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The Pacific Review ›
Volume 17, 2004 - Issue 4

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Track 1/Track 2 symbiosis in Asia-Pacific regionalism

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Pages 547-565 | Published online: 11 Aug 2006

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/0951274042000326069

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Abstract

This paper addresses the question of how Track 2 international policy networks contribute to economic security. If we accept a neoclassical economic interpretation that economic security is best achieved by trade and capital liberalization, then Track 2, or non-formal research and policy networks, are able to help enhance economic security by providing Track 1 or the formal, inter-governmental organizations with novel ideas and approaches on how best to advance regional economic liberalization. As well as providing institutional memories for regional cooperation, Track 2 networks also serve as test-beds for new ideas in emerging issue areas. This was clear in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis when a number of Track 2 networks grappled with the inter-linkages between economics and security as well as provided expertise on how states can best cope with globalised financial markets and the free flow of capital. By discussing each of the Track 2 networks and how they respectively interact with

Track 1 processes, the paper provides a detailed account of the regional governance architecture in the Asia-Pacific region more broadly, and its contribution to economic security.

Keywords:

Policy networks | Asia-Pacific regionalism | PECC, ASEAN-ISIS, CSCAP, PBEC | ABAC.

Notes

1 The term was apparently invented by a former American foreign service office, Joseph Montville, to refer to negotiations by non-state actors on issues normally in the official diplomatic sphere. In some conflict resolution literature as well as popular terminology, however, “track 2” is used much more broadly referring to almost any non-governmental efforts to resolve conflicts, including grassroots dialogues.

2 PECC, ASEAN, and the Pacific Island Forum have formal observer status in the APEC process. The latter two are organizations of member governments and thus clearly in Track 1. PECC includes government officials acting in their private capacities, but it has been led by policy institutes. Its inclusion reflects that important PECC role in giving birth to the APEC process.

3 It can be argued that very few Asia-Pacific Track 2 institutions associated with intergovernmental processes are truly independent of government, but the policy space they occupy is smaller or larger depending on the personalities and standing of their key leaders, the nature of the issue, and the nature of the governments. Where Track 2 has been dominated by former officials, it can appear even less flexible than the Track 1 as it can be stuck in past positions rejected by the Track 1 counterpart.

4 Commissioned research work for Track 1 is frequently done by individuals and individuals associated with Track 2 policy networks. However, depending on the degree of flexibility allowed by the contract, we would regard this as part of the Track 1 process.

5 Based on discussions with Track 2 leaders in other ASEAN countries.

6 See the ASEAN Regional Forum, Documents Series 1994-2002 from the ASEAN Secretariat (2003: 11).

7 One partial exception is the Pacific Island Forum. The ASEAN Secretariat has also gradually expanded its capabilities.

8 Based on interviews conducted at the national secretariats for ASEAN in 1969.

9 Kojima's 1965 concept of a Pacific Free Trade Area was apparently sparked by his participation in a 1964 East-West Center conference on Economic Cooperation for Development and Trade in the Pacific. See Lawrence Woods (1993: 41). Woods provides the best history of Asia-Pacific economic organizations, including PAFTAD, PBEC, and PECC, up to the early 1990s.

10 For example, statements at the 2003 meetings have dealt with SARS (in May) and support for the Doha Round (in August).

11 There are frequent complaints by ABAC members that their reports are treated in a perfunctory manner by the ministers.

12 See the Report of the Council for Asia-Europe Cooperation, CAEC (2000).

13 For critique of the “cooperative” rather than “collaborative” approach, see Witte et al(2000: 4).

14 One complication for APEC is the membership of Taiwan, referred to in APEC as “Chinese Taipei.” China is adamantly opposed to Taiwan's participation as a political entity in political discussions including the APEC Leaders' meeting. This issue has also been extended into Track 2 networks, preventing Taiwan from organizing a committee.

Additional information

Notes on contributors

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Charles E. Morrison has been the President of the East-West Center since August 1998. Prior to that he directed the Center's APEC Study Center and its former Program on Economics and Politics. Dr. Morrison's PhD is from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, where he once taught courses in Southeast Asian international relations.

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