The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 27
Number 3 *Parameters Autumn 1997*

Article 1

8-22-1997

Autumn 1997 Review Essays

Donald W. Boose Jr.

Russell W. Ramsy

Recommended Citation
Donald W. Boose Jr. & Russell W. Ramsy, "Autumn 1997 Review Essays," *Parameters* 27, no. 3 (1997), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1832.

Review Essays

From *Parameters*, Autumn 1997, pp. 155-61.

Strategic Reading on Northeast Asia: 1997 Update

DONALD W. BOOSE, JR.

By the strictest definition, "Northeast Asia" consists of Japan and Korea, but China, the United States, and Russia have long been involved with the region and it is the interplay of interests among all these powers that has made the modern history of Northeast Asia so violent, dangerous, bewildering, and often tragic. Russia's particular claim to be a Pacific power rests on its control of *Dalny Vostok*--the Russian Far East--a vast and poorly defined region for which the term "tragic" seems particularly apt. In *The Russian Far East: A History*, John J. Stephan succeeds admirably in making a rich, bloody, and tumultuous history accessible.

The earliest foreigners to intrude on the region were Chinese and Japanese, followed in the 17th century by European Russians. Just as Americans pushed west across an enormous continent, their expansion accompanied by clashes with native peoples and bordering countries, the Russians pushed east seeking wealth, refuge, free land, and defensible frontiers. The Russian Revolution and the end of World War I convulsed the region as contending forces fought for control or survival. Not the least of these were huge contingents of German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war cut off from their homeland, as well as military detachments from Japan, Britain, and the United States. One of the lesser-known of the world's great cross-cultural events took place on April Fool's Day 1920 when, under the eyes of various Russians, Europeans, Chinese, Koreans, and native peoples, the last American contingent steamed out of Vladivostok as a Japanese military band played Stephen Foster's "Hard Times, Hard Times, Come Again No More."

Eventually, the Soviet central government established control of the region, but the ensuing period of stability was all too brief. Stalin soon brought a new era of violence in which ethnic Koreans and Chinese were expelled and hundreds of thousands of Russians of all races and creeds were consumed in purges. While the killing largely ended with Stalin's death, the region never recovered economically. *Dalny Vostok* was still a "deep net" for criminals and political prisoners, many of whom languished in the Arctic Kolyma River gulags; in the atomic age it became a dumping ground for radioactive waste as well.

The fall of the Soviet Union has so far failed to bring happiness and prosperity to the region (the effects of Gorbachev's economic *perestroika* were so inimical that Stephan calls it "katastroika"). There is little sign of vitalization of Russia's stagnant economy and fractured society, but the resources of the region are so rich and the potential so great that dreams of a "brilliant future" continue to arise, no matter how many times they have been dashed in the past.

While Russia has had a foothold in Northeast Asia for some three centuries, China has been involved with Northeast Asia for at least two millennia. Eclipsed during the century of Western dominance in Asia, Chinese influence and assertiveness are rising again. China's historical relationship with Korea is particularly important, and so it is useful to have available Chae-Jin Lee's short, readable, and comprehensive *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations.*

Lee spends fully a third of the book on the Korean War, providing an overview of Chinese strategic planning and

addressing the issue of when and how China became involved (Lee argues from the evidence that the Chinese leadership was aware of and encouraged Kim Il Sung's ambitions as early as mid-1949, with Mao Zedong the dominant figure in Chinese policymaking). He then deals consecutively with military, diplomatic, and economic relations. National interest and security concerns have always dominated Chinese policymaking, but its leaders long held a strong ideological sympathy with North Korea. Eventually, however, as economic power and international influence tilted decisively in favor of South Korea, and as domestic policy shifted from ideological and revolutionary fervor to an emphasis on economic development, the Chinese leadership adopted a "two Koreas" policy. They implemented this policy far more deftly than did the Russians, managing to retain close ties with the North while normalizing relations with the South. Lee argues that this approach has increased China's influence in the peninsula and makes it an effective force for stability, but it is an approach that could challenge Japanese and US regional economic interests. Furthermore, while China's diplomatic and economic perspectives have changed, its military outlook has not. China views North Korea as a buffer state (as Japan did at the turn of the century) and this affects its attitude toward the ROK-US alliance. So long as Korea remains divided, the Chinese tend to view a US military presence as tolerable, but they are likely to feel threatened by a reunified Korea still militarily allied with the United States. There are parallels here with debate over NATO expansion.

In *Tacit Acceptance and Watchful Eyes: Beijing's Views about the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, Fei-Ling Wang comes to the same conclusions as Lee but leaves open the optimistic possibility that if the US-China relationship improves and the ROK-US alliance is revised, China might accept a US military presence in a reunited Korea as nonthreatening. The most important element of the equation is the relationship between the United States and China.

The future of the ROK-US alliance was the subject of a study initiated in 1992 at the direction of the US Secretary of Defense and the ROK Minister of National Defense who tasked RAND and the Korean Institute of Defense Analysis (KIDA), respectively, to examine future options. The results are presented in *A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of U.S.-Korean Security Cooperation* edited by Jonathan D. Pollack and Young Koo Cha. The RAND and KIDA analysts identified four broad alternatives: a continuation of the current robust alliance with a substantial US military presence postured to support an ROK defense of the peninsula against either North Korea or a future (unidentified) post-reunification threat; a revised alliance with an off-shore, rapid-reinforcement-capable US force; a regional security alliance with a Korea-based US force configured for regional contingencies outside Korea; and a purely political alliance with no Korea-based US forces.

Both the RAND and KIDA teams agreed that the current structure is best so long as North Korea remains**,** in the authors' words, a "credible threat." In the event of reunification or a substantial movement toward south-north accommodation and integration, both teams favored the regional security alliance. They were less enthusiastic about a reconfigured defensive alliance and saw a purely political alliance as least desirable in all circumstances. Within this framework, the two teams had some differences. The RAND team was consistently less supportive of a continuation of the current "robust" alliance in the event of accommodation or reunification than was the KIDA team, while the Koreans viewed a purely political alliance more favorably than did the Americans. It would be interesting to know more about the ROK-US disagreements that lay behind the innocuous differences that survived to appear in print.

Some critics suggest that there should be no ROK-US alliance or US military presence in Korea at all. One of the most vocal of these critics is Chalmers Johnson. A frequent commentator on Northeast Asia economic and security issues, Johnson is the most prominent of the "revisionist" scholars of Japan, so-called because they reject the notion that Japan's economy is fundamentally the same as (and responsive to the same economic pressures as) the market economies of the West. Johnson has long argued that Japan's political economy is different from that of the Anglo-American nations "in terms of institutions, the role of the state, and the weight of economic nationalism." His particular contribution is the now widely accepted concept of Japan as a "capitalist developmental state" that "uses economic policies to achieve what other nations attempt to achieve through military force," the economic ministries playing roles that in the United States are performed by the Pentagon and National Security Council. This does not necessarily mean that Japan is undemocratic (Johnson himself calls Japan an "open, democratic society"), for Japanese economic policies (like American security policies) must eventually be endorsed by the legislature or otherwise subjected to public scrutiny. Nonetheless, the officials who develop, shape, and oversee the implementation of policy wield great influence, and Johnson argues that the true leadership of Japan lies not with its elected politicians, but with the officials of the major ministries.

Johnson rejects any idea that Japan is "inscrutable" or that there is any mystery about its "plan rational" approach to economics. He attributes the differences between Japan and the West to differing historical and cultural backgrounds. The West's adversarial culture, derived from a history of democratic or anti-absolutist revolutions, has led to a distrust of the "state" as an overarching political entity. Japan, with quite a different history, has a largely non-adversarial culture and a more positive attitude toward the state and the bureaucrats who administer it. Thus the Japanese are prepared to see their best and brightest train for careers as state bureaucrats and to accept a high level of state guidance in economic and social matters. The key to dealing with Japan (or any other country), Johnson argues, is to understand it. That requires regional specialists with language training. Johnson has no patience with those among his critics who cannot read Japanese and lack in-country experience.

While much of Johnson's scholarship is widely accepted, he is a controversial figure. It was easier to accept his views when Japan's economy was unambiguously strong. Since the early 1990s, however, Japanese stock and real estate markets have tumbled, the country has endured a long recession, its banking industry is in disarray, a substantial part of its industry has moved overseas, and there are serious problems of corruption within the bureaucracy as well as among politicians. All these events have buttressed arguments that Japan's "plan rational" economic system has outlived its usefulness. Johnson rejects that claim, noting that Japan still has the largest foreign reserves of any country in the world, is still the world's leading source of long-term capital, has a per capita gross domestic product a thousand dollars higher than that of the United States, and continues to provide an enviable quality of life for its people and an example to other Asian countries. Johnson's own interpretation is that the Japanese bureaucratic leadership is manipulating a "planned transition from a producer-oriented, high-growth economy to a consumer-oriented, headquarters economy for all of East Asia."

Whether Johnson is right in this or not, he is a significant voice and it is important to understand his views. His collection of essays, *Japan: Who Governs? The Rise of the Developmental State*, is a good place to begin. It has the advantage of presenting Johnson's ideas in manageable bites, and is usefully organized in three sections dealing with Japan's economic system, political issues, and strategic and security matters. The reader should supplement these essays with a series of exchanges between Johnson and his critics published last year in the Summer, Fall, and Winter issues of the journal *Orbis.*

Johnson has argued for Japan to increase its military capability, but many in the region remain fearful of a "remilitarized" Japan. The worst-case scenario is graphically portrayed on the cover of *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security* edited by Selig S. Harrison. Next to a dramatic image of a Japanese H-1 satellite-lofting rocket blasting off into space is a photograph of the cooling tower of a Japanese nuclear plant. These represent two of the three key elements (the third being sophisticated computer guidance) that Japan could combine into an intercontinental ballistic missile system. Harrison clearly believes that this is a real threat. In his introductory essay, he outlines the history of Japanese nuclear development, pointing out that Japan's declaration of its "three non-nuclear principles" (not to manufacture, possess, nor allow entry into the country of nuclear weapons) is merely a policy statement with no basis in Japanese law. He stresses that Japanese leaders have been slow to sign up to nonproliferation measures and quotes statements by various Japanese leaders that could be construed as reflecting nuclear ambitions.

The issue that particularly disturbs Japan's neighbors and its own public is the Japanese government's commitment to energy generation by plutonium-fueled reactors requiring a reprocessing capability. It was fear of precisely these capabilities in the hands of the DPRK that led to a strong international reaction against North Korea's nuclear program. Concerns about Japan's program were heightened by a large sodium coolant leak at the Monju fast-breeder reactor in December 1995 and by an 11 March 1997 explosion that severely damaged the Tokaimura reprocessing facility and caused radiation leakage. Harrison includes one "pro-plutonium" essay by nuclear engineer Atsuyuki Suzuki, who argues for plutonium-fired reactors on the basis of economics, environmental protection (there is less radioactive residue than from uranium-fired plants), and energy self-sufficiency. The remaining essays are by Jinzaburo Takagi, a vocal opponent of the plutonium program, and Taewoo Kim, who argues less against the Japanese program than for an independent South Korean reprocessing capability. While readers may come away unconvinced that the Japanese leadership harbors ambitions to field nuclear weapons, they will learn much about the overall issue of nuclear power in Japan from this useful book.

Two other recent, more narrowly focused, books are also worth mentioning. *The Effect of Japanese Investment on the World Economy: A Six-Country Study, 1970-1991*, edited by Leon Hollerman and Ramon H. Myers, examines the time when stock and real estate gains, a strong yen, and increased profits fueled a huge surge in Japanese direct foreign investment. The various authors of these essays see similarities with the mid-1800s, when British and European capital transformed the world economy, and with the 1950s and '60s, when US foreign investment underwrote the post-World War II recovery of the market economies (and provoked some of the same concerns raised in later decades by Japanese investment). Noting that Japanese direct foreign investment leveled off when the inflated value of their real estate and stock markets plummeted, the authors suggest that it is unlikely that Japanese direct foreign investment will ever again reach the levels of the 1980s.

One aspect of modern Japanese society that seems to enhance Japanese economic success is what Eigo Ikegami calls "its paradoxical synthesis of competition and collaboration." In *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*, she argues that this characteristic derives from the culture of the *samurai*: the horse-riding, land-holding Japanese warriors who, from the 12th through the 19th centuries formed the ruling class of Japanese society. Once past the initial chapter, wherein Ikegami establishes the theoretical basis for her argument, the reader will find a well-written, fascinating account filled with thought-provoking insights into Japanese history and culture.

Overall, this mixed bag of books has much value for the military professional and the informed citizen. The strong, long-standing US ties to Northeast Asia are growing. China's resumption of a strong regional role, the continuing political and economic evolution of Japan and Korea, the eventual resolution of the tension between North and South Korea, and the inevitable reemergence of Russia as a significant regional actor will all present the United States with challenges and opportunities. The kind of background knowledge and commentary provided by these books is essential if we are to have informed policy debate in this exciting time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Harrison, Selig, ed. *Japan's Nuclear Future: The Plutonium Debate and East Asian Security*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996.

Hollerman, Leon, and Ramon H. Myers, eds. *The Effect of Japanese Investment on the World Economy: A Six-Country Study, 1970-1991*. Hoover Press Publication No. 432. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1996.

Ikegami, Eigo. *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995.

Johnson, Chalmers. *Japan: Who Governs? The Rise of the Developmental State*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1995. See also David L. Asher, "What Became of the Japanese `Miracle'" *Orbis*, 40 (Spring 1996), 215-34. "Japan's `Miracle' Economy" (comments by Chalmers Johnson and others and Asher's response), *Orbis*, 40 (Summer 1996), 429-44. "Japan's `Miracle' Economy Recidivus" (further comments by Johnson and his critics), *Orbis*, 40 (Fall 1996), 623-26.

Lee, Chae-Jin. *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations.* Hoover Press Publication No. 434. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1996.

Pollack, Jonathan D., and Young Koo Cha. *A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of U.S.-Korean Security Cooperation.* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1996.

Stephan, John J. *The Russian Far East: A History*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994.

Wang, Fei-Ling. *Tacit Acceptance and Watchful Eyes: Beijing's Views about the U.S.-ROK Alliance*. Carlisle, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 24 January 1997.

The Reviewer: Colonel Donald W. Boose, Jr. (USA, Ret.) spent six years with the United Nations Command Component of the Military Armistice Commission in Korea and was the Assistant Chief of Staff/J-5 (Director of Strategic Plans and Policy) of US Forces, Japan, from 1987 to 1990. Prior to his retirement from the Army, he was

Director of Asian Studies at the US Army War College, where he continues to teach. He is the coauthor of *Great Battles of Antiquity*, to which he contributed chapters on warfare in pre-modern East Asia.

Review Essay

Analysis of the US-Mexican Border: A Strategic Literature Yet to Come

RUSSELL W. RAMSEY

The US national security community bases its policies and strategies on the legitimacy of sovereignty, the philosophical centerpiece of the nation-state since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. The national security planner and the strategist who would visualize the massive flow of illegal immigration and the related narcotrafficking problem at the US border with Mexico through the eyes of the contemporary strategic literature is in for a rude surprise. The US-Mexican border literature is not strategic in nature; it is little more than an inventory of problems.

Ambassador George Kennan's 1947 "Mr. `X'" article in *Foreign Affairs* sounded the national security tocsin, to the satisfaction of most thinking people in the Judeo-Christian West, producing a robust, legitimate, and ultimately winning defense against the neo-barbarians of the communist East. Central to the policy of containment and the strategy of deterrence against communism were the value and legitimacy of the nation-state. By viewing the US-Mexican border as a giant social problem instead of a legitimate national security issue, the scholarly community is simply not producing a serious analysis of what is, essentially, a strategic set of issues involving sovereignty, borders, and the future of two huge nation-states.

Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense from 1981 to 1987, has penned a novel with an obvious political message. Called *The Next War*, his 1996 chiller depicts five scenarios that project the United States into large-scale armed conflict. In one scenario, the United States invades Mexico in response to runaway illegal immigration, northward flow of illegal drugs, rampant corruption, and seemingly uncontrollable political terrorism. The Mexican government is presented as completely incompetent to operate a stable political democracy, a veritable band of thugs in complicity with the worst criminal elements. If Weinberger's book was meant to be a caveat to Mexican government officials, the effect is unfortunate, for the scenario played out in the book fuels the ultraconservative myth that there are no functional strategic solutions to the problem short of outright invasion. Mexicans in 1997 have not forgotten the US occupation of Veracruz harbor in 1914 and the Pershing invasion expedition two years later.

If the Weinberger book reaches too fast for the trigger on the US-Mexican border problem, one might consult Timothy J. Dunn's 1996 study, *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1978-1992*. Dunn offers an important inventory of cooperation among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies across the southwestern United States in their efforts to check the flow of illegal northward immigration. Then he creates a theory by summing up four national security issues affecting Latin America in the recent past: cooperative security measures on the US-Mexican border; the drug war, which he considers fictitious or pretextual; US policy in Central America during the 1980s, central to today's wave of democratization; and opposition to Fidel Castro's military adventurism. For Dunn, these prove the existence of a militaristic Anglo-Saxon conspiracy against Latin America.

Professor Wayne A. Cornelius of the University of California at San Diego has assembled an unusually comprehensive set of essays on immigration policy. His 1994 edited volume *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* discovers a "convergence hypothesis" among the industrially developed countries who import cheap labor from developing nations. But he also validates a "gap hypothesis," meaning that, as these converging policies continue in place, they increasingly fail to accomplish their stated purpose, namely, to impose limits on an unwanted flood of economic immigrants. Professor Cornelius's conclusions were presented in his superb essay called "Economics, Culture, and the Politics of Restricting Immigration" in the 15 November 1996 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. He calls for

the nation-states affected by economic immigration to establish some fundamental parameters, to decide what it is that they really want to do when they invite cheap foreign labor to immigrate and then take measures to restrict the ensuing ethnic flood.

The literature on illegal economic immigration, then, is either highly politicized on the liberal-conservative spectrum or narrow in scope. One suspects that professors in fields like agricultural economics and international finance will seize the torch on such critical issues as illegal immigration across the border between the United States and Mexico, given that these specialists are already creating a good literature on privatization and democratization in Latin America. The 1996 Index issue of the *Latin American Research Review*, which is the nation's prime source of research interest by scholars specializing in Latin America, shows only six articles dedicated to the Mexican border problem in 25 years. Scholars of international relations, national security policy, and military strategy need to revitalize the meaning of sovereignty in the milieu of massively penetrated borders.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cornelius, Wayne, et al., eds. *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994.

_____. "Economics, Culture, and the Politics of Restricting Immigration," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 15 November 1996.

Dunn, Timothy J. *The Militarization of the U.S. Mexico Border 1978-1992*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1996.

Weinberger, Caspar, and Peter Schweizer. *The Next War*. Washington: Regnery Publishers, 1996.

The Reviewer: Russell W. Ramsey is a civilian professor at the US Army School of the Americas. He holds the Ph.D. degree in Latin American history from the University of Florida and has written many articles and books on Latin American military topics.

Reviewed 22 August 1997. Please send comments or corrections to carl_Parameters@conus.army.mil