

Asia should avoid security plight set by NATO

With NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg having concluded a four-day trip to South Korea and Japan, the bloc's attempt to extend into Asia has been a topic of many international affairs observers. There is even discussion on Twitter whether the NATO should become NAPTO – the North Atlantic Pacific Alliance, and bring in Australia, Japan, India, New Zealand and many more.

The US-led military group's current bid to expand into Asia is actually Washington's attempt to revise the post-war international order. In the original so-called international order, NATO does not have any military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, let alone a military structure. Today, in ad-

dition to eastward expansion, the NATO is also extending its functions far eastward, characterized by enhanced cooperation with the US' allies and close partners in Asia.

The fundamental logic of their cooperation is the globalization of the so-called collective security system, the NATO's core value and foundation. Under such an arrangement, an aggressor against any one state is considered an aggressor against all other states.

The concept of the collective security system was born in the context of the Cold War. As a result, when NATO is trying to extend its collective security arrangement to the Asia Pacific, it is to extend Europe's Cold War architecture here, threatening to the security of the region.

The NATO is trying to add its Asian allies and close partners, such as Japan and South Korea, into its collective security arrangement by stepping up their cooperation. This would split the Asia Pacific, one of the most diverse region in the world, into two groups – one is under NATO's such arrangement, and another is not.

The so-called collective security is essentially selective security. When some of US allies and close partners in the Asia Pacific are included into such an arrangement, the selected group and the non-selected ones will be fallen into a deeper security dilemma.

That is to say that no matter what beautiful rhetoric the NATO uses as a pretext to ramp up cooperation with Seoul and

Tokyo, it will mean insecurity for Asian countries which are not under NATO's collective security system. Asia is standing at a crossroads. All regional countries should mull whether they head toward a path of grave security dilemma where contests in terms of security between two groups escalate, or solidify to avoid the region splitting into two and pursue their shared security.

To shun the treat of security dilemma triggered by potential NATO's expansion to Asia, it is critical for all regional countries, including China, Japan, South Korea, as well as countries in the Southeast and South Asia, to pursue shared security, instead of collective security.

The lessons of the Cold War are worth learning. Asia should

not repeat the same mistakes.

All Asia-Pacific countries should proceed from the whole situation and take a long-term perspective to pursue their shared security, rather than the so-called collective security which is propagandized by NATO for immediate interests. The prospect of collective security must be a less secure region. And this is a security trap set by the US-led group. All Asia-Pacific countries should stay vigilant toward NATO's attempt to impair the regional security.

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Is 'win-win' or 'zero-sum' the main global philosophy of international relations?

By Roland Boer

Is "win-win" or "zero-sum" the main global philosophy of international relations?

Westerners would say that "zero-sum" is the way the world works. This is the philosophy of "I win, you lose" – or "win-lose" – and it has a deep root in Western history. Think of the doctrine of election or the "chosen people": one group is chosen by God and the rest can go to hell. Through 500 years of Western imperialism and colonialism, this is how the West has treated the rest of the world.

My sense is that the West is in the minority on this question. Western countries comprise only a small portion of the world's population, and so their "win-lose" philosophy is also in the minority. This brings us to "win-win," which is a core principle of China's foreign policy. As we know, "win-win" arises from China's long cultural tradition.

So we have two philosophies competing – paradoxically – on the world stage. Thus far, it seems to be China vs the West, but we need to ask: do other countries have versions of "win-win"? And how do they deal with the West's "win-lose" approach?

They are many possible examples, but let us focus on Papua New Guinea (PNG), since it is increasingly important in Pacific and Southeast Asian relations. PNG's foreign policy follows the principle of "friends to all and enemies to none." PNG is not alone: the Solomon Islands has the same policy, as do other Pacific countries.

However, PNG often finds that it is caught between both approaches: it has more in common with China, but it also must deal with the West. To see how, let us consider PNG-China relations and PNG-Australia relations.

Chinese President Xi Jinping made an official visit to PNG ahead of the APEC leader's forum in November



2018. Earlier in 2018, PNG's prime minister had signed onto the Belt and Road Initiative, and President Xi's visit to PNG marked a significant enhancement of China-PNG relations. As the "Post-Courier" newspaper noted, PNG had achieved a "win-win" outcome with the visit. The paper stressed Xi's "wise parting message," who said that we should not expect one development model to fit all developing countries, since the latter should have more say on their development path of choice.

In June 2022, then Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited PNG. Again, many agreements were signed and China's economic partnership with PNG was producing results all the way from the state electricity grid to medical facilities. When welcoming Wang Yi, Prime Minister James Marape stressed PNG's "friends to all and enemies to none" foreign policy. Marape also said that the China-PNG relationship is "as solid and strong as ever," and that it "cannot be compromised or sabotaged."

By contrast, PNG-Australia relations are very different. For 60 years (1914-

1975), PNG was a colony of Australia, and for the 48 years since independence PNG has been treated very poorly. Reading through the PNG newspaper articles, one comes across a long list of grievances: a lack of recognition of the assistance from PNG soldiers and villagers to Australian troops during the struggle against Japan; "boomerang aid," or "aid" that benefits Australia and not PNG; the Australian bans on PNG agricultural products and on issuing visas to PNG citizens; and so on.

Clearly, "friends to all and enemies to none" is much more of a challenge for PNG in relation to Australia, since many in PNG struggle to see Australia as a "friend."

It was therefore not easy for the Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, to visit PNG in January 2023. Many were the grievances to be addressed and the discussions were difficult. At the joint press conference after the meetings, there was much "feel-good" talk about "friendship." Yet, commentators noted that Australia emphasised a postponed "security"

agreement, while PNG stressed economic development. A PNG newspaper observed, "Our most immediate need is to fix our economy, feed ourselves, and live quiet secure lives."

However, the Australian media tried to frame Albanese's visit in terms of "zero-sum." At the press conference, Marape was asked: what does the security agreement mean for PNG-China relations? Marape answered that these issues "were not before us." The PNG-China relationship remains the PNG-China relationship, he said. As for Australia, the relation is "particularly unique," so there was no need to bring "China or any other nation into the picture." In other words, we will deal with each country in our own way.

The hapless Australian media (and not a few of the ruling elite) were puzzled, since this answer did not suit their "win-lose" worldview – no matter how hard they tried to make it fit.

To return to my initial question: it seems that versions of "win-win" are more common in the world than "win-lose." We would need to consider more examples beyond PNG and the Pacific to confirm this conclusion, but the Pacific is a good start.

So what should be done about Western countries like Australia and their "zero-sum" philosophy? Given the deep cultural roots, it will take many lessons to unlearn this destructive philosophy. But perhaps they could begin with more time in PNG, and other Pacific countries, so as to learn more about "friends to all and enemies to none," and "win-win."

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