

Major-Power Relations in Post 9-11 Asia Pacific

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Profound indeed have been the ramifications of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001—not only for the United States, but also for the international community. The staggering human toll of nearly 3,000 people at the World Trade Center alone includes nationals from eighty-six nation-states and territories. Washington's retaliation on a broad global front in a war against international terrorism is a watershed that marks the end of the cold war and post-cold war eras.

The immediate aftermath of 9-11 witnessed a rush of explanations and pronouncements that sought to decipher the global significance of the day's events.¹ Thus, for example, International Institute for Strategic Studies Director John Chipman declared the dawning of a new strategic era that will see a reshuffling of old alliances and antagonisms in a struggle likely to be as defining as the cold war. Further, he anticipated that the campaign against terrorism would become routine, "part of the sinews of international relations" (*Straits Times* 20 October 2001). Dominic Moisi (2001), a prominent commentator at the French Institute of International Relations, saw the events as marking the arrival of a new world order dominated by conflict between radical Islam and the West, in a situation in which the United States is less sure of its position as a superpower, and more aware of its condition of super-fragility.

In addition, several new paradigms have been offered, some more exaggerated than others. Robert Samuelson (2001) saw that the illusion of U.S. invulnerability to external threats could no longer be maintained, and that the change in attitudes and assumptions would have a profound effect on U.S. politics and foreign policy, as well as on the nation's identity.² U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared that "we are entering a dangerous new period in American history, one in which the United States' historical invulnerability has been replaced by a new era of vulnerability; one in which new enemies strike our cities and our people in novel and surprising ways . . ." (2001). Yet others, seizing upon Washington's attempts to build a global

coalition to fight international terrorism, have been somewhat precipitate in declaring that the United States had found this an opportune time to practice multilateralism, rather than pursue its path of unilateralism.³

Addressing what they perceived to be changing emphasis in U.S. threat perceptions, commentators also declared in the immediate aftermath of the attacks that the greatest current danger for the United States was not posed by a state—be it Russia or China—but, rather, by a non-state group or even an individual, which suggested the sidelining, at least temporarily, of the traditional big-power obsession with a rising power. Commentator Paul Kennedy, in an interview with a Japanese daily newspaper the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, envisaged that in the twenty-first century not only will such attacks become more widespread, but it will be harder to react appropriately to the threats that shall, as a result, challenge citizens of nation-states. “They are going to come from non-state factors—terrorists, sects, fundamentalists. They are going to use the weapons of the weak” (“New threats in a changed world” 2001).

In a sense, even the meaning of collective security seems to have been changed by the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which was originally designed to deal with acts of aggression by states, and to address aggression by non-state actors. Nor did the original signatories of the alliance envisage that “an attack might come from halfway around the world, that the victim would be the United States” (Gordon 2001). But above all, terrorism with a global reach seems to have emerged as the primary reference point in U.S. foreign policy. As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly put it in the run-up to a dialogue between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States in November 2001, “there is no question [that] as with all dialogues nowadays with the American government . . . global efforts against terrorism [are] certain to be front and center in the topics [to be discussed]” (*Straits Times* 30 November 2001). The ramifications of 9-11 have been registered among both friends and adversaries, as President George W. Bush has drawn a sharp line in the sand between those countries that are with “us” and those that are with the terrorists in the war against terrorism.

The manner in which the United States has used the rhetoric of war to frame the response to the 9-11 attacks, as Joseph S. Nye (2001) has noted, may have enabled it to garner a broad-based

patriotic support on the domestic front. However, Washington's efforts at coalition building abroad have been complicated by the diversity of security and domestic interests on the part of its friends, allies, potential strategic competitors, and even detractors. Nowhere is this diversity more sharply reflected than in Asia Pacific, despite the common, indeed almost universal, sense of outrage against what transpired on September 11. Accordingly, it is necessary to distinguish rhetoric from substance, as much as it is important to identify persisting strategic fundamentals even as we reflect on the changes that have marked the strategic landscape since 9-11.

THE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

Asia Pacific is host to Asia's largest U.S. forward military deployment, amounting to about 100,000 troops, most of whom are stationed in South Korea and Japan. The individual deployments are not only focused on the security needs of East Asia, but also on the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, where emergency situations may call for swing-around deployments. Within Asia Pacific, American military assets are anchored in or projected through bases and facilities offered by formal and de facto allies.

Since 9-11, a number of these bilateral facilities, arrangements, and linkages have been revitalized to varying degrees as part of a widening strategy to deal with the threat of terrorism and the specific U.S. military response in Afghanistan. If military needs serve to underline the interconnectedness between regions for the United States, the globalization of terrorism and the extended reach of the Al Qaeda network serve to remind regional states and societies (some of which must reckon with home-grown militant Islamic groups) of their vulnerability to penetration and attack.⁴

Threats to U.S. interests also potentially menace the locations of the interests, wherever they may be. A case in point is Singapore's revelation, in December 2001, of a terrorist plot by local members of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network (straddling Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia), which has alleged links to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines and Al Qaeda, against U.S. and Western targets in the republic. This also underlined the inherent threat to life and limb of ordinary Singaporeans. Following a second wave of arrests of JI members in

Singapore in August 2002, the government asserted that the JI had not only targeted foreign interests in Singapore, but also local assets and installations.

Very noticeably after 9-11, and particularly since the terrorist car bombings in Bali on October 12, 2002, and a spate of terrorist attacks in the southern Philippines in the same month, there has been a generally heightened sense of internal insecurity, regional vulnerability, and exposure to terrorism pervading both developing and developed states in Southeast Asia.⁵

Northeast Asia, despite the presence of a perceived rogue state on the Korean peninsula, does not fully share this internal vulnerability. It could be said too that not all Southeast Asian states are equally vulnerable to the threat of terrorism, although foreign travel advisories and strategic risk analyses, which can influence business decisions, have tended to see the region in an undifferentiated light especially in the immediate aftermath of the Bali bombings.

Fundamental transformations in the Asian strategic landscape have, however, taken place elsewhere in Asia, primarily in South Asia, where the post 9-11 realignment of the security interests of Pakistan, a long-time strategic partner of China, has given the United States an advantageous toehold on either side of the India-Pakistan divide. India for its part has taken advantage of the war against terrorism to strengthen its security cooperation with the United States. In Central Asia, the United States has gained unprecedented access to bases and military facilities, and probably a long-term military-politico-economic presence in Afghanistan; China and Russia, meanwhile, have gained a freer hand in dealing with their own separatist-terrorist threats in Xinjiang and Chechnya, respectively.

The external security environment of Asia Pacific, except for the wild card of North Korea, is generally benign, reflecting the stability in relations among the region's member nation-states and territories. Nevertheless, as the meeting point of U.S., Chinese, Russian, Japanese, and to a much lesser extent, Indian strategic interests, Asia Pacific has also witnessed significant shifts in major-power relations since 9-11. In the long run, India (which, like China and Russia, is a major power in continental Asia) is likely to give greater meaning and substance to its strategic footprint in Asia Pacific, which is symbolized and recognized by its membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), as its strategic and economic competition with a rising China unfolds. However, in the near term, the impact of India's power relations will register primarily in the

South Asian security complex and among the Indian Ocean littoral states of ASEAN, rather than in the wider Asia Pacific, for which reason the following pages focus essentially on the U.S.-China-Japan-Russia context of strategic relationships. They have undergone general amelioration as their interests, though not necessarily congruent, have converged to find common ground in their respective moves to counter terrorism.

Sino-U.S. Relations

To the extent that stable Sino-U.S. relations constitute a critical basis to wider stability in Asia Pacific,⁶ events since 9-11 have had a positive effect on that great power nexus, in the wake of the previous volatility marked by cross-Taiwan Strait tension and gunboat diplomacy, the May 1999 accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the collision of a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft with a Chinese jet fighter over the South China Sea in April 2001. The return of a measure of calm to Sino-U.S. relations followed the growing Chinese awareness that Washington's global security concerns had shifted away from the China threat factor. The fact that China has, for now, become a less critical issue for the United States coincides with Beijing's interest in avoiding external complications at a time when it is both undergoing a domestic leadership transition and seeking to gain international recognition as a responsible big power. Beijing has thus been wary of any incident that might complicate Sino-U.S. relations.⁷

Both sides had been seeking to improve at least the atmosphere of their relationship, and 9-11 provided a timely opportunity for the forging of a new Sino-U.S. understanding and a basis for some form of limited security cooperation rather than confrontation. Indeed, China's support for the Washington-led war against terrorism (which resonates with Beijing's fight against allegedly Al Qaeda-linked terrorist activities by Muslim separatists in its western province of Xinjiang, especially since Washington obligingly branded the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement in Xinjiang as a terrorist organization) has included intelligence sharing, backing at the United Nations, and cautious but unprecedented support for U.S. military operations in a third country, namely, the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda network in Afghanistan. China has also pledged reconstruction aid to Afghanistan, amounting to US\$150 million, while muting its response to the new U.S. military presence in Central Asia and the return of a U.S. military

profile to the Philippines. Nevertheless, lest they should appear as being too up front in endorsing Washington's policies, China's leaders have been cautious to hedge their condemnation of the terrorist attacks and support of the United States with calls for restraint and a multilateral approach (Pei 2001, 20).⁸ This Chinese position was sustained in the subsequent American rush to war in Iraq.

Since the meeting between Bush and China's President Jiang Zemin on the sidelines of the October 2001 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Shanghai, the United States has couched its description of relations with China in candid, constructive, and cooperative terms—describing it as neither a “strategic partnership,” the term used by the former Bill Clinton administration, nor a “strategic competitor,” the description used by the George W. Bush administration in its early days. As Secretary of State Colin Powell elaborated before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in early 2002, the relationship is “candid where we disagree; constructive where we can see some daylight; and cooperative where we have common regional, global or economic interests” (Plate 2002). A high point in Sino-American relations was Jiang's visit to the United States in October 2002. The Chinese president became the first Asian leader to be received at Bush's ranch at Crawford, Texas. More significantly for China was Bush's announcement that he would not support Taiwan's independence. The summit paved the way to resumption of military contacts and dialogues between the two countries.

Japan

For Japan, 9-11 presented an opportunity to inject new meaning into its relationship with the United States while widening the parameters of its overseas security role. This coincided with the emergence in Japan of a populist prime minister, Koizumi Jun'ichiro, who rode high in opinion polls and held much promise as a reformist, until the buildup of pressure that led to his sacking of the popular Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko, in January 2002, dented not only his personal image and confidence, but also called into question his political will to address much-needed domestic structural reforms. In the immediate aftermath of 9-11, however, Koizumi was quick to demonstrate Japan's resolve to be a reliable ally of the United States in the response to terrorism—a resolve that went beyond the familiar checkbook diplomacy that, in the case of the

Gulf War, had brought poor political dividends.

After the relatively swift passage of the necessary legislation (the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law), Japan dispatched three destroyers and two navy supply ships to the Indian Ocean where, at Japan's expense, they refueled at sea U.S. and U.K. naval vessels, the U.S. Department of Defense announced. About half of Japan's fleet of C-130 and U-4 aircraft were dispatched to give airlift support (*Straits Times* 3 March 2002).⁹ Significantly, the rendering of such noncombatant cooperation took place outside the area surrounding Japan and represented the first Japanese military deployments to assist forces in combat since the end of World War II. Such developments, which previously would have aroused suspicion in China, traditionally wary of any expansion of Japan's international security role, met with muted comment from Beijing. Toward the end of 2002 as war clouds gathered over Iraq, Japan, in a move to signal further support for the United States, dispatched an advanced Aegis-class destroyer to replace one of the three previously deployed destroyers in the Indian Ocean.

Although, on the occasion of Koizumi's brief visit to Beijing in October 2001, Chinese leaders had warned Japan to be "prudent" and "to remember the wariness of other Asian countries" as it contemplated the dispatch of noncombatant forces abroad to support the U.S.-led antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan, Jiang sounded much milder than before when he told Koizumi that it was "easy to understand" why Japan wanted to be involved in the campaign.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he cautioned Koizumi about regional sensitivities over Japanese defense moves (*International Herald Tribune* 9 October 2001; *Straits Times* 9 October 2001). Some analysts believe that "although China has expressed its understanding . . . the Chinese leadership expects that such support will remain highly limited in time and scope. . ." (Swaine and Pei 2002, 4).

Despite a much-dented image at home, Koizumi continued to project himself as a firm ally of the United States during Bush's visit to Japan in February 2002. He avoided being critical of his counterpart's "axis of evil" depiction of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, indicating that it reflected the firm resolve of the U.S. president to deal with terrorism. While events since 9-11 may well see a greater international acceptance of Japan's overseas security role, a demonstration of strong support for Washington is not without attendant risk in the eyes those who are worried about new U.S. expectations of Japan and the implications, not only for Japan's

attempts to normalize relations with Pyongyang, but also for wider Japanese diplomacy in the Middle East. Moreover, although it now may be perceived as an opportunity for Japan to project a certain élan in its foreign policy, it should not be forgotten that international image also depends on Tokyo's capacity and will to set its economic house in order. As Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz commented, "[a]s Japan continues to struggle with deflation and a growing overhang of non-performing loans and non-performing assets, its influence gradually declines. The question for Japan is not whether it has the means to restore itself to vibrant economic growth. The question is whether it has the will" (French and Brooke 2002).¹¹

Russia

Since 9-11, Russia has been able to enjoy a slightly more balanced relationship with both China and the United States. During a visit to Moscow two months before the September 11 events, Russia and China had signed the first treaty of friendship and cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in fifty years. It lays the legal groundwork for the development of their relationship over the following twenty years and seeks to establish the basis for a new "strategic partnership" rather than a military alliance between the two powers. Coming close on the heels of much publicized Sino-Russian opposition to Washington's proposed theater missile defense (TMD) and national missile defense (NMD) systems, subsequent antimissile tests conducted by the United States, and Washington's scrapping of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the newly affirmed Sino-Russian friendship appeared to counterbalance the post-cold war U.S. hegemony (Bespalov 2001). Indeed both Jiang and President Vladimir Putin, while disavowing any military alliance between them, had nevertheless been united in expressing their hope for a "just and rational international order" (Taylor 2001).

Elsewhere in Central Asia both major powers had found common cause against terrorism, ethno-religious militancy, and extremism through security cooperation in an expanded Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which also ties in the four Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Such a security framework could pass for a functional collective security arrangement, although one might be tempted to see it as a Sino-Russian "condominium" of sorts, given the great discrepancy in military power between the two

big players and the Central Asian republics. But presumably the SCO can provide a common platform of opposition to certain American strategic policies and American unilateralism. For example, the SCO defense ministers' meeting of June 2001 declared support for the ABM Treaty that Washington wanted to abandon in order to set up an NMD system. The meeting also opposed U.S. plans for a TMD system that, China feared, could be extended to cover Taiwan (*International Herald Tribune* 16–17 June 2001).

However, since 9-11, the emerging U.S. military presence in some of the SCO's Central Asian member states has diminished somewhat the significance of the organization as a regional security mechanism that does not have direct U.S. participation or a covert U.S. overhang.¹² An observer has speculated that one future challenge for the SCO is how to safeguard its interests without coming into direct conflict with the U.S. presence and U.S. interests (Yu 2002). Equally, it could be argued that, if the U.S. presence there is entrenched over the long run, it could present the local regimes with a counterbalance to Russia and China, the intentions of which they view with some reservation if not suspicion.

Russo-U.S. Relations

Developments since 9-11 have provided Russo-U.S. relations with a common security cause in the fight against terrorism, while pushing the contentious missile defense issue further down the road.¹³ Indeed, Putin was able to extract cooperative mileage during his visit to the United States in November 2001, when he indicated that Russia would not object were the U.S. military to operate in former Soviet republics around Afghanistan, and the Russians to provide intelligence on terrorist activity in the region. More shrewdly, Putin has been able to facilitate a return of Russian influence in Afghanistan on the back of U.S. power. One is reminded that, after all, Moscow's ties to Afghanistan's Northern Alliance are older and deeper than are those of Washington.

Significantly, Russia had followed its statements of support for U.S. military actions against the Taliban and Al Qaeda with the dispatch of its own transport aircraft carrying troops and medical personnel to Afghanistan (Hoagland 2001). Russia has taken the opportunity to reset the framework of cooperation with the United States, which fitted into its underlying interest

(elusive though it might have proven at times) in carving for itself a role in world affairs. Indeed, while Putin called for a “comprehensive, purposeful and well-coordinated struggle against terrorism,” he insisted that it could only occur if such a struggle were “conducted under an international security system restructured to give Russia more influence” (“Mr. Putin’s Choice” 2001).

Looking at the improving climate of big-power relations in Asia Pacific, it can be said that Russia appears to be balancing a growing security relationship with China without seeming to alienate the United States, the Japan-U.S. relationship has been embellished, and Sino-U.S. relations are in relatively good repair. But at least for the short term, it is the United States which seems to have benefited the most. That is not to say, however, that the current U.S. strategic advantage can be sustained, the inherent structural tension in all these bilateral relationships can be ignored, or the situation shall not be seen, by hindsight, as being a big common pan in which different players are simultaneously frying different fish.

LONG-TERM REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Challenge to Development

The swift success of the early phase of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan served both to underline the role and utility of conventional military force in countering terrorism, and to reaffirm the virtues of a quick fix or safe response. This may well overshadow the primary political need to refocus on the root causes of terrorism. Despite Powell’s avowal at the January–February 2002 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting of the U.S. commitment to expand the war on terrorism to include addressing root causes such as poverty, the major thrust of Bush’s proposal in 2002 to increase defense spending for the following year by US\$48 billion—an amount almost equal to the total international aid which the rich countries have committed to the poorest nations in the world¹⁴—was in the area of conventional military hardware.¹⁵

For many regimes in Asia Pacific, particularly Southeast Asia, long honed on the wisdom of a softer but comprehensive approach to security, the seeming attractiveness of a military solution

to security challenges that are more symptomatic of poor development, social injustice, and mismanaged nation building in multiethnic states can have long-term regressive implications, especially for countries such as the Philippines that are witnessing the return of conventional military collaboration with the United States in the fight against terrorist-separatist groups. Nor has there been much evidence of a U.S. inclination to invest in the moderate Islamic constituencies in any hearts-and-minds strategy to isolate Islamic militancy. As the chairman of the influential Council on Foreign Relations in New York has noted, funds allocated by the U.S. State Department to educational and cultural exchange programs dropped 33 percent to US\$232 million between 1993 and 2001, even as the population in Muslim countries grew 16 percent (*Straits Times* 17 October 2002).

While that is not to deny the usefulness and appropriateness of force, in the search for security one must not forget the need to strike a balance between military means on the one hand, and political, diplomatic, and economic means on the other. In a sense, it could be argued that the developmental process must center on the individual for whom “human freedom” is the “core element of security.” Here the promotion of human rights, individual liberties, and greater democratization can contribute to human security as much as can freedom from fear and want (Acharya 2001, 18).

However, since 9-11, human rights and democracy issues have been sidelined in terms of U.S. foreign policy priorities, as Washington has embarked on an antiterrorism coalition-building exercise that, in some cases, has included becoming bed fellows with some of the most oppressive regimes, those in Central Asia being a case in point. At the same time, the previous focus on human rights seems to have given way to a consideration of the extent to which the restriction of certain rights by means of emergency legislation might be justifiable in the fight against terror. It has been pointed out that, for countries in Southeast Asia, 9-11 has served to shift “their attention from the problems that came with democratic transition to the issue of political stability that was being challenged by rising radical Islam” (Kusuma 2002, 9). While the fight for human rights may not be seeing a retrenchment in the wake of 9-11, it has become clear that there is a need to strike a balance between human rights and military necessity in the fight against terrorism.

Security Cooperation

The focus on weapons, however, may well have a redeeming aspect in that there is now a seeming convergence of great-power awareness of the dangers posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), especially in the event that proliferation should connect with global terrorist networks on their respective turfs. Much remains to be done to persuade Russia and China to enter into proliferation-control agreements that would effectively contain the spread of WMD technology to so-called rogue states. Be that as it may, China has moved progressively toward establishing rules to control the export of missile technology and dual-use biological and chemical agents, while at the same time tightening military export regulations.

It is in the area of low, non-conventional/non-traditional security (not just combating terrorism but also in dealing with cross-border crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, cyber crime, and piracy—some of which activities might also be linked to terrorism) that the scope for collaboration among the great powers, and between them and other regional states, has widened considerably since 9-11. This includes intelligence exchanges, cooperation between internal-security agencies and police forces, as well as financial surveillance of suspected terrorist networks. In July 2002, the United States and ASEAN signed a Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism which provided for intelligence exchange, blocking of terrorist funds, and tightening of border controls. Responding to American suggestions, Malaysia agreed to host an anti-terrorism center, which will also be open to all ASEAN members. China signed a joint declaration with ASEAN in November 2002 on cooperation in the area of non-traditional security. Consideration should be given to how such efforts could be further entrenched within other Asia Pacific multilateral cooperative security frameworks such as the ARF (which is acquiring a counter-terrorism security agenda), and even APEC. Given its focus on trade liberalization and the economic growth of the region, APEC has always had at least an assumed economic security concern, and it witnessed an unprecedented venture beyond strict economic issues to an overtly diplomatic-security realm when at the October 2001 summit its leaders, despite the reservations of some, expressed their post 9-11 security concerns and pledged to cooperate and undertake steps to counter terrorism.

Multilateral Cooperation

The above reference to multilateralism should be weighed against a persisting unilateralist impulse on the part of the United States in its war against terrorism despite Powell's reported comment before an audience of U.S. businessmen in Shanghai on the occasion of the 2001 APEC meeting that, "[u]nilateralism has kind of gone away for the time being." More instructively and far more reflective of great-power reality, he added, "[w]e are so multilateral that it keeps me up 24 hours a day checking on everybody" (Sipress 2001). Those states such as China that have emphasized the need to involve the United Nations and have it play a major role in fighting global terrorism reflect an underlying concern with a perceived U.S. tendency to act alone that, it is feared, will ignore the complementary but not necessarily congruent political interests of friends and strategic partners in such an endeavor.

While the United States is not necessarily averse to joining in multilateral efforts at peacemaking in Afghanistan, or to toning down some of its antiterrorism rhetoric when necessary in response to the sensitivities of allies, it is nevertheless—following operational lessons learned in the Gulf War and Kosovo—prone to assigning roles rather than sharing decision making, particularly in the area of military efforts to meet the threat of terrorism. Vice President Dick Cheney put it more sharply to the Council on Foreign Relations in February 2002 when he said, "America has friends and allies in this cause but only we can lead it . . . The United States and only the United States can see this effort through to victory" (*Sunday Times* 17 February 2002). But perhaps the harshest complaint has been voiced outside Asia Pacific. Chris Patten, the European Union's foreign affairs commissioner, has rebuked the United States for reinforcing "some dangerous instincts: that the projection of military power is the only basis of true security; that the U.S. can rely on no one but itself; and that allies may be useful as an optional extra" (*Financial Times* 15 February 2002).

Such incipient unilateralism or à la carte multilateralism will have long-term implications for those U.S. allies in Asia Pacific that are called upon to participate in, or contribute to, the next phase of Washington's war against terrorism. Already Bush's undifferentiating inclusion of Iran and North Korea with Iraq in a nexus of evil has caused considerable unease in Russia and China, both traditional friends of Pyongyang, and in South Korea, which is interested in

revitalizing the rapprochement with North Korea. South Korea's former President Kim Dae Jung continued to nurture hopes for his "sunshine policy" toward the North in the final year of his presidency, despite previous setbacks caused by a stiffening of the Bush administration's posture toward Pyongyang during Kim's visit to the United States in March 2001. For his part, Bush sought during a February 2002 visit to Seoul—amidst wide anticipation of U.S. preparations for an assault on Iraq—to assuage his South Korean ally by disavowing any plans to attack the North. More importantly, allies and friends with differing interests will be inclined to ask how the United States is likely to match its rhetoric with action over the longer term.

Regional Balance of Power

An assessment of the long-term implications for the region should not ignore the necessary distinction between the changing climate of relations and the underlying fundamentals of power and strategic interests. While the transforming effects of 9-11 on major power relations in Asia Pacific are not to be underestimated, it may be asked whether the changing atmosphere merely reflects a temporary conjunction of interests rather than a fundamental transformation of such interests. Were 9-11 a defining moment in the evolving major-power relations in the region, what events might follow? Those who have observed the past swings in Sino-U.S. relations cannot fail to notice that deeply embedded structural elements in the relationship include the Taiwan issue, human rights, and missile defense, which controversy over the proposed TMD system China has had the greatest difficulty in accepting.¹⁶ Richard Holbrooke who, as former assistant secretary of state in the administration of President Jimmy Carter, oversaw the negotiation of the 1978 Joint Communiqué on Normalization with China, says of the situation today that "[t]he relationship with China . . . is not inherently stable; too many things lie beneath the surface that could disrupt it" (2002).

At the heart of Washington's relationship with Beijing lies the challenge of living with an ascendant China. Indeed, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director George Tenet was far more candid in his remarks to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in February 2002. As he saw it, "September 11 changed the context of China's approach to us, but it did not change the fundamentals. China is developing an increasingly competitive economy and building a modern

military force with the ultimate objective of asserting itself as a great power in East Asia. And although Beijing joined the coalition against terrorism, it remains deeply skeptical of U.S. intentions in Central and South Asia. It fears that we are gaining regional influence at China's expense, and it views our encouragement of a Japanese military role in counter-terrorism as support for Japanese rearmament—something the Chinese firmly oppose” (Tenet 2002).

The long shadow of a rising power which is China falls not only on the sole remaining superpower, but also on Japan, which is perceived to be—too precipitately by some—a power in decline. As much as China seeks to grow in stature and international respectability and recognition, as its economic and military capabilities become more diversified and sophisticated, it will also compete for influence in Asia Pacific with Japan, which is searching for a broader international-security role and revitalized international stature. Moreover, the ghost of Japan's militaristic past will not be easily exorcised from the Chinese mindset. Some of these disturbing elements, embedded in the Sino-Japanese relationship, were reflected in a speech, which former Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Yohei gave to the Central Party School in Beijing in August 2000. He had warned that China's missile arsenal and increasing military spending were causing widespread concern among the Japanese people, some of whom viewed such actions as a threat to Japan. But he also conceded that the Chinese people were concerned about the revival of militarism in Japan, including Japan's joint research with the United States on ballistic-missile defense (*Straits Times* 31 August 2000).

While the former Soviet Union was the principal strategic competitor of the United States during the cold war, since 9-11 Russia has found common strategic cause with the United States in the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Its acceptance of a U.S. strategic presence in its own Central Asian backyard may hint of a paradigm shift in Moscow's relations with Washington, but it could also sow the seeds of a new competitive relationship with the sole remaining superpower. There may also be a greater convergence of Sino-Russian strategic interests in Central Asia, given that the strategic toehold that the United States now has to China's west, in addition to the preponderance of U.S. power in Asia Pacific, will not sit well with Beijing. Russia, through its arms transfers to China, will have an important role in extending China's strategic reach and naval capabilities in Asia Pacific, which development will

be cold comfort to Japan.

These undercurrents notwithstanding, in the aftermath of 9-11 the United States has been a major beneficiary of improved relations with Russia and China, neither of which is inclined to challenge directly U.S. hegemony or unilateralism, despite the formalization of their renewed friendship. However, the Iraq war is a stark reminder to them of the awesome might of the sole remaining superpower. Even as China and Russia come to terms with this reality, they will explore the leeway for maneuverability in their diplomatic-strategic space, at times seeking alignment between themselves and other lesser powers for want of some balancing factor. In such a context “multilateralism” and “support for the United Nations” become code words for common opposition to America’s unilateralist impulse.

Within the hierarchy of powers in Asia Pacific, the United States remains preeminent. Its centrality in the regional security architecture is underscored not only by its formal alliances with South Korea and Japan, but also by the network of less formal and looser security arrangements with lesser powers such as Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, and even less obtrusive arrangements with Malaysia and Indonesia. In the longer run, however, the United States will increasingly have to take cognizance of the rising power of China and the declining power of Japan, its major ally in Asia.

An alternative scenario could be one in which Japan, on the path of economic revival, finds itself increasingly locked into a competitive relationship with China. Both possibilities point to the importance of keeping the United States strategically engaged in the region.

A third scenario anticipates a greater concerted role for the four major powers—the United States, China, Japan, and Russia—in managing stability in Northeast Asia. Here, the issue of a nuclear-capable North Korea, which topic came to the fore in October 2002 with Pyongyang’s admission that it has a uranium-enrichment program, might eventually become the focal point of such concerted focus, given that the United States has recently shown some inclination to distinguish this particular challenge from that posed by Iraq, which Washington is far more determined to challenge on its own terms.

Implications for the Lesser Powers

An assessment of the changing major-power relations should also be appreciated against the regional diversities within Asia Pacific. ASEAN is far from being a supra-national actor that can play an active balancing role among the major powers, although it seeks to facilitate a balance of external influences where possible. If at all it is a “balancing factor,” it is largely in the sense that the regional strategic, political, social, economic, and ethno-religious diversities that it encapsulates make it less likely that any of the major external powers will have its exclusive embrace. Its ability to manage a stable and peaceful regional order will also reduce the opportunities for external interventions. But with respect to the Iraq war, ASEAN’s inability to give collective voice to the issue of the day reflects intramural differences over America’s unilateralism, interventionism, and doctrine of pre-emptive war on the one hand and, on the other, the need to address the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction as well as upholding past UN resolutions on Iraq.

In terms of non-conventional security threats, the ASEAN region has borne the considerable impact of 9-11 on its economies and multiethnic, multireligious societies. Furthermore, regional states not only differ in their conventional power relations with the United States, but also reflect wide differences in their relationship to political Islam. Until the Bali bombings, Indonesia’s political elites were generally dismissive of external warnings, including those voiced by Singapore’s Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, about the existence of Al Qaeda–linked terrorist cell leaders in the country. Indonesia’s initial denial mode and reluctance to take suppressive measures against Muslim extremist groups reflected the country’s delicate domestic political circumstances and the need on the part of its political leaders, including the president, to tread carefully to avoid alienating the Islamic ground.

Lest, in the eyes of the public at home, they unwittingly come across as being embroiled in a crusade against the Islamic world, those ASEAN members with sizable Muslim constituencies, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand (in its Southern provinces), and the Philippines (in Mindanao), are being careful to balance their condemnation of terrorism with circumspection in their support for a Washington-led war against Al Qaeda and subsequently Iraq. Even Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand, which have more overt security ties with the United States, are

being mindful of existing Muslim–non Muslim faultlines within their respective societies. Muslim-dominant states such as Malaysia and Indonesia are not necessarily averse to rendering unobtrusive assistance to the United States in its anti-terrorism efforts.

In the Southern Pacific, the Australia-New Zealand-United States (ANZUS) security treaty has been operationally bilateralized since the 1980s because of New Zealand’s anti-nuclear policy. Nevertheless, New Zealand (still a nominal alliance partner of the United States) has supported the war against terrorism and even committed Special Air Services (SAS) units to serve in Afghanistan. However, New Zealand’s Prime Minister Helen Clark avoids the unabashedly pro-American leanings of her Australian counterpart John Howard, who in the immediate aftermath of 9-11 invoked Article IV of the ANZUS treaty in going to America’s assistance in the war against terror and used the analogy of America’s “deputy sheriff” to characterize his country’s security role. In the case of the Iraq war, Australia-New Zealand divergence is even clearer. New Zealand distanced itself from the war given that it was pursued without a UN mandate.

An accurate reading of the diversity of interests among friends, allies, neutrals, the indifferent, and even the detractors is no less important, precisely because of the understandable inclination on the part of the United States in the rush to war in Iraq without a UN mandate to draw a sharp line between supporters and opponents and to simplify the issues in its attempts to give global coherence to its actions against Saddam Hussein. In reality, that coherence is much more difficult to achieve in Asia Pacific, particularly Southeast Asia. And, indeed, as the war against terrorism moves from the military to the political realm, and as America moves from war fighting in Iraq to a post-war triumphalism to reward friends and “punish” detractors, the greater is the likelihood of divisions and faultlines emerging within and between regional states in Asia Pacific as they adjust to a new international order. The need, therefore, for a sustained and multifaceted approach to understanding the impact and implications for Asia Pacific of developments following the September 11 events is urgent.

Notes

1. The events of 9-11 have been attributed to a range of root causes, including a clash of civilizations, poverty, ethnic grievances, feelings of alienation, the new ideological divide, rebellion against a world gone awry, reaction to a perceived unjust world order, the destabilizing tendencies of modernity, the reaction against economic globalization, and the United States' perceived oppressive domination of the world economy.
2. One year after 9-11, Samuelson (2002) said that, beyond realizing a shrinking world (brought on by technology and the openness of borders) does not necessarily make for a safer world, it was still too early to gauge the true meaning of the event.
3. In the immediate aftermath of 9-11, the father of President George W. Bush invoked the image of Pearl Harbor and asserted that "this most recent surprise attack [should] erase the concept in some quarters that America can somehow go it alone in the fight against terrorism or in anything else for that matter" (Daalder and Lindsay 2001).
4. Coker (2002, 39) echoes the view of some that Al Qaeda is "largely a franchising agency that functions through religious internationalism and stateless networks, rather than through the Cold War mechanism of sponsoring states." Nevertheless, it could be argued that Afghanistan, during the regime of the Taliban, did provide a safe haven for Al Qaeda, while the Bush administration, in its war against terrorism, has sought unconvincingly to link Iraq (as part of an "axis of evil" that includes Iran and North Korea) to Al Qaeda.
5. Following the Bali bombings, Australia, the citizens of which constitute the vast majority of the casualties, together with Britain, Denmark, Germany, and the United States, declared in travel advisories the following to be "high risk" countries: Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and East Timor.
6. Richard Holbrooke (2002) sees this relationship as "the most important bilateral relationship in the world during the next cycle of history, much as the U.S.-Soviet relationship dominated world affairs for most of the last half of the 20th century."
7. In the run-up to President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States in October 2002, Beijing sought to play down such possible irritants as the visit of the Taiwanese first lady to the

United States, the first visit to the Pentagon by a senior Taiwanese Defense Ministry official, and the feting of Taiwan's defense minister by U.S. officials in Florida.

8. At a joint press conference with Bush in Shanghai in October 2001, Jiang said he had made it clear that “we are opposed to terrorism in all forms.” But he hoped that any action in Afghanistan “would ‘have clearly defined targets,’ would ‘be aimed accurately, with few civilian casualties’ and would be guided by the United Nations” (Sanger 2001).
9. The Japan correspondent of the *Straits Times*, citing a report in the Japanese vernacular daily newspaper the *Asahi Shimbun*, noted that the request for Japanese assistance had not come spontaneously from Washington. Rather, senior SDF officers had prompted Washington beforehand by presenting the U.S. naval chief in Japan with a list of military options open to Japan (*Straits Times* 7 May 2002).
10. The warning was a faint echo of the previous months' Chinese reaction to Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine—a memorial to Japan's war dead, including several Class A war criminals from World War II—and his refusal to ban a textbook which downplays Japanese atrocities during World War II, as well as of previous Sino-Japanese recriminations over trade issues.
11. Koizumi himself admitted, “Ten years ago, Japan perhaps was a little overconfident. Today, Japan has lost confidence in itself. But Japan has to regain confidence in itself; and, with hope, if we work on structural reform, then definitely Japan shall be able to revive its economy” (Allen and Chandler 2002).
12. Washington now has military-to-military relations with Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan (which hosts the SCO regional anti-terrorism center). There are about 1,000 U.S. troops based in Uzbekistan, which received US\$43 million in military aid in 2002 (Kaiser 2002; Rashid 2002, 14–16, 18).
13. In the event, the U.S. decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty was met with a low-key Russian response. Putin described it as “a mistake” but also stressed that the decision was “not a threat to the security of the Russian Federation” (*Straits Times* 15 December 2001). See also Yu (2001).
14. At the 2000 Millennium Summit in New York, the world's leaders set themselves targets, the Millennium Development Goals, to meet the challenges posed by poverty, illiteracy, and

disease. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has advocated an increase in worldwide official aid of about US\$50 billion to achieve these goals (Annan 2002).

15. The 2003 defense-spending bill, which Bush signed in October 2002, saw the sharpest increase in military spending since the early 1980s. It earmarked nearly US\$72 billion for military procurement and US\$58 billion for research and development, out of a total defense budget of US\$355.4 billion (*Straits Times* 25 October 2002).
16. Beijing has been much exercised over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, especially in the form of land- and sea-based theater missile systems that could undermine China's ability to maintain political and military pressure on Taiwan (Swaine and Pei 2002, 4). Consequently, China has increased the number of short-range ballistic missiles, estimated to total around 350, deployed along its southeast coast facing Taiwan (Smith 2002).

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