

**ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY:NEW DEFINITIONS, EVOLVING REGIONALISM**

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In pinpointing the applications of a new security model for the Asia-Pacific region in the nineties, the analyst is perhaps to be guided only by one precautionary restraint: that nothing is really familiar or simple in the world that marks the "end of history" and that the onset of the Pacific Century in Asia is characterized not so much by receding threats as by growing uncertainties. At the same time, the pronounced seismicity released by shattered spheres of influence of the Cold War has not made its presence felt in this region. Pressure points here are not of recent origin: they are instead, both residues of Cold War confrontation and problems of how the power generated by economic advancement is to be tamed for regional stability.

Post-Cold War disorder or entropy has unleashed the forces of ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, and secessionary nationalism in many parts of the world. Most of the Asia-Pacific region however, seems to have escaped the effects of these phenomena so far. The situation is defined as relatively stable with what a recent Chinese commentary called a "multipolar tendency of coexistence of many kinds of forces."<sup>1</sup> The region is seen as having accommodated these forces long before the end of the Cold War so that there is thus no *sturm und drang* resultant from the collapse of a bi-polar international system in the balance of

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<sup>1</sup>"Commentary" on Current International Situation in *Guangming Ribao*, March 23, 1993, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: China (hereinafter referred to as FBIS-CHI), (March 30, 1993), p.5

forces in the area. It is also generally accepted that no new flash points of conflict have emerged in the region and that the steady, spectacular, economic development of most regional actors has been a force for promotion of stability. The region's leaders talk of the grand evolution from the "power game" to the "wealth game", and of the shift from geo-political emphasis to geo-economic emphasis.

Why then the need for discussion of security structures for this region? For one, the region has known conflict in the past. The larger countries are aware of the possibilities that exist for expanding the scope of their regional strategies and developing their national strengths in a comprehensive manner, while the smaller nations are uneasy about the future that lies ahead. These are territorial states with their patterns of conflict, however subliminal, and with their quota of internal tensions, whether central or peripheral. Most countries of the region grapple with the challenges of development, the preservation of national sovereignty, the rising expectations of their peoples, and access to the resources that will provide the growth and prosperity that ensures stability and security. The absence of overt conflict in the region does not in itself suggest any pervasive sense of security. Thus, conventional views of "stability in the east" versus "turbulence in the west" do not sufficiently describe the situation in the Asia-Pacific. Perhaps the situation has been best described in a recent comment by a Japanese foreign ministry official who described the security situation in the Asia-Pacific as "very much muddled", where "everybody is afraid of everybody else"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> In meeting with Fellows, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, at Tokyo, March 29, 1993

## **Multidimensional Concept of Security in a New World Order**

Within the region itself, there are multi-dimensional views of what the new world order should aspire to be. The leadership of a major country - China - stresses the importance of the affirmation of national sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs and the prerogative of the right to development as being the basis for definition of this new world order while Burma's imprisoned democratic leader Aung San Suu K yi has warned of the pitfalls of a culture of contentment that can miss the urgency of the need to address democratic and political reform. She adds that the "greatest threats to global security today come not from the economic deficiencies of the poorest nations but from religious, racial (or tribal) and political dissensions raging in those regions where principles and practices which could reconcile the diverse instincts and aspirations of mankind have been ignored, repressed and distorted."<sup>3</sup> An Asian consensus of opinion on the subject of the new world order has not yet crystallized.

The determination of what security framework is best adaptable to the requirements of the Asia-Pacific region must not only identify what threats or contingencies such a framework must address but also what dimensions the concept of security has come to acquire in a changed world situation. Do the conditions exist for the development of a "security community" in the Asia-Pacific region where such a community comprises a group of nations that has "become integrated and in which there is real assurance that the members of the community will not fight each other physically but will settle their disputes some other

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<sup>3</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi, written speech delivered by Dr. Michael Aris at Oxford University on May 19, 1993

way"?<sup>4</sup> How is the geographical scope of the region to be defined? The determinism of economic growth and the linkages created by it need not always correspond with the strategic limits within which security concerns are to be addressed. Do the various regions or sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific exist in their autonomous *cui de sacs*? The strategic reach of powers like China affects more than just Northeast or Southeast Asia but also Central and South Asia . At the same time, growing economic integration entails a reworking of traditional concepts of sovereignty and territorial frontiers, and also of standard definitions of national security.

National security in a changed world is increasingly coming to be regarded as a multi-dimensional concept. Non-traditional issues and concerns, including unhindered access to the global market, the possession of harmful weapons technology by unstable regimes, competition for maritime resources, the threats of transnational religious fundamentalism and state-sponsored terrorism, as well as humanitarian intervention are being incorporated into the concept. The symbiotic nature of a global civil society and economic interdependence are increasingly coming to define the world order. Awareness of the interrelationship between domestic development and the international environment is increasing globally, and the Asia-Pacific region is no exception. In China, for instance, in the wake of the Tiananmen Square incident, and also the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the difficulty of sequestering domestic affairs from global tendencies towards democratization

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<sup>4</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, "Regionalism and the Quest for Security: ASEAN and the Cambodian Conflict", *Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 46, No, 2, Winter 1993, pp 439-467; the definition of "security community" is quoted by the author from Karl W. Deutsch et al, "Political Community and the North Atlantic Area", at footnote 13, p.442

was felt acutely. The defense of China's political system from external threat became a top priority for the Chinese leadership.

Within Asia there are emerging definitions of security threat that center on economic questions. Views are expressed that the "biggest threat" is posed by the possible breakdown of the global trading system, the breakdown of the Uruguay Round and GATT. Problems of protectionism and "managed trade" are seen as constituting a "serious security problem" because of the damage inflicted on economic development, which in turn harms political development and social development and endangers the security situation.<sup>5</sup>

Global interdependence perforates national sovereignty and the imperatives of regional cooperation in the economic field exert their influence across national frontiers. Growth triangles are considered a "new model of subregional economic cooperation" in Asia and have become or, are in the process of becoming, concrete realities in the South China-Hong Kong-Taiwan sector, the Bohai coast of China, the west coast of South Korea and northern Kyushu and Yamaguchi in Japan and between Singapore, Johore in Malaysia and the Riau Archipelago of Indonesia. The growth triangle is defined as a "particular Asian solution to regional integration among countries at different stages of economic development and with different social and economic systems."<sup>6</sup> Special development zones, the opening of closed

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Noordin Sopiee, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 1993

<sup>6</sup> William Thomson, Vice-President of the Asian Development Bank as quoted by Xinhua, April 8, 1993 in FBIS-CHI, April 8, 1993, p.7. The "growth quadrangle" is another variation on this concept. Thailand has proposed the upgradation of the upper Mekong basin region of Thailand, Burma, Laos and China's southern Yunnan province into a growth quadrangle which covers transportation, navigation, irrigation, agriculture, fisheries and livestock, and environmental aspects in addition to cooperative use of water resources. In strategic terms, the roads constructed under this project would particularly benefit China by providing access to

frontiers to border trade, the building of roads,' bridges and the facilitating of easier communications are other offshoots of this process of interdependence. The Hong Kong/Taiwan/Singapore-ization of select regions on the periphery of mainland China creates its own tensions vis a vis the geo-political impulses of China's center of authority. The idea of China as a "civilization-state" of interlocking criss-crossing networks among Chinese communities spread all over the region creates its own challenge to the orthodox concept of a One China based on ideological and territorial grounds or a historic Middle Kingdom consciousness. Conversely, the growth of a Chinese identity that traverses territorial borders and the new dimensions being added to the definition of being Chinese, may result in the consolidation of new faults along civilizational and ethnic lines in Southeast Asia as countries like Indonesia and Malaysia with significant Chinese communities and suspicions of the latter's role, react to such a trend.

Traditional concepts of sovereignty and security are also subject to erosion today by the accentuated emphasis on humanitarian intervention based on expressions of a universal morality versus national priorities, state sovereignty and the inviolability of borders. Western norm-setting regarding standards of liberal democracy arouses opposition and controversy in many Asian countries today. The Bangkok Declaration adopted at the Asian regional human rights preparatory meeting for the World Human Rights Conference , and containing the "aspirations and commitments" of the Asian region on human rights reaffirmed the principles of respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal

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international sea routes from Yunnan via Thailand's eastern port of Laem Chabang and opening a new land transport link from China to ASEAN countries.

affairs of States, emphasized that the right to development is a universal and inalienable right and stressed the non-use of human rights as an instrument of political pressure.<sup>7</sup> An interesting debate also surrounds the concept of development as a human right with China, in particular, opposing the Western view that economic development should be based on freely elected governments and respect for human rights. It is further stressed that the pre-condition for the right to development is the right of national self-determination rather than individual freedoms with such self-determination including full sovereignty over natural wealth and resources of the country concerned.<sup>8</sup> In much of Southeast and Northeast Asia, the view often expressed is that Asians have their own set of values concerning human rights and human rights-related intervention is seen as a threat to national security and the defense of core national values.

### **Economic growth and security**

Economic development is seen in most of the Asia-Pacific as the panacea for most problems and political stability as the necessary pre-condition for such economic development ("political stability promoting economic development and economic development promoting political stability"<sup>9</sup>). The former Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Y. Nakasone also links the issue of economic growth being related to security. In his view, giving the opportunity of economic growth to developing countries in order to increase the number of people in the

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<sup>7</sup> Xinhua, April 2, 1993, in FBIS-CHI, April 6, 1993, pp. 5-6

<sup>8</sup> Gu Chunde, "Right to Development: A Basic Human Right" in *Beijing Review* No. 19, May 10-16, 1993, pp. 10-11 in FBIS-CHI, May 12, 1993, pp. 12-13

<sup>9</sup> As stated by an Asian participant at Conference on Asia-Pacific Basin: Trends to the Year 2000, Harvard University, May 11, 1993

middle class will itself work for political stability - this stratum of society would underpin democracy. It is this vision of an "East Asian economic mode]" (or "developmental market economy") which can ensure prosperity and development in the region, according to Mr. Nakasone.<sup>10</sup>

Economic growth in most countries of the Asia-Pacific region has led to an expanded military capacity and an increase in defense budgets for the procurement of sophisticated weapons. The very process assumes that instability is anticipated in the region. In the post-Cold War era, Japan has the world's second-largest defense budget - after that of the United States. Reports speak of the region's air defense expenditure for 1992 as totalling over U.S. \$ 3.3 billion. The island of Singapore, with a population of only 2.7 million, spent U.S. \$ 1.8 billion on defense in 1990.<sup>11</sup> China's economic growth and regime emphasis on bridging the technological gap in military weaponry with developed countries has led to steady increases in defense spending since 1989. The emphasis on maritime security has placed the development of a blue water navy for China at the forefront of such plans. Wealth would appear to multiply insecurity here and sharpen nationalist aspirations to safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity on the basis of military strength.

Purchases of new and technologically sophisticated equipment, and arms acquisitions in many South-east Asian nations suggest a shift from tackling insurgency of a domestic nature to conventional warfare priorities. The process has marked the emergence of a new

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<sup>10</sup> Yasuhiro Nakasone and Lee Kwan Yew, "A Message from Asia to President Clinton", Tokyo; *International Institute of Global Peace*, 1993, p.21

<sup>11</sup> Hormuz P. Mama, "Tensions mount within the Asia-Pacific region", *International Defense Review* 8/1992, p.732



economic cold war in Asia. U.S. sources recently warned that Russian arms sales in the Asia-Pacific region could upset the strategic balance. Russian arms sales, according to a statement attributed to President Boris Yeltsin, were worth U.S. \$ 1.8 billion in 1992 and Vietnam was reported as having suspended talks with Russia on the future of Cam Ranh Bay military base because it is displeased with Moscow's growing arms trade with Beijing<sup>12</sup>. Malaysia started negotiating with the Russians for the purchase of MiG29 aircraft and Mi35 helicopters in 1991. Russia has also approached Indonesia, the Philippines and Burma with attractively priced arms. A Singapore-based defense analyst recently noted that "Arms sales have always been rather important in terms of diplomacy" and that "Seeing the Russians making inroads suggests a further reduction in US influence."<sup>13</sup> The US is reported to have offered F16 and also possibly *F/A18* aircraft to the Malaysians in a bid to stave off the Russian deal. Indonesia has ordered three new German submarines which would boost its offensive naval capability besides purchasing 39 naval vessels from the former East German navy. <sup>14</sup> Arms sales by China bring both the finance and the influence required to make it a significant presence in the region and to meet to some extent, the costs of military modernization, addressing the dilemma of "too little cash and too many responsibilities". 45% of China's total arms exports between 1987-1991 went to the Asia-Pacific region and China was ranked 4th among the top 15 exporters of major conventional arms to the developing countries

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<sup>12</sup> *South China Morning Post*, March 27/28 1993, p.8

<sup>13</sup> Derek Da Cunha, defense analyst at the Singapore Institute of Southeast Asia Studies quoted in Michael Vatikiotis and Melana Zyla, "Scrambled Jets", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 18, 1993, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 18, 1993, pp.10-11

during 1986-1990.<sup>15</sup> Reports also speak of the "mounting evidence" that China is shipping missile technology to Pakistan despite verbal assurances by China that it has accepted the provisions of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Defense cooperation between China and Pakistan is described as "an enduring relationship"<sup>16</sup>. Thailand and Burma have also made substantive arms purchases from China in recent years.

This spurt in arms sales to the region, and the growth in sophisticated arms acquisitions, engenders its own reaction among most of the countries involved to restrictions imposed by multilateral regimes for arms control. The trend also illustrates the difference in approaches to the question between two major regional players, China and Japan. China, North Korea, Pakistan, Myanmar and Singapore were the five Asian states which abstained when the UN General Assembly's First Committee approved a resolution to set up an arms sales register while Japan sponsored the resolution.<sup>17</sup> At the 89th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi in April 1993, the Chinese delegate, Peng Qingyuan outlined China's stand on "transparency in arms transfer (TIAT)" stating that in the pursuit of TIAT, "the fundamental principle of undiminished national security" must be observed. Chinese opposition to the use or threat of force in "displays of hegemony and power politics" were once again stressed as also the incumbency of countries with the largest and most advanced nuclear and conventional arsenals to drastically reduce such weapons and "their naval and air

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<sup>15</sup> Gerald Segal, "Managing New Arms Races In the Asia/Pacific", *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1992, p. 92.

<sup>16</sup> Mushahid Hussain, "Pakistan-China defense cooperation, an enduring relationship", *International Defense Review*, 2/1993 pp.108-111

<sup>17</sup> Gerald Segal, "Managing New Arms Races", p. 97

forces in particular, while taking the lead in making public information on their arsenals and the deployment of their forces."<sup>18</sup> Such a view implies that different security conditions apply in each sub-region of the Asia-Pacific and that imposing a multilateral system of control on arms transfers will encounter obstacles created by definitions of national security and the dictates of bilateral relations with countries designated as "friends" having "legitimate" defense concerns.

Economic growth has also helped countries like South Korea to acquire political influence in the region and also to lessen their security anxieties to some extent. Any sense of "econophoria" that lulls regional players into assuming that intra-regional economic cooperation and networking will prevent the occurrence of conflicts determined by traditional concepts of defense of national sovereignty, historically claimed territories and ideological differences may however, be misplaced. In fact, the economic growth of countries like China is accompanied by a demonstrated propensity to achieve military modernization and conflicts of the future may concern the defense of economic interests including the protection of energy resources in the South China Sea.

Economic growth can also accentuate disparities between regions within countries with a resultant awakening of public expectations and demands for "equitable" distribution of the fruits of development. The tapping of resource potential in a particular region can lead to popular unrest generated by fears of influx of outside groups and also to the growth of secessionist movements. The conflict generated between the imperatives of economic development and the protection of the environment and rights of indigenous peoples can also

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<sup>18</sup> "China's Stand on Arms Transfer", *Beijing Review*, May 2-9, 1993, pp 8-9.

cause social tensions. Security in neighboring countries can be threatened by refugee influxes generated by discrimination against ethnic minorities or their displacement by settlement of people from outside the area or province concerned.

**The Asia-Pacific: no strict definitions of scope**

There are no strict definitions of the scope of the Asia-Pacific region. The security perceptions of various sub-regions of this region have inner and outer perimeters which overlap with other sub-regions. A broad definition would suggest a scope extending from the Bering Strait to the Persian Gulf while a southeast/northeast Asia-centered definition would specify dimensions that stretch from the Kuriles to the Straits of Malacca. The exclusion of areas like South and Central Asia from the latter ambit may not be sustainable in the medium and long term. India's security concerns for instance, do not focus exclusively on Pakistan but on China also; the situation in Burma and the military expansion plans of the State Law and Order Restoration Commission (SLORC) has direct implications for the northeastern flank of India's frontier; and India's Nicobar Islands border the coast of Sumatra. The growth of religious "particularism" in Kashmir cannot be seen as divorced entirely from the threats of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia including Chinese Xinjiang. Attempts to formulate and establish a nuclear weapons-free zone in South Asia, encompassing India and Pakistan have encountered widespread opposition in India not only because of the global reach of nuclear proliferation but also because such steps do not bring China into the verification regime, or induce it to join the disarmament process and agree to discontinue

testing.<sup>19</sup> Persistent reports about nuclear installations on the Tibetan plateau <sup>20</sup>, although vehemently denied by the Chinese Government, receive considerable attention in India. China's nuclear reach, all said and done, extends well into South Asia. Similarly, the exclusion of Central Asia from any consideration of security issues in the Asia-Pacific is also not realistic. Kazakhstan, the largest of the new states in Central Asia, has a considerable amount of nuclear weapons on its territory ("more than any other Asian state", according to some reports), and the future of its nuclear arsenal is a matter of concern for the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

Current attempts by countries in the region, most specifically the ASEAN group, to construct a dialogue on security issues have focussed more on the uncertainties generated by the scaling down of American military presence in Asia after the Cold War, the growth of Chinese military strength and ambitions, Russian aims and intentions, and the possible recrudescence of Japanese militarism. Henry Kissinger's recent comment that Asia today has "some of the appearance of 19th century Europe" fits this perspective when it speaks of the region as having three "Great Powers" of comparable potential - Japan, China and Russia - and a "tier of somewhat less powerful states whose alignments could determine the balance - like Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and other ASEAN countries". In this scenario, the United States is identified as a "balancer", which "like 19th century Britain is increasingly tempted to retreat into splendid isolation and to intervene only after its interests have already

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<sup>19</sup> See K. Subrahmanyam, "An Equal-Opportunity NPT" in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 1993 pp. 37-39

<sup>20</sup> John Ackerly and the International Campaign for Tibet, "Nuclear Installations on the Tibetan Plateau", *China Rights Forum*, Spring 1993, pp4-8

been challenged".<sup>21</sup>

### **The end of the Cold War brings new uncertainties without burying old threats**

While the end of the Cold War in Asia has not resulted in any seismicity of the Balkans sort, it would not be inaccurate to state that the possibilities of incontrovertible change in the security situation confront the nations in the region. The old strategic triangle between the United States, China and the erstwhile Soviet Union has broken down, Russia is still far away from recouping a powerful Asian presence for itself, and the growth in Chinese military strength has raised fears about China filling a strategic "vacuum" in the region. The ongoing debate in Japan about the country's external role, domestic political change and the uncertainties inherent in the US-Japan relationship induces a further sense of *fin de siecle* in viewing the region. Hovering over all this is the real possibility that domestic concerns and priorities will occupy center-stage in US government policy resulting in a down-sizing of American security commitments and military presence.

Against this background, three commonly identified causes of security concern in the Asia-Pacific region are : 1) the possibility of Japan becoming a military power; 2) the possible withdrawal of the United States from Asia and its reversion to protectionism and isolationism and 3) the possibility that China may adopt a "new geopolitical policy"<sup>22</sup>. More specifically identified flash-points are the tensions in the Korean Peninsula, China's Taiwan question, and the dispute over the ownership and control of the Spratly Islands in the South

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<sup>21</sup> Henry Kissinger, "America in Asia: Don't Disengage and Do Consult", *International Herald Tribune*, June 14, 1993

<sup>22</sup> Former Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone in interview with Fellows, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University at Tokyo, March 29, 1993

China Sea. Regional rivalries caused by the growing naval power of countries like China (whose capabilities will be further enhanced by the acquisition of a naval base with submarine operating capacity in Hong Kong, in 1997) are other potential sources of friction. Tensions between India and Pakistan over Kashmir continue to stalk the security situation in South Asia. Uncertainties also confront the situation in Cambodia. Cambodia is described as the "thorn in the flesh" of the region and many ASEAN countries fear that they will become to Cambodia what the European Community has become to a dismembered Yugoslavia. The possibility that the Khmer Rouge plans the eventual partition of the country along lines similar to the Franco-Siamese demarcation of 1893 has been mentioned in this context.<sup>23</sup>

### **Japan, China and the United States: new directions?**

The Japanese dilemma today is that it can no longer play "Sancho panza to the knight" or continue being the "incomplete" superpower. A senior Japanese diplomat recently identified the current phase of Japanese foreign policy as one in which the Japanese are expected to operate in rather than adapt to the new global environment - a totally new experience for Japan.<sup>24</sup> Japan also faces the problems of harmonizing the domestic political process with the international political process and coming to terms with its history. There are residues of the cold war in Japanese political structure and mental fatigue within the Liberal Democratic party with the need for restructuring and rethinking party politics being greatly felt. Japan's alienation builds its own smokescreen around Japan's intentions - so

<sup>23</sup> Michael Vatikiotis, "Asean Nightmare", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 27, 1993 pp. 12-13

<sup>24</sup> Meeting with Fellows, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, at Tokyo, March 30, 1993

much so that while on the one hand Japan is blamed for timorousness on issues of security, on the other any talk of Japan playing a more active role in collective security is automatically assumed as signalling its militarist ambitions.

Japan has consistently sworn its loyalty to the terms of the US-Japan Security Treaty . Yet there are regional concerns about Japan's future intentions as were voiced at a recent conference in Tokyo on Asia's Role in the Changing World Order. Speaking at the conference, the Singapore Prime Minister said that "Japan's reach and aspirations are global. But they cannot be made clear" and that there is "no firm consensus either in Japan, in the region or across the Pacific on what Japan's role should be".<sup>25</sup> A majority of Japanese would favor the growth of Japanese power based on Japan's "software" rather than "hardware" capabilities - increasing investment and technology flows from Japan to the rest of the region and strengthening Japan's status as a premier trading nation. The Japanese are certainly sensitive to the possibilities of translating wealth into substantive military power; but at the same time they feel acutely the need for Japan to be more than just the world's richest nation. The 1992 "Bluebook" of the Japanese Foreign Ministry proclaims that Japan's actions affect virtually all issues concerning the building of a future international order and that Japan must articulate to the international community its global vision and objectives.<sup>26</sup>

The workings of Japanese foreign policy are traditionally geared to the protection of Japan's foreign trade interests, the disbursement of official development assistance (ODA) and the management of technology flows. In addition to this, Japan is now articulating with

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<sup>25</sup> *Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 14/15, 1993

<sup>26</sup> Xinhua, April 2, 1993 in FBIS-CHI, April 6, 1993, p.10



greater emphasis its stance on such issues as nuclear non-proliferation, environmental protection, restrictions on export of dual-use technology, activization of the global arms register and the attachment of conditions (including those related to human rights, democratization and low military budgets) for the disbursement of ODA. This "banner-weaver" approach enables Japan to carve its niche as a planner and proponent of policies that embrace multilateralism rather than the dictates of pure bilateralism.<sup>27</sup> Similar intentions underly Japan's proposals for a regional security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific.

In July 1991, Japan proposed that regional security should be discussed within an enhanced ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC). At Bangkok in January 1993, Prime Minister Miyazawa outlining Japan's policy towards ASEAN said that a key element of this policy was the "promotion of political and security dialogue among countries of the region".<sup>28</sup> The statement echoed recommendations made in a report released on December 25, 1992 by the Prime Minister's Council on Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region for the *21st* Century. That report also suggested that the usage of the ASEAN PMC as a forum for regional security discussions could evolve into a more formal structure resembling the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In a bid to expand the regional framework for cooperation and the creation of a common stake in economic security, Japan has additionally suggested the strengthening of cohesion between the three Indochinese states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and ASEAN.

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<sup>27</sup> Takashi Inoguchi, "Japan's Foreign Policy in East Asia", *Cuffent History*, December 1992, pp. 408-409

<sup>28</sup> Paul Handley, "Japan's Clarion Call", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 28, 1993, pp. 10-11

The passage of the International Cooperation Law in the Japanese Diet in July 1992 allowed the dispatch of 600 Japanese peacekeepers to Cambodia. Mozambique is the second theater of such deployment. In Japan itself, the public consensus in favor of such involvement is slowly growing - by April 1993, some 70 % of the Japanese population was said to favor UN- peacekeeping involvement for Japan although the stress was on post-conflict maintenance of peace and not outright peace enforcement.

Japan's cautious forays into the field of multilateralism in relation to security are designed both to test regional reactions to this new role as well as to soothe regional sentiments which fear the revival of any militarist expansionism by Japan. These suspicions are most rampant in South Korea and China. There is an element of concern in Chinese observations<sup>29</sup> of the fact that Prime Minister Miyazawa stressed during his January visit to Indochina and ASEAN that Japan "assumes a grave responsibility towards the Asia-Pacific region". This assessment automatically assumes that there is a major change in Japan's Asian diplomacy and that the spelling out of "the Miyazawa Doctrine" has "participation" and playing a greater role in regional security as goals which are necessary for Japan to seek a standing as a big power. An attempt is also made to forecast that the next Step in Japan's peacekeeping venture, which has already garnered growing domestic support, will be the revision of the law governing the Japanese Self Defense Forces by adding a third task of contributing to international peace, to the already existing tasks of maintaining domestic order

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<sup>29</sup> Sun Yunjuan, "New Trend of Japan's Asian Diplomacy", *International Strategic Studies*, No.2, 1993, pp. 23-25

and defending against foreign aggression.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast, Japanese threat perceptions center more on Russia, the nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the diminution of the free trade regime, and restrictions being placed on the further consolidation of Japanese economic gains in the region. Japan's "main problem" with Russia centers around the dispute concerning the Northern Territories and contingencies posed by the unstable Russian situation. The far eastern part of Russia (in the Japanese view this is one of the most homogeneous regions of the Russian Republic and also a very conservative area) is still viewed as directly confronting Japan.<sup>31</sup> Japan wishes to emphasize that the fate of weapons deployed by the former Soviet Union in Asia is now uncertain and that there must be an increased flow of information about the whereabouts of these weapons. Thus, Japan's position is stated as going "far beyond the dispute over Japan's northern territories, which is often misunderstood; it concerns the level of Russian awareness of their military, economic, and social condition, as well as their potential to damage East Asian security as a whole."<sup>32</sup>

The downsizing of US military presence in Asia and the uncertainty surrounding China's future regional posture may induce Japan to redefine its defence priorities. The

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<sup>30</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser, "China's Security Perceptions, Interests and Ambitions", *Asian Survey*, Vol. xxxiii, NO.3, March 1993, p.257

<sup>31</sup> Hisahiko Okazaki, "The New Security Framework in Post-Cold War Asia"; paper presented at Conference on Asia-Pacific, Harvard University, May 1993, p.3

<sup>32</sup> Ryukichi Imai, "Asian Ambitions, Rising Tensions", *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 1993, p.34. Concern about Russian military strength in the Pacific theater is voiced also by China. See Luo Renshi, "New Situation of Arms Control and Disarmament in the Asia-Pacific Region and China's policy and Course of Action", *International Strategic Studies*, No. 1, 1993, p. 27

nuclear posture of an eventually unified Korea may also prompt Japan to engage in an expensive rearmament program including building missile defenses against a small number of nuclear missiles directed from the Korean Peninsula. Already there are reports<sup>33</sup> that Japan is refining its US made Patriot anti-missile system to counter missiles such as the Rodong-1, with a range of 1000 kilometers (600 miles) test-fired by North Korea in May 1993 and capable of hitting cities like Osaka, Nagoya and Kobe in Western Japan.

Many Japanese officials believe that it may take further time to establish a multilateral model for security in the Asia-Pacific. The realization has however, dawned on Japan that the concept of individual security constructed on the foundations of self-defense under a security umbrella provided by the United States or the incongruity of the world's largest debtor nation provisioning the security requirements of the largest creditor nation will have to be reworked. The debate concerns the future role to be played by Japan in collective security requirements under a U.N regime or a regional network and also the security profile that Japan should adopt in the event of a vast reduction of U.S military presence in the region. Underlying this are doubts about future trends in ties with the United States and fears that protectionist sentiments and managed trade systems may dilute the special nature of this relationship. There is thus a sense of urgency in Japan about ensuring that the Japanese economic development model gains widespread acceptance in Asia so that common values about economic matters diminish fears of any Japanese dominance of the region. Japan also regards the promotion of a global free trade regime in East and Southeast Asia as being of

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<sup>33</sup> "Japan Says North's Missile Can Hit Osaka and Kobe", *International Herald Tribune*, June 12/13 1993

utmost importance; the way it sees for this is a "soft institutionalization" of the regional economy through the propagation of Japanese management techniques and values regarding government-business relationships, rather than a "hard institutionalization" in the guise of proposals like the East Asian Economic Group (EAEG) originally proposed by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir.<sup>34</sup>

Despite providing for the first successful germination of the prospects for a regional dialogue on security in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan has not come up with specific initiative for the settlement of any outstanding disputes or differences in the region. It has also as yet been unable to live down its reputation of being ethnocentric, neo-mercantilist and unable to come to terms with its past history - impressions that continue to dominate the thinking of a number of countries in the Asia-Pacific. Despite Japan's formidable economic power, countries like China are still able to practice a "containment by guilt" strategy on the Japanese with considerable success.

Recent events in the checkered relationship between Japan and China have been characterized by an artificial sense of well-being. The visit of the Japanese Emperor to China in late 1992 was not marked by public remonstrations by the Chinese Government of Japan's historical excesses in China. It can be argued that at a time when China is consolidating its economic progress domestically, ensuring that its interests are protected abroad and building comprehensive national strength as the material foundation for national security (such strength being based on population, resources, economic power, science and technology, military affairs, culture, education and diplomacy), China can do with important support from the

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<sup>34</sup> Takashi Inoguchi, "Japan's Foreign Policy", p. 411

Japanese on such issues as its relationship with the United States. Prime Minister Miyazawa made an unprecedented plea to President Clinton supporting renewal of China's Most Favored Nation status during his U.S visit in May 1992 and Japan has affirmed to the southeast Asian nations that China is not a threat.<sup>35</sup>

The Chinese perspective of regional security in the Asia-Pacific is dominated by questions of reunification, peace and stability. The modernization of national defense is seen as a key requirement for national security. The present security situation is regarded as one of considerable fluidity and great change, where there are no friends or foes, where there are no relationships of complete dependency or complete opposition . This is a period of adjustment of strategic relations, of developing, but not fully exposed "contradictions"<sup>36</sup> Against this background, the Chinese are formulating their regional strategy for an order that stresses its opposition to hegemonism and power politics and support for the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Thus, China's "five proposals" for the establishment of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region are: 1) In developing relations, Asian countries should abide by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the UN Charter, respect each other,

<sup>35</sup> Zhongguo Xinwen She, April 17, 1993 in FBIS-CHI, April 19, 1993, p.2 quotes a report from Washington carried in *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* that Prime Minister Miyazawa "made a strong appeal to the United States to extend China's most-favored-nation status unconditionally". This was reported to be the first time that a Japanese prime minister had made such a request on a formal occasion to the United States.

*Beijing Review*, March 1-7, 1993, p.10, quoted in FBIS-CHI, March 3, 1993, pp.34-35, reported that during his ASEAN trip, Prime Minister Miyazawa told reporters in Bangkok that he and ASEAN leaders have a common view that China cannot be a threat to the peace in the region.

<sup>36</sup> Chen Xiaogong, "Several Characteristics of the Present International Situation", *International Strategic Studies*, NO.1, 1993, pp. 8-13

and cooperate on equal footing. They should oppose hegemonic acts which create spheres of influence, set up or participate in military blocs, build military bases, and station troops abroad; 2) All Asia-Pacific countries should commit themselves to developing good relations with countries around them and settle territorial disputes; disputes that cannot be settled can be shelved for the present. They should develop confidence-building measures; 3) There should be no regional arms race. Countries can however, develop their military strengths to a level commensurate with "legitimate defense needs". The United States and Russia should reduce their naval strengths in the region. Nuclear arms should not be redeployed from outside theaters into the Asia-Pacific region; 4) Nuclear powers in the region should affirm the principle of non-use of nuclear arms against non-nuclear countries. China supports the setting up of regional nuclear-free zones; 5) China supports the promoting of cooperation in science and technology in the region within regional organizations like APEC and ESCAP and the principle that the developed countries should help the developing in this regard.<sup>37</sup>

China's security interests are defined as becoming more and more regionalized in the changing world situation. Security on China's periphery is seen as especially important in this context since most perforations of Chinese sovereignty occur along this periphery. Events along China's coastal and land periphery could well exert a crucial influence on the course of future events in that country. The coastal zone, especially the South China economic zone, into which investment funds from Taiwan and the overseas Chinese and finance and information services from Hong Kong are attracted, is already articulating a new definition of

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<sup>37</sup> As stated by Chinese participant at Conference on Asia-Pacific, Harvard University, May 1993

being Chinese never imagined by founders of the People's Republic in 1949.<sup>38</sup> All of China's land borders are mainly the home of ethnic minority groups and the statistics indicate that over 20 ethnic minorities in the border areas belong to the same racial groups as people of neighboring countries or regions.<sup>39</sup> Chinese security planners are well aware of the potential for instability in these regions. The securing of a stable environment on the periphery, a situation that China believes it enjoys at present more than at any time since 1949, is a priority for the Chinese government. Military strategy is now focused on local wars and contingencies. No imminent security threats are publicly defined.

China's defense development strategy however suggests perspective planning that goes beyond dealing merely with local border area contingencies. The strategy is more than a stocking up on provender, it involves both the upgradation of hardware and combat capabilities as well as professionalization of the army. More mechanized corps are to be formed, the number of rapid reaction forces will increase, and weapons acquisitions from Russia are expected to be maintained. Strategic forces are to be improved in terms of

<sup>38</sup> Some observers see this as a crisis of China's legitimacy and identity. See Samuel S. Kim, "China as a Regional Power", *Current History*, September 1992, pp. 247-252. Referring to the growing assertiveness of China's civil society, Kim writes that the "implications of these enormous numbers wanting to become rich, and the accompanying social, political, and economic pressures, are staggering, especially when placed in the context of industrial modernization and shrinking ecological capacity" (Ibid. p. 250). The view from the mainland, where politics and economics have come to be divided from each other, is understandably different. Here it is said that the "South China economic zone, with cheap labor and a huge market in the mainland of China, the funds and international sales of Taiwan, and the finance and information services of Hong Kong, will eventually catch up with Japan and become a decisive force in the international arena." (*Beijing Review*, February 8-14, 1993, p.10)

<sup>39</sup> Jing Wei, "Border Trade in Minority Regions", *Beijing Review*, March 22-28, 1993, p.B. The space inhabited by China's 55 minorities makes up 64 percent of Chinese territory (Ibid. p.13)



penetration, survivability, accuracy and mobility, with a transformation from first-generation to second-generation missiles . The militia force is to be transformed into a regular reserve force and defence research and development is to keep up with the industrialized countries.

China's strategic focus in the short and medium term is being directed more and more to the securing of its sovereignty and territorial integrity along its south-western periphery and its coastal zones abutting the South China Sea. The border with Russia is not a source of tension and in the foreseeable future, Russia is not seen as a threat although there is a stress on the need for reduction of Russian naval presence in the East Asian region. With Japan seen as only a long-term threat with the military balance with that country being of crucial importance in the future, the Chinese security focus is directed at the Taiwan Straits, the disputed islands in the South China Sea (the Paracels and the Spratlys, the first group already under full Chinese control and the second partially controlled by China), the frontier with Burma, India, Pakistan and the new Central Asian Republics.

The reunification principle of regional security as defined by the Chinese is one on which the mainland safeguards the option of the use of force of arms to regain Taiwan. This contrasts starkly with China's otherwise concerted stress on "peace" and "development" as the pillars of its regional and global foreign policy. The evolution of a regional multilateral security mechanism in the Asia-Pacific may thus stumble on this aspect. The issue involves Taiwan's pursuit of a "pragmatic foreign policy" aimed at securing recognition for Taiwan as an independent regional actor, the growth in Taiwan's defense budget and acquisition of defense equipment from the United States and other Western countries. The Taiwanese question also exposes Chinese vulnerabilities and intentions: there are differing scales of

response to actions by regional players vis-a-vis Taiwan - U.S moves to supply F-16 aircraft to Taiwan in 1992 while greeted with vociferous protest were not matched with corresponding actions on ground in bilateral Sino-U.S relations while similar French actions were met with the closure of the French Consulate in Guangzhou as a retaliatory measure.<sup>40</sup>

The reunification issue is tied up with Chinese definitions of sovereignty and status. This is a continuing item on the agenda of the Chinese leadership since the Guomintang fled China in 1949. The threshold level for stoic forbearance in the face of Taiwanese moves to assert an independent profile would be crossed in the event of Taiwan's declaration of independence or in the face of overt foreign assistance in sustaining such a move. Reactions from China could include a blockade of the Taiwan Strait, the possible delivery of strategic air strikes against select Taiwanese targets and also missile strikes. A full-scale invasion of the island may only be a final option. The likely re-emergence of Taiwan as a "critical issue" points to the underlying instability of Sino-US relations in coming years. Within Taiwan itself, increasing prosperity, democratization and the growth of a "Taiwanese consciousness" suggest a growing preference to consolidate a de-facto "independence". Even the Guomintang, officially committed to reunification with the mainland, went on record during the December 1991 National Assembly elections that "no one among the 20 million Chinese in Taiwan wants to unify with the Chinese communists"<sup>41</sup>. In neighboring Hong Kong too, democratic sentiments have come to be tied up with anti-Communism.

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas C. Lee, "Perspectives on U.S. sales of F-16 to Taiwan", *The Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 2, No.1, 1993

<sup>41</sup> J. Bruce Jacobs, "Rip Van Winkle returns to Taiwan", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 13, 1993, p.36

Another potential source of tension involving China and the region is the question of the Spratly islands in the South China Sea. The Spratlys encompass a large and geographically contiguous area (the archipelago covers a sea area of more than 250,000 sq. kms.) and islands in the group are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei. The largest island in the group, Itu Aba or Taiping in Chinese, is controlled by Taiwan which has held naval exercises in the area.<sup>42</sup> The dispute over ownership of the islands has led to conflict between Vietnam and China with the latter steadily consolidating its claim both diplomatically (in 1987, the UNESCO requested China to establish an oceanic observation station in the Spratlys, providing legitimacy to Chinese jurisdictional claims), militarily and administratively (in July 1987, the Spratly islands were declared as constituting part of the "strategic border" of the newly established Hainan Province). The area is also believed to contain oil reserves which are substantially larger than China's on-shore reserves.

The growth of Chinese naval and air power appears directly linked to Chinese military strategy concerning the resource-rich islands in the South China Sea. The acquisition from abroad, or indigenous development, of a small aircraft carrier, development of an air field in the Paracel Islands, and activating of a mid-air refuelling capacity are expected to figure in these plans. The Su27 aircraft recently acquired from Russia have been deployed in South China with both Taiwan and the defence of the Paracels and Spratlys in mind. On the diplomatic front, however, China has endeavored to project an image of conciliatory

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<sup>42</sup> Chang Pao-Min, "A New Scramble for the South China Sea Islands", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 12, No.1, June 1990, p.32

reasonableness on the issue of the Spratlys. In August 1990, Premier Li Peng announced in Singapore that claims of sovereignty over the islands should be put aside without prejudice and that there should be discussions regarding joint development of the area. This has not hampered concerted action on the ground to protect Chinese interests in the islands. The promulgation by the National People's Congress of "The Law of the People's Republic of China on Its Territorial Waters and Their Contiguous Areas" which enables China to "exercise its sovereignty over its territorial waters and its rights to exercise control over their adjacent areas, and to safeguard state security as well as its maritime rights and interests" fits this perspective. As recently as May 1993, a Chinese seismic survey ship is reported to have intruded into Vietnam's southern continental shelf and interfered with oil exploration vessels working for British Petroleum and India's Oil and Natural Gas Commission. The incident was publicized by Vietnam one day before the arrival of Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian in Hanoi. The Chinese ship was operating near a disputed area of the South China Sea where the Chinese Government has awarded a concession to the US-based Crestone Energy Corporation.<sup>43</sup> The incident confirms the volatility of the situation in the area. Reports suggesting that China is asserting its claims because of the depletion of its land-based resources and the pressure of population on these resources (a so-called lebensraum theory)<sup>44</sup> have also fuelled regional doubts and fears of Chinese intentions.

The same desire to exploit the military and economic underpinnings of security is

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<sup>43</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 27, 1993, p.14

<sup>44</sup> John Garver, "China's Push Through the South China Sea: The Interaction of Bureaucratic and National Interests", *The China Quarterly*, December 1992, pp. 1018-19

evident in the evolution of China's relations with the military leadership in Rangoon since 1988. Chinese arms sales to SLORC since 1988 are worth US \$ 1.4 billion. The sale of arms, ostensibly aimed at securing internal stability in Burma includes such equipment as F-6 and F-7 jet fighters, anti-aircraft guns, missiles and rocket launchers, patrol boats, armored personnel carriers and ground-based radar. Chinese technicians are reported to have been seen at the Irrawaddy port of Haing Gyi, Mergui port in the southern coastal region, and at Thilawa on the Irrawaddy delta. It is also reported that a radar station is to be set up on Coco Island, just 30 miles from India's Andaman Islands. Meanwhile bilateral trade with Burma is flourishing and the economic integration of Burmese border areas with adjoining areas of Yunnan province is proceeding apace. Road-building and infrastructural improvements including construction of bridges, and upgradation of railways in Burma have all involved the Chinese in recent years.<sup>45</sup>

It is essentially within the framework of residual Cold War issues, widespread uncertainties, and potential threats that the United States must operate in the Asia-Pacific in

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<sup>45</sup> Bertil Lintner, "Burma and its Neighbors", *China Report* 28:3 (1992), pp.225-255. The road built during World War II to link Lashio in northern Shan State and Yunnan province has been repaired and upgraded with Chinese assistance.

Drug smuggling across the Burma-China border is another growing problem. See Agence France Presse report, March 8, 1993 in FBIS-CHI, March 8, 1993, pp. 25-26. The report quotes authorities in Ruili, China as saying that rural Burmese smugglers move some four tons of the Golden Triangle and more than a ton of its opium each year into Yunnan province.

China has denied intentions to use the Haingyi naval base. The Foreign Ministry denial was publicized by Xinhua, February 11, 1993, quoted in FBIS-CHI, February 11, 1993, p.3.

In March 1993, an unattributed report in the Hamburg journal *Der Spiegel*, quoted an internal memorandum of the General Staff Logistics Department of the People's Liberation Army stating that "We can no longer accept the Indian Ocean as only an ocean of Indians". (the report was carried in FBIS-CHI March 10, 1993, p.32)

the new era. For the United States, this is a period of "ill-defined risk" and a time of enormous transition. The nineties are seen as being like the twenties and thirties and the challenges before the military establishment are those that involve a shaping of the future in a desired mold, where a new international security environment is built that precludes problems in a prevention-by-anticipation mode - the so-called "Clint Eastwood element". The new defense strategy has a regional rather than global focus and assists overarching policy goals of enlarging the "democratic zone of peace". The challenge for the United States is how to accommodate itself to a new thinking and new framework for regional security in areas like the Asia-Pacific at a time of restructuring and reduction in American force deployments and military expenditure and at a time in its life as a nation when the most likely and immediate threats are seen as domestically generated and where economic weakness undermines the ability to pursue foreign policy goals.

That the United States is the only superpower in the Asia-Pacific is not disputed by any of the countries of the region. A country like Japan, whose very identity abroad seems crucially dependent on its relationship with the United States, leads the chorus of voices emphasizing that the Americans must retain and not reduce their presence in the region. "Without a chaperone, Asia will dance in the dark," says Singapore's Tommy Koh.<sup>46</sup> The Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammed, realizes that the future of his EAEG proposal is dependent on U.S endorsement if it is to succeed regionally and therefore makes

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<sup>46</sup> Tommy Koh, "Without a Chaperone, Asia Will Dance in the Dark", *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 20, 1993

strenuous pleas for such endorsement.<sup>47</sup> Even the Chinese would prefer a gradual, rather than any precipitate reduction in U.S defense strength in the region even as they maintain that U.S deployments in the Asia-Pacific region far exceed the needs of defense.

The United States is seen as a balancer, a stabilizer - it is almost as if the talisman of American presence wards off the potential evil of a hegemon native to the region. The U.S presence is also regarded as necessary to neutralize potential rivalry between Japan and China. On the Korean Peninsula, along the last remaining fault lines of the Cold War between North and South Korea and amidst the danger of nuclearization, U.S involvement is a constant factor: it has been the U.S, more than China, that has had to adopt a leading role in negotiations with the North Koreans following their decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

U.S strategies envisage the gradual reduction of forward deployed U.S support personnel while continuing to maintain a sufficient level of ground forces and air and naval capacity in the region. The "bottom line is to maintain a sufficient capability for forced entry in crisis situations, sea lane protection, and air superiority."<sup>48</sup> While with the loss of bases in the Philippines, U.S force deployments in the Asia-Pacific are now confined to Japan and South Korea, defense facilities abandoned in the Philippines are being offset by the provision of facilities at Singapore that permit repair and replenishment for US warships, stationing of a naval logistics team, and the deployment of aircraft. Malaysia has announced that the Lumut

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<sup>47</sup> Jacob M. Sclesinger, "Asia Asks U. S. to Maintain Strong Role in the Region", *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 14/15 1993

<sup>48</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, "U.S. Strategy and Southeast Asian Security: Issues of Compatibility", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 14, Number 4, March 1993, p. 303

dockyard in Perak will service US warships and Indonesia has agreed in principle to permit US naval vessels to be serviced at ship-repair facilities in Surabaya.<sup>49</sup> The new pattern of access to facilities for landing, repair and replenishment, is in tune with the Pentagon's defense strategy for the nineties which emphasizes a smaller total force, with greater strategic agility, flexible deterrent options, such a strategy being capabilities- rather than threat-based.

The world of the nineties is however a different place from that of the post-World War II era. There is no single uni-dimensional threat that the United States faces in Asia, there are no Korean or Vietnam wars to be fought . Russian strength nowhere approaches that of its Soviet forbear, and if there is a new strategic triangle developing in the Asia-Pacific region, it is that between the United States, Japan and China. Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kwan Yew stated recently that ASEAN's security would have to evolve from the growing interaction in the region between America, Japan, China, a Korea that would be eventually reunited, and a revived Russia.<sup>50</sup> The Korean and Russian factors in this scenario may not exert their influence in the perceivable short and medium term thereby increasing the options available to the United States, Japan and China. The countries of ASEAN anticipating the problems that could arise from a bipolar Sino-Japanese model of domination of the region see the United States as strategic balancer, political stabilizer and provider of security. The role of the United States as economic competitor, or as a country whose policy options are increasingly driven by domestic concerns about loss of the high ground on economic and

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<sup>49</sup> Sheldon W. Simon, "Regional Security Structures in Asia: the Question of Relevance", in *Collective Security in Europe and Asia*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, March 1992, p. 41.

<sup>50</sup> Xinhua, May 19, 1993 in FBIS-CHI, May 19, 1993, p.8



technological domination to Japan has to be fitted into the scheme mentioned above.

There is, however, no guarantee that nationalist aspirations among countries in the region - Indonesia is growingly desirous of assuming a leading profile on regional issues in South-east Asia, Malaysia makes more than trademark jabs at aspects of U.S policy with which it disagrees and the Philippines has fresh memories of domestic discord over the presence of U.S bases - will not hinder U.S maneuverability.

Any presentation of the account for the "alliance dividend" owed to the U.S for 40 years of military and economic involvement in the region is bound to involve new patterns of burden-sharing, growing stress on the assumption of more than bank-rolling powers by Japan including the acquisition of collective security responsibilities, macroeconomic measures to stimulate domestic demand and imports by Japan (the 49 billion dollar surplus Japan has with the U.S "creates severe tension" in the latter country) and raised standards of expectation regarding conduct and contributions from Japan commensurate with the status of a top political and economic power.

Provided the security alliance between the U.S and Japan endures, the addition of the conditionalities mentioned above in a flexible deterrent strategy that contains Japan while at the same time compels it to respond rather than merely adapt to the changed circumstances of international politics, will be welcomed in the Asia-Pacific. The only skeptical voices may be raised in China and Korea where suspicions of Japan left over from history will be hard to dispel.

A subliminal containment of China through pressures on issues like democracy and human rights may be more difficult to propagate in the region. The Singapore Prime Minister recently cautioned the US that campaigning too hard on these issues would "give a sharper and more xenophobic edge to Chinese nationalism" and that the younger generation of leaders in China did

not want "China to descend into chaos. Neither does the rest of Asia."<sup>51</sup>

### **Developing a security structure for the region**

Devising a security structure for the region from this pastiche of power interests, uncertainties, and no common threat perception is a difficult task. The fundamental question facing the region on this issue is whether the conditions for the coming into being of a security community exist. The growing regional economy certainly reveals increasing trends of integration - whether it is the "flying geese" model propagated by the Japanese, or the "growth triangles" discussed earlier. The institutionalization of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) is another example of this deliberate and conscious expression of regional will toward economic cooperation and integration. The success of ASEAN in fostering regional peace and stability among member states and also in articulating a common approach despite the existence of divergent perceptions, on the issue of Vietnamese presence in Cambodia is also a positive example of an integrative approach to defining "security roles".<sup>52</sup>

It was the erstwhile Soviet Union that on different occasions from 1969 onwards, propagated the idea of multilateral security cooperation for Asia. These ideas and proposals, including Mikhail Gorbachev's proposal for a "Helsinki process for Asia" or a "Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia" (CSCA) on the lines of the CSCE in Europe did not

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<sup>51</sup> Jacob M. Schlesinger, "Asia Asks U.S."

<sup>52</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, "Regionalism and the Quest for Security", p. 448

receive support from most Asian countries given the attitudinal prisms of the Cold War. Even after the end of the Cold War, there is no fulsome embrace of the CSCA concept in Asia. In fact, any development of such a concept for the Asia-Pacific is likely to be a step-by-step evolutionary process involving bilateral confidence-building measures leading to a regional consensus on the avoidance of conflict, containment of conflict and conflict settlement and finally the establishment of a regional security forum. It is also unlikely that such arrangements can subsume presently existing alliances of a military nature or cooperative associations among regional states.

The current debate on the utility of a regional security regime for the Asia-Pacific originated in significant measure with the interest, speculation, and varied reactions aroused by the ideas put forward by the erstwhile Soviet Union. The Canadians and the Australians followed with their own set of proposals, again conditioned by their experience of dealing within European security regimes, and the South Koreans and the Mongolians proposed their versions. Three major countries - the United States, China and Japan - did not express their affirmation, especially for the Soviet proposals. The U.S attitude was that given the enduring nature of bilateral alliances, such ideas only represented a "solution in search of a problem". That view has been partially modified. There is now a realization that "new mechanisms to manage or prevent" new security concerns and flash-points, apart from those left over from the Cold War, must be developed. Increased security consultations in the framework of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference are welcomed as a process which "can usefully encourage nations to share information, convey intentions, ease tensions, resolve disputes and foster confidence" with full participation by the United States. In the

current view of the United States, the post Cold-War period in North-east Asia "invites dialogue to prevent arms races, the forging of competing alignments and efforts by one power or group of powers to dominate this strategic region."<sup>53</sup> While Japanese views on the subject have been discussed earlier, the Chinese believe that different countries in the Asia-Pacific region are situated in different security environments and have different problems relating to security. Finding a unified model to deal with the issue of security may therefore be difficult and premature.

The test of the success of a regional security regime is the willingness of the most powerful players in it to abide by its requirements. The acceptance of principles such as willingness not to alter the status quo by any means except negotiation and peaceful means, and not to pursue unilateralist means of enhancing individual military security may not be easy. The regional preference may be for pragmatic step-by-step moves towards enhanced mutual confidence, political consensus-building, setting aside differences and increasing common ground, reduction of communication barriers, and increasing the economic underpinnings of mutual security, through trade and economic flows. It is also likely that countries like China will not favor the mere transference of Eurocentric versions of collective security regimes to the Asia-Pacific region.

On most bilateral and regional issues which have the potential for conflict in the Asia-Pacific region, mere principles enunciated through regional dialogue will not suffice to dispel tensions and build mutual trust. Whole questions of sovereignty, status, historical animosities

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<sup>53</sup> Ambassador Winston Lord, "A New Pacific Community: Ten Goals for American Policy" (Opening Statement at Confirmation Hearings for Ambassador Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State-Designate, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, March 31, 1993), p. 12

and senses of injury, are tied up with them. At the most, an enhanced sense of community consciousness or "continental collective" can prevent issues like the territorial dispute in the Spratlys which involves a large number of countries from boiling over and moderate the likelihood of full-scale conflict between China and Vietnam on this issue. The relieving of tensions has generally been accomplished through bilateral dialogue on mutual force reductions and confidence-building measures as between China and the erstwhile Soviet Union, discussions on confidence-building measures within the ambit of discussions of the India-China Joint Working Group on the boundary question, the agreements on measures for reconciliation and exchange and abandonment of nuclear weapons between North and South Korea, and discussions between India and Pakistan on confidence-building, including the agreement on non-attack of nuclear facilities between the two countries.

The lessons of ASEAN whose success since its establishment in 1967 has been in the avoidance of the wasteful conflicts that marked the situation in the sub-region in the early 1960s despite the fact that security did not enter its agenda formally until January 1992, are that political, economic and cultural cooperation contribute to the development of a "sense of regional community, thus minimizing - if not eliminating - the use of force among member-states."<sup>54</sup> Grafting the experience of ASEAN on to other sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific may not be automatic. However, the beginning made by ASEAN in discussing security issues with its "dialogue partners" - the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the European Community and South Korea, has certainly imparted a positive momentum to the concept of a regional forum for discussing security. The inclusion of Russia, China, Vietnam,

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<sup>54</sup> Muthiah Alagappa, "Regionalism and the Quest for Security", p.449

Laos and Papua New Guinea as the latest countries invited to join this dialogue further expands the scope and content of this process.

Given the uncertainties that mark the regional situation, the new "Asian-Pacific paths to security" will have to be informal rather than structured, evolutionary rather than one-stroke in development. Credible bilateral security regimes can lead to credible sub-regional security regimes which in turn can be the building blocs of a larger regional security regime and found a security community. Within sub-regions however, the ASEAN example of not permitting intramural conflicts over territorial and other issues to take precedence over the imperatives of economic, cultural and functional cooperation must provide useful guidance.

Regional dialogue of the sort being carried on in the ASEAN Post-ministerial conference can provide an effective channel for promoting sharpened focus and consideration of such issues as arms proliferation, rising defense budgets, naval rivalries, and principles for conflict prevention. The definition of what should be the relevant region for security must also be taken up. Issues that spill over borders like narcotics trafficking, state-sponsored terrorism, and refugee flows also concern regions as a whole and threaten stability and hence security and could be included in the discussions.

The issue of leadership change in China and whether systemic change will occur in that country or whether change can be contained within the current system can be identified as a primary source of uncertainty in the Asia-Pacific region. By virtue of its geographical spread, and the multi-ethnic make-up of its border areas, its vast population, any political upheaval in China is bound to generate reverberations far beyond the country's territorial borders. By contrast, the evolution of events in the Korean Peninsula may be easier to

manage and contain despite lingering doubts in Northeast Asia about the intentions of the North Korean regime and whether the regime in Pyongyang will "implode" or "explode". In the Korean Peninsula, the pattern established since 1990 of dialogue, however intermittent and broken, between the two Koreas, offers the best prospect for eventual reunification; this process of "Koreanization" in peace-building on the Peninsula provides the foundation on which efforts of a multilateral/internationalist nature by powers like the United States, China and Japan can help reduce the uncertainties stemming from non-conformist actions by an isolated North Korea. Regime change in North Korea, or how the question of post Kim II-Sung politics in that country will be settled, could induce serious civil and social upheaval that is bound to create pressures on South Korea. The avoidance of such an eventuality is in the obvious interest of both sides involved. Reunification of the German sort is not practicable on the Korean Peninsula, the costs of this being too much for the South Korean economy to bear at present, but the process of reconciliation through political dialogue, the building of mutual confidence through military disengagement, with the ultimate goal of developing a shared sense of common security, must slowly supplant the current stand-off between two different political and ideological systems.

The creation of a defense community of the NATO type is far away from achievement in the Asia-Pacific. The nations of the region have expressed no preference or desire for such an arrangement. Cultural, ethnic, and historical differences may create difficult barriers even if such a community is to be created. Even within the ASEAN region, despite the existence of bilateral defense arrangements among some countries and the Five Power Defense Arrangement, interoperability within armed forces in the ASEAN region is far from being realized.

Judging by the widespread emphasis on the basic importance of economic growth and development in the region, it is quite possible that any attempt to build a security regime will stress the geo-economic more than the geo-political factors involved in promoting such an arrangement. The attempt will be to address security as a multi-dimensional concept that involves avoidance of trade disputes, promotion of a free trade regime, bilateral confidence-building measures aimed at improvement of communications, creation of hot lines between military forces, "mutual balanced force reductions", more high level political dialogue, stress on political stability, and mutual non-interference in each other's affairs. At the same time, conflict prevention through a heightened momentum of socialization and integration of states inclined to disruptive behavior into the process of regional dialogue on security issues, is also a realistic goal. However, this is not to underestimate the crucial importance of the need for substantive trust-building in relations between primary antagonists involved in such conflicts as for instance in the case of the Spratly Islands dispute between China and Vietnam. Similarly, the resolution of the Taiwan question exists outside the scope of regional dialogue, it is China's problem although the manner of its resolution is bound to be a matter of concern to most countries in the region, especially to the United States whose response or lack of it will critically determine the outcome of the situation.

A regional dialogue on security in the Asia-Pacific is part of the region's growing consciousness about the need to articulate an Asian voice on issues concerning the new world order. Such terms as a "Community of Asian Nations" or "Asia-Pacific Common House" have an inclusive approach that links the avoidance of war, aggression, respect for



independence and sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, with the promotion of free trade and the market economy, and maintaining the identity of Asia. The inclination is towards a "multi-faceted, multilayered, pragmatic" and flexible approach that advocates diversity and pluralism, and regards security as not just limited to deterrence and military balance but enhances political stability through confidence-building. The process is an evolving one, but its fulfillment is not a foregone conclusion.

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