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**ASIA PACIFIC SECURITY
TAKING CHARGE, COLLECTIVELY**

Ron Huisken



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Asia Pacific Security: Taking Charge, Collectively

Ron Huisken

Introduction

The development of multilateral processes and mechanisms to help protect and strengthen stability in the Asia Pacific region is proceeding slowly. Multilateral machinery is being allowed to develop at a 'natural' pace. This is a luxury we can ill-afford. The Asia Pacific is in the early stages of the sort of strategic transformation that in the past has produced acute tensions, high levels of armament and a significant risk of serious conflict. The more tools at the disposal of policy makers to help minimise and to manage the stresses of this strategic transformation the better. A more determined and pro-active approach to the development of multilateral machinery should be seen as an urgent priority. Moreover, the onus of responsibility for this task must shift progressively toward the region's major powers.

This paper will attempt to characterise the strategic challenges that lie ahead for the Asia Pacific. It then considers how more authoritative multilateral processes could contribute to managing these challenges. Finally, it offers some broad proposals on what a more authoritative multilateral security architecture in the Asia Pacific might look like.

Asia and the end of the Cold War

The nature and shape of the global strategic order that would emerge following the end of the Cold War have been the subject of intense debate and speculation. The immediate reality of unipolarity – the US as the sole superpower – was expected to be ephemeral, a unipolar moment, before multipolarity in some form became the defining characteristic. As it happens, circumstances have conspired to extend America's unipolar moment, and to make its imminent demise rather improbable. America's strong economic performance over most of the 1990s allowed it to maintain a military effort that progressively dwarfed that of every other major power, and at a share of GDP that was modest by Cold War standards. Further, the US, singularly, has taken a great leap forward in the application of information technologies to conventional warfare. As a result, the qualitative gap between the US and everyone else has become even wider than the quantitative one. And finally, after considerable ambivalence in the early 1990s, the US progressively assumed wider responsibility for the maintenance of global order. Thus far, at least, power and responsibility (and the associated perception of exposure to risk) have spiralled upwards in a mutually-reinforcing manner.

The extent and degree of US pre-eminence are critically important features of the contemporary strategic scene, but it does not make an examination of other strategic developments irrelevant or even premature. Indeed, the consolidation and extension of America's unipolar moment could make the inevitable accommodation of other strategic developments more stressful. This is more true of the Asia Pacific than anywhere else.

The view that Asia would be the arena of greatest interest from the standpoint of the global strategic order has gathered strength inexorably over the course of the post-Cold War period. The Clinton administration regularly articulated this view but, certainly at the most senior leadership levels, was continuously diverted by other interests and concerns. The Bush administration has forcefully reaffirmed this priority, at least from the standpoint of security and defence. The US Quadrennial Defence Review of September 2001 places Asia unambiguously at centre stage. This was done for some pretty compelling reasons. The review describes Asia as the region most susceptible to large-scale military competition, as containing a volatile mix of rising and declining powers, and as the possible source of a real military competitor to the United States. Moreover, the review outlines a significant transformation of the US military posture in Asia and sets out a number of concrete steps to get this transformation underway. In short, there are good reasons to believe that the primacy of Asia in the US worldview has made the full transition from rhetoric to reality.

It is interesting, and relevant, to reflect briefly on the contrasting experiences in Europe and Asia when the Cold war ended. As residents of Asia know only too well, the Cold War was a global contest. But few would dispute that its core was always Europe, and that this was borne out by what happened when it ended. In November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down and just 25 months later the strategic order in Europe was unrecognisable. It still seems quite extraordinary that a transformation could be so swift and complete, and utterly peaceful. An explanation of this happy outcome – particularly regarding the re-unification of Germany – would undoubtedly give a lot of weight to the deep institutionalisation of political, security and economic affairs in western Europe under the European Union and NATO.

The Berlin Wall came down, Germany reunified, the Warsaw Pact dissolved, the Iron Curtain lifted, the Red Army went home and, finally, the Soviet Union broke up. Despite the breakneck speed of this transformation, the political and strategic landscape that emerged shows every sign of being durable. There appear to be no features of the new landscape that everyone senses contain the seeds of significant stress and probably cannot be

sustained. The Balkans has been an arena of significant and ugly conflicts since the end of the Cold War but these have been essentially, and quite remarkably, detached from the wider European order. The linkages to bigger things that characterised the Cold War have been effectively severed.

If one looks at how Asia responded to the end of the Cold War the contrast could hardly be greater. Nothing seemed to happen. Certainly no walls came down, no countries reunified or broke up, and no armies moved out. This does not mean that Asia was unimpressed with the end of the Cold War. Inscrutability may have been the order of the day, but there can be little doubt that states in the region sensed relatively quickly that the boundaries within which the region could evolve strategically had abruptly been made quite elastic.

The Cold War was a straightjacket not only for the two superpowers. The power of these two states was so disproportionate, and the consequences of failure on their part to avoid war so enormous, that they were able to insist that the strategic interests of others be suppressed or made clearly subordinate to the management of the superpower contest. The end of the Cold War was therefore a liberating development. The sense of additional space for political and strategic manoeuvre was widespread, not least in Asia. For many states, of course, liberty was not an unqualified good. In many cases, the sense of opportunity was matched by concern that not all of newly possible trends and outcomes were attractive.

Several of what might be termed strategic reference points in Asia quickly became uncertain variables. For one, would the US commitment to peace and stability in East Asia remain as dependable as in the past? For another, could the relatively positive US-China relationship recover from the shock of Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989 and the absence of a common enemy in the Soviet Union? Thirdly, how would the Japan-China relationship develop without the insulation of the Cold War?

While other players will or could be important, the three states mentioned here – the US, China, and Japan – hold the key to whether or not the security landscape in Asia moves toward being stable, positive and resilient. It is useful, therefore, to take a closer look at the considerations that appear to be driving their respective strategic outlooks.

United States

The unexpectedly sudden and emphatic victory in the Cold War left the United States starkly exposed as a state with global hegemonic capacities without precedent in modern times. The United States was in no sense

daunted or embarrassed by this state of affairs. In his final State of the Union address in January 1993, President Bush Snr described it as something that was clear, accepted and welcomed.

A world once divided into two armed camps now recognises one sole and pre-eminent power, the United States of America. And they regard this with no dread. For the world trusts us with power, and the world is right. They trust us to be fair and restrained. They trust us to be on the side of decency. They trust us to do what is right¹

This characterisation of the US as the exceptional State, the benign, selfless hegemon endures to this day. Although said then, and since, with complete conviction, President Bush Snr clearly had an additional purpose, namely, to sustain domestic support for an active global role. He addressed expectations for a major 'peace dividend' with plans to reduce defence spending by 30 per cent over the period 1989-1997, but took every opportunity to stress America's opportunity and responsibility to lead: 'There is no one else.'²

What was missing, of course, was a clear sense of purpose. For two generations this had been provided in compelling terms by the Soviet Union. Nothing comparable was to emerge until 11 September 2001. Some serious work had gone on behind the scenes in 1990/91 to identify a mission suited to the circumstances in which the US found itself. The prescription that emerged was that the US could and should prolong these circumstances indefinitely by *preventing* any other nation or alliance from becoming a great power.³

Events – particularly the Gulf War and the 1992 election campaign – prevented this work from developing to maturity, and the administration's final National Security Strategy Report highlighted an altogether softer approach: 'the report identifies a strategy for near-term leadership and outlines ways the United States can help influence the future through the United Nations, regional organisations, and alliances.'⁴ The key players in this policy development process (not all equally attracted to the draft product) – Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Colin Powell, Condolezza Rice, Lewis Libby and, at one remove, Donald Rumsfeld – were to reassemble ten years later under President George W. Bush.

During the Clinton era, America defied the widely forecast trend toward multipolarity and did so effortlessly. The US economy set off on the longest period of sustained growth in decades and underpinned an emphatic confirmation of American pre-eminence. The administration cast about for an engaging depiction of its foreign policy objectives. It settled without real

enthusiasm, on engagement and (democratic) enlargement, but the circumstances seemed not to require anything more.

Defence spending trended downwards throughout the 1990s, resulting in a cumulative fall close to the 30 per cent forecast by Bush Snr. Russian spending, however, collapsed and many other powers, including some of the larger European NATO states, took substantial cumulative 'peace dividends'. By 2000, US defence spending accounted for some 40 per cent of the world total – nearly double its share during the Cold War – and exceeded the combined expenditure of all the other major powers (Japan, China, UK, France, Germany, Russia). More particularly, the US took a great leap forward in the application of information technology to the business of war, adding a wholly new dimension to its extant military supremacy.

Great wealth and power naturally attracts a lot of supplicants. More and more of the world's troubles were pushed in Washington's direction. Washington's natural inclinations to lead and to shape were reinforced by its demonstrated ability to bring force to bear anywhere in the world precisely, relentlessly and with comparatively little risk. The evident capacity to conduct decisive military operations with high confidence of low casualties fuelled an intense debate in the United States on the criteria for intervention. The prevailing orthodoxy – linked to former Defence Secretary Casper Weinberger and Colin Powell when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs – was a checklist that set the threshold very high, a presumptive no. The new circumstances encouraged a more permissive stance.⁵ Values, it was argued, should rank alongside more traditional core national interests. The air campaign against the Former Republic of Yugoslavia to require it to comply with basic humanitarian principles in dealing with its own province of Kosovo broke new ground in this regard. The combination of the use of deadly force to advance interests hitherto regarded as the internal affairs of a state, and doing so without the sanction of the UN Security Council, angered and alarmed China and Russia in particular.

A second phenomenon was also at work. The United States began to worry ever more seriously about how small and undeserving actors could sneak past its overwhelming strengths. Terrorism was already a prominent concern for Bush Snr, and continued to drift up the priority list throughout the 1990s. There was relentless pressure for missile defences to cope with 'rogue' states. Space assets were recognised as critical to US power in many ways but, for that reason, were also a potential Achilles heel. The corruption or disruption of information flows, often referred to as cyber warfare, was similarly seen as a means of inflicting disproportionate damage on the United States.

These two phenomena appear to have been mutually reinforcing. On the one hand, disproportionate power produced both pressures and temptations to widen the scope of international interests that the US could protect and promote as core interests, that is, through means up to and including the use of force. On the other, the attractions of disproportionate power and the absence for the foreseeable future of any direct challenge led to a growing preoccupation with indirect or asymmetric challenges. As the singularity of the US position sank in over the course of the 1990s, the tendency to wield and to be able to protect its power unilaterally gathered momentum. In the security field, this reinforced the view that, ideally, the US should not have its options limited by other countries or international agreements. Ratification of the CTBT was therefore deemed not to be in US interests. Similarly, the convention of joint management with Russia of strategic nuclear forces was abandoned through withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and from the process of negotiated reductions in offensive nuclear forces.

A third development of particular importance to this study was the 2001 Quadrennial Defence Review. The completion of this review coincided with and has therefore been completely overshadowed by the campaign against terrorism. It is still the case that the strategy and conventional force posture goals set out in the QDR reflect a markedly stronger determination to be able to shape the security environment pro-actively and pervasively, and to do so on a much broader scale than had been envisaged in the past. Moreover, the QDR identifies Asia as the region of priority concern and interest in this regard.⁶ As noted earlier, many of the individuals who applied themselves in 1990/91 to the question of what the US could and should do to exploit and protect its status as the sole superpower reassembled in 2001 in positions of even greater influence. There is little detailed information available on the arguments and conclusions arrived at in 1990/91. It is likely that the ensuing decade, as dynamic and tumultuous as one could wish, reinforced many of the projections that underpinned the analysis at that time. In any event, in terms of the thesis that the US could and should be ambitious in leading and shaping, it can be said with some confidence that QDR 2001 is in the same league as the earlier policy paper.

The thrust of the QDR is that US primacy should become more clearly apparent in Asia. US resolve to ensure stability on the Korean peninsula is reaffirmed but the report makes clear that this old agenda will be pursued in parallel with the new. This new agenda is highlighted through the creation of a new region – the East Asia Littoral – running from ‘South of Japan through Australia into the Bay of Bengal’. The report requires that US forward deployed and stationed forces be more widely dispersed to cope with

contingencies across this vast new region, and that they be capable of doing so in all but extreme cases with minimal reinforcement from other regions or the continental United States.

The implicit focus of the East Asia Littoral – China – is referred to obliquely as a ‘possible competitor with a major resource base’. This matches the Bush administration’s wider effort to take a more detached position on China – openly more doubtful that China will be a constructive player from the US standpoint but not conceding in any way that China is or soon will be in the same league as the United States.

The Soviet Union had provided a common interest for the US and China sufficiently compelling to make all other issues quite secondary. The Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s and the consolidation in 1972 of China’s ‘squatter’ status in the Western camp was a pivotal development in the Cold War. It imposed a second front on the Soviet Union which felt obliged over the last 25 years of the Cold War to deploy substantial conventional and nuclear forces in its eastern regions. For the United States, China was a blue-chip strategic asset.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, China’s importance to the United States as a strategic asset withered. Instead, China became, quite abruptly, a strategic complication and, prospectively, a challenge to US interests in Asia. Moreover, this shift in perspective occurred in the shadow of the violent suppression of dissent in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. The era of the United States and China having to define new parameters for a long-term relationship opened with illusions dashed as well as realities transformed.

More than a decade later, the outlook is no less problematic. The basis for a stable, constructive relationship remains obscure. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the relationship has not only been unstable, but that the sharp fluctuations have occurred around a declining trend. The balance of sentiment on both sides has shifted significantly in the direction of viewing the other party as a core problem rather than as a key part of the solution to their respective aspirations. The China debate was a virtual constant in Washington throughout the 1990s. Moreover, it was very much the energetic free-wheeling and occasionally venomous debate that characterise the American way of arriving at a bipartisan consensus capable of supporting a consistent policy setting. While no such consensus even looked like emerging, the more conservative or hawkish side of the debate seemed to get the upper hand in the late 1990s. A public opinion poll in 1997 found just 25 per cent of Americans prepared to label China a ‘friend’ (with 36 per cent depicting it as an adversary and 39 per cent with no opinion). In 1983,

the breakdown had been 52 per cent (friend), 21 per cent (adversary), and 27 per cent (no opinion).⁷ Being labelled a 'panda-hugger' in Washington became a synonym for limited career options.

The Bush administration, as noted, has delivered on its campaign promises to adopt a stance toward China that is harder, more demanding and more watchful. The administration is of the view that a significant part of the problem is that the US has taken China too seriously, reacting to what China might become in the relatively distant future rather than to what it is today and will be for quite some time yet. The Bush administration seems more consciously determined not to concede peer status to China before it is absolutely necessary to do so. The past characterisations of the Washington-Beijing axis as the most important bilateral relationship in the world are no longer made or accepted in Washington. The relationship is important but those with US allies, especially Japan, are conspicuously promoted. The youngest hegemonic state in history is seeking to adopt a loftier and more distant attitude toward the 1.3 billion people of the world's oldest civilisation, a civilisation that has probably won and lost more empires than the US, UK, France, Germany, Russia and Japan put together.

A strong measure of competition – including strategic competition – between the US and China is probably inescapable and will simply have to be managed. But the trend in US-China relations holds significant risk that a deeper antagonism will take root and dispel hopes for a relatively positive security environment in East Asia over the longer-term. And both sides are responsible for this trend.

China

China has been at the centre of affairs in east and central Asia as an organised political entity for more than 3000 years, at least since the Shang dynasty of 1450-1122 BC.⁸ Over this vast expanse of time, it has enjoyed numerous long periods of comprehensive dominance – military, economic, technological and cultural – but also suffered many periods of civil war, stagnation, invasion and loss of empire. Many scholars consider that this unique experience has given the Chinese, and particularly the intellectual and policy communities, a more highly developed sense of destiny than is typical in other countries. Moreover, this long history and the continuing tradition of authoritative government inclines the Chinese leadership to operate with far longer time horizons than the three or four year election cycle that now prevails in all the other major powers.

China now appears to be on the cusp of yet another resurgence. The crucial political decisions in 1978 to move away from the command economy

led to a sustained surge in economic growth. Between 1979 and 2000, the average annual rate of growth in GDP was 9.5 per cent, compared to 5.3 per cent for the period 1960-1978. Authoritative forecasts, conditional of course on political cohesion and continued internal reform to extend market economy practices, put China growth potential at about 6.7 per cent over the period 2000-2015.⁹

When perspectives on regional and global strategic developments were transformed by the end of the Cold War, China's economic performance was already credible enough to support projections of what sort of China one could expect to see at various points in the future. And just about any projection about China produces breathtaking results. Those made in the early 1990s about what sort of impact and influence China could have in the suddenly fluid post-Cold War environment undoubtedly helped shape the attitudes of the United States as well as of all the Asian states.

It was pretty clear around 1990 that China would almost certainly become a transforming economic giant in East Asia. It was at once an essentially unlimited market, a bottomless pit for foreign investment, an overwhelming competitor for export markets for lower-technology manufactured goods, an entity that could change profoundly the energy equation, particularly oil and gas, for all states, and a huge variable in the global environment equation. All of these things essentially came to pass in the first decade of the new era. China is essentially on track. Current (2001) IMF projections (using Purchasing Power Parity rates) show China passing the US as the world's largest economy as early as 2007. The World Bank estimates that by 2020 China will rank second behind the United States as a trading nation, up from seventh place in 2000 and 27th in 1979.¹⁰

Major caveats attach to the quality of statistical data on China's economic condition and performance. In addition, much can happen to derail projections of the kind referred to above. Size matters, however, and when everything is multiplied by 1.3 billion, it assumes proportions that matter a lot. China's maturation into an entity that is not only very, very big but also agile and innovative and capable of generating significant surplus wealth for the calculated projection of power and influence is probably many decades away. Even now, however, it seems beyond dispute that China will dispose of increasingly formidable economic and therefore political influence, above all in east and central Asia.

Then there is the question of the size and character of China's armed forces. This is far less susceptible to projection than the major economic indicators. For one thing, China practises a degree of obfuscation and

secrecy in this field that we have not seen among the major powers since the demise of the Soviet Union.¹¹ Even more important, perhaps, is that so much depends on how the Chinese leadership views the role of (potential) force in achieving its aims. This includes, of course, their perceptions of whether others could and would use military force to frustrate these aims. It is certain that China's armed forces will modernise and diversify their capabilities, particularly in the direction of power projection or at least denial capacities in the areas close to China, with Taiwan and the South China Sea as concrete objectives. This expectation, however, leaves a great deal of flexibility as to the magnitude, speed and direction of modernisation.

Beyond a strong, generalised sense of destiny derived from its uniquely long history, students of China contend that its worldview is shaped more particularly by relatively recent experiences. The most recent, usually referred to as period of 'humiliation', offers a compelling picture of what China must never again allow to happen. This period, roughly the 150 years from 1800 to 1949, saw a succession of more advanced powers use force or the threat of force to compel a weak and weakening dynasty to compromise China's sovereignty and surrender its wealth. Essentially all the major powers of this period were involved, including the US, UK, Germany, Russia and, most particularly, Japan. The obvious lessons were drawn from this experience: be suspicious of the outside world; assume the worst on the part of major powers in respect of accepting a strong China; and accumulate sufficient comprehensive power so that whatever engagement was necessary could be conducted from a position of strength.

Matching these 'lessons' from the period of humiliation is a strong attachment to prior periods of ascendancy when China proclaimed itself as the Middle Kingdom, surrounded by States that recognised and accepted its supremacy through the gesture of periodic 'tributes'.

As China and the United States began, more or less unconsciously, to test the parameter of their post-Cold War relationship they discovered that the comparative harmony of the 1970s and 1980s had been lost. Though probably hazy on both sides, their respective visions of the appropriate nature of the relationship between them – and, by implication the influence that each was prepared to concede to the other in shaping the future of Asia – were different, and diverging.

In retrospect, it may well have been the case that China had inflated expectations. The factors contributing to such a frame of mind are not hard to discern. China had, after all, been a close strategic partner for 20 years, a good deal closer in fact than most people realised because the relationship had comparatively little visibility.¹² Moreover, with its particular historical

baggage, and all the hype about the power it was expected to become, the Chinese leadership would have felt encouraged to reap earlier rewards and be more assertive about the role it expected to play. In addition, the United States appeared to be signalling that it intended to loosen its strategic grip on Asia: it planned to reduce its forces in Japan and the Republic of Korea; it accepted the loss of its bases in the Philippines; and it was prepared to pursue its trade interests with Japan to the point of great cost to the political and even security relationship with this hitherto pivotal ally.

What China appears not to have fully appreciated – and may indeed have been incapable of fully appreciating – was the extent to which Tiananmen Square had transformed impression of China, and its abrupt demotion in strategic importance to the United States following the demise of the Soviet Union. In any event, as the United States gradually absorbed the full implications of winning the Cold War and began to develop new policy bearings for the still strangely fluid post-Cold War era, it looked upon China with very different eyes. Far from being regarded as the co-determinant of the future order in Asia, Beijing found itself regarded as a prospectively dangerous loose cannon lacking the disciplines of democracy, respect for human rights and compliance with the established norms and conventions of international conduct in fields like trade and non-proliferation. The relationship began to be dominated by differences – above all Taiwan, human rights and proliferation, both nuclear and conventional. In addition, the United States changed course with Japan, restoring the primacy of the political and security relationship, froze the planned reductions in its forward-deployed forces and reaffirmed its determination to resist the threat or use of force to secure the incorporation of Taiwan into China. The Clinton administration settled firmly on a policy of engagement of China but the debate in the United States on the alternative of containment was a serious one. In 1996-97, it was widely reported that Beijing had made the fundamental determination that, on balance, the direct and prominent US role in the security equation in East Asia was no longer in China's interests and that China should seek to weaken that role.¹³

Even if this was true – and it is certainly plausible – the current of events and trends was moving in the direction of closer US interest in Asia and sharper interaction with China. And the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 suggested that even lady luck was conspiring to reinforce the drift toward antagonism in US-China relations. The steady consolidation and development of US pre-eminence – most spectacularly in the military field – throughout the decade also strengthened the pressures and temptations in Washington to act unilaterally to achieve its objectives. From Beijing's perspective, two developments in the late 1990s

were seen as further graphic examples of America's disdain for China's interests. First, North Korea's launch of a rudimentary three-stage missile in August 1998 tilted the political balance in Washington on missile defence decisively in favour of a commitment to deploy. Even the limited deployment envisaged to cope with numerically small threats from 'rogue' states like North Korea could readily be shown to have the theoretical capability to negate China's modest nuclear deterrent. In addition, the sea-based component of America's missile defences could be deployed to cover Taiwan. More to the point, China appears to be convinced that these possible outcomes in fact constitute the real motives behind the US missile defence program. Second, when China and Russia adamantly opposed intervention against Serbia over humanitarian concerns in Kosovo in the UN Security Council, the US went ahead (with NATO support) without any form of UN authorisation. And it accomplished its objectives. For China – with an eye to Taiwan, Tibet and the separatist movement in Xinjiang – any confidence that the US could be relied upon to be a relatively benign hegemon essentially evaporated.

When the Bush administration assumed office in January 2001, it essentially codified the preceding decade of difficulty and deterioration in US-China relations. During the campaign it had bluntly characterised China as a strategic competitor. Once in office, it consciously took a more detached or aloof approach to China, signalling – as befits a superpower – that China was important but not especially important. In an early crisis – the collision between a Chinese fighter and a US intelligence-gathering EP-3 aircraft in international airspace off Hainan Island in April 2001 – the administration conspicuously resisted elevating its significance and pursued a resolution through normal diplomatic channels. Moreover, with no particular subtlety, the administration flexed its muscles. In the delicate psychological game over Taiwan, it tilted conspicuously in favour of Taiwan, following up in April 2001 with the most generous arms package since 1992. As a State Department official put it recently, 'Taiwan is not looked at as a problem anymore. We look at it as a success story'.¹⁴ China clearly regards US insistence on peaceful reunification as a cover for a more strategic objective, namely, to protect Taiwan's considerable value as a military complication for China. In protesting the US decision to allow Taiwan's Defence Minister to attend a conference in Florida in March 2002, a Chinese Vice Foreign Minister exposed this view when he urged the US to abandon its policy of regarding Taiwan as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'.¹⁵

The missile defence program was accelerated and recast in ways that made it, again incidentally, an even more serious prospective challenge to

China's nuclear deterrent. This development was reinforced by the US decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty, despite solemn warnings from China and Russia that this would weaken global stability. Finally, the US crafted a new defence policy and force posture that made Asia the region of primary interest and concern and, in contrast to the past focus on Korea, signalled US determination to shape the security environment across the region as a whole. The events of 11 September has at least delivered a pause. China spontaneously expressed its sympathies and indicated that it would support efforts to bring those responsible to justice. China has not reneged on this undertaking, but it has chosen to be cautious and discreet in doing so, in contrast to Russia and even Japan. Part of the reason for this may be that the US has made clear that it sees the war on terror as a self-contained issue. Washington demanded support in this campaign – 'either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists' – on its merits and not in exchange for concessions on other difficulties that countries may have with Washington.¹⁶ To this extent, when President Bush speaks of 'a common danger erasing old rivalries', Beijing would appear to be erring on the side of caution rather than hope.¹⁷

Japan

The sudden end of the Cold War left Japan, like most states, surprised and unprepared. A decade on, it is fair to say that Japan has accepted that it will have to compete hard to remain influential in shaping the political and strategic evolution of Asia. Further, Japan seems determined as far as possible to be able to compete on equal terms with the other contenders. Although the United States had been pushing Japan in this direction for a decade or more before the Cold War ended, this development in Japan's outlook is overwhelmingly the result of the pull from China over the decade since that watershed.

The Japanese are very conscious of the impact of the weight of history on Chinese perceptions. As a senior politician, Ichiro Ozawa, put it a few years ago:

The sense that China is the Middle Kingdom is very strong among the Chinese, and in that regard you might say that the sense of wanting hegemony is very much there.¹⁸

A Japanese academic has gone so far as to suggest that the influence of centuries of Chinese superiority is still detectable in Japan's tendency to view international relations as hierarchical and to be rather tentative in promoting multilateralism.¹⁹

Competing on equal terms refers to having a comparable array of political, diplomatic, economic and military tools with which to exert influence. A comparison of the Gulf War and the campaign against terrorism provides a measure of the development in Japanese thinking on the military tool. In 1990-91 Japan paid US\$ 13 billion towards the cost of the war and was still sharply criticised for not finding a way to be involved. (Six Japanese minesweepers turned up in the Gulf long after the fighting had ended.) For Japan, as the world's second-ranking economic power and already lobbying determinedly for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, this rather unfair but still humiliating experience left a deep impression. In contrast, in October 2001, just weeks after the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Diet approved legislation to allow a fleet of naval support vessels to deploy to the Indian Ocean. These vessels performed rear-echelon roles, never connecting directly with coalition elements engaged in combat, but they got there while the operation was in full swing.²⁰ This, and the fact that the operation was distant from Japan, broke significant new ground for the JSDF.

Turning first to Japan's relations with China, the broad parallels with the US experience are quite striking. Japan-China relations were normalised in 1972 on the coat tails of the US opening to China. Relations remained generally harmonious; trade and investment links flourished; and opinion polls in both countries suggested reciprocal positive views. Nothing testing was attempted on the political or security fronts, reflecting, perhaps, a tacit understanding to help present a solid front to the Soviet Union.

Public perceptions of China were badly damaged by the suppression of student protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Together with China's continued rampant economic growth (contrasting ever more graphically with a virtual standstill in Japan), its assertiveness in the South China Sea, and a renewed tendency to criticise Japan's dysfunctional attitude toward its wartime behaviour, Japan's perspective on China became less sanguine. At the same time, Japan's relation with the US were being strained by increasingly bitter trade disputes with the first Clinton administration. Then an ugly rape incident on Okinawa exposed a degree of resentment across Japan toward the US military presence that surprised both Tokyo and Washington. Both sides worked energetically to stabilise the situation, but these developments also provoked Japan to take a serious look its security options for the longer term. This examination coincided with a sharp escalation in Beijing's belligerence toward Taiwan, culminating in repeated missile test firings into areas close to Taiwan on the eve of its presidential elections, and the US decision to engage in some careful gunboat diplomacy with two aircraft carriers.

The upshot was that the US and Japan issued a strong re-affirmation of their alliance in the Joint Declaration on Security of April 1996. Japan also undertook to revise the 1978 guidelines on the extent and nature of the assistance it could render to US forces in 'situations in areas surrounding Japan other than an attack on Japan itself'. China was strongly critical of the declaration on security (and of the comparable Australia-US declaration which followed in July 1996), labelling the alliances as relics of the Cold War and evidence of a predisposition to contain China.

When the new guidelines appeared in July 1997, China pressed Japan relentlessly on the real meaning of the phrase 'situations in areas surrounding Japan', suspecting that it embraced Taiwan. The Japanese settled on the response that the guidelines were 'situational, not geographic', and stoically repeated it until China became bored. The guidelines passed into law in May 1998.

Reference was made above to speculation that the developments culminating in the events in 1996 may have led China to conclude that the US security presence in East Asia was no longer in its interests. If such a fundamental shift in fact took place, it can be inferred that the pivotal consideration was Japan. For China, and many other states in Asia, the most tangible benefit of the US presence was the assurance it provided that Japan would be contained militarily. And from China's perspective, it probably looked as though the US-Japan alliance had tilted towards becoming a vehicle for Japan's re-emergence as a military power.

Japan's unease about China deepened over the second half of the decade. The drive in Beijing to encourage nationalist sentiments – widely interpreted as a response to the declining legitimacy of communist ideology as a basis for the State's authority – included giving greater prominence to Japan's invasion of China in the 1930s and the atrocities committed during the occupation. The persistent stagnation in the Japan economy – by this time undeniably structural rather than cyclical – threatened to erode the foundation of Japan's power and influence and undoubtedly added to a developing sense of insecurity. This climate exacerbated the shock of North Korea's launch of a three-stage Taepo Dong missile in August 1998. The missile overflew Japanese territory and the reaction of anger and anxiety – both public and official – were very strong indeed. One consequence was that Japan agreed to formal collaboration with the US in the development of theatre missile defence (TMD). China's view that the US was using this event as an excuse to gain complete freedom to develop missile defences and promote its global strategic objectives extended also to Japan's interest in TMD. Chinese analysts leaned to the view that Japan's real intent was to

negate the deterrent capacity of China's nuclear-tipped intermediate range ballistic missiles. Japan gave some credence to this view in its Defence White Papers that began around this time to express concerns about China in uncharacteristically clear terms, including more detailed commentary on Chinese missiles capable of targeting Japan.

A further indication of the shift in Japanese perceptions of China was provided by the mounting domestic criticism of the substantial development assistance provided to China. Although mutually understood to be defacto reparations for the war, the contention that Japan was funding a growing threat to itself began to resonate more strongly in official circles and among the general public.²¹ Japan cut this funding by 25 per cent in 2001 to US\$1.2 billion.

Japan's reaffirmation in April 1996 of its alliance relationship with the United States as the centrepiece of its security posture was a positive choice, that is, a course that Japan determined to be in its best interests. Even so, the experience of the 1990s progressively strengthened the Japanese view that a more comprehensive national capacity to protect and advance their interests was needed. The Soviet Union had been a sufficiently dominantly common concern to render US and Japanese strategic interests substantially congruent. This congruency has since eroded. Even though the US relationship was strong and dependable, the contention that Washington would – or even could – in prevailing circumstances give Japanese security interests close and careful attention must have been seen in Japan as increasingly unrealistic. The challenge from China, to take the biggest issue, looks a great deal more immediate and pervasive to Tokyo than it does to Washington. American dealings with China can only by accident, it seems, leave the Japanese feeling either neglected and demoted or nervous about heightened tensions and risks. Missile defence is a case in point. Japan would have been fully aware of the significance that China and the wider region would read into its decision to join the US in developing a TMD capability. Even if strengthening its strategic position vis a vis China over the longer-term was an important consideration, the clear threat from the DPRK and the careful focus on TMD made it a reasonable response and not something to which others could legitimately react strongly. Since Japan joined, however, the Bush administration has transformed the issue by accelerating the development program, withdrawing from the ABM treaty and eliminating the distinction between theatre and national or strategic missile defences. It now looms as something much closer to a direct challenge to nuclear deterrence as one of the pillars of global stability, a challenge that China in particular would regard as highly provocative. For

Japan, this raised the political risk of being associated with the US program, and has led to a re-evaluation of its involvement.

There are certainly limits to the US interest in a more independent Japanese security posture, but such limits are still distant. For the time being, US interest in pushing Japan in this direction is now more than matched by Japanese interest in opening the door. In October 2000, a report prepared by an influential and bipartisan group of Americans (several of whom now hold senior positions in the Bush administration) boldly declared that the US-UK relationship should be a model for the US-Japan alliance.²² It also stated bluntly that the Japanese prohibition on collective self-defence should be lifted to permit more efficient security cooperation. Prime Minister Koizumi has since advocated that this issue be reviewed, and Japan's 2001 Defence White Paper takes the same position.

As with the US, the Japan-China relationship has become more complex and watchful over the decade since the Soviet Union provided a common focus strong enough to smother other concerns. In Japan's case, the tension between economic interests and the more intangible but no less compelling political and security attitudes is more acute. Economic interdependence is deepening rapidly while the political relationship has become more brittle, trending towards antagonism. A Japanese assessment of this relationship, when translated into English, is that these two countries 'have boosted their sense of incompatibility'.²³ Japan's current determination to loosen the constraints of its constitution on the role of the JSDF can be expected to endure. The process will remain gradual but, even so, keeping the pace to what China and others (especially the Koreans) can live with will be difficult.

Forecasting Asia's security climate

The foregoing vignettes on the security interests, concerns and perceptions of the bigger players provide a basis for conjecture on the nature and intensity of the challenges to a robust security order that could arise over the coming decades. All these players have immediate interests and concerns, assessments of threat and assessments of the capacities they could bring to bear to manage, deflect or defeat any challenges. Equally, all of these players are responding to projections of where the others could be at various points in the future, the challenges they could then pose, and what they can or should do to have adequate countervailing capacities evolve in a timely manner.

Forecasting the plausible alternative ways in which the Asia Pacific could evolve from a security standpoint over the next two decades, even in the very broadest terms, is a daunting task. It is not one that will be

attempted here. It still can be said, however, that it is difficult to envisage a future that does not involve very considerable stress and uncertainty, strong pressures for enhanced military capabilities, and a higher risk of major conflict than should be acceptable.

A middle-of-the-road projection might have the following as its key elements. The United States will continue to be drawn to the view that its unipolar moment requires and allows it to be significantly more pro-active in shaping the global security environment. The view that the US had the political, economic and military capability to do this gathered strength during the 1990s. The events of 11 September added irresistible impetus to the will to exploit this capability. To this we must add the intention to make the Asian rim of the Asia Pacific the principal focus of this qualitative development in America's security posture.

America's undoubted hegemonic capacities have in the past been helpfully diluted from the Asian perspective. For one thing, the US was a global power with compelling, and often more urgent, interests beyond Asia. For another, the US is distant from Asia, and its military capabilities forward deployed in Asia have been relatively modest, stable and concentrated in North Asia. The net effect of probable developments in the US security posture will be to bring America's stark military superiority more visibly to bear in Asia.

Any such trends in US posture can be expected to accentuate perceptions of US hegemonic capacities, and the intent to exploit them.

China will undoubtedly have the most acute perceptions of such a drift in US posture, and the strongest resolve to contest it. This will, in turn, exacerbate the fear factor inherent in the scale on which China does things, even when it considers its reaction to be restrained and moderate.

The probable Japanese reaction will be twofold: to further strengthen its alliance with the US, and to seek to accelerate its journey to 'normalcy'. Both trends will reinforce China's view of being contained and denied its rightful place in the region and the world. These trends may also encourage South Korea to move closer to China,

A more overt sense of strategic competition between China and the US and Japan is likely to strengthen India's strong desire to deal itself into the major power game in greater Asia. Moreover, there are stronger prospects now than in past decades that India and the United States will develop a more robust, positive relationship. This could only deepen China's perception of coordinated containment.

Russia seems unlikely over the next two decades to regain the strategic weight and cohesion needed to be genuinely influential in East Asia's power game. But its position, its past and its potential make it impossible to dismiss. As many expected, Russia's post-Cold War strategic accommodation with China — driven by a shared general concern about US unilateralism and specific concerns about missile defence — already looks rather ephemeral. Moscow appears to have determined that its core interests for the foreseeable future lie in the West and an accommodation with Europe and NATO. Russia's posture in Asia is likely to be defensive rather than proactive. It will seek to avoid any slide back into a difficult relationship with China. And the pressure to remain China's foremost supplier of advance weaponry will remain strong for some time. Equally, however, the likelihood that China and Russia will build the sort of dependable strategic partnership that might shape the options of other major players seems fairly remote.

This depiction of possible strategic trends in greater Asia clearly has significant implications for the smaller states, essentially the members of ASEAN, but also Australia. For these states, the strategic environment is essentially an exogenous variable. ASEAN has long been aware that South East Asia would inevitably be an arena in which the major powers would compete for influence. ASEAN has also been aware that its internal cohesion would be the key to containing and managing such competition to the benefit of the region.

Competition among the major powers for influence in South East Asia can confidently be projected to intensify. Unfortunately, ASEAN cohesion has taken a battering in recent years. And, particularly in light of Indonesia's chronic difficulties, it is hard to be optimistic about an early recovery. Moreover, even at its peak in the mid 1990s, ASEAN cohesion was never truly as robust as it appeared. Historical tensions and rivalries within the grouping have been dampened rather than addressed and resolved in a substantive way.

ASEAN is therefore not as well positioned as it might have been to cope with the fallout from the strategic future outlined above. A plausible development is that heightened uncertainty about the stability of the wider region will legitimate the continued, relatively vigorous 'modernisation' of regional armed forces. This process will, however, also reflect and fuel local rivalries. Moreover, one can envisage significant differences among ASEAN states in the nature of the balance they seek in their relations with the major powers.

The foregoing is clearly a rudimentary peek into the future. It is not, however, based on any leading assumptions intended to result in some electrifying prediction. But it still points clearly to the fact that peace and stability in greater Asia will encounter some profound challenges in the decades ahead. The core reason for this is that the prevailing relationships of power and influence will undergo significant change from multiple sources more or less simultaneously. The first of these has been the focus of attention for the past decade – the rise of China into a massive and possibility dynamic and adroit entity on the international scene. The second will be the maturation of Japan into a more normal, multifaceted player seeking to compete on more equal terms with China. And the third could be India, although greater uncertainties still attach to its capacity to harness its potential.

This rudimentary forecast could be enriched in several dimensions. The outlook for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range ballistic missiles would be one. Another would be to examine how the more prominent flashpoint – Taiwan, the Korean peninsular and the competing claims in the South China Sea – might be affected by the deeper transformations underway. Others would be to look at energy consumption and production, or water supplies or environmental pressures. It is almost intuitively obvious that no such embellishments would make the future look less demanding.

Keeping the peace, in theory

The foregoing discussion suggests that the existing security arrangements in Asia have to evolve to accommodate the emergence of not one but at least two additional large players. One of these, China, has been the focus of attention. This is entirely appropriate as China has dominated the region for millennia but in modern times was essentially a non-player until just two decades ago, and a player of certain consequence, both actual and potential, for perhaps half this time. It is, however, now time to recognise that there is a significant additional dimension to this challenge: namely, the implications of Japan being drawn out and seeking greater autonomy in the promotion of its political and security interests.

Assuming, first, that China stays roughly on its present trajectory and that Japan both re-ignites its economy and continues to move toward normalcy as a security actor, then Asia will confront the unfamiliar phenomenon of both these countries being strong and active at the same time. One of the better-supported propositions in international relations is that the disruption of an established order by the rise of a new player brings height-

ened risks of instability and conflict. The established players resent and resist having to make way for the upstart, and mutual unfamiliarity increases the scope for miscalculation. It is therefore no surprise that, early in the post-Cold War era, analysts identified Asia as having the greatest potential for serious inter-state conflict.²⁴ Nor has the passage of time diminished this concern. In 2000, for example, the Armitage/Nye Report on Japan cited earlier, and a CIA-sponsored assessment, continued to rank Asia in this way.²⁵

There is an offsetting consideration. Asia's re-emergence as a distinct pillar of wealth, power and influence in the world comes at a time when a variety of developments are considered to have sharply reduced the utility, and therefore the probability, of major war.²⁶ Costs and risks have risen sharply while prospective rewards have fallen. International norms have evolved significantly in the direction of condemning the unilateral resort to war. And the huge advances in transparency have made all these things subject to wider national and international scrutiny and assessment. To state the obvious, however, improbable does not mean impossible. Moreover, there is as yet little sign that states are prepared to abandon the basic instinct that what really makes war unlikely is being in a position to fight and win.

The impact on this prognosis of having to accommodate two major new security players is difficult to gauge. The literature includes a number of thoughtful and articulate papers on the 'realist' perspective, about where the forces of economic and technological development and of the competition for power can be expected to take Asia in the future.²⁷ Some anticipate that Asia will follow Europe and go through a prolonged balance of power phase. This phase will be testing and potentially violent, but it will make the players intimately knowledgeable about one another. Over time, the cumulative pain from breakdowns in the balance, and the realisation that no one state can dominate for long will lead states into a process of institutionalising their interdependence.

A counter view is that the pure realist perspective ignores the centrality of China and the fact that a hierarchical regional order with China at the top has been tattooed into the fabric of international relations in Asia since time immemorial.²⁸ It is sometimes further contended that Asian states have developed culturally-distinct processes for the management of stability in this hierarchical system. The thrust of these arguments is that Asian states will neither have to go through the painful educational process of a balance of power era, nor to emulate Europe by eventually developing highly structured institutions to manage interdependence.

Whether this more optimistic outlook should be accepted as a policy prescription for the future is questionable. In the first place, China's status as the Middle Kingdom has been successfully challenged on more than one occasion, although there is much truth in the observation that it eventually absorbed and sinocised its conquerors. Secondly, the long periods of Chinese dominance were anything but peaceful. To the contrary, warring against the states on its periphery was an all but constant activity. Finally, there is the fact that technology has transformed international relations and geopolitics. Relations between states are now much more immediate. Rivalry, including military threats, can be expressed and felt over great distances and across physical barriers that in the past helped to keep states out of one another's hair. Even setting aside whether we can, at this distance, get a realistic feel for how the business of international relations was conducted in Asia all those centuries ago, there is good reason to doubt that the underlying attitudes and perceptions will re-emerge, or that they could deliver satisfactory outcomes if they did.

A relevant dimension of the realist analysis of the future shape of the Asian security order to this discussion is a debate on the options that might be available to the United States. Specifically, two options are considered to exist. The first is to perpetuate America's primacy or global hegemony, its unipolar moment. This is considered an option because the foundations of US hegemony — preponderant economic power, technological supremacy and a huge, widening lead in military power — will not be challenged in the foreseeable future, and could be wielded to ensure this remains the case. A more subjective factor considered crucial to the realism of this option is that American 'exceptionalism' can be relied upon to sustain a high level of acceptance of US hegemony. The ingredients of this characteristic include the vibrancy of its democracy, its adherence to values and principles that are increasingly universal, the absence of an empire, and its singular capacity to exert influence through the 'soft' channels of attraction rather than by means of coercion and intimidation.

The alternate school contends that this is a dangerous fantasy: the emergence of competitive states is inevitable, and that a US posture of primacy will encourage other states to coalesce against it. Their prescription is for a strategy of off-shore balancing. Under off-shore balancing, the US would define its core interests more carefully and step back, giving the main players in each region more scope (and responsibility) to establish a workable order. The capacity of the United States to intervene decisively would help deter destabilising developments, particularly the emergence of a regional hegemon. Under this approach, the risk of strategic over-reach, and of

countervailing coalitions, would be reduced and the era of dominant US influence prolonged.

The risks associated with a strategy of primacy do look rather compelling. After just a decade of unipolarity the interaction of disproportionate power and disproportionate responsibility has made the United States harder, more distant and disdainful and more impatient - in a word, more imperial. There is no challenger on the horizon. There has been interest in building a countervailing coalition, but little evidence that this can or will amount to much in the foreseeable future. But perceptions of the US as a benign hegemon have eroded significantly, even among its closest friends. At least for the time being, however, the US continues to be simultaneously driven and attracted toward a strategy of primacy.

At the same time, at least for Asia, the off-shore balancing option looks rather unrealistic. From Washington's perspective, in particular, leaving the region to its own devices in the expectation that outcomes acceptable to the United States are a good bet will seem like folly. For one thing, the US is irrevocably committed to ensuring that the Korean War is brought to a definitive end on terms that are both honourable and stabilising. For another, the US will be aware that, over time, the China-Japan relationship will become the key determinant, alongside its own relationship with China, of the security environment in Asia. Japan, however, will be a handicapped power for some time. The US is in important ways directly responsible for this state of affairs, and it could well remain an overriding US interest to try to keep Japan short of full normalcy. In other words, close US involvement in managing the evolution of the China-Japan relationship is probably inescapable.

Boosting multilateral management

If the thrust of the assessments presented above is broadly accurate, the possibility that the adverse trends in the core regional security relationships will harden into geostrategic patterns must be regarded as very real.²⁹ The likelihood of major war may be reduced but it will remain higher in Asia than elsewhere. What we can more confidently expect is a prolonged period in which the development of military capabilities is given a high priority and that this process will become both steadily more interactive and more complex as additional players are drawn in. Tension and suspicion will become more entrenched in relationships within the region, and political energies will be skewed toward conflict avoidance and crisis management, to the relative neglect of constructive and collective approaches to common problems.

The realist prescription is that the struggle for power in the anarchic international arena will see ebbs and flows, crises and conflicts but, eventually, it will develop the impulses to build a more stable order. The alternative prescription is also realist but is markedly more optimistic about how quickly and painlessly Asia can arrive at a stable order. These distinctive prescriptions are of course overdrawn. But it is likely that they lurk in the background, shaping views about what is necessary or desirable or feasible in the way of broad security policy settings for the region.

Both prescriptions spell trouble for the region. Accepting the fatalism of the realist school would represent an abrogation of political leadership. Similarly, the optimism of the 'Asia is special' school should by now be seen as misplaced. Better collective outcomes are within reach but it is most unlikely that the free operation of the region's international system will deliver them. Deliberate intervention, consciously forging more desirable outcomes, is necessary.

Very obviously, this refers to multilateral processes focused on the objective of attenuating the instinct to address security concerns unilaterally through the accumulation of military capabilities. It is important, immediately, to stress the limits of multilateralism. Just as the command economies learnt that banishing market forces was an exercise in futility, so multilateral security processes must work within the realities of the extant and prospective relative strategic weight of states in the grouping. Similarly, no imaginable development of multilateralism in Asia can significantly displace the elemental instinct that states have to deter or defend themselves against perceived threats. This is another way of saying that bilateral relationships, especially those between the major powers, will continue to be fundamental in shaping the quality of the regional security environment. In Asia, in particular, multilateral processes can do no more than complement the mosaic of bilateral relationships.³⁰

Multilateral security processes can, however, be a crucial, civilising influence on the operation of the anarchic international system. This is true even of the initial, exploratory processes that we must accept as the limit of what is feasible in the region at present. There is a fine line between the circumstances that a community of states would regard as a positive and robustly stable security environment and one that is seen as troubling, unpredictable and necessitating stronger precautionary investment in the armed forces. It is essentially impossible for anyone in such a community to say where that line is. Knowing when the line has been crossed is generally easier. And the historical experience has been that, hard though it may be to stay behind the line, backtracking after it has been crossed is harder still.

Needless to say, no claim to originality is being made here. The region, or at least many of its medium and smaller states, decided in 1993 to create a forum specifically to discuss security issues.³¹ The resulting ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which held its first meeting in 1994, was a bold initiative. For the reasons canvassed above, Asia's sense of community was not well developed and the notion of addressing the sensitive issue of security in a multilateral forum was approached with considerable hesitation. Crucially, however, the ARF attracted the participation of every state that mattered. Several characteristics of the ARF contributed to its successful launch. It was helpful, for example, that most states had had some exposure to the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference process which would have given them confidence in ASEAN's caution and moderation. Similarly, casting the forum as an arena for discussion on security issues at the political level (among Foreign Ministers), and indicating that the agenda and all ARF statements would be subject to the consensus principle would have provided additional reassurance that the forum could be managed.

A more subtle, but critical, characteristic of the ARF was that it was a forum launched by ASEAN for the purposes of influencing the postures the major powers – most particularly China – adopted toward South East Asia. In other words, it was launched by ASEAN for ASEAN. For the other participants, there has been the sense of being invited, of being the guests of ASEAN. This is critical because, although the ARF has moved in the direction of becoming a truly regional body, that movement has been modest. Some consideration is now being given to changes in the management of the ARF that might accelerate this transformation but these changes are being pursued cautiously and without much in the way of political priority or urgency. What this amounts to is that, for the foreseeable future, the authority of the ARF will essentially remain limited to the authority of ASEAN. ASEAN is an important entity on the political and security landscape of Asia but it is not, and will not become, one of the principal forces shaping that landscape.

There is the view that there is a rough consensus in the region on the political space available for the multilateral consideration of security issues, and that the ARF fills that space. There is also the view that the ARF can and will develop to provide all the multilateralism in the field of security that the region requires. The thesis of this paper is that both these views should be contested. The security outlook for the region is one of great challenge and complexity. The interdependence of security interests and concerns among Asia Pacific states is strong and growing stronger. Moreover, the only reasonable conclusion to draw from the experience of the past

decade is that the region is not managing these challenges particularly well. To the contrary, the trends are disturbingly adverse. The machinations of the 'anarchic society' appear to be gaining the upper hand. As Paul Dibb observed in 1996, 'an Asia that depends solely on a balance of power ... and on the defence preparations of individual states will not necessarily be a stable region that manages strategic change in an orderly manner'.³²

A stronger determination to take charge collectively should be seen as a key element of a strategy to improve the prevailing odds. Given the stakes involved, this development in the multilateral consideration of security issues should be seen as involving the highest authorities – that is, heads of states – and as bearing the authority of the major powers. It is almost ironic at this stage that the region already has in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum a process that fulfils one of these criteria. Heads of State from the region have been meeting annually in APEC for over a decade. Regrettably, the formal purpose of these meetings is limited to trade and related economic issues, a constraint that testifies to the unfamiliarity with and suspicions about multilateral processes that characterised the region in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Discussions at APEC have in fact broadened out over time. In 1999, for example, a key topic was East Timor, and in 2001 it was the response to terrorism.

In formal terms, however, it remains the case that regional heads of state meet to discuss an agenda that properly belongs to trade ministers. This is a waste of a scarce resource. A priority objective must be to give this annual gathering of leaders the authority and responsibility to address all of the broader forces shaping the character of the region, including developments in the field of defence and security. It would be reasonable to expect such a leaders' forum to endorse the ARF (reformed to loosen ASEAN ownership) and APEC as the specialised forums for security and trade respectively. In the case of the ARF, this would provide a decisive boost to its stature and authority. A development along these lines would provide the Asia Pacific region with a valuable additional tool with which to shape a future that does not involve the prevailing security trends hardening into geo-strategic patterns.

The importance of ensuring that this development is embraced and driven by the major powers does not preclude concerted advocacy and lobbying by other states to secure this outcome. After all, the middle and smaller powers of the region are arguably the most vulnerable to any serious deterioration in the regional security environment that results from the free operation of the dominant strategic forces in the security marketplace. These middle and smaller powers have the most to gain from some capacity to modify the operation of the security market and they should be prepared to make a deliberate effort to put this capacity in place.

Notes

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- 2 Remarks at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, 5 January 1993
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- 4 Statement on the National Security Strategy Report, 19 January 1993. See: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/papers>
- 5 For a cautionary note on these temptations see Colin S. Gray, 'The RMA and Intervention: A Sceptical View', *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol.22, No.3, December 2001, pp.52-65.
- 6 For a further assessment see my *QDR 2001 :America's New Military Roadmap: Implication for Asia and Australia*, SDSC Working Paper No.366, April 2002.
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- 8 Warren I. Cohen, *East Asia at the Center*, Columbia University Press, 2000, p.4.
- 9 'China's Economic Conditions', Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 27 December 2001.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 A good review of this issue can be found in Shaoguang Wang, 'The Military Expenditure of China, 1989-98', *SIPRI Yearbook 1999*, pp.334-349.
- 12 See James Mann, *About Face*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1999, especially pp.369-376.
- 13 See, for example, Jim Hoagland, 'China: Two Enquiries...', *Washington Post*, 20 July 1997.
- 14 Quoted in John Pomfret, 'In Fact and in Tone, US Expresses New Fondness for Taiwan', *Washington Post*, 30 April 2002
- 15 Quoted in Bonnie S. Glasser, 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back'; *Comparative Connections*, (An E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations), 16 April 2002.
- 16 President Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September 2001.
- 17 President Bush, State of the Union Address, 29 January 2002.
- 18 Quoted in Fred Hiatt, 'Counterweight to China', *Washington Post*, 5 May 1997, p.19.
- 19 See G. John Ikenberry and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama, 'Between balance of power and community: the future of multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol.2, 2002, p.83.

- 20 The Japanese constitution or, as some would have it, the prevailing interpretation of the constitution, prohibits Japan from engaging in collective self-defence activities. A short introduction to this issue can be found in Nagashima Akahisa, 'Collective Self-Defence and the Japan-US Alliance', *Japan Echo*, October 2001, pp.30-35.
- 21 See, for example, the remarks made by Japan's Finance Minister quoted in, 'Japan may cut financial aid to military powers', *South China Morning Post*, 17 July 2001.
- 22 'The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership', Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington DC, 11 October 2000. The authors included Richard Armitage (currently Deputy Secretary of State), Paul Wolfowitz (currently Deputy Secretary of Defense), and Joseph Nye (Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Clinton). Often referred to as the Armitage/Nye Report.
- 23 Kokubun Ryosei, 'Japan-China Relations After the Cold War', *Japan Echo*, April 2001, p.14.
- 24 See, for example, Richard K. Betts, 'Wealth, power and instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War', *International Security*, Winter 1993/94; and Aaron L. Friedberg, 'Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar World', *International Security*, Winter 1993/94.
- 25 'The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership', op.cit.; and the Central International Agency, National Intelligence Council, 'Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Nongovernmental Experts', Washington DC, December 2000.
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- 27 For an excellent overview see Aaron L. Friedberg, 'Will Europe's Past be Asia's Future', *Survival*, Autumn 2000, pp.147-157.
- 28 See in particular Kishore Mahbubani, 'The Pacific Impulse', *Survival*, Spring 1995, pp.105-120. For an earlier analysis concluding that China's dominance complicates parallels with Europe, see Coral Bell, 'The Asian balance of power: a comparison with European precedents', *Adelphi*, Paper No.44, 1968.
- 29 I am indebted to Robert Manning for this characterisation of the risk. See Robert A. Manning, 'The Perils of Being Number 1: East Asian Trends and US Policies to 2025', paper presented to a conference on 'East Asia and the United States: Current Status and Five-Year Outlook', Washington DC, 17 February 2000.
- 30 The literature on multilateralism in Asia is extensive. Two good discussions, with extensive references to this literature, are John S. Duffield, 'Why is There No APTO? Why is There No OSCAP?: Asia Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective', *Contemporary Security Policy*,

August 2001, pp.69-95; and G. John Ikenberry and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama, 'Between balance of power and community: the future of multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol.2, 2002, pp.69-94.

- 31 Japan in fact initially broached such an initiative in 1990 but this fell on deaf ears until ASEAN picked it up.
- 32 Paul Dibb, *The Emerging Geopolitics of the Asia-Pacific Region*, SDSC Working Paper No.296, June 1996, p.18.

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