

## Chapter 13

# **‘Architectural alternatives or alternatives to architecture?’**

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‘Architecture’ has emerged as the latest catchphrase in Asian security politics. Scholars and practitioners alike have overwhelmingly—and largely uncritically—embraced the architectural metaphor. In so doing, however, they often end up talking past one another, seriously devaluing the debate about Asia’s emerging security order in the process, and at a time when the rise of China and the region’s consequent geopolitical transition is placing a premium on clear strategic analysis. To illustrate the shortcomings of applying the architectural metaphor to Asian security politics, we begin this chapter by examining the sources and limits of one of the latest and most controversial of Asia’s architectural blueprints: Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s Asia-Pacific Community (APC) proposal. We argue that criticism of the APC has been focused too squarely on the specifics of the proposal, while insufficient attention has thus far been given to the larger problems associated with employing the notion of ‘architecture’ itself. We go on to make the case for abandoning the term ‘architecture’ altogether, particularly the heavy managerial connotations associated with it. In its place, and drawing inspiration from the work of the renowned Australian international relations scholar Hedley Bull, we advocate a more ‘informal’ approach to Asia’s security order, which emphasises relationships over organisations.

### **The Asia-Pacific Community: a case study**

Prime Minister Rudd’s proposal to establish an APC was formally announced, somewhat unexpectedly, on 4 June 2008 at the annual dinner of the Asia Society AustralAsia Centre in Sydney (Rudd 2008a). Speaking before approximately 500 guests, Rudd called for the establishment of ‘a regional institution which spans the entire Asia-Pacific region—including the United States, Japan, China, India, Indonesia and the other states of the region’. The scope of this institution should be broad-ranging, he suggested, and ‘able to engage in the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action on economic and political matters and future challenges related to security’. Rudd designated 2020 as the year by which this vision for an APC should be implemented. He appointed Richard Woolcott, a former secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, as a high-level

envoy charged with taking the proposal to the capitals of the wider region for further discussion.

At least four motivations appear to have underpinned Rudd's APC proposal. First, the plan needs to be viewed in the Australian domestic political context. Since his election in late 2007, Rudd has signalled a renewed focus on Asia as a major pillar of his government's foreign policy approach. Comparisons with his regionally focused Labor predecessors, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, have, however, been almost inescapable. Given the role these leaders played in helping to establish the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process, the APEC Leaders' Meeting and arguably even the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF), Rudd has big shoes to fill here, especially when the regional agenda is already so full. Even the Asia credentials of his immediate predecessor, John Howard, have been reviewed fairly favourably, with Howard and his Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, given much credit for securing Australia a seat at the East Asia Summit (EAS), as well as executing a simultaneous strengthening of Australia's bilateral relations with the United States, China, Japan and Indonesia (see Wesley 2007). Having consistently criticised the predominantly bilateral orientation of his predecessor's approach to the Asian region, Rudd's imperative to be seen to be moving towards a more obvious multilateral perspective thus also constitutes part of the explanation for his APC initiative.

Second, the fact that Rudd's Asia Society speech was made immediately before visiting Japan and Indonesia is revealing. During his early months in office, Rudd had come under increasing criticism at home and abroad for what some commentators regarded as an unhealthy bias towards Beijing (Sheridan 2008a).

<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister's fluency in Mandarin, his longstanding scholarly interest and professional experience in China, coupled with the fact that he visited China—but no other Asian nation—on his first major overseas trip outside of Australia's immediate neighbourhood all contributed to this perception. Commentators have tended to cast this preference in zero-sum terms, as if Rudd's interest in China comes at the expense of Australia's ties with Japan, India and South-East Asia. The Asia Society speech thus appears to have formed part of a larger effort to counter this mounting criticism. Much of the speech itself was devoted to discussing what Rudd explicitly termed Australia's 'critical bilateral relations' with Japan and Indonesia. The order of the wording that Rudd employed when sketching out his vision for an APC—listing Japan ahead of China—was also highly symbolic.

Despite the emphasis given to the symbolic purposes of the APC proposal, Rudd clearly intended it to be more than merely an expedient political gesture. In tandem with his Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, Rudd has continued to revisit the proposal during high-profile speeches (see, for example, Smith 2008:19–22;

Rudd 2008b). This also reflects the third consideration motivating the APC proposal: a growing sense of trepidation that Asia's institutional landscape is evolving in ways that could be increasingly unsuitable for the implementation of any effective regional 'architecture' and the sense of regional consensus that must ultimately underpin it.

A large part of the problem here stems from the fact that Asia's great powers have shown an increasing tendency to use regional institutions not as sites for cooperation, but as instruments of competitive influence: Beijing through ASEAN+3 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO); Moscow through the SCO; Washington in APEC and through its own ad hoc mechanisms such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI); and Tokyo through the ARF and, increasingly, through the EAS as it strives to check China's growing influence in the ASEAN+3 grouping. Taken together, this has created a situation in which, as Lowy Institute Director, Allan Gyngell (2007:1), recently observed, 'The Asia-Pacific region has too many regional organisations, yet they still cannot do all the things we require of them.' The APC proposal might thus also be read as a genuine attempt to remedy these 'design flaws' in the region's emerging 'architecture'.

The fourth factor motivating Rudd's initiative is related more directly to Australia's own national interest and place in the Asian region. For significant parts of its history after European settlement, Australia harboured a deep sense of insecurity towards its region. The former head of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs Alan Renouf, for instance, once described Australia as a 'frightened country' that lived in fear of its own Asian neighbourhood and sought out a 'great and powerful friend' to compensate for those insecurities (Renouf 1979). Harvard Political Scientist Samuel Huntington (1993:42, 1995:151–4) later described Australia as a 'torn country'—a society divided over whether or not it belonged to Asia. While many Australians have a much more confident and comfortable view of Australia's regional situation, echoes of the old concerns remain, although these often take the form of worries about being overlooked rather than overrun. Canberra remains fearful that it could—whether because of its size, cultural composition or geographical location—potentially yet find itself excluded from the region's most influential institutional processes. The two most worrying potentialities from an Australian standpoint are an institutionalisation of the Six-Party Talks process into a formal and highly influential regional security mechanism without any expansion of its membership, or a deepening of cooperation between the members of the ASEAN+3 process leading to the formation of a genuine East Asian community that excludes Australia. By playing the role of entrepreneur in putting forward the idea of an APC, and by proposing this as the peak institution in the region, Canberra could thus be seen to be guarding against the possibility of its economic and political marginalisation from this part of the world.

Notwithstanding these apparently genuine motives, Rudd's APC proposal has not met with widespread regional and domestic acclaim. Perhaps the most direct attack was delivered by the influential Singaporean commentator Barry Desker, who, when speaking before a Canberra audience in July 2008, described the proposal as 'dead in the water' (Walters 2008). More generally, criticism has tended to focus on four main areas. First, the harried style in which the initiative was announced was seen to have severely damaged its prospects. In the days after the Asia Society speech, for instance, media reports surfaced that Woolcott heard of his mission as special envoy only hours before its announcement (Sheridan 2008c). There also appears to have been a complete absence of consultation with other interested parties throughout the region. Little thought appears to have gone into how the new body will relate to existing structures, such as APEC, the ARF and the EAS. The inevitable dilemmas surrounding membership of the new grouping have also been glossed over. What, for instance, would be the membership status of Taiwan? Would the small island states of the South Pacific be invited to join? The hastiness of this proposal's delivery and its consequent disregard for these obvious dilemmas not only damaged its prospects in the eyes of many, it could have affected Rudd's Asia policy credentials.

Washington's response to the proposal was among the more open-minded. While calling for further detail, for instance, US Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, emphasised the need 'to be open to new ideas and suggestions' (Flitton 2008). That the proposal was announced in the shadow of a US presidential election, however, at a time when Washington still appeared distracted by developments in the Middle East, was equally seen as a factor inhibiting its prospects. This issue of timing relates also to China. With its economic and strategic weight in the Asian region still on the rise, one could argue that it might not be in Beijing's interest to set in concrete an institutional structure reflecting today's power realities, when those of tomorrow could be weighted even more heavily in its favour, thereby enhancing its capacity to shape that structure.

Third, the prospects for Rudd's proposal were seen to be further diminished by his alienation of other regional actors, including some of the leading ASEAN countries and Japan. As Desker's comments suggest, the APC idea has not been particularly well received in some parts of South-East Asia, especially since Indonesia was the only ASEAN country mentioned by Rudd in the original list of leading participants. Canberra's lack of consultation with its South-East Asian neighbours has added to this problem and has been read as a lack of gratitude, in particular, by those governments who were so influential in helping Australia to secure a seat at the EAS (Medcalf 2008). While it is possible that ASEAN might no longer occupy the driver's seat of regional diplomatic processes by 2020—as economic and strategic weight shifts increasingly in favour of Asia's great powers,

and in particular in China's direction—ASEAN retains a significant role in most of the region's prominent multilateral processes. The blessing of the main members of ASEAN is therefore arguably critical to the success of Rudd's APC idea. Likewise, Japan remains a leading and influential supporter of the same open and inclusive vision of regional architecture advanced in Rudd's proposal—as opposed to the narrow, more exclusive approach championed at times by China and Malaysia (see, for example, Walters 2005). Tokyo's wounds, however, remained raw for some time over what it perceived as Rudd's bypassing of Japan on his first major international trip—so much so that Japanese Prime Minister, Yasuo Fukuda, made but one passing reference to Australia in his own major speech on the future of Asia-Pacific security (Sheridan 2008b).

A final criticism that has been levelled at Rudd's proposal is that it threatens to exacerbate some of the same design flaws in the emerging so-called regional 'architecture' that it aspires to alleviate. It is seen to have the potential, for instance, to further fuel the competitive approach to institutions that is becoming a feature of great power politics in the region. Rudd was sufficiently careful in his Asia Society speech to specify that his proposal 'does not in itself mean the diminution of any of the existing regional bodies'. Even Woolcott himself, however, was later forced to concede that comparisons were inevitable. In his terms:

One of the issues that needs to be addressed is the link between the Prime Minister's concept of an Asia-Pacific community and the variety of existing organisations in the field. There will be arguments I suppose, is it better to tinker with or adjust existing institutions or is it better to have a new overarching body? (Cited in Kelly 2008)

The real risk in all of this, critics contend, is that Rudd's APC proposal will become yet one more fixture on an already overcrowded institutional landscape.

## **The problem with architecture**

Amid the barrage of criticism that Rudd's new architectural blueprint has been subjected to, little if any has focused on potential flaws in the concept of 'architecture' itself and its application to the Asian region. In the past decade, this terminology has become so deeply entrenched in the lexicon and discourse of Asian security politics that its usage has been taken almost as a given. As this section goes on to demonstrate, however, the term 'architecture' is really quite a confused and confusing one when used by scholars of Asian security. Further, a strong case can be made that the Asian region is simply not conducive to the application of the architectural metaphor, and even that architecture in any genuine sense of the term is, for the foreseeable future, unlikely to emerge in this part of the world.

Among Asian analysts, the eminent Indonesian scholar Jusuf Wanandi (1994) pioneered usage of the architectural metaphor in a paper delivered to the eighth Asia-Pacific Roundtable in June 1994. As Nick Bisley (2007:342–3) observed, however, its rise to prominence in the lexicon and discourse of Asian security politics was inspired primarily by calls during the late 1990s to reform the international financial ‘architecture’—described by Barry Eichengreen (1999:1) very simply as institutions, structures and policies—in the aftermath of the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis. As often occurs in Asian security politics, strategic thinkers borrowed directly from their economic counterparts.

The subsequent decade has seen a veritable plethora of books, edited volumes, refereed journal articles, policy briefs and academic conferences embrace the architectural metaphor. Despite the popularity of its usage, however, only rudimentary efforts have been expended amid this flurry of intellectual activity to define explicitly what the term ‘architecture’ really means, especially within an Asian regional context. As the following analysis demonstrates, when employing the architectural allegory, many leading scholars of Asian security tend not even to formally define the terminology or to consider whether their implicit understanding of ‘architecture’ is consistent with how others are using it. This is problematic in that there appears to exist within the broader scholarly debate at least several clusters of assumptions as to what the term connotes.

First, different pride of place is afforded to the economic and security dimensions of regional architecture. Some, for instance, refer to an overarching regional or institutional ‘architecture’, but do not clearly distinguish between its economic and security components (see, for example, Patel 2008). Others specify an overarching regional architecture, but see it as comprising two distinct economic and security ‘pillars’ or ‘legs’ (see, for example, Nanto 2006). Yet another perspective views trade and security arrangements as distinct components of a broader Asian institutional architecture, but also considers the ‘strategic interaction’ between them (Aggarwal and Koo 2008). Last, but not least, a number of analysts refer to the Asian security architecture as a separate and largely distinct construct (see, for example, Ball 2004:48; Desker 2008a).

Second, ‘architecture’ is often employed as one and the same term, but with reference to quite different ‘layers’ or ‘levels’ of collaborative security arrangements. As the preceding paragraph suggests, for instance, the term can be used in a broad sense to describe the overarching architecture across an entire region. The question of where such boundaries can and should be drawn geographically, however, remains unclear. Some refer, for instance, to an ‘Asia-Pacific security architecture’, some to an ‘Asian security architecture’, while others refer to an ‘East Asian security architecture’. The Singapore-based scholar Mely Caballero-Anthony (2007:1–3, 8, 10) even uses the terms ‘Asia’ and ‘East Asia’ interchangeably when referring to one and the same ‘regional

security architecture'. In many regards, however, these trends can also be seen as reflecting the contested nature of the concept of 'Asia' itself (Katzenstein 2005:10).

Compounding this problem, some scholars assume the existence of 'architectures' within the overarching *regional* architecture. David Shambaugh, for instance, suggests that 'the US-led [bilateral alliance] security system remains the predominant regional architecture across Asia'. Shambaugh (2005:3, 11, 14), however, also goes on to refer to an emerging 'multilateral architecture that is based on a series of increasingly shared norms (about interstate relations and security)' and suggests that regional security architecture can be likened to a 'mosaic' comprising 'different layers that address different aspects of regional security'. Similarly, Desker (2008a:56–8, 62, 70) writes simultaneously of 'Asia's security architecture' and 'the Northeast Asian security architecture'. Adding to the confusion, scholars seem unable to agree about whether the architectural terminology should be employed in the plural or the singular sense. Highlighting this tension, Nick Bisley's (2007) recent contribution to the National Bureau of Asian Research's annual *Strategic Asia* series is entitled 'Asian security architectures', while he refers to 'Asian security architecture' in the singular throughout the piece.

Finally, and perhaps most problematically, 'architecture' is also often used interchangeably with other terms. Tsinghua University Professor Chu Shulong (2007:8–11), for instance, uses the term 'architecture' interchangeably with that of 'mechanism' and 'framework'. Hanns Maull (2005:69) exchanges the term with what he considers the more 'appropriate' descriptor, 'security arrangements'. Along similar lines, while referring to the US-led alliance 'system' as 'the predominant regional security architecture across Asia', Shambaugh (2005:2–3) depicts an Asia-Pacific security architecture that is embedded within an imprecisely defined Asian regional 'system'. In so doing, he would appear to have blurred the distinction between the terms 'architecture' and 'system' to the point where they become almost indistinguishable.

A large part of the problem here could stem from the fact that Asia is simply not conducive to the macro-analytical notion of 'architecture', which implies that an overarching *structure* can be fashioned and implemented to address the daunting array of security challenges currently facing the region. The sheer diversity—economic, cultural, geographic, historical and political—of 'the region' could simply make it unsuited to such processes of formalisation. As Gyngell (2007:8) observes, 'the multiplicity of visions of the region and the variety of functional needs that must be accommodated' are such that 'the Asia Pacific has never been headed towards the goal of a comprehensive European-like arrangement: its history and geography are of a very different order'.

## Structure or strategic relationships?

Even if scholars and policymakers are able to observe a consistent and coherent usage of the architecture metaphor (and we think this is somewhat unlikely), the problems with using this terminology will continue. Architects design buildings in which families, workers and other social groups exist. They provide blueprints for the construction of walls that keep people in. They use formal structure to define the environment. Even landscape architects use the structure of formal plantings and inanimate objects to organise a garden; they choose what goes in and what stays out. This approach presents problems for our subject: Asia's future security order.

The architecture debate encourages a focus on processes and structures rather than relationships and outcomes. Some participants in the discussion favour an ASEAN-centred universe in which the 'architecture' is built on and around the existing multilateral processes championed by many of the 10 South-East Asian countries (see, for example, Goh 2007–08). Others suggest that the foundations of that architecture are provided by Washington's set of bilateral alliances (see Baker 1991/92). Those with more pluralistic and flexible tastes suggest that we need to weld these together so that we can mix the hope of multilateral progress with the insurance of alliance (see, for example, Tow and Acharya 2007). While this combination reflects the inclination towards hedging strategies to cope with the uncertainty of Asia's strategic future, it is a potentially unmixable set of ingredients.

The inclusion of US-led alliances in Asia as part of the regional architecture is problematic on theoretical and practical grounds. In theoretical terms, it suggests that these alliances contribute to regional order because of their nature as organisations (compared, for example, with what the ARF can offer as a different type of intergovernmental grouping). Alliances, however, contribute to regional order because of the promises (including promises of security assistance) that exist between their members. These promises condition the expectations of states inside and outside the alliance relationship. As Coral Bell (1991:46) argued some years ago in a short study of Australia's alliance relationship with the United States, 'International politics works, unfortunately, on nothing more substantial than a system of expectations.' As shapers of expectations, alliances make their major contributions to order. They do not do so as organisational alternatives or supplements to multilateral diplomatic forums.

The practical difficulty in including alliances becomes clear when we remember that a regional architecture can be a set of walls that defines the conditions of existence for those who live within them. As such, it very quickly becomes a basis for *containment* and *control*. If one of the leading requirements for Asia's future order is China's effective participation in strategic relationships with other great powers in the region, an overarching architectural vision that



incorporates the US alliance system (alongside everything else) could fall well short of the mark. While promising to provide an overarching framework for the management of Asia's strategic challenges, such an architectural vision will do more to divide the region and raise suspicions. It would resemble a Western attempt to reassert control over Asia's political evolution.

Each one of the architectural options assumes that order is a product of the way we organise ourselves. Here, order tends to be viewed as a function of external structure and not of strategic interaction, although somehow the latter is supposed to be inspired by the former. As an alternative to this organisational view of order, a relationship view focuses directly on the quality of the strategic interaction between the powers, rather than on the external structures within which their relationships are meant to develop. This means that the true building blocks of an Asian regional community are not a set of overlapping groups (from ANZUS and the Five Power Defence Arrangements through to ASEAN, the ARF and the EAS) and that the job of regional community building is not to work out which of these survive and how they might relate to one another. This is the nearly impossible task that Rudd and his colleagues have set for the APC on the basis that Asia's existing attempts at regional organisations don't yet add up to what we need (Rudd 2008a). In response to some of the criticisms within the region that have been levelled at the APC proposal, Rudd and his colleagues have also demonstrated the continuing appeal of the additive approach by pouring praise on the achievements of ASEAN, which they have retrospectively claimed the community can build on (see Smith 2008).

This mistakes the pots (which are simply containers) for the plants (where the true life exists). The real building blocks are the relationships between the powers highlighted in their strategic interaction. Here, the most important *institutions* of regional politics are not the formal organisations that hold regular summits, but the rules and patterns of behaviour that operate between the major actors on a daily basis. Such an informal approach would suggest that the basis of Asia's strategic future, including China's role, is not a regional architecture—which seeks to organise and perhaps even control the actors—but a set of regional bargains that nourish and support their most important strategic relationships.<sup>2</sup> One of these bargains is an effective but informal compact between the United States and China that they will recognise each other's leading role in regional affairs.

It is entirely possible that formal constructs could develop from these bargains: for example, a set of bargains between Asia's great powers might then be reflected in an Asian security mechanism of some sort involving China, the United States, Japan and India. There is, however, no reason to suggest that the relationship will work in reverse. One might establish such a forum only to find that the powers that have agreed to attend do not regard one of the others as a legitimate

participant. Similarly, in domestic politics, the formal trappings of statehood rely on an informal bargain that is the basis of a social contract. (Bull [1977:59] saw pre-modern African societies that were stateless as a ‘spectacle of “ordered anarchy”’.). Similarly, we need to insure ourselves against believing that the cooperative relations between Europe’s former great powers since World War II have been due to the formal institutional relations between them and not to their political determination to limit the possibilities for dangerous competition between them, which allowed these regional organisations to develop. Likewise, for ASEAN to exist in the first place, its original founders needed an informal but robust bargain between them that represented their mutual interests in unmolested sovereign independence. That original and informal bargain is infinitely more powerful and important than ASEAN’s more recent and more formal charter, which has attracted a mix of admirers and sceptics (see Desker 2008b).

A similar logic can be applied to the argument that the best answer for Asia’s evolving power equation is a concert in which power is as much shared as contested. There is much to be said for this approach (see, for example, White 2007), at the heart of which is an informal agreement between the great powers to collaborate in the management of the relations between them. Indeed, Bull (1977:74) nominated the ‘managerial system of the great powers’—which could take the form of a concert or a condominium—as one of the *institutions* of international order, by which he did not mean formal parts of an architecture within which the great powers were housed as essential pieces of the furniture. Instead, the institutional aspect relates to the patterns of behaviour among the great powers. The institutions here are more about practice and relationships than about formal structure. Bull (1977:74) explains that ‘[b]y an institution we do not necessarily imply an organisation or administrative machinery’ (which is so commonplace in the contemporary discussion of Asia’s ‘architecture’), ‘but rather a set of habits and practices shaped towards the realisation of common goals’.

Instead of thinking about which gatherings, arrangements, forums and processes can combine to produce Asia’s future order, we are better to focus on what habits and practices the great powers need to adopt—and how smaller and medium powers in the rest of the region (such as Australia) can encourage that adoption. At the heart of the European concert of the early nineteenth century was not an ornate edifice of formal diplomacy (the trappings of Vienna) but a common realisation by the great powers that what Napoleon had been allowed to do to the regional balance could not be allowed to repeat itself.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, while Washington’s diplomatic recognition of Beijing marked part of China’s *formal* entry into the family of nations in the 1970s, the real work was done in the earlier bargain engineered by Henry Kissinger (a disciple of Metternich) and

Zhou En-Lai, which gave informal but very powerful recognition to the triangularity of Asia's strategic relationships (see Isaacson 2005:333–54).

The arrival of a genuine concert in Asia is no easy matter (Acharya 1999). For a number of the reasons outlined above, to stand any sort of chance it would probably need to begin in an informal fashion—as a series of mutually supportive great-power bargains—before the architects gained the opportunity to formalise (and often to de-energise) the cooperation. In today's climate, if one or more of the great powers made a serious proposal for a concert, it would most likely be treated as yet another architectural option. We would immediately shift to a discussion of when (and more importantly where) the first such annual gathering should be held, what its agenda should be and who should be invited (and left off the list).

Despite sporadic and very painful progress (and sometimes no progress at all), the Six-Party Talks that Beijing has hosted to address North Korea's nuclear weapons program offer a very subtle, almost undetectable, hint of great-power concert. Three of the major players—China, the United States and Japan—are on board, and signs of convergence between the positions of Beijing and Washington (if not shared by Tokyo) have perhaps been the main benefit of this process. Again, the value of the Six-Party Talks lies not in another architectural option for Asia's future order, but in the quality of the relationships between the great powers. An architect might propose that these talks are the building block or the scaffolding for an eventual East Asian security mechanism. The notion of a '6–1+3' approach (North Korea out and India, Australia and New Zealand in) presents, however, an architectural illusion that needs to be resisted (see, for example, Kessler 2006). Instead, the magic, such that it exists, lies in the very small and pale embryo of concerted behaviour—a pattern that might just be utilised further afield. Policymakers should aim to protect the relationship and not the organisation.

## Conclusion

The fascination with Asia's *architectural* options is quite understandable. While Asian analysts have been quick to reject unkind comparisons with European regionalism, they have nonetheless been sensitive to claims of an Asian institutional deficit. At the same time, the proliferation of Asian regional organisations has provided many options from which to choose—in fact, rather too many overlapping options that necessitate some organisational spring-cleaning. The rise of China, and the general change in Asia's geopolitics, provides the obvious testing ground for this process of organisational selection.

Rudd's APC represents one attempt to put this organisational shop in order for the challenges to come as global power is increasingly decided in Asia. It is, however, proving difficult for the APC proposal to shake itself free of the vested

and competing interests that are attached to existing approaches to Asian regionalism. Similarly, any grand notions of an overarching Asian architecture are hamstrung by a cacophony of competing perspectives on what that architecture comprises (differing views of its component parts) and how it is defined (differing views of its crucial features). Additional confusion is provided by the simultaneous existence of multiple 'architectures' and of multiple subregions to which these can apply.

At one level, the architecture debate naturally lends itself to some academically intriguing taxonomical puzzles. At another level, however, it can lead to a policy dead end, by exaggerating the importance of structure and by suggesting that order is a question of good organisation. An informal approach, which argues that order rests on strategic relationships, focuses our gaze on the bargains we need from Asia's great powers. As Australia and other regional countries grapple with the geopolitical changes that are already well under way in Asia, driven above all by China's rise, they need not be worried about building the best regional house that a good architect can design. Instead, they need simply to concentrate on the residents and whether or not they are able to live together. To do that, more walls and buildings might need to be torn down than erected, and we might need to employ more relationship specialists and fewer architects.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Rudd and Howard have therefore suffered from the same criticism but in reverse order: Rudd was suspected of being too close to Beijing but has ended up emphasising the US relationship with some rigour; Howard was accused of favouring the United States over Asia but, at least in terms of Australia's China relationship, stands not guilty as charged.

<sup>2</sup> On strategic bargaining, see Schelling (1960).

<sup>3</sup> For a recent and approachable study, see Zamoyski (2008).