

A Farewell to Trans-Pacific Cosmopolitanism?

On the Passing of
Robert Scalapino,
Kim Kyung Won and
Yamamoto Tadashi

By Paul Evans

Three men from three nations, but one common legacy -- to have left a lasting mark on international affairs in the Asia-Pacific and to have nurtured an informed empathy among countries in the region. Paul Evans pays tribute to the passing of Robert Scalapino, Kim Kyung Won and Yamamoto Tadashi and explains why they were so influential.

DESPITE A LONG PERIOD of constructive economic and social transformation in most of Asia, the reduced likelihood of major inter-state war, and the current dynamism of trans-border human and cultural flows, this is a moment of rising nationalism, strategic tension, power transition and uncertainty. Leadership, wisdom and deep understanding are in short supply.

Between November 2011 and July 2012, the Asia-Pacific world lost three individuals who left a major mark on the region's international affairs. Robert Scalapino (1919-2011) was a towering figure in American academic and Asian policy circles for more than 60 years. Kim Kyung Won (1936-2012) was an academic star, Blue House policy advisor, diplomat and public intellectual who for more than four decades was intimately involved in making or commenting on many of the key decisions in South Korean foreign policy and its regional and global roles. Yamamoto Tadashi (1936-2012) was a tireless promoter of ideas, networks, exchanges, and dialogues with a focus on Japan's foreign policy, US-Japan relations and Asia-Pacific community building.

I only came to know each of them in the last 25 years of their lives. All three had near legendary status by that time. The setting was not

quite as their student, but many conversations and occasional collaborations in the fecund era of track-two dialogues, network building and multilateral processes across the Pacific and in Asia that proliferated as the Cold War receded.

Amid the ocean of commentary on policy, issues and domestic and regional dynamics, it is unfortunate that so little attention focuses on the intellectual leaders who have been the sinews and brains of the region's diplomacy and emerging architecture. Of the three, only Scalapino wrote a memoir,¹ more a chronicle of travels and events than an intellectual self-examination, and we await the biographies that should follow. This is a first and personal cut at their contemporary legacy and significance.

It is easy to speak of the *American* Scalapino, the *Korean* Kim and the *Japanese* Yamamoto. Each was well known in policy circles in their own country and regionally. What makes them collectively interesting is that despite their commitment to their own nations and to the management of immediate policy problems, all three took a longer view seeking to build ideas, institutions and habits of mind that could help manage and possibly remake a turbulent regional order.

¹ *From Leavenworth to Lhasa: Living in a Revolutionary Era* (Berkeley: IEAS Publication, 2008).

² Ezra Vogel, "In Memoriam: Robert Scalapino (1919-2011)," *China Quarterly*, 209, March 2012, p. 217.

³ Robert Scalapino, "Northeast Asia: The Search for a new Paradigm, An Introduction," in *Peace Forum*, No. 25, Winter 1997/98, The Graduate Institute of Peace Studies, Kyunghee University, p.1.

⁴ This draws on my longer essay, "Between Truth and Power: Kim Kyung-Won, 1936-2012," in Han Sung Joo, ed., *Agonies and Aspirations of a Liberal* (International Policy Studies Institute, 2013).

⁵ This quotation is from a transcript for the speech that I made and that was approved by Kim.

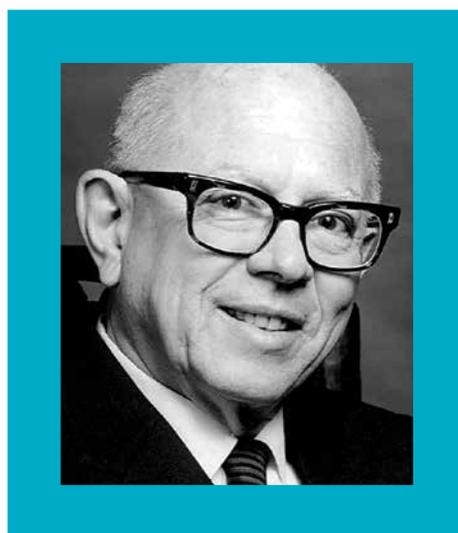
ROBERT SCALAPINO

Robert Scalapino was American-born and educated, having his initial first-hand exposure to Asia as a military translator during the Pacific War. Ezra Vogel described him after his death as "indefatigable traveller, omnipresent conference participant, prolific scholar, generous mentor, and public intellectual — the best known political science specialist on Asia in his generation."² The indefatigable traveller moniker was especially perceptive. Frequent flyer points were part of a personal mission based on the idea that being knowledgeable about fast-moving Asia meant keeping in touch on a face-to-face basis.

His 39 books and more than 500 articles centred on domestic politics in Japan, Korea and China and on regional developments and US policy options. In 41 years as a professor at the University of California at Berkeley and as the founder of the Institute of East Asian Studies, he had an influence on hundreds of graduate students, many of them from Asia and many of whom, like Ogata Sadako and Han Sung Joo, went on to significant positions in their home governments and international organizations.

After his retirement in 1990, he accelerated his travel and played an active role in the expanding number of bilateral and multilateral meetings focused on regional political, economic and security matters. He saw new economic forces in play that transcended national boundaries and posed major challenges for political leaders and regimes, speaking often about "Natural Economic Territories" that were part of the political geography of a changing Asia. While a supporter of America's system of bilateral alliances, he was also an early advocate and participant in a range of multilateral dialogues emphasizing co-operative security approaches. Writing in 1997, he argued:

While national sovereignty will remain an important aspect of the political scene, the growing interde-



pendence of all nations (even North Korea will soon join the trend if it avoids collapse), dictates that certain critical decisions must be made collectively. Once such decisions have been made, moreover, the compliance of all parties to the agreement becomes a test of whether regional and global institutions can be effective. In these respects we are in an experimental age.³

One aspect of the experiment was his embrace of the concept of human security in the early 2000s, not as a magic elixir but as a concrete reality resulting from the new set of trans-national challenges, including climate change and environmental degradation, that demanded collective solutions from countries regardless of regime type.

Summarizing his own views about the complexity and possibilities of the region as "cautiously optimistic," he tended to focus on practical improvements and the forces in play rather than ideal arrangements in stating what he was cautiously optimistic about. He did not try to apply European ideas about security communities or supra-national institutions to Asia, one path to cosmopolitanism, but believed that deeper collaboration was necessary, desirable and possible.

KIM KYUNG WON

To say that Kim Kyung Won lived in what Chinese writers call "interesting times" is an understatement. Born in what became North Korea, a refugee to the South during the war, his life spanned a turbulent period in Korean history and regional affairs: civil war that he remembered as "worse than hell," division and enduring enmity on the peninsula, tumultuous economic and social transformation in South Korea, the South's transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, and the emergence of middle-power and internationalizing Korea as a player on the global stage.⁴

Kim was the first Korean to complete a doctoral degree in the Government Department at Harvard University, writing a thesis supervised by the unlikely combination of Henry Kissinger and Stanley Hoffmann on how conservative Europe dealt with revolutionary France, a surrogate way for him to analyze how South Korea could manage a fateful political struggle and find a *modus vivendi* with Communist China and North Korea.

Later teaching in Canada, the US and South Korea, his writing focused on the social foundations of ideology and nationalism in contemporary Korea. He tried to explain why South Korean elites had little of either save for anti-communism. In realist fashion he focused on the balance of power politics and national interests that were reshaping America's Asia policy in the Kissinger-Nixon era of détente.

For 13 years he stood on the front line of Korean diplomacy as what some called Korea's "Kimsinger," first as the senior foreign policy advisor to President Park Chung-hee and then for two further years in the government of President Chun Doo Hwan. He served as South Korea's ambassador to the UN from 1981-84 and then to the US until 1988. Later in a speech at York University in 1994 he recalled:



I worked for the three authoritarian governments in South Korea that were certainly not headed by Jeffersonian democrats. To understand these governments you need to either be a complete cynic or have a sense of history. Democracy comes only if the bricks are laid one at a time and are accompanied by economic modernization. Eventually, it becomes inevitable, the only possible choice. In South Korea authoritarian government became untenable because the Korean bourgeoisie would no longer tolerate being treated like children. Democracy comes not for ethical, moral or idealistic reasons but rather for pragmatic and practical ones.⁵

After leaving government Kim played several roles as columnist, commentator and public intellectual, writing frequently for Korean papers, helping found the Seoul Forum for International Affairs and the Institute of Social Sciences, lecturing occasionally, attending dozens of international meetings, and taking on occasional assignments, including as head of the "Commission on the Internationalization of Korea" created by President Kim Young Sam.

In hundreds of essays, newspaper columns and speeches that combined gravitas with a fine

6 Kim Kyung-Won, "Maintaining Asia's Current Peace," *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 1997-98, p. 55.

sense of humor and sardonic wit, he championed deterrence and bilateral diplomacy but, like Scalapino, also encouraged the nascent efforts to create regional institutions, all the while politely skeptical that they could be realized in the near future. Pressed to identify the path to peace, he turned to Kant and his study of European philosophy to focus on the creation of constitutional regimes founded on the rule of law and international institutions. In the meantime, real-time, Asia-Pacific was in "the extremely dangerous position of having to restructure old peace mechanisms, such as bilateral alliances and the Korean Armistice Agreement, while trying to develop multilateral institutions ... which are still in their infancy."⁶

As with Scalapino, to Kim the path to improvement in both domestic institutions and regional arrangements lay through responses to material conditions and practical problems, not through great leaps of imagination. Yet in thinking about what was desirable beyond what was immediately possible, his European-inflected cosmopolitanism was not far from the surface.

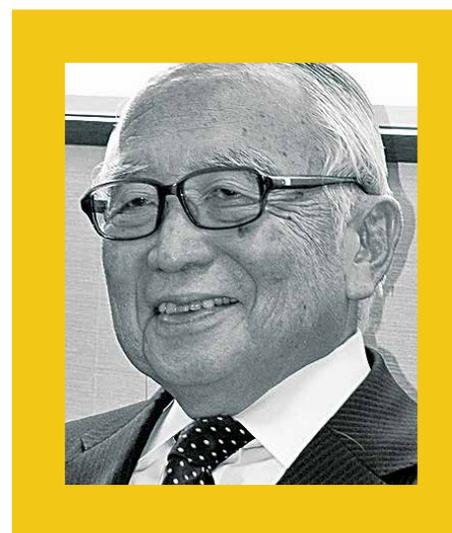
YAMAMOTO TADASHI

Yamamoto Tadashi also did graduate studies in the US. He returned to Japan committed to the idea that a key to internationalizing Japan and improving Japan's relations with the US and, later, its Asian neighbors was deeper dialogue and exchange conducted on a non-governmental basis. He established a think-tank type of organization, the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), in 1970, and engineered exchange programs connecting members of the Diet and their US counterparts in Congress. He was a founding force in the creation in 1967 of the Shimoda Conference, the first full-fledged, non-governmental policy dialogue between Japan and the US. Later he co-ordinated the Asia component of the Trilateral Commission.

By the early 1990s, his main focus had shifted toward building an Asia-Pacific community, involving Americans and Canadians, but centred on Asia. The JCIE hosted, supported and chronicled a range of track-two policy dialogues, most important of which was the Asia-Pacific Agenda Project (APAP), which organized mul-

Their most important contribution could have been the culturing of informed empathy, the ability to understand and listen deeply to others even when not agreeing with them. Research, dialogue, exchange were not objectives in themselves, but part of a process. Walking in another's shoes is a first step down a cosmopolitan pathway.

7 Foreword to ASEAN-Japan Co-operation: A Foundation for East Asian Community (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2003), p. vii.



multiple meetings and projects linking individuals and research institutes around the region. "Those engaged in organizing these activities," he later remembered, "believe that a strong and broadly based network of policy research institutions and intellectual leaders is essential to developing a robust Asia-Pacific community. One role of such institutions and leaders is to provide policy advice to the respective governments independent of but complementary to the internal governmental analyses."⁷

He also felt that these processes could help open Japan. A strong proponent of the Non-Profit Organizations bill, he saw Japan's international connections as contributing to the reform of governance at home in which elites should move from governing to governance, empowering individuals and non-state actors. A strong believer in civil society and what would later be called non-governmental public diplomacy, he valued the independence of his institution and the special role of NGOs and NPOs inside Japan and across the region.

Two of the major projects under the APAP banner focused on work with Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi on the human security agenda (he also served as Executive Director of Obuchi's "Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century") and Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori on HIV AIDS and public health in Asia. He played a special role in connecting Japanese internationalists in the Liberal Democratic Party, business and bureaucracy to elites and ideas abroad.

In building an Asia-Pacific community, he was both pragmatic and visionary. A devout Catholic deeply influenced by the Vatican II process, his sense of community was not that of a treaty-based community similar to that in Europe but, as he once described it, a family with a shared mission. The mechanism was an inter-generational dialogue and human networks centred in Asia that included Europeans and Americans, but was not dominated by them. When once asked what he felt his most significant accomplishment, he referred to the dialogues he had helped to conduct on improving Japan-Korea relations.

He has been compared in significance to the industrialist Eiichi Shibusawa, deeply involved in international exchanges in the prewar period, and Shigeharu Matsumoto, founder of the International House of Japan, in the postwar era. Regionally, he has been heralded as the "Jean Monnet of Asia."

NURTURING INFORMED EMPATHY

Individually, the three men had as much impact on their home countries' views of the world and foreign policies as any intellectuals of their generation. Regionally, all were influential in shaping bilateral relations, especially involving the US, as well as facilitating the nascent multilateralism growing within Asia and across the Pacific.

Collectively, they have three things in common that may be of special significance at a time when

legacies of the past, historical memories, nationalism and strategic uncertainty abound.

First, each was a special form of nationalist and patriot who understood and advanced his country's national interests but who had a philosophical perspective to conceive them in a broad way and also look beyond them. All had lived through the turbulence of war or civil war. All three were hopeful that multilateral processes could take root in Asia, but were mindful of the obstacles they faced. All three understood the role that national interests and the struggle for power and sometimes survival play in international affairs. Yet all three looked for moments and opportunities when international co-operation could be deepened, conflict made less likely.

Second, they do not scan easily, politically or theoretically. International relations theorists will despair at their lack of rigor in embracing a realist, constructivist or liberal perspective on the world. It is no less easy to pin a label of conservative or liberal on them in their domestic context. Instead, it's best to identify them as internationalists who combined a mixture of realism, open-mindedness, pragmatism and cosmopolitanism.

Third, they all believed in the virtues of deep thinking and constant contact. Curiously, though active in so many of the bilateral and regional dialogues in the past quarter-century, I never heard any of the three make the case for the primacy of confidence-building and trust-building measures, the main prescriptions advanced by a generation of co-operative security advocates. It was not that they didn't feel these would be valuable but rather that they saw them as partial and incomplete.

Rather, their most important contribution could have been the culturing of informed empathy, the ability to understand and listen deeply to others even when not agreeing with them. Research, dialogue, exchange were not objectives in themselves, but part of a process. Walk-

ing in another's shoes is a first step down a cosmopolitan pathway. Kim Kyung-Won often said that knowledge of the other does not necessarily lead to sympathy or agreement. He argued that it was in fact the deep knowledge that North and South Koreans had of each other that made them such fierce enemies. But improvement was impossible without it.

Perhaps their enduring message is that despite the constraints imposed by the politics of survival, rivalry and competition, fatalism is avoidable and progress possible if based on the capacity for empathy and not losing sight of the possibilities for co-operation when circumstances and leadership permit. Whether this can lead to a transcendence and transformation of Asian international affairs is the question they have left to their successors.

Paul Evans is Professor of Asian and trans-Pacific international relations at the Institute of Asian Research and the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia. His first book was a biography of John King Fairbank, his most recent a dictionary of Asia-Pacific security terminology, and his next, *Engaging China: Myth, Aspiration and Strategy in Canadian Policy from Trudeau to Harper*, is due for publication by the University of Toronto Press in March 2014.