

THE REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: IDENTIFYING WEAKNESSES AND REFORM

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The security situation in the Asia Pacific region is determined by a series of complex factors related to historic and present domestic and international situations. The reminiscences of old wars, territorial disputes and military buildup are aggravating the present picture in the area.

Almost sixty five years have passed since the end of World War II. However emotions are still running high whenever attempts are being made to revise the history of that war thus demonstrating that war memories still remain very sensitive issue. The configuration of international landscape in Asia and the Pacific that emerged after that war and further evolved throughout the 'cold war' period has brought up the dividing lines that are still felt very intense today. The trend towards maintaining and strengthening the 'cold war' era alliances may lead to perpetuation of the old as well as to creation of the new dividing lines in the region.

The results of the World War II, decolonization and conflicts that took place in the region after it are exemplified in a number of potentially conflicting areas and points here. Some of the unresolved conflicts bear potential that might ignite the regional situation: the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan straits areas immediately come to one's mind when one thinks of such possible threats to regional security.

The area of the western Pacific embraces abundant groups of islands, isles and islets claimed by at least two governments each. The Senkaku, Takeshima, the Kurils are immediately coming to one's mind when we think about disputed territories alongside

with islands of the South China Sea. The area of the South China Sea is the world's second-busiest international shipping lane. Each year, more than half of the world's supertanker traffic passes through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok, with the majority of seafaring traffic continuing on to China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. One may think that, for example, the November 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea commits its signatories to cooperative conduct and thus removes the imminent conflict, however the existing territorial disputes in the Pacific area pertain latent potential threat to regional security.

Another phenomenon in the area is the growing armaments buildup. Most nations here are modernizing their military forces thus causing serious concern among their neighbors and in a more general sense in the world. Such modernization is not limited to the acquisition of conventional weapons alone; in some cases we witness the desire of certain governments to acquire the dangerous weapons of mass destruction and other sophisticated weapon systems. Such acquisitions complicate security situation in the area and invite others to seek countermeasures to alleviate potential threats to their security thus generating a dangerous spiral of regional arms race. China and Russia express concern with US-Japan program to create antiballistic missile defense, the US views with apprehension dynamically growing military expenditures of the PRC [see, for example, recent US DoD publication '*Military Power of the People's Republic of China*', Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington 2009], and, of course, DPRK is challenging the international community with its nuclear and missile programs. Major Pacific powers are facing uneasy choice: they must either cooperate to reduce mutual threats or unilaterally halt problematic programs (such as missile defense or long-range

conventional weapons); otherwise they will have to find ways to counter each other's programs.

The whole notion of *security architecture* in the Asia Pacific region I believe is erroneous from the very beginning because when we attempt to appraise it today we see that what the region essentially lacks is *the architecture of security*. Current situation – whereas we see certain elements and partial security structure – shows distinctive deficiencies in regional security architecture. Most of the existing security structures belong to the 'cold war' period, some – like the six-party talks – are the ad hoc creations (however functional in my best judgment), covering limited sets of issues, and some still are more of a discussion forum than security institutions. The backbone of *regional* security (embracing the whole region) structure simply *does not exist*.

Another deficiency in security architecture in the Asia Pacific region is the problem of compliance. Over the past decade and a half a number of international agreements were reached especially with regard to security in the Korean peninsula and the South China Sea. However their compliance record so far is not convincing. Neither the 1994 Framework Agreement was honored by both signatories; the whole quid pro quo idea of that arrangement has collapsed, nor were the subsequent accords reached through the six-party negotiations implemented. So right now we witness how the security situation in the North East Asia is dangerously aggravating.

Likewise the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea aimed at resolving the littoral states' contradictions and alleviating danger of potential conflict finally is merely a political statement, and not a legally binding document. If one party violates a provision, there is no method for enforcement.

One of the serious security weaknesses in the area lies in the domain of perception of security. The feeling of insecurity often prompts wrong policy decisions that may produce unexpected and sometimes dangerous results. Unfortunately the end of the ‘cold war’ has not eliminated the confrontational security architecture and attitudes and therefore has not completely alleviated legitimate concerns of many national governments about their nations’ security. It should become a rule in the region that security of a nation cannot be achieved at the expense of security of other nations.

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Since regional security system performance does not fully satisfy its members, the question arises: what could be done to enhance regional security in Asia and the Pacific? This question has been looming lately over the region. A number of prominent experts – *Jusuf Wanandi, Alphonse F. La Porta, and Ralph A. Cossa* among them – have expressed their views in a few PacNet bulletins recently that were very informative and useful while preparing this report. The very fact that so many knowledgeable scholars and practitioners address this issue means that reform of regional security architecture is imminent.

However instead of suggesting some organizational and structural recipes – being important as they are – let me try to define several principles that in my view should be accepted.

First of all the nations of the region should come together to definition of threats to regional security. This goal is not easy to achieve. However, once such threats are defined ways and means to alleviate them will be worked out.

Confrontational attitudes and policies that characterize current scene have to be abandoned. The new security architecture has to take into account concerns of all national actors in the area bearing in mind that security cannot be sustainable at the expense of anyone.

Security should be comprehensive, based on the principles of multilateralism and strict adherence to international law. It should include:

- political security – the code of conduct of all parties with recognition everyone's legitimate interests and obligation to resolve all differences exclusively by political means without the resort to force;
- military security, including confidence building measures, legitimate armament sufficiency, multilateral arms reduction arrangements, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technologies (with due respect to peaceful development of nuclear energy programs); possibly, multilateral missile defense programs;
- economic cooperation – the Asia Pacific region needs to enhance its economic strength and become a locomotive to drive the world economy out of the present crisis and further emerge as a center of global economy of the 21st century;
- energy security – with scarcity of local energy resources and growing energy requirements the Asia Pacific region needs a comprehensive region-wide policy so as to avoid future clashes and competition;
- environmental security – in the forthcoming Copenhagen environmental summit and beyond it the Asia Pacific region has to speak with one voice, but before it regional solution in this domain is to be achieved;

- maritime security – East Asia is a conglomerate of trading nations, therefore unhampered access to shipping lanes is important to all countries of the region;
- human security – as democracy, respect for human rights and dignity is expanding in the area regional standards in this regard should be also established.

When agreements on security architecture are reached all parties have to honor their obligations without prejudice. The mechanism to enforce the compliance has to be established otherwise the regional security architecture might fail.

The new regional security architecture should doubtlessly embrace all or most existing regional structures and allocate to each a specific role in a grand design of regional security that will benefit all Pacific nations.