result of this foundational assumption, constructivists argue that reality can be transformed and reshaped by social forces and conditions. Accordingly this approach regards ideas, ideational norms, and cultural practices as being an integral part of the landscape that determines the texture and calibration of international relations. Structural and material conditions are therefore not a given state of affairs like the assumption of anarchy among realists, but rather the conditions deriving from the subjective choices made by elites and society. The most celebrated proponent of this school of thought is Alexander Wendt, and suffice it to say that constructivism has had a

significant impact on the study of international relations in the last two decades.¹⁰ Elite preferences, perceptions of identity, cultural values and deliberate choices are often emphasized when this approach is utilized.

Both liberalism and constructivism have had a major impact on the study of foreign policy owing to their focus on identities, interests, cultural norms and strategic choices of elites. For constructivists, foreign policy provides an avenue for social forces that tend in the direction of cooperation and elites who desire certain values and identity and strive to realize that outcome. Well-coordinated foreign policy is for constructivists a function of aggregate identity formation and the conscious appropriation of opportunities to realize structural conditions that sustain and further such a community. Whereas identities may derive from a broad and specific cultural context, elites are important mobilizers of the appropriation of this identity and the formation of regional communities that reflect these norms and values. In this regard both these latter schools of thought are much more sympathetic to the preferences of medium and small states in foreign policy output. Not only do they acknowledge the importance of non-structural conditions in elite decision-making, but more importantly, provide the policymakers of such states with far greater latitude than that assigned by realists. This feature of non-realist thought in international relations theory is especially useful in studying bilateral overhangs or legacies. The reason for this assertion is simply the fact that many of the bilateral overhangs or legacies examined in this book operate quite independently of global structural dynamics. The argument can clearly be made that structural dynamics prohibit overly adventurous policy output for fear of international repercussions. Yet, there is a very real sense in which such dynamics are anchored within the confines of the relationship or the broader regional sub-system at best. There is in fact a growing realization among international relations scholars that such bilateral relations are deeply informed by contextual attributes rather than general ones of the international system.

One of the most important contributions of the constructivist school is that the process of forming perceptions is fundamentally an inter-subjective one. As noted by Innis Claude, mistrust is often a perception attendant on particular holders of power rather than the power itself.¹¹ In other words, the intentions or perceived intentions of those affected by such power considerations in turn determine their perceptions and expectations of how such power will be utilized. How well a state tolerates

a subservient role then becomes contingent on the expectation that the stronger power will exercise restraint in the use of available power. This is the reason why lesser states often view some more powerful states as benign and others as aggressive. This assessment, that is subjective in turn, conditions how states view the exercise and restraints imposed by a stronger power. Depending then on whether the assessment is positive or negative, the perception settles or unsettles them. The former is an indication of benign intent while the latter is an indication of aggressive intent. This social construction of threats is normally anchored on the basis of a state's historical predispositions and actions. So, for example, Chinese and Korean perceptions of Japanese aggressive intent is deeply informed by the latter's past aggression and the seemingly unrepentant attitude or unwillingness to take responsibility for previous acts.

International relations and order are also deeply informed by perceptions of morality and justice. There must be widespread perception within the international system that some acceptable norms of power and the exercise of it obtain. If such a situation is absent then it is unlikely that structural peace will endure since perceptions of injustice will invite resentment and rebellion.¹² This observation is notwithstanding the fact that structural power and order is also determined on the basis of a rank ordering of power. The perception of whether the distribution of power and the norms attendant on its exercise is therefore interactive with the longevity of an existing arrangement. It is the exercise of such seemingly just power with widespread acceptance that in turn creates what theorists refer to as soft power. Such soft power as opposed to hard power is accumulated on the basis of the regular use of power within predictable and acceptable bounds.¹³ In fact, Hedley Bull, a classical realist, makes the point that challenges to an ordered arrangement that is viewed as inherently unjust may well lead to support for a reordered structure that delegitimizes a previous order. And he provides readers with the example of how colonial powers became delegitimized after widespread resistance by subject territories.¹⁴

Robert Jervis, a realist, for example, argues that there is a restraining role for morality in international relations. Whereas even if a state is not directly concerned with morality in the setting of national goals, morality can influence the policy choices that are available to a state. The choice of a moral means or a lesser evil can inform states even if such a choice is not in the short-term interest of the state.¹⁵ For example, many more enlightened

European states have inhibitions regarding the sale of weapons to countries involved in conflict or the potential for such involvement. Such a policy trades short-term benefits for long-term positive gains for the country in question as well as the international system. Such behaviour leads to an increase in international social capital, to borrow a phrase from Robert Putnam. Jervis identifies three ways that morality can assist in international relations: it serves to inform us of positive criteria to aspire towards as human beings, it assists in deflecting the threats of pseudo-realism or an overwhelming concern with power and narrowly defined self-interest, and ethics can play a guiding role when consequences attendant on a course of action are unclear.¹⁶

Notwithstanding its overwhelming influence and many sub-schools of thought, international relations theorists have often ignored the overwhelming influence of historically embedded interactions between states that have in turn informed the conduct of international relations. Specifically, such relations are not conducted in abstract, but rather in relation to the needs and priorities of states and statesmen.¹⁷ Such interactions appear to have an overwhelming influence on the relations between geographically proximate states in particular. The confluence of historical interactions and geographical proximity have also led to the creation of structures and practices that have sometimes preceded modern statehood as we currently understand it. In other words, time honoured practices between such states had led in turn to the evolution of certain channels and structures for the conduct of bilateral relations. Specifically, such structures are especially important in the resolution of outstanding issues that periodically crop up between such states or sensitive issues that require immediate resolution in order to prevent a downward spiral in bilateral relations with all the attendant consequences.

BILATERALISM AND OVERHANGS OR LEGACIES

In a recently edited volume on international relations in Southeast Asia, N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer point out that bilateralism is a prevalent form of interaction in Southeast Asia.¹⁸ The case studies analysed in this book document that bilateralism is a well-established foreign policy response in Southeast Asian international relations. Bilateralism is a useful mechanism with substantial historical precedence in the resolution of problems between geographically proximate states. In many instances, bilateralism

preceded the onset of multilateralism in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, no claim is made that such interactions are only useful among geographically proximate states. All states may avail themselves of the usefulness of bilateralism as a policy tool, especially if such interactions are mutually beneficial in problem-solving and mutual gain. Such a platform appears to be popular in the international relations of Northeast Asia as well. Nonetheless, in the Southeast Asian case, it is a truism that bilateralism is significantly enhanced among geographically proximate states.

There appear to be a large number of reasons privileging bilateralism over multilateralism, especially among geographically proximate states. From the findings reported in the book, it is clear that history has privileged bilateralism and provided policy formulators with an established practice and venue in dealing with immediately adjacent states. This historical imperative in turn derived from the geographical necessity of coping with dense transactions and interactions. Consequently, history and geography combine to provide the most forceful evidence in favour of bilateralism. The accumulated interactions and knowledge derived from bilateralism subsequently serve to undergird the practice and establish it as a preferred medium through which international relations may be conducted. Additionally, the case studies also indicate the ready and regular availability of structures permitting bilateral interactions. These may take the form of Joint Border Committee (JBC) meetings as in the case of Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam or ministerial meetings as in the case of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Similarly, bilateral fora are equally important in the Northeast Asian context, where delicate issues are often addressed. Such issues have in the past included overlapping territorial claims and boundary demarcations to trade and security-related issues. In light of the growing importance of the ASEAN Plus Three forum and that of the East Asian Summit (EAS) and the East Asian Community (EAC), it may be surmised that such interactions are likely to be significantly enhanced in the future. In fact, the recognition by both China and Japan that they have the historic task of accommodating each other in raising the political and economic profile of the entire region augments such possibilities.

Apart from the convenience of continuing with an established practice, there are many other factors privileging bilateralism. Bilateralism appears to allow for the resolution of problems that are unique to two countries or appear to involve them the most. In this regard it may be argued that levels of compliance in bilateralism are likely to be higher and attendant

transactional costs significantly lower than when like issues are negotiated within a multilateral setting.¹⁹ The scope of such agreements also tends to be lesser and the arrangements significantly more flexible, taking into account idiosyncratic considerations that are often extremely important in the region. Additionally, there is the existence of a strongly held normative belief in East Asia that bilateral avenues provide the best forum to resolve conflicts or coordinate policies, as argued by T.J. Pempel.²⁰

Bilateralism may involve specific and traditional security discourse markers like overlapping territorial claims as well as non-traditional threats like illegal migration and environmental pollution. The utilization of such fora seems to buffer the issue at hand from excessive publicity that may in turn lead to political posturing. Such posturing is certainly not uncommon in developing countries and Asia where the notion of “face” and propriety often complicate international relations. Posturing often significantly complicates the situation from rational resolution and opens up the possibility of pandering to important domestic political constituencies. When such posturing occurs, a simple issue often becomes conflated with many others. Additionally, it is likely to escalate tensions and often leads to the overall deterioration of bilateral relations. Consequently, quiet and contained bilateral diplomacy is often the forum of choice for neighbouring countries.

The bilateral relationships examined in this volume do tend to suggest that security issues take priority over economic issues at the outset. In other words, there does appear to be sequential logic favouring security matters in the first instance. Conversely, it may be noted that when bilateral security relations are poor between geographically proximate countries, economic activities tend to suffer. This spillover effect is most clearly demonstrated in the case of China–Japan, Japan–Korea, Vietnam–China, Thai–Cambodian and Thai–Myanmar bilateral relations, the case studies chosen for this project. China’s trade and investments with Japan are often significantly affected by untoward developments like the case of tainted food products that surfaced in 2008. Similarly, Japan’s relations with Korea are often affected when there is disagreement over historical issues and the manner in which narratives are related in Japanese school textbooks. And at the peak of Myanmar’s tensions with Thailand, border trading zones are typically closed, much to the chagrin of Thailand. Likewise, when relations between Cambodia and Thailand are strained, both countries often deploy troops along the common border and economic activities slow to a trickle.

On the other hand, when the security environment is favourable, bilateral economic relations tend to be expansive, as is the case between China and Japan, Korea and Japan, China and Vietnam, Vietnam and Thailand and Myanmar and Thailand.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that such fora often privilege larger and more powerful countries as well. In other words, smaller countries with less power and fewer policy instruments may suffer from bilateralism during the negotiation process. In this regard, multilateral fora offer greater protection for smaller states than bilateral ones, as the former are more likely to adhere to rational-legal principles rather than power considerations. The most recent example of such disagreement occurred between Cambodia and Thailand over the land surrounding the UNESCO-designated historical Preah Vihear Temple Complex in 2008. Both countries deployed additional troops along the common border and clashes occurred. Additionally, Thailand was itself in a political crisis with a weak government as well as a military allied with the traditional elite and opposed to the elected government. Prime Minister Hun Sen in Cambodia faced the uncertain prospects of a national election. Further exacerbating the matter was the fact that both countries were involved in a good measure of political posturing. The issue has been dealt with through bilateral contacts and talks, and Thailand in particular stressed its preferences for a purely bilateral approach to dealing with both tensions and disputes. Thus, the Cambodia–Thailand dispute and the heightened tension in 2008 display the pre-eminence of bilateralism in dealing with both border issues and tension between the countries of Southeast Asia. More recently in 2010 when such agreement did not obtain, both countries tentatively agreed to Indonesian mediation through the deployment of unarmed observers at the disputed border. Whereas Thailand was initially reluctant to agree to this arrangement, it eventually relented after some persuasion. As *primus inter pares* in ASEAN and given its recent democratic credentials, Indonesia was fortunately in a position to work out such a mechanism and forestall the situation from worsening. But the fact remains that the Thai military retains a certain independence and latitude with regard to its dealings with immediately adjacent neighbours. Additionally, the political executive, especially those drawn from the military, have little influence in shaping the course of events. Worsening this already complicated internal scenario is the fact that Thailand is home to a number of nationalistic groups that inflame sentiments at the ground level. The

People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the Thai Patriot Network are two such groups that often brought pressure to bear on the Abhisit-led Democrat Party minority coalition government. Yingluck Shinawatra who succeeded Abhisit has been more fortunate, although the 2014 coup against her government by royalist forces leaves open the spectre of much more nationalist foreign policy output. The sudden and sustained departure of Cambodian and Myanmar nationals after the coup was a clear reflection of this problem, and the military only relented to registering and accepting these undocumented migrant workers when pressures from the business lobby groups became pronounced.

It should be noted at this juncture that bilateralism and multilateralism are not mutually exclusive enterprises. In fact, as Etel Solingen points out, states often engage in forum shopping or pick and choose where they deal with a particular issue. Naturally there are many considerations that go into such venue selection. All else held constant, the likelihood of securing the greatest benefit in an issue is likely to be a strong motivation. Alternatively, states may and indeed often do deal with a number of fora simultaneously. Such a practice may involve the bundling of issues on the basis of positive outcomes or for legal or normative reasons. Another way to conceptualize the relationship between bilateralism and multilateralism is to think of them as avenues in a layered process where states retain a core of bilateral transactions that are then supplemented by larger and larger fora as the arena radiates outward not unlike the latticed approach mentioned by Christopher Dent.²¹ In such a scenario, states may quite simply reinforce their choices in larger domains to secure preferred outcomes. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that states do not necessarily regard bilateralism and multilateralism as mutually exclusive policy options.

In fact there are quite a few instances where the failure of a bilateral forum to resolve an issue resulted in the issue being brought to a larger multilateral forum. This seems to be the case especially where the issues have legal implications in international law. Overlapping territorial claims provide the best example of just such a development. In 2002 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled on the question of sovereignty over the disputed islands of Ligitan and Sipadan between Indonesia and Malaysia. Similarly, in 2008, the ICJ determined the ownership of Pedra Blanca/Pulau Batu Putih and Middle Rocks between Malaysia and Singapore. Both these cases display the limitations of the regional approach to solving important bilateral issues and the seeming irrelevance

of regional mechanisms. On a more positive note, however, disputing countries were able to agree on the utilization of an international dispute settlement mechanism and agree to abide by the terms of its judgement. Conversely, however, China and Vietnam, China and Japan, and Korea and Japan have significant overlapping claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea, respectively, that remain unresolved. There appears to be little will by the parties involved to subject the disputes to any kind of arbitration at the international level, and the issue continues to fester at the bilateral level, periodically straining diplomatic ties. For the time being, territorial occupation appears to constitute the proverbial ownership. Nor have such issues always been peaceful. For example, China and Vietnam were involved in a naval skirmish in 1988 over the disputed Paracel Islands, as mentioned by Ramses Amer in his chapter on China–Vietnam relations. And the allure of fishery and mineral resources in these disputed territories, and by extension their maritime boundaries, make such claims more intractable and potentially dangerous unless there is clear political will to resolve the issue. In the past, China, Japan and Korea have exhibited relative unwillingness to resolve such claims legally compared to their Southeast Asian counterparts, although China has been more willing to negotiate such claims with Vietnam recently. In this regard, Northeast Asian overlapping territorial claims are likely to be significantly more difficult to resolve.

While broad structural imperatives generally shaped bilateral policy output, agency reasons also exerted an important influence in bilateral relationships. In other words, political elites in the countries involved were often responsible for setting the general tone and temper for bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. Similarly, political personalities were as important as historical episodes like the outbreak of conflict or previous hostilities in the shaping of bilateral relations. These historical overhangs are still clearly evident in the case of China–Japan, China–Vietnam, Japan–Korea, Cambodia–Thailand and Thailand–Myanmar relations. In this regard it may be surmised that history has a powerful impact on formative perceptions in bilateral relations. This formative impact may then be reinforced or altered by elites.

Elites in Asian countries often exercise power that is disproportionate to their office. Rational-legal power is often buttressed by powerful constituencies, clientelism and tremendous access to public and natural resources. Consequently, their imprint on policy output is significantly

enhanced. Since many of these countries have political systems with little diffusion of power, decisions made by elites are strictly top-down. As a result, good and bad relations are amplified many times over. Another clear demonstration of the impact of elites in the state of bilateral relations is their impact on the periodization of the relationship. This impact is very clear in many of the relationships, especially if regimes had remained in power for a long period of time. Hence, the idiosyncratic imprint of the likes of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in China, Park Chung Hee in Korea, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Ne Win in Burma and Hun Sen in Cambodia are clearly visible. If two such elites disliked each other, the impact on bilateral relations would have been profound. For example, it was common knowledge in diplomatic circles that Chinese political elites intensely disliked the former Vietnamese foreign minister, Nguyen Co Thach. This bad chemistry in turn had a very negative impact on China–Vietnam bilateral relations. Similarly, Thaksin’s nationalistic rhetoric significantly deteriorated Thailand’s bilateral relations with Malaysia and Cambodia, while his business interests led to an even-keeled relationship with Myanmar. Perhaps the sobering and positive outcome of frayed bilateral relations is this: rational structural imperatives blunt the potentially damaging impact of agency factors.

Structural imperatives have had a definitive impact on East Asian international relations. Until 1991 the dynamics associated with the Second and Third Indochinese Conflicts had a formative impact on regional international relations. The Second Indochina Conflict spilled over from the dynamics of the Cold War wherein the United States sought to contain the spread of communism in Southeast Asia as well as the policies of China and the Soviet Union. In turn, China and the Soviet Union were opposed to U.S. military intervention in the Indochinese countries. After the conclusion of the Second Indochina Conflict in 1975, the Sino–Soviet rivalry in the Asia-Pacific came to the forefront. Ironically, the emergence of the Third Indochina Conflict was characterized by rivalry among the communist-ruled Asian countries of Cambodia–Vietnam and China–Vietnam, respectively. The collapse and subsequent implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 had a profound impact on regional structures that modelled themselves on either the communist or non-communist side of the Cold War divide. The broader developments led in turn to the resolution of the Cambodia Conflict, the full normalization of relations between China and Vietnam as well as Vietnam and ASEAN. These

developments allowed ASEAN to shed its Cold War origins and interests and expand to incorporate the three Indochinese states and Myanmar. Hence, structural imperatives have a great deal of impact on regional developments. They have informed and conditioned regional international relations as well as the form and agenda of multilateral institutions in Southeast Asia. In this regard, idiosyncratic policy output was often restrained by structural conditions.

The looser structural conditions of the post-Cold War period have in turn allowed for far more discretion in the evolution of regional organizations and the regional agenda. In fact, this structural loosening led to the dispersion of the previously convergent foreign and defence policies of the ASEAN states. The new environment brought about new challenges, and with it, new problems and new perceptions of threat. Hence, it is no coincidence that bilateral relations between geographically proximate states deteriorated substantially in the 1990s. Not only did the new environment bring about new challenges, it also allowed for much more idiosyncratic foreign policy output. This was not necessarily a negative development because regional states acquired far more independence and latitude in policy output than before; however, it marked the start of a new learning curve. This curve challenged and tested the limits of the informal arrangements and accommodation that multilateralism had brought to regional relations. It also tested the limits to which state sovereignty became an issue in the regional management of regional problems.

The political violence that followed in Cambodia, Myanmar and Timor Leste during this period all became issues that tested ASEAN's mettle. The absence of procedural protocol in dealing with internal problems within ASEAN was a liability that attracted much negative attention. Yet, this informality and the absence of enforcement mechanisms for compliance spelled the loss of significant gains that had accrued from before. Moreover, there is precious little regional multilateral organizations can do when the situation within a country or between countries deteriorates. ASEAN's deeply cherished non-intervention principle also returned the members to basic principles of power and influence in dealing with each other. There were attempts to remedy this problem through the formation of an ASEAN Troika in the 1990s, but it has proved to be of little use thus far. It is to be hoped that ASEAN members and their major dialogue partners accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) lodged with the United Nations. Hopefully, TAC will provide sufficient deterrence against the

outbreak of conflict between member states. TAC requires that signatories agree to resolve differences between states without resorting to violence. Nonetheless, when relations were frayed between Myanmar and Thailand, and more recently between Cambodia and Thailand, there was no mention of TAC or the promise to avoid conflict. States involved in those situations merely attended to domestic constituencies and concerns.

Importantly, looser structural arrangements have also led to a much closer and more cooperative relationship between Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. Although the Asian financial crisis of 1997 severely tested and deteriorated the economies of many Asian countries like Indonesia, Korea and Thailand, it also provided major opportunities for a recalibration of regional networks and architecture. Were it not for the crisis, ASEAN would not have initiated a currency swap arrangement with external partners and worked towards a meeting of the Finance Ministers of China, Japan and Korea with those of ASEAN. In fact it was this embryonic idea that in turn snowballed and led to the convening of the EAS in Kuala Lumpur in 2005. The location of the meeting was also no coincidence since it was Malaysia under Prime Minister Mahathir that had previously lobbied hard for the realization of an East Asian Economic Grouping (EAEG) — that was subsequently downgraded to an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) — in ASEAN deliberations. The resistance of the United States and Australia to the idea made the EAEG impossible in the 1990s. In addition, the United States promoted its own idea of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum with its regional allies in tow. And Indonesia, as *primus inter pares* in ASEAN, was simply unwilling to go along with a Malaysian prescription for regional order. Naturally, the poor chemistry between Malaysia's Mahathir and Indonesia's Suharto simply made the idea stillborn.

This book draws on the concept of historical overhangs or legacies among important bilateral relationships in East Asia. Significant bilateral relations are those that have traditionally been problematic with the potential to deteriorate into armed conflict. The concept of overhang or legacy, as utilized in international relations, essentially refers to negative historical memories that both inform and influence public perceptions as well as those of policymakers. To borrow a phrase from political scientist Giovanni Sartori, the concept has negative connotative value. Whereas the perception is derived from important historical episodes, it is the manner in which they are interpreted and the way that they linger on perceptions

that make them enduring. Consequently, an overhang or legacy essentially establishes an initial frame of reference on which an observer tags on other developments. In this regard, an overhang or legacy provides the broad landscape against which subsequent interactions are interpreted and gauged.

Preliminary evidence indicates that overhangs or legacies have not only been kept alive but consciously cultivated and embellished in order to make them more durable and invoke emotional responses. There is a sense in which such negative and stereotypical images are constructed or have a constructivist angle. Over time, however, such constructions invariably acquire a life of their own and become deeply embedded in the psyche of the countries involved. Quite apart from such independent volition, such overhangs or legacies also have the potential to become condensation symbols that charge public opinion and negatively influence a situation.²² In other words, although the overhang or legacy exists independently, it can be stoked or transformed to serve a specific purpose. Naturally, such negative images are best and often deployed during times of adversity when pre-existing strained relations with geographically proximate countries are easily invoked. Given this dynamic, an added concern is whether the overhangs or legacies serve the function of a causal factor for poor bilateral relations or merely undergird them and are utilized when appropriate. In order to isolate the nature of the overhang or legacy and its significance on the bilateral relationships examined, it therefore becomes necessary to identify the issues that have contributed to the overhang or legacy and whether they are independent variables or merely intervening ones in the process of policy formulation. In order to test this hypothesis, the chapter writers have briefly examined two recent examples of deteriorated relations and the contribution or impact of the overhang or legacy on the situation that existed. It is also important to identify the major sources of this narrative and how they may be blunted to enable more cooperative bilateral relations to obtain in the future.

KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This book addresses a number of core and common questions. These questions are central to the concept of critical historical junctures and overhangs or legacies, and also help provide the basis for a comparative treatment of the different configurative case studies. The comparative

treatment of the cases will allow for nuancing differences between them and lead to much richer observations and conclusions. The core questions addressed by all chapter writers are as follows:

- (1) When and how did the critical historical juncture that led to the formation and crystallization of the overhangs or legacies occur? Chapter writers were asked to identify whether the episode arose as a result of external stimuli, domestic ones, or an admixture of the two.
- (2) How long did the said important juncture last? There may well be differences between a clearly identifiable symbolic moment, like the collapse of the Berlin Wall in Germany that signified the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Alternatively, the juncture may extend over a period of time across a policy domain or may crystallize in the course of a few successor administrations.
- (3) Were there clearly discernible cleavages or internal crises that constituted the antecedent conditions for the strained relations? The importance of such cleavages should be clearly demonstrated within the sociopolitical environment of the country in question. Such contextualization will assist in establishing the specificity of critical variables in a particular country. Locating the context is also likely to identify the communities that were involved in the creation of the overhang or legacy and the constituencies that are likely to be affected by it or, conversely, sustain it.
- (4) Under what conditions do bilateral overhangs or legacies become invoked? Are certain personalities, pressures, interest or occupational groups or regime types more likely to stoke tensions through the utilization of overhangs or legacies? So, for example, in the case of Thailand there is a strong correlation between Democrat-led governments and bilateral tensions with Burma/Myanmar. Alternatively, is nationalism sometimes expressed in terms of the virtuous self and the stereotypical other, where the bilateral partner is characterized as being fundamentally bad and worthy of punishment and/or retribution?
- (5) How are historical overhangs or legacies kept alive and replicated or refined? Is there general recognition of the overhang or legacy at the elite and societal levels? Are there any previous, current or ongoing attempts to ameliorate the impact of historical overhangs or legacies? So for example, in a number of countries in Northeast Asia, the recording

of history in official textbooks is seen as one of the ways of dealing with negative historical legacies. Are there such past or ongoing efforts, and if not, why not? Chapter writers were also asked, where possible, to identify recent examples of the flare-up of an overhang or legacy and explain it.

On the basis of the description of important overhangs or legacies and core questions to be addressed, the following countries and bilateral relationships were judged to be worthy of further research and discussion: China–Japan, Japan–Korea, China–Vietnam, Myanmar–Thailand and Thailand–Cambodia. The chapters that follow discuss these bilateral relationships and narrate their importance both in history and the present, paying special attention to the questions raised. The chapters are then compared for commonalities and differences in the types of issues that are typically involved, how these issues became embedded in the bilateral discourse, what are the constituencies that invoke them and under what circumstances, and finally, what are the possibilities of such issues eventually fading into the background. A summary of the findings appears in the concluding chapter.

There are a number of other peripheral questions that are important for comparative and policy purposes that pertain to the applicability of the findings across domains. In other words, the results obtained from these findings may well yield further hypotheses to be tested or refined in the field. Of special interest is the applicability of measures that have reined in overhangs or significantly ameliorated their impact. Whatever findings may obtain from this book, one thing is certain — it is incumbent upon political elite to muster sufficient political will and resources to overcome overhangs or legacies. Additionally, since such overhangs or legacies obtain within the context of a bilateral relationship, such efforts must be pursued by both countries in the relationship simultaneously to achieve progress.

Notes

1. See, for example, Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 4; Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 153–81; and K.J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 5th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1988), pp. 13–16.

2. A superpower is described as one that is able to change the texture of international relations unilaterally and during the period of the Cold War typically referred to the United States and the Soviet Union. Great powers are able to achieve a similar outcome except that they have to act in concert to do so. For a sampling of the literature on the problems confronting lesser states in the international system, see Robert O. Keohane, "Liliputian's Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics", *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 291–310 and David Vital, *The Inequality of States* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1967).
3. See J. David Singer, "The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations", *World Politics* 14, no. 1 (October 1961): 77–92 and William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory", *International Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (March 1973): 89–117.
4. The most prominent discourse on classical realism in the post–World War II period was Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 6th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1976). Realists often trace their lineage to the Greek philosopher Thucydides and the Italian statesman Niccolo Machiavelli, among others.
5. See Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).
6. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
7. See, for example, Joseph Nye and Robert O. Keohane, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977) and Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
8. Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).
9. See David A. Baldwin, "Neorealism, Neoliberalism and World Politics", in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, edited by David A. Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
10. The pioneering article was Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425. The later and more detailed work is *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Much of the work on ASEAN by Amitav Acharya, for example, is well within the constructivist tradition. See his *The Quest for Identity: International Relations of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 2000) and *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).
11. Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 64–55.
12. See, for example, Gregory T. Russell, "(Review on) Order and Justice in

- International Relations", *Ethics and International Affairs* 18, no. 1 (2004): 107–9. I am indebted to Tae Ryong Yoon for bringing this article to my attention.
13. The classic reference on soft power is Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
 14. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 98. Again, I am indebted to Tae Ryong Yoon for alerting me to this source.
 15. Robert Jervis, "Morality and International Strategy", in *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospects of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 107–35.
 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 133–35.
 17. The early exception to this rule was James Rosenau, who understood the domestic inputs into foreign policy. See his *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1967) and *Linkage Politics* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1969).
 18. See, for example, N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer, eds., *International Relations in Southeast Asia: Between Bilateralism and Multilateralism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010). The discussion on bilateral relations in this chapter draws on the conclusion from that book.
 19. On this point, see Etel Solingen, "Multilateralism, Regionalism, and Bilateralism: Conceptual Overview from International Relations Theory", in *International Relations in Southeast Asia*, edited by N. Ganesan and Ramses Amer (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).
 20. T.J. Pempel, "Challenges to Bilateralism: Changing Foes, Capital Flows, and Complex Forums", in *Beyond Bilateralism: U.S.–Japan Relations in the New Asia Pacific*, edited by Ellis Krauss and T.J. Pempel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
 21. Christopher Dent, "The New Economic Bilateralism in Southeast Asia: Region-Convergent or Region-Divergent?" *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 6, no. 1 (2006): 81–111.
 22. On the concept of condensation symbols, see Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964).