Trends in Southeast Asia Series: 1(2003)

Political and Security Outlook 2003: Asian Geostrategic Trends

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THE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON

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These edited keynote papers were originally prepared in December 2002 and delivered on 7 January 2003 at the 2003 Regional Outlook Forum organized by ISEAS. The Forum addressed the regional outlook for the year 2003.

Published by
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 119614

E-mail: publish@iseas.edu.sg
World Wide Web: http://www.iseas.edu.sg/pub.html

ISSN 0219-3213
February 2003

About the Speaker

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SEVEN CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: ASIA AND THE WORLD SINCE 9/11

Do We Miss the Cold War?

In 1992, as the Soviet Union was collapsing, Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger caused a minor uproar in Washington by suggesting that the world would miss the Cold War — despite its constant threat of nuclear war. His point was that there was an element of stability to the confrontation between the two superpowers. From an American perspective, the Communist adversary had been clearly evident; this threat had been countered with a sustainable strategy of deterrence and containment; the U.S. had built an international coalition against Moscow and its allies that endured for decades; and the Soviets had vulnerabilities that ultimately led to their demise in the generation-long struggle against Communism.

A decade later, Eagleburger's provocative comment seems to have been all too prescient! As we look into the first decade of the 21st Century, we are fortunate to live in a time when the world's major powers are not in confrontation. Yet today we face a new set of diverse threats to our physical security, economic well-being, and social stability. We are in the early years of another generation-long struggle. Today's threats are more complex than were those of the Cold War era. Our adversaries — and allies — are less clearly identifiable. And mobilizing an international response is proving to be a particularly difficult challenge.

This presentation outlines the new security agenda that has emerged in the decade since the end of the Cold War. It is an agenda with seven components that will have to be dealt with, in varying degrees, by all the countries of Asia — and the rest of the world as well. It is an agenda that will require the cooperation of nation-states and international organizations on a global scale for effective

management — even if one country, the United States, will play a significant leadership role.

There are, moreover, three particular problems that we all have to deal with in constructing an effective response to this new security agenda: We have to build a consensus on what the threats are; we need to develop policies that integrate responses to very diverse problems; and we have to create new domestic institutions, coalitions and international structures to implement these new policies.

The Confusing 1990s: Peace, or Chaos?

The end of the Cold War initiated a decade of promising efforts to resolve long standing international conflicts. The 1990s began with the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council cooperating to craft a peace agreement for Cambodia — setting in motion a process that brought to an end more than a century of great power interventions in Indochina. In 1993, with the Soviet Union no longer fueling conflicts in the Middle East, the "Oslo Peace Process" took hold and led to nearly a decade of (ultimately unsuccessful) efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And in South Africa, Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990 was followed by a largely peaceful transition to democratic governance, capped by elections in 1994 that ended more than a century of white minority rule.

Inspired by the collapse of the Soviet Union, these hopeful developments sparked a mood of "triumphalism" in the United States. The Clinton Administration's first National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, asserted that the post-Cold War era would be a time of the spread of democracy and economic free markets on a global scale. The political philosopher Francis Fukuyama even incautiously suggested that history — the struggle for the most effective forms of political and economic organization — was coming to an end. Democracy and market capitalism, he asserted, had been proven through practice to be the most effective ways to promote political accountability and economic prosperity. The non-violent overthrow of dictatorial governments in Poland, Rumania, Chile, Indonesia, the Philippines and Yugoslavia by broad-based political movements seemed to confirm that "people power" could effectively challenge repressive regimes and establish democratic government.

As the decade progressed, however, other developments suggested new challenges to stability and security: Iraq invaded Kuwait — sparking a major U.S./U.N. intervention in the Persian Gulf. Political and humanitarian crises erupted in Somalia and Haiti. There was genocidal violence in Rwanda, and political turmoil, "ethnic cleansing", and ultimately a NATO intervention in the Balkans. And there were confrontations in Asia involving the United States — over North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs in 1994, and across the Taiwan Strait in 1996.

And then there were some violent events of a distinctive character that — in retrospect — have now acquired global significance. In 1993 there were bomb attacks on the World Trade Towers in New York and a Federal office building in Oklahoma City. Bomb and assassination plots against the Pope and international airlines were disrupted in the Philippines in 1995. In Tokyo that same year, a fringe religious group — the Aum Shinrikyo — initiated a poison gas attack on the city's subway system. And late in the decade, U.S. military barracks in Saudi Arabia and two American embassies in East Africa were bombed, and an American warship was attacked in Yemen.

Why were American facilities abroad under attack? It is now evident that forces were at work that wanted to drive the United States from certain parts of the world. But the exact character of these forces, their organizational strength and objectives, would not become evident for a few more years. In addition, unease about the preeminence of American power in post-Cold War global affairs led several of the major powers to try to construct a multipolar international system to countervail U.S. influence. China and Russia, in particular, announced a strategic partnership designed to check U.S. intentions to enlarge NATO and maintain peace across the Taiwan Strait.

While the U.S. economy boomed in the latter 1990s, East Asia unexpectedly found itself in an economic crisis that shocked the world with its rapid onset and extensive impact. In the two years 1997-98, the so-called East Asian "tiger" economies nearly collapsed, revealing that the remarkable growth they had experienced earlier in the decade had been built on highly vulnerable institutional foundations. First Thailand, then Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines faced economic implosion. Manufacturers declared bankruptcy as their

small profits could no longer support inflated production. Poor and corrupt lending practices swamped banks with bad loans. Government management and oversight of the economies was limited and ineffective.

Facing the specter of economic disaster throughout East Asia, the IMF stepped in with what at that point was the largest economic rescue packages in its history. The IMF loans did pull many countries out of their precipitous decline, and the speed of the region's recovery surprised as many observers as did its near collapse. Despite recent major gains from the crisis, however, East Asia's economic future remains uncertain. Institutional reforms have been uneven. The generally sluggish world economy has dampened down the "pull" of export led growth strategies. And China's emergence as a major economic force is now altering patterns of foreign investment and market access, to the detriment of many of the economies of Southeast Asia.

So as the 1990s ended, it was unclear whether the world was headed toward the glorious future of political reform and economic progress hoped for at the end of the Cold War. In the United States, a number of national security studies concluded that the world was entering a period of new and significant threats to national and global security — economic turmoil and the corruption of governments, the expansion of criminal networks (linked to the drug trade), humanitarian crises, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. Curiously missing from this agenda — in retrospect — was the growing challenge of religiously motivated conflict, especially in the Muslim world.

The Clarifying Impact of 9/11

Any ambiguity about the character of the new era was dramatically clarified on September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Towers in New York were attacked — successfully — for a second time. While this was obviously an assault on an American target, the fact that nationals of more than 70 countries died in the collapse of a symbol of economic globalization, indicated that a more universal message was intended by the terrorists.

That message was clear to the international community. In short order following the attacks, the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, NATO, and even the Organization of the Islamic Conference, passed resolutions

condemning terrorism and supporting international efforts to counter this new form of violence. Any thoughts in Beijing, Moscow (or Paris) about constructing a multipolar world seemed to vanish as they and most other countries rallied around the United States to confront a threat that was as ominous for them as for the U.S. — even if they had not (yet) suffered a major attack.

What was the message of 9/11? It was the revelation that a highly organized and well financed sub- and trans-national organization of global scope, and motivated by a radical interpretation of Islam, was determined to drive the United States from the Muslim world and bring down secular or moderate governments — especially governments that were cooperating with the United States. These governments were predominantly in Muslim countries (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Sudan and Somalia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia). The goal of this organization, now known to be al Qaeda, was to establish a new international order, a new Caliphate, based on its particular interpretation of Islam. Afghanistan under the Taliban was its model as well as the home base for training and organizing this assault on the non-Muslim world or Islamic apostates. In other terms, the leaders of al Qaeda were intent on polarizing the world along religious lines, precipitating a "clash of civilizations" — to use Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington's phrase — as a way of pursuing their utopian vision.

What Does this Mean for Asia?

After September 11, 2001 the world thus acquired a new security agenda. States are now redefining their national security priorities and considering new approaches to cooperation with other countries and international organizations. The United States is in such a period of reassessment and reorganization — as it was in 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and in the late 1940s after the Soviet Union acquired nuclear weapons.

The states of Asia are also reevaluating their security requirements. I believe we — collectively — share a seven part security agenda of interrelated threats that will require new ways of thinking about international, and national, affairs, new ways of organizing for defense, and new foreign policies.

- *Countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction* — biological and chemical, as well as nuclear, and their means of delivery — is the most urgent task. Modern technologies have put enormous power — for evil as well as good — in the hands of sub-national groups and individuals as well as states. The traditional notion of an international system structured around nation-states able to control sovereign borders is a fading ideal. The Cold War-era notion of a stable balance-of-terror among the major nations is eroding fast. Sub-national groups are acquiring nuclear, biological or chemical weaponry, or using modern technology — even aircraft and agricultural fertilizer — in destructive ways that are very difficult to contain. Their capacity to inflict massive damage is particularly difficult to deter if motivated by suicidal impulses.

  Unless the international community can develop collective ways of controlling the spread and use of these technologies, we all face a future of highly destructive violence. For the United States, the proliferation issue is now at the top of the security agenda — in dealing with North Korea and Pakistan, as well as Iraq and Iran. There is some question, however, as to whether a number of our security partners in East Asia share the sense of urgency on this matter. But unless proliferation can be constrained, many more states in this region, as elsewhere, will seek to acquire nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction — to the universal detriment of human security.
- *The drug trade and international crime* syndicates are highly corrosive forces affecting domestic stability and international security. Quite apart from the devastating impact of drug use on individual and community health, the huge monetary resources generated by drug trafficking corrupt governments, undermine economic development programs, and enable sub-national groups to buy weaponry of all varieties. Without control of the drug trade, we will not be able to control weapons proliferation or terrorist operations.

  Drug trafficking has long been a challenge for the entire Asia region, whether it be production, distribution or consumption. The United Nations estimates that 95% of the world's annual crop of opium/heroin is produced Asia wide, with about half that amount coming from the "Golden Triangle" area of Southeast Asia.
- *Terrorism*, since 9/11, has become the buzzword and focus of national security specialists, political leaders and publics alike. Unfortunately, the term masks the dynamic of this complex and challenging phenomenon. Terrorism is political warfare.

  The international prominence of al Qaeda has revealed the motivational basis of the most widespread and dramatic terrorism of our time — political turmoil in the Islamic world. Factional conflicts justified by religious belief are driving not only the attacks on the United States, but the threat to "moderate" governments in Muslim countries from northern Africa to Southeast Asia.

President Bush stresses that the problem we confront is "terrorism". His terminology reflects a determined effort to avoid stigmatizing Islam or playing into al Qaeda's game of polarizing the world along religious lines. The United States, as a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse country, is doing all it can to focus its defenses on the violent extremists, not Islam. The extremists, in contrast, are doing all they can to characterize U.S. policy as a war against Islam and the Muslim world. As a form of political warfare, much of the effort in the struggle against terrorism requires influencing "hearts and minds", and as of today, it is not clear that the U.S. has developed an effective response to al Qaeda's appeal to Muslim publics.

The reality behind this rhetorical jousting, however, is a great struggle that will dominate world politics for the next several decades. It is the issue of the Muslim world coming to terms both with itself and with the rest of the international community. Non-Muslims can be only marginal players in this great struggle. Our challenge is to be supportive of the forces of moderation and tolerance in that world, and to work with friendly countries to isolate and neutralize those who seek a violent clash of civilizations.

Governments in Asia, as in other regions, are now working among themselves and with the United States to heighten cooperation in intelligence and police work, control of cross-border movements of individuals and weaponry, specialized military training and operations, control of monetary flows and other dimensions of the complex war against terrorism. And while such cooperation is essential to countering the violent schemes of the extremists, it is only the beginning of efforts to change the political mood that justifies or tolerates terrorism.

- *Economic reform* is usually separated out from issues of national security. But the impact of the financial crisis of 1997-98 on the internal stability of Indonesia highlights the fact that without effective forms of economic management, countries are vulnerable to political destabilization resulting from economic crises. Without governments largely free of corruption and cronyism, international investment capital will not flow in support of domestic growth and international trade. Economies will become stagnant, with obvious consequences for social and political stability. The WTO process and other forms of multilateral economic cooperation provide mechanisms to promote good economic governance as well as access to the markets that will pull developing countries along the path of growth.

  Most of the countries of Southeast Asia have experienced both the dynamism of export-let growth, and also the disruptive impact of economic mismanagement. While significant progress has been made in some countries in promoting institutional reform, it is clear that the political extremists are seeking to destabilize vulnerable economies — as the attack on Bali's tourism trade so tragically demonstrates. Thus, the war on terrorism and economic reform, as well as the drug war and

counter-proliferation measures, must become integral elements of the new security agenda.

- The challenge of *failed or weak states*. Until 9/11, countries governed by corrupt or ineffectual leaders were seen largely as human rights or humanitarian problems. But al Qaeda's hijacking of Afghanistan and its use of countries like Sudan, Somalia, the southern Philippines or Indonesia as bases for training, money laundering and operations has heightened the realization that indifference to the plight of national neighbors has security consequences.

  The challenges, costs and rather poor record of success in efforts at "nation building" has led the United States, and other countries, to remain aloof from the daunting tasks of trying to reform or reconstitute the political and economic systems of weak or failed states. But the Bush administration, despite its initial disparagement of efforts at "nation building", is finding that the realities of the war against al Qaeda have forced it to assume many of the responsibilities of post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan — and perhaps before long in Iraq.

  In South and Southeast Asia, we watch with concern the efforts of central authorities in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and many of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) states to control the activities of al Qaeda, the Tamil Tigers, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Abu Sayyaf and other ethnic and religiously motivated terrorist groups. The leaders of the JI hoped to create an archipelagic Islamic state as an alternative to the ASEAN coalition. Strengthening the abilities of the states of this region to counter the destabilizing plots of the extremists is fundamentally an internal responsibility. But the United States intends to be an active participant in this process where it has willing partners.

- *AIDS and BioTerrorism*. Public health issues, even more than economic concerns, have long been at the margins of national security agendas. But the global AIDS epidemic is contributing to the weakening or failure of state systems, decimating the ranks of leadership elites, overburdening public health systems and draining national budgets. In developing drug therapies, traditional economic considerations such as the profit motive and protection of intellectual property are under challenge in the face of the moral and humanitarian characteristic of this trans-national health scourge. The international community is only beginning to confront the AIDS crisis, and other epidemic diseases, as an element of a security agenda. But the growing awareness of the potential for bio-terrorism — experienced in limited form in the United States in the anthrax attack at the time of 9/11 — will force public health issues onto national security agendas.
- *Organizing the international system*. Dealing with this daunting agenda cannot be the work of one country alone. International coalitions and organizations are essential to integrating the tasks required to control proliferation, international crime and terrorism,

promote economic reform and fight the scourge of AIDS and other threats to regional and global security. That said, the international community is not well organized for this challenge. The United Nations, its specialized agencies, and regional organizations such as ASEAN and the ARF, are institutions designed for policy debate and political consensus building, not operations. That situation is now slowly changing as states and regional organizations respond to the challenges of countering terrorism, weapons proliferation and the other issues explored above. We now are in a time when "coalitions of the willing" function as ad hoc responses to this new security agenda. The question for the coming decades is whether formal international structures such as ASEAN and the United Nations will become effective mechanisms of collective action in countering the diverse scourges of our time.

Is the United States the Solution, the Problem — or Neither?

How will the international community deal with this daunting agenda? Or will it deal with it at all, especially in the context of that appealing but vague concept of the "international community"? The reality is that international organizations, as presently constituted, lack the authority, resources, capacity for action, or experience to exercise the required leadership. They may deal with certain aspects of the new agenda, or on a limited — perhaps regional — basis. But leadership able to integrate responses to the full range of issues will come at the initiative of a limited number of governments acting either in concert or as competitors.

Prior to 9/11, that enduring isolationist strand of American politics tempered Washington's impulse to act abroad, despite the global range of U.S. interests. The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, however, as with the attack on Pearl Harbor a generation ago, mobilized the political will that today is merged with America's exceptional economic and military resources. For better rather than worse, the U.S. is now at the forefront of the war against terrorism, proliferation and the security challenge presented by states like Iraq and North Korea.

That said, not all leaders have followers — or all the followers they need to achieve their aims. And it is evident today that certain countries that have long relied on the United States for their security — countries from France to South Korea — are uneasy about certain policy initiatives from Washington. This reflects a natural concern with the concentration of power in one entity, the absence of a dominating

common enemy, and the fact that U.S. interests and those of long-time allies and partners are seldom in full accord.

President Bush recently published a comprehensive national security strategy designed to clarify his approach to the challenges of our times. Two aspects of that strategy statement have been the focus of some debate and concern, both within the United States and abroad: The implication that the U.S. will act unilaterally in pursuit of its security interests; and the assertion that the threat of terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction may require preventive, if not preemptive, action.

Regarding unilateralism, the strategy document states, "In exercising our leadership, we will respect the values, judgment, and interests, of our friends and partners. Still, we will be prepared to act apart [from them] when our interests and unique responsibilities require." Words, of course, are one thing; actions another. What can be said on behalf of action is that history documents that the United States has rarely taken forceful action alone. Its military engagements abroad almost always have been undertaken as coalition enterprises. Even in current circumstances, where many feared unilateral U.S. military action against Iraq, it is evident that the Bush administration — despite what reportedly have been vigorous internal debates — committed itself to work through the United Nations Security Council. And while this situation has not fully played out, it is clear that the administration's preference is to see the UN become a viable institution in dealing with the challenge of proliferation — whether in Iraq, North Korea, or in other circumstances that seem likely to arise.

It must also be recognized that given the changed character of security threats, and the unwieldy character of alliances and international organizations, the building of political consensus and the formation of coalitions may take more time than is required to deal effectively with imminent threats. It is also quite possible that conflicting national interests will prevent the emergence of the desired consensus. Thus, the strategy statement concludes: ". . .we will be prepared to act apart when our interests and unique responsibilities require."

As for preventive, or preemptive action, the strategy statement observes that, "Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents; whose so-called

soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most potent protection is statelessness." In other words, the logic of deterrence and containment that imparted a measure of stability to the Cold War nuclear confrontation between the superpowers is breaking down. Weapons of mass destruction are being acquired by sub-national groups whose violent schemes are difficult to deter. Preventive action may be the only way to forestall catastrophic acts of terrorism, or to deter those who would support terrorism beyond their borders.

But this does not mean that the unrestrained, unilateral use of force has become the preeminent component of U.S. foreign policy. "The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats . . . We will always proceed deliberately, weighing the consequence of our actions," concludes the national security strategy statement. In reality, it is evident that the United States, despite its diverse capabilities, does not have the capacity to act effectively alone in dealing with the complex seven-part security agenda of our times.

American military power is modernizing in remarkable ways. Yet that power is only effective if directed by accurate information, and good intelligence requires the collaboration of many security partners. Controlling the international flow of money to terrorist groups, and the movements of terrorists themselves, requires non-military forms of cooperation. The rebuilding of failed states, to be effective, must be an international responsibility. Thus, the true test of American power in the long-term struggle we now face will be Washington's ability to build an international consensus in support of shared security goals, and to lead in the construction of policies and institutions in support of those goals.

But of all the challenges of this era, the most difficult is likely to be managing relations with the world of Islam. That is a diverse world, and its very diversity — its unresolved issues of religious doctrine, of relations with the non-Muslim world, issues of modernization versus tradition, of factional divisions and leadership within the Umma — underlies the hostility and violence that today threatens to grow into a clash of civilizations. Of all the issues I have discussed here today, this is the one where I think we have the fewest answers. It is the issue where the non-Muslim world has the least to contribute, yet where our collective future may be most affected. It is the

issue that is most likely to shape the character of international relations for the post-Cold War generation.

About the Speaker

Professor Yang Jiemian is currently Senior Fellow and Vice President, Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS). He has also served the Institute of Peace and Development in the capacity of Senior Fellow and Director of Department of American Studies. He received his education in a variety of top academic institutions in China as well as the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has a prolific publishing record. His most recent publications include Sino-US Relations in Post-Cold War Era: Comparative Studies on Foreign Policies, (2000), The Taiwan Issue and the World Configuration of Powers: Changes and Challenges (co-authored), (2002), and International Terrorism and Contemporary International Relations: Impacts and Influence of the "9.11" Attacks (co-authored), (2002). Prof Yang is much in demand as a speaker on American foreign policy and Sino-US relations.

GEOSTRATEGIC TRENDS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: A CHINESE SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE

Although the end of the Cold War had not fundamentally changed the overall geostrategic patterns in the Asia-Pacific region, there were several noticeable trends. This region has, on the whole, avoided great turmoil within the countries concerned and drastic disruptions in inter-country relations. It has also established a new kind of security dialogue mechanism in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Besides, there is a growing awareness of regional cohesion and identity. Moreover, September 11 has accelerated these trends, adding some new characteristics to the geostrategic developments in the region.

I. Post-9/11 Geostrategic Changes

September 11 has greatly accelerated changes in Asian geostrategic landscape in the following ways. Firstly, while the strategic gravity of the United States still remains in Europe and its flanks such as the Middle East and Central Asia, the United States realizes the importance of maintaining its strategic presence in the Asia Pacific. As such, the Bush Administration tries hard to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and to cultivate positive relations with the relevant countries.

Secondly, all the major powers and country groups are readjusting their relations, in response to an emerging common terrorist threat. As the lowest common denominator there seems to be an understanding among Asian countries that they should work together to maintain peace and stability in the region. With this understanding in mind, all the major powers and country groups such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) are increasing their consultation and coordination efforts. On the other hand, they do not want to launch a frontal challenge to the United States.

Thirdly, to borrow the US term, three potential major power centers of Russia, India and China are playing distinctive roles in the region. Russia is trying to establish a stronger role in the Asia-Pacific region, especially Northeast Asia. India is strengthening its role in South Asia. China continues to be on the rise. All these three potential major centers would play a even bigger role in 10-20 years' time.

Fourthly, geo-related factors are increasingly important elements influencing international relations in the Asia-Pacific. For instance, most of the regional countries put economic cooperation as the high priority agenda item in APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation); similarly, we witness the proliferation of "10 plus" cooperation formula and sub-regional cooperation such as the formation of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) economic cooperation involving China, Myanmar, Laos, Viet Nam, Thailand and Cambodia. Other "soft" strategic factors such as environmental and cultural factors are also playing an increasing role in inter and intra state relations.

Fifthly, the anti-terrorism struggle has further complicated regional ties. The United States is pursuing the remnants of the Al-Qaeda in the region. Its military has re-entered into the Philippines and it has strengthened its military relations with other non-alliance countries such as Singapore. Japan also takes advantage of the anti-terrorism drive to extend its military forces far into the Indian Ocean. The Bali bombings have shown that the terrorist groups are re-massing themselves for new rounds of attacks. With the presence of a large Muslim population in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia, how best to tackle the current terrorist threat without stirring up ethnic and religious sensitivities is a serious challenge to the governments in the region.

II. Roles of Small and Medium-Size Countries

The small and medium-sized countries are playing an increasingly important role in the regional political, security and economic affairs. Given their relatively smaller size and less political clout, these small and medium-sized countries are strong advocators and supporters of peace and stability. Moreover, they seek for economic cooperation and collective security, by which their voice can be heard and interests protected. This is one of the major reasons that prompted the Southeast Asian

countries to organize the ASEAN, ARF and South Pacific Forum. Also because of their relatively smaller size and less weight, some of their proposals for regional cooperation have been welcomed and met with less suspicion. A good case in point is the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It was South Korea and Australia and not the major powers that initiated this important regional organization in 1989. Again, the sheer size and political weight of these countries meant that they could sometimes assume the role of a mediator or facilitator between major powers. ARF, for example, has provided a couple of occasions for China and the United States to meet and look for opportunities to improve their relations at difficult times. New Zealand used the ARF meeting to facilitate the summit between President Jiang Zeming and President Clinton only a couple of months after the U.S.-led NATO bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade.

In a very typical and traditional sense of geopolitics, these small and medium-sized countries often act as balancers and function as buffer zones in major power relations. Understandably, they also want major powers to play a balancer's role to check other major powers in the region. But these countries have moved far beyond these traditional thinking. For instance, some Southeast Asian countries have realized that a rising China is not a threat but an opportunity. These countries readily accepted Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's proposal for a free trade zone between 10 ASEAN countries and China. ASEAN and China have also agreed upon a Code of Conduct relating to the South China Sea territorial disputes.

Here I would like to say a few words about Singapore's role in promoting collective security in the region. In the past decade, while working hard at building up its national defense capabilities, Singapore is making a four-pronged effort to promote collective security in the region. One approach is to strengthen its consultation and coordination efforts with other fellow ASEAN members. The second approach is to strengthen its military ties with the United States. Third is to try to promote greater peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits. Fourth is to initiate and host more "one and half" as well as second track dialogue on regional security and political matters. On the whole, all these efforts have produced positive results and increased Singapore's influence in the regional arena. Since September 11, Singapore has had joint military exercises with the Untied States and Thailand; it

has also hosted the IISS Military Leaders' Meeting and the 5th Asia-Pacific Chiefs of Defense Conference jointly organized by the US Pacific Command and Singapore Armed Forces.

III. Regional Framework in the Making?

Compared with Europe, North America and even Africa, regional cooperation is relatively new in the Asia-Pacific region. In the most part of the 20th century, Asia mainly saw an upsurge of nationalism to rid itself of the Western power's colonization and control. At the end of the World War Two, many Asian countries succeeded in winning independence and started nation building efforts under the banner of nationalism.

Regionalism only gained momentum in the late 20th century because of economic integration and political and security considerations. Following the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), 34 American countries are planning to establish a free trade area in the Americas in 2005. African countries will also form an All-Africa Single Market in the same year. These developments indicate that if the Asia-Pacific Region did not speed up its regional integration, they may well be marginalized amid severe global economic competition. In terms of political and security considerations, there is no existing regional framework that is comparable to NATO or European Union (EU). The pace of political and security regional cooperation seems much slower than economic one. The Cold War has been over for more than a decade, however, Asia is still heavily burdened by its legacy. The United States prefers to maintain its bilateral alliance system in Asia. North and South Korea and China and Taiwan have not been united yet. More importantly, some of the major powers still think in the zero-sum game ways. There is an absence of region-wide institutions as in other regions: EU and NATO in Europe, Organization of American States (OAS) in the West Hemisphere and Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Africa. This absence of a regional architecture made it very difficult for Asian countries to coordinate high politics matters, especially the security ones.

Regional cooperation has been developing with its own strong characteristics. The Asia-Pacific Region is very diverse in its history, religion, ethnicity, culture, and

language. Geographically speaking, it can mainly be divided into continental and maritime groups. Moreover, the Asia-Pacific countries also differ in the modes and stages of economic development and political systems. Until recent past decades, these factors had prevented the Asia-Pacific region from achieving regional cohesion and common identity.

There are two trends of developments in Asia-Pacific cooperation. One, there is a shift from economic to security cooperation. Economic cooperation leads the way. With closer communications and easier interaction among the Asian countries, the Asian regional convergence will gradually transcend over the present divergence in cultures, religions, customs and even ideologies. The economic organizations would begin with economic cooperation before moving on to include collaboration in the political and/or security fields. The APEC is moving in this direction. On the other hand, ASEAN and SCO began from political/security cooperation before proceeding into the economic field.

It is increasingly believed that it is high time that the Asia-Pacific Region translates the various proposals for regional security cooperation into reality. The following are some ideas worthy exploring.

IV. Prospects and Perspectives

Regional cooperation needs strategic vision

At the beginning of the new century, we must fully understand the fundamental and rapid changes and, therefore, look ahead to plan a roadmap for multi-faceted cooperation. We should work out a strategic goal as well as specific targets and timelines, both appropriate for and serving the real conditions of this region. To achieve this, we must fully utilize the existing regional mechanisms and organizations for consultation, coordination and implementation.

Regional cooperation needs leadership and partnership

Given its weight and influence, the United States is the most important factor in the Asia-Pacific regional cooperation. Other powers such as China, Japan, Russia, India, South Korea, Indonesia and Australia also have special responsibilities and obligations. They should take up the leadership in a positive way. Metaphorically

speaking, the Asia-Pacific region has to walk on two "legs" in order to achieve full regional cooperation. One "leg" is intra-regional cooperation, especially the need to include both major powers and small and medium-sized countries in the spirit of democratization of international relations. The other "leg" is inter-regional cooperation. The Asia-Pacific Region has to develop more institutional and regular cooperation with Europe, North America and others, for instances, the ASEM and NAFTA (North Atlantic Free Trade Area).

Regional cooperation needs further expansion

Nowadays, non-state actors and non-traditional security has become very prominent in international relations. Therefore, Asian countries must tap on both governmental and non-governmental channels. Non-governmental exchanges are relatively weak in Asia. People-to-people and NGOs-to-NGOs cooperation and exchanges are no less important than military-to-military and governmental interactions. Asian countries have increasingly realized that such non-traditional issues as terrorism, drug-trafficking, piracy, smuggling, illegal immigration, and HIV/AIDS are transnational and should be dealt with by all the parties concerned.

Key non-economic factors that could have a bearing on future regional cooperation include Japan's treatment of its history and its implications on its relations with other Asian countries, U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, intra-regional conflicts of interests, Islamic extremism, territorial disputes and social unrest. There will also be extra-regional factors.

Both governments and people in the Asia-Pacific Region should further promote regionalism by overcoming their internal weaknesses and shortcomings, learn from the useful experiences from Europe, Africa and West Hemisphere, and set up a timeline as they did with trade liberalization as a target.

Regional cooperation needs to move beyond geostrategic considerations

Geopolitical factors are still the main frame of reference for foreign relations for the most governments of the world. However, there are many limitations. In the past, geostrategy and geopolitics were used by Western powers and even by Adolf Hitler for their own expansionist political purposes. Today, if geopolitics are mishandled,

they would easily lead countries to fall back into the Cold War mentality and where relations are viewed essentially as zero-sum games, thereby foreclosing win-win solutions and disregarding interdependence. Besides, geostrategy and geopolitics could no longer match the new developments such as information revolution, scientific and technological advancements that have reduced the significance of geopolitical factors. Geostrategy and geopolitics alone could not explain, let alone solve, many new emerging issues.

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