

Despite these drawbacks, Sun has (thankfully) given us a quite original and challenging work that should spawn debate on theoretical, methodological, and historical grounds. His arguments will not convince everyone—nor should they—but their sheer breadth and insightfulness should reopen many historical issues, especially those relating to the rise of nationalism, the nature of the May Fourth period, and Lu Xun’s role in modern China.

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Ezra F. Vogel, Yuan Ming, and Tanaka Akihiko, editors. *The Golden Triangle of the U.S.-China-Japan, 1972–1989*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002. 268 pp. Hardcover \$40.00, ISBN 0-674-00960-6.

The trilateral relationship between the United States, China, and Japan has been one of the most dynamic interactions in the post–Cold War era. As coeditor Ezra Vogel points out in his Acknowledgments at the beginning of this book, “the three powers [are] likely to be the most critical in determining the fate of East Asia over the next several decades.” Indeed, no other relationship can be more important to the Asia-Pacific region, and for this reason it has attracted enormous attention from scholars and policy makers alike in recent years.¹

This book is the result of the combined efforts of three conferences attended by scholars from the United States, China, and Japan for the purpose of examining the U.S.-China-Japan relationship. The first conference covered the period from 1945 to 1971. The present book is the result of the second conference, which examined the “golden age” from 1972 to the end of the Cold War in 1989. The book is structured such that the nine contributors are divided into three groups, representing the three countries, and thus it attempts to offer a balanced picture of this complicated relationship.

As a historical account covering most of the 1970s and 1980s, this book may serve as a starting point for a better understanding of the historical background to its subject as well as more recent developments. The volume is divided into four parts. Part 1 focuses on the domestic politics of the three countries in relation to the foreign policy of each toward the others. This is a constructive first step to

help readers achieve a better understanding of how each country approaches the other two. Michel Oksenberg provides a detailed analysis of the policy-making process in Washington, from the Nixon- Kissinger years to the senior George Bush. Zhang Baijia focuses on Chinese politics during the Cultural Revolution. Kamiya Matake, concentrating on Japanese politics, makes a grand tour through the governments of several Japanese prime ministers, from Tanaka Kakue to Nakasone Yasuhiro.

The next three parts concentrate on bilateral relations: “U.S.-China Relations,” “U.S.-Japan Relations,” and “China-Japan Relations.” Each part includes the contributions of two scholars representing their own countries and offering different perspectives. For the U.S.-China group, Robert Ross presents a comprehensive overview of U.S. relations with China, while Jia Qingguo offers a well-researched study on Chinese relations with the United States. Next, Gerald Curtis provides an excellent analysis of American foreign policy toward Japan, while Nakanishi Hiroshi examines Japanese relations with the United States. In the last part of the book, “Sino-Japanese Relations,” Zhang Tuosheng and Soeya Yoshihide each analyze their own country’s relations with the other from a different angle.

The strength of this book is that it lays a foundation for future research. Ezra Vogel gives an excellent summary of each chapter and skillfully highlights the importance of the triangular relationship. Other contributors provide useful frameworks for the comprehension of each country’s foreign policy toward the other two. In asking the interesting question “How far was Japan willing to go toward actual military cooperation with the United States?” for example, Kamiya Matake is able to argue that “Tokyo’s willingness was influenced by the views and personalities of its successive prime ministers” (p. 61). This brings the analysis from a macro-level of international systems down to the micro-level of actual politics and individual leaders.

On the other hand, this approach represents only a beginning and is only partly successful in addressing the dynamics of the triangle. Most of the authors concentrate only on bilateral relations rather than the relations with, and the impact of, the third country. Therefore, the book is more like a collection of studies on three bilateral relationships rather than on a true triangular relationship. The authors tend to discuss only the country with which they are most familiar. Take part 1 on domestic politics, for example: Michel Oksenberg, the author of the “U. S. Politics and Asian Policy” chapter, is a well-known China expert, so his discussion is overwhelmingly concentrated on U.S. policy toward China, leaving only half a page for Japan. At the same time, the “Chinese Politics and Asian-Pacific Policy” chapter concentrates almost entirely on the Chinese perspective toward the United States, with little attention paid to Japan. This tendency to focus on bilateral and not trilateral relations continues into most parts of the book.

There are exceptions, however. Gerald Curtis, a leading expert on Japanese politics and U.S.-Japan relations, makes a genuine effort to incorporate the “China Issue” into his discussion of U.S.-Japan relations (pp. 138–143). Soeya Yoshihide, in the chapter on Japan-China relations, makes a fine reference to the triangle. Kamiya Mataka, in his examination of Japanese politics and Japan’s Asia policy, also tries to address the internal considerations that were behind Japanese policies toward both China and the United States.

Perhaps the lack of genuine focus on the trilateral relationship is due to the fact that in the period 1972–1989 it was not fully developed among these states. As Nakanishi Hiroshi points out, “At the time, the triangle relationship between Japan, the United States and China had little impact on the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship” (p. 165). It may also have to do with what Soeya calls a “fundamentally asymmetrical” relationship in which Japan tends to have a “junior status,” whereas “the United States and China have both been prepared to play highly strategic games by recognizing each other as a strategic counterpart” (p. 225).

Another reason for focusing primarily on bilateral relations is that some authors pay too little attention to perspectives from the third country. The Japan–U.S. chapter, for example, quotes the phrase “the U.S.-Japan relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none” (p. 179). It is understandable from the Japanese perspective that its relations with the U.S. are more important than with China. But it is hard to argue that a U.S.-Japan relationship is more important than U.S.-China relations in the context of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly if one is coming from the Chinese perspective.

I would like to make following suggestions for how this project might have been approached. To analyze the ongoing dynamics of this triangle we need first to develop an overarching theme. A possibility is to consider what impact the third country has on the bilateral relations of the other two. For example, the discussions can involve just what is the U.S. role in China-Japan relations.

Second, it is understandable that, considering the nature of academic specialization today, it is hard to find a bilateral-relations expert who can also deal with a third country. But there are scholars who can, and this talent should be fully utilized. Two of the editors of this volume, Ezra Vogel and Tanaka Akihiko, are the best examples: Vogel is an acknowledged expert on U.S. relations with both China and Japan, whereas Tanaka is recognized to have a deep understanding of Japanese foreign policy toward both China and the United States. Both could have contributed a substantial chapter to this book.

Third, a comparative study could be conducted on each country’s foreign policy toward the other two. For example, it would be useful to compare the China policies of the United States and Japan.² The research could also focus on each country’s policy choices. Take Japan for example: one could analyze the future directions of Japanese foreign policy by addressing a question asked by

Zhang Tuosheng, "Should Japan 'focus on Asia' or 'on America' or 'on relatively balanced relations?'" (p. 208).

Finally, based upon the suggestions above, a comprehensive concluding chapter is needed that would improve our understanding of not just the bilateral relations between each of the three powers but also the triangular relationship of all three. With the increasing level of interaction among these three powers there will be a growing demand for such an approach.

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NOTES

1. For example, see Kokubun Ryosei, ed., *Challenges for China-Japan-U.S. Cooperation* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 1998); Zhang Yunling, ed., *Zhuanbian zhong de Zhong, Ri, Mei Guanxi* (The changing relations among China, Japan, and the United States) (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1997); and Quansheng Zhao, "The Shift in Power Distribution and the Change of Major Power Relations," in *Future Trends in East Asian International Relations*, ed. Quansheng Zhao (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 49–78.

2. For a recent study on comparative foreign policy, see Steven Hook, ed., *Comparative Foreign Policy: Adaptation Strategies of the Great and Emerging Powers* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2002).