

RAPPORTEURS
Vanessa Hawkins
Aaron Timms

ASIAN APPROACHES TO PEACE AND SECURITY AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

LOWY INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICY
31 Bligh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Australia
Tel: +61 2 9358 7126
Fax: +61 2 9358 7034
www.lowyinstitute.org

INTERNATIONAL PEACE
ACADEMY
777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
USA
Tel: +1 212 687-4300
Fax: +1 212 983-8246
www.ipacademy.org

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THE LOWY INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICY

AND

THE INTERNATIONAL
PEACE ACADEMY

1-3 SEPTEMBER 2004

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

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Its two core tasks are to:

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- promote discussion of Australia’s role in the world by providing an accessible and high quality forum for discussion of Australian international relations through debates, seminars, lectures, dialogues and conferences.

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Introduction

Asian states contribute greatly to the United Nations in both human and financial terms. The region has also been the venue for some of the defining missions of the UN, from Korea in the 1950s to more recent operations in Cambodia and East Timor. However, in discussions on the role of the UN, Asian voices are often not heard.

Do Asian states have a distinct view of state sovereignty, of security more generally, and of the appropriate responses to threats in the post-September 11 security climate? To what extent should such responses be tailored to the regional context? In the current strategic climate, and in the light of the US-led fight against terror, what role should the United Nations and regional actors play in maintaining peace and security in Asia? Do today's threats and challenges call for institutional reform of the UN, or for new security strategies altogether?

In September 2004, the Lowy Institute for International Policy and the International Peace Academy held a conference in Sydney to discuss these issues. The meeting brought together a group of key actors from the region and the United Nations to engage in a dialogue on the nature of these threats and the role that the United Nations can play in addressing them. Panels were convened to discuss the following issues: Asian concepts of peace and security and threat perceptions; traditional threats to the region; failing states; terrorism; and the future role of the UN in Asian peace and security. This report is a synthesis of the discussions that arose out of those panels. It is presented in four, thematic parts: Asian concepts of security and sovereignty; traditional threats; non-

traditional threats; and Asia's future relationship with the United Nations.

Part I: Asian Concepts of Security and Sovereignty

1. The status quo

Even though the conference was convened under the broad umbrella of "Asian approaches to peace and security", the coverage of Asia that emerged throughout discussions was by no means uniform. The focus of proceedings was firmly on South, Southeast, and Northeast Asia. This illustrates a point made by a number of conference participants: Asia is not a uniform entity. There is no cultural or civilisational unity within Asia, and the continent lacks the cohesion found in other regions. Instead, it is a collection of states with diverse ethnic and national identities. According to one participant, it is more useful to think of Asia as a collection of sub-regions, each with their own regional dynamics and neighbourhood hegemons. Although much was made at the time of the 'Asian values' debate in the 1990s of a shared cultural identity, Asia as a whole is marked more by diversity than uniformity.

However, many, though not all, Asian states share one similar characteristic: the defining national experience of colonialism. Several conference participants emphasised that this shared history, more than any cultural identity intrinsic to Asia, underpins the emphasis on state sovereignty and non-interference that is prevalent in the region. Even after independence, Asia suffered from exploitation of internal differences as a pretext to the exertion of external influence and control. There was a perception among participants that Asia as a region has a greater sense of living with

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its history. There is continuing suspicion of external interference and the sense that Asia has never been left alone to develop its own institutions, processes and architecture to manage power relations. As a result, sovereignty is more absolute in expression and practice in Asia than in Europe. This has led to a security agenda dominated by norms of non-interference, respect for territorial integrity, political independence, and national sovereignty, and a marked preference for settling disputes bilaterally.

For some Asian states, attachment to **territorial integrity** was the product of the colonial experience, which left newly independent states with little sense of national identity, and shared anxiety over the integrity of colonial borders. This translated into strong emphasis on defence against attacks from the outside, as well as action to clamp down on the possibility of internal secession. Concerns over **political independence** also stem from the colonial experience, as well as from post-independence worries about soft imperialism and neo-colonialism. The issue of political independence also gained resonance as a response to superpower politics during the Cold War. At the international level, many Asian states joined with other post-colonial states in their support for the non-aligned movement. Many conference participants felt the ‘Asian values’ debate stems from sensitivity to the possible use of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a soft arm of Western intervention with greater reach, in some cases, than governments. Commitment to **national sovereignty** stems from all of these concerns, as well as from worries about economic penetration, aid conditionality, and the impact of multi-national corporations operating in Asia.

The end of the Cold War had less resonance in the Asia–Pacific than in the Europe–Atlantic region. In many parts of the region, and particularly in East Asia, power relationships have been more fluid and still remain unsettled. Where the 1990s saw the rise of

internal conflict and state failure in other regions of the world, the security agenda in Northeast Asia and perhaps South Asia remained dominated by traditional concerns of regional power rivalries and the threat of interstate conflict. The traditional response to power relations in East Asia and South Asia was to adjust to the prevailing winds. During the 1990s, the strong norms of sovereignty and non-interference made it difficult for new initiatives to emerge without being viewed with the suspicion that they could be instruments of external influence. Asian governments responded to the emerging norm of humanitarian intervention — particularly as the justification for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) intervention in Kosovo — with extreme caution. There appeared to be an instinctive hostility to the very word ‘intervention’ and anything that legitimised it.

The dominance of the traditional security agenda, and a corresponding reluctance to address threats through collective forums, have also played out in Asia’s relationship with the United Nations. Despite the UN operations in Cambodia and East Timor, the perception remains that the organisation has had little involvement in Asia in recent decades. One participant attributed the lack of enthusiasm for a wider UN presence to a perception that the region has not been served well by international institutions — most notably, a lingering suspicion of the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank after the 1997 financial crisis — as well as the dominance of the traditional security agenda and a disposition to deal with threats bilaterally rather than acknowledging the legitimacy of an effective role for outsiders. Viewed from Asia, the UN still exhibits an Atlantic orientation, and the organs of the UN are felt to have very little impact on the way Asian governments behave. One participant noted that Asia has the lowest rate of ratification of major multilateral treaties (particularly those related to disarmament and human rights) of any region. It should be noted, however, that this suspicion of

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multilateral mechanisms has applied equally to any support for regional mechanisms.

At a time when other regions are moving towards strengthening regional organisations, it is striking that Asia has not yet chosen to embrace an overarching regional organisation, or even a regional norm against takeover of civilian governments. Unlike Europe, Africa, and the Americas, Asia has no regional human rights mechanism, let alone a regional security mechanism. Past attempts to transform the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) into a more robust sub-regional organisation have failed. One participant suggested that while it may be true to say that, so far as economic prosperity and cooperation are concerned, Asia is in the twenty-first century, its antique architecture of power relations and security arrangements place the region in the nineteenth.

2. Signs of change?

The Responsibility to Protect

Given the region's commitment to non-interference and state sovereignty, it may have been anticipated that the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty would find little support among Asian governments for the recommendations contained in its *Responsibility to Protect* report, released in 2001. The report was viewed with suspicion by some Asian governments as an effort to codify predominantly Western norms and practices and an attempt to cloak geopolitical motives in the lofty language of humanitarianism.

The Commission anticipated this hostility, and considerable effort was made to alleviate any concerns. The Commission had three Asia-Pacific members, and embarked on extensive consultations throughout Asia, as in other regions, before writing the report. This

hostility appears to have been primarily instinctive; according to some participants, those who have read the report are surprisingly receptive to it because it accommodates many of their concerns, aiming to ensure that future interventions are safeguarded by a rules-based system designed to prevent unilateral interveners from appropriating the language of humanitarian intervention. *Responsibility to Protect* affirms sovereignty as the bedrock principle of international relations, and calls for functioning and legitimate states as the best guarantors of international order. If, due to neglect, incapacity, or perpetration, the state is no longer able to protect its people, this notion of sovereignty yields to an international responsibility to protect. The report lays out two threshold conditions that must be satisfied before justifying intervention: large scale loss of life and ethnic cleansing. It further elaborates four principles that should guide any intervention: right intention, last resort, proportionality and reasonable prospects for success. The only body with the power to authorise such humanitarian intervention is the UN Security Council.

The prevailing sentiment around *Responsibility to Protect* at the conference was that, if in fact new norms of intervention are to be UN-centred and require UN authorisation, these norms will require substantial restructuring of the UN, starting with the Security Council. Otherwise, it was feared, the geopolitics of the present permanent five (P5) members will trump humanitarian concerns and interventionism will become the Trojan horse that some states currently suspect it to be. Although the need to restore credibility and prestige to the UN is no longer as urgently felt as in the months leading up to the US intervention in Iraq, there are still many in Asia who feel that reform of the Security Council is long overdue.

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Regional mechanisms

Much has been made of the slow pace of change in the region. Nonetheless, it is possible to trace some progress that has been made in the 13 years since the 1991 UN mission in Cambodia. Two of the most important complex peacekeeping operations of the post-Cold War period — the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) — have taken place in Asia. This period has also seen the emergence of China and Japan as major actors in UN peacekeeping. Cambodia was a landmark, the first instance where China sent a military unit in support of a UN peacekeeping mission. China's growing interest in peacekeeping coincides with a decade of increased engagement at the multilateral level, notably at the UN, and seems to signal China's desire to emerge as a constructive regional power. Japan, too, is demonstrating growing interest in peacekeeping operations, perceived by some to reflect Japan's ambition for a permanent seat on the Security Council. One cannot divorce Japanese interest in peacekeeping from a broader geopolitical interest in expanding its military and strategic role, possibly as a counter to China in the regional balance of power.

The most interesting recent development is what appears to be a renewed interest in regional security mechanisms, particularly in Southeast Asia. This was signalled when some of ASEAN's more prominent members — including Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand — sent troops to East Timor with the UNTAET mission. At the time, it would have seemed premature to herald engagement in East Timor as representative of a change of attitude within the region towards collective engagement. It is only in retrospect, following other initiatives within the ASEAN community, that analysts might point to East Timor as a watershed moment. Conference participants highlighted a promising recent development: a proposal floated by

Indonesia for an ASEAN security community, complete with peacekeeping capabilities. Although this is opposed by Singapore and other states, some at the conference felt it significant that Indonesia — itself a potential theatre of operations for any ASEAN forays into peacekeeping, according to one participant — is the proponent of strengthening regional security mechanisms.

In the last year or two, there has been much greater interest in the Asia-Pacific region in regional and multilateral approaches. Whether this interest will be sustained, and whether it will lead to any significant attempts to reform regional institutions, yet remains to be seen. Any attempts to reform regional institutions within Asia must be accompanied by both a commitment to build the capacity of such institutions, and an enhanced willingness to use them. Unfortunately, the prevailing assumption seems to be based on the notion that structures, once created, will determine the behaviour of states. One conference participant pointed out that ASEAN has a long history of building institutions that are later underutilised. It is difficult to imagine that any proposal for a strengthened regional or sub-regional security mechanism will go far without support by the four Asian states with the strongest capacity to intervene militarily in the region — namely Japan, India, China, and Australia. In the near term, any commitment to strengthening regional institutions may take a back seat to diplomatic activity surrounding the release of the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

Part II: Traditional Threats

1. An enduring security agenda

The big questions surrounding the future of Asia's security environment reflect the uncertain future of the region's balance of power: how are China's growing influence, the role of the US, the significance of Japan and the dynamism of India going to play out in the

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future? Regional approaches to traditional threats mirror these uncertainties, and while the threats may be old, they are no less threatening because of that.

Most participants agreed there is little likelihood that the region will see open conflict between states in the near future. One went so far as to venture that we are now entering an historic era, with the East Asian 'condition of major wars' coming to an end, and the region as a whole awakening from strategic hibernation. Nevertheless, flash points remain, particularly in North Korea and Taiwan, and the proliferation of non-traditional security threats has served only to add to the list of potential catalysts for conflict.

2. North Korea and the future of nuclear non-proliferation

Some participants regarded with optimism the continuation of six party talks to resolve the crisis in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and expressed the hope that these might eventually lead to direct bilateral talks between the DPRK and the US. Most, however, were far less optimistic. The perception, common to many actors in the region, that nuclear proliferation in the DPRK is a containable local issue is misplaced. It underestimates the extent of the threat posed by the North Korean weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program, and fails to recognise that the nuclearisation of the DPRK will have truly global repercussions. According to a participant, the six party talks have been limited by the scope of their own agenda: the issue of the sanctity of the Kim Jong-Il regime has not been addressed, and all talk of universal values and rights has been muddied by the familiar 'Asian values' debate. Further complicating matters is the fact that none of the parties share a common notion of the goal of the talks: are they designed to lead to complete, or only partial, disarmament? Strategic isolation, or economic engagement? It would be imprudent to focus solely on the six party talks to the

exclusion of other avenues of negotiation.

That said, the likelihood of the DPRK launching a conventional 1950s-style war across the Demilitarised Zone remains low. The more plausible scenario is that maladministration and economic sclerosis will cause the country to implode, and there is no knowing what a wounded, nuclear-armed North Korean government would do in the event of such an implosion. In the meantime, several participants were vocal in rejecting pre-emption as a solution to the crisis. They further conceded that, in the long term, deterrence is also unlikely to work. On the other hand, economic and humanitarian assistance may be one way of exerting soft influence over the DPRK regime, and inducing pressure for reform. Currently, a number of piecemeal programs via the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), as well as some bilateral assistance packages, have been introduced in an attempt to stave off the implosion scenario. The hope is that conditional economic assistance will lead to economic reform which, as the case of China has demonstrated, can be an important lever in opening up the country, and a crucial first step on the road to greater engagement and cooperation with the international community.

However, participants warned that we should exercise caution before drawing superficially attractive comparisons between China and the DPRK. The North Korean and Chinese regimes are fundamentally different, and while some enclave reforms have already been introduced by Kim Jong-Il, concessions to capitalism in the years to come are likely to be highly selective and the prospect of any real, fundamental policy shift away from the centralised command economy remains low. Assistance to the North will be helpful, but of only limited use in effecting long term political behavioural change.

The effect of these grim prognoses was to underscore the continuing severity of the DPRK nuclear problem.

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The problem will not be resolved any time soon because it is more than simply a struggle over nuclear arms: it is a struggle for the vision of a unified Korea. If the goals of democracy, open market economic policy, internationalism, and nuclear disarmament are shared, then there is hope for a peaceful reunification of North and South. But there is a long way to go until we reach that point.

The discussion on North Korea dovetailed into a broader discussion of the future of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The outlook for non-proliferation remains modest. Nuclear weapons have become an extraordinarily effective way of gaining the attention of the White House: as one participant noted, in the five years following its first declared nuclear test in 1998, India had a more sustained strategic dialogue with Washington than in all the 50 years before. Nuclear weapons, in other words, have become 'weapons of the underdog'. Even among the established nuclear powers, particularly the UK and France, there remains an unwillingness to live up to the non-proliferation bargain. So long as nuclear weapons continue to be seen as symbols of prestige and influence, non-proliferation efforts will stand little chance of success. If anything, the current regional trend is away from non-proliferation.

3. Kashmir, Taiwan and the rise of China

Participants gave some consideration to the potential for conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. While the likelihood of all-out war between the two remains low, continuing eruptions of tension are expected over the coming years. Pakistan remains in a potentially weak political situation, with much internal pressure and division springing from the country's participation in the war on terror. If the current government were to be overthrown, and Pakistan's internal discord to find a less measured outlet on the international stage, tensions with India could escalate beyond all control. Participants also considered the

conflict between China and various ASEAN states over control of the South China Sea and the Spratlys, though the diagnosis of the situation there was considerably less pessimistic than in the case of Kashmir.

Tensions over Taiwan persist. China's position is well known: it has consistently advocated a peaceful resolution of the problem, through the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. Importantly, it has also at all times viewed the problem as a strictly internal one. In practical terms, the immense costs involved in waging a conventional war also speak strongly in favour of a peaceful solution to the problem. This argument is not lost on either the Chinese or Taiwanese governments. Both China and Taiwan are currently enjoying the fruits of economic growth and prosperity; both have a lot to lose. Nevertheless, the option of force is unlikely to be permanently ruled out by Beijing. If conflict does develop, it is similarly unlikely that the US, in spite of the current ambiguity of its Taiwan policy and the confusion surrounding the circumstances under which it has said it would intervene, will regard it purely as an internal problem for China.

Most participants agreed that conflict over Taiwan is more likely to come about by accident than deliberate design, but that the risk for miscalculation and misunderstanding remains high. It would take no more than one strategic miscue for the situation to ignite; and were war to begin, it would be very hard to contain and de-escalate. Participants stressed the need to view the status of Taiwan as more than simply a territorial dispute: it is the issue over which much of the regional power relations equation ends up becoming focused. Taiwan is the fulcrum around which China's relationship with both the region and the US will swing.

The discussion on Taiwan raised a number of questions about the trajectory of China. The general consensus at the conference was that China is rapidly emerging as an

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authentic global power. While its emergence has gone hand in hand with increased engagement, cooperation and interdependence with the international community, it is normal for global powers to claim specific regional spheres of influence. What shape will China's sphere of influence take? Will there be agreement over what it is entitled to? The Chinese government remains adamant that it will not resort to military means to announce its emergence on the world stage, but the tendency in the US is to treat any assertion of a sphere of influence, no matter how it is expressed, as an example of illegitimate expansionism. How will this be resolved? And more broadly, in what direction will China's relationship with the US evolve?

These issues will form an intriguing, and perhaps unpredictable, backdrop to the development of the regional security environment over the years ahead.

Part III: Non-Traditional Threats

1. A new security agenda

At the same time, a new security agenda is emerging in Asia, with non-traditional threats increasingly coming to be seen as a significant challenge to the region's security. These threats are interconnected and multidimensional, and they have little to do with the exercise of coercive military power by competing nation states. Instead, they have developed quite independently of state control, as a result of demographic pressures, resource depletion, population movements, non-state terrorism, disease, and global warming. They include Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), bird flu, AIDS, terrorism, drug trafficking, people trafficking, money laundering and the more complex problem of state failure. While stressing the difficulty of constructing any kind of definitive hierarchy of non-traditional threats, participants identified the following issues as being of most concern to the region as a whole: resource scarcity; the spread

of infectious diseases, especially AIDS; international terrorism; and global climate change. Developing nations are vulnerable to many of these emerging threats: Asia, composed primarily of infrastructure- and resource-poor countries, is therefore particularly vulnerable. For most people in the region, security is more about human security — protection from poverty and disease — than violence or conflict.

That said, the relationship between non-traditional and traditional security threats is not entirely oppositional: one of the key themes of the conference was the way in which non-traditional threats are coming to interact with — and aggravate — traditional security fault lines in the region. For instance, the depletion of fish resources in the Pacific has exacerbated traditional sovereignty disputes, and unregulated population movements have aggravated transborder conflicts and created political tensions between sending and receiving states. The disputes may be old, but transnational developments are injecting them with renewed life. Looking ahead, there is also a chance that, with anticipated shortfalls in energy and water over the next few decades, actors will resort to violence to access essential resources.

One participant noted that the increased economic integration the region has seen over the last decade is one of the main reasons behind the rapid spread of non-traditional threats. It is also the reason why the need to respond to them has become all the more urgent: born of integration, non-traditional threats demand an integrated solution, with an emphasis on the development of common standards and procedures, and region wide institutions, to tackle the problem. Yet in spite of this, governments in the region continue to devote the overwhelming majority of their resources and policy energy to addressing traditional security threats. Several participants rejected this approach and endorsed a reorientation of the regional security apparatus towards non-traditional threats. Particular emphasis was placed on the need collectively to develop

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traction for a multilateral system to deal with these threats, a process in which the UN would be very well positioned to play a leading role.

2. Terrorism

According to one participant, the threat posed by Al-Qaeda has diminished over the last three years, with many key operatives having been killed or captured. However, in its place, around 30 different splinter Islamist terrorist groups, capable of mounting operations on the scale of Bali and Madrid, have emerged, many of them in Asia. The US-led invasion of Iraq has had a paradoxical effect on regional terrorism: on the one hand, Iraq has become the new centre of global *jihad*, shifting attention away from other regions; on the other, the war has given groups in the region renewed ideological impetus.

The most worrying concern with respect to terrorism is the acquisition by terrorist groups of chemical, biological or radiological weapons. There is a significant chance that they will attempt to move in this direction: worldwide, three substantial chemical-biological operations have been disrupted in the past two years. The prospect of a regional maritime terrorist attack is increased by the region's narrow waterways, high volume of shipping traffic and loosely regulated naval ownership arrangements.

The good news is that governments in the region have become more decisive in their strategies to counter terrorism over the past two years: appropriate policing structures have been developed to monitor terrorist groups, knowledge of the terrorists' support bases has increased, and intergovernmental cooperation has grown. But a lot still remains to be done. Groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah are yet to be formally proscribed in many Southeast Asian countries and legislative efforts have, for the most part, focused on the planners and perpetrators of attacks, rather than the supporters,

fundraisers, procurers and propagandists of terrorist organisations more generally. Terrorism can only survive where it has a strong social and financial support base. The so-called 'Rumsfeld' approach to combating terrorism, based on the use of force, where success is measured by the number of operatives captured and cells destroyed, may reduce the threat in the short term, but it leaves the terrorists' social and economic avenues of support untouched. The fight against terrorism over the next 10 years will be as much about fighting terrorist networks as terrorist groups themselves: until governments in the region realise this, their counter-terrorism efforts will count for little.

Most participants agreed that addressing the root causes of terrorism will become a critical issue for the region over the coming years. We know that terrorists recruit from a broad cross-section of society and that what drives people to join is not poverty or lack of education, but ideology and indoctrination. At the same time, however, many terrorist cells' agendas are grounded in highly concrete local political issues. Addressing the root causes of terrorism will allow us to gain a sense of those causes' diversity, and the speed with which they can change. The aim is not to justify or excuse terrorism, but simply to understand where the problem stems from, so as to better address it.

Adherence to human rights standards will also be an important component of the fight. One participant, noting that massive human rights violations can feed the growth of terrorism, expressed the hope that in the long run, respect for the values of democracy and human rights will starve terrorism of both its popular support and ideological *raison d'être*. Governments' responses must be proportionate to the actual threat, or risk radicalising wider communities. As an important corollary, governments must be careful not to identify terrorism with one particular religious or ethnic group, and work to encourage and empower moderate voices within specific communities. Human rights matter

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because they are one thing we have that the terrorists can never destroy: forfeiting them in the struggle to defeat terrorism will defeat the point of joining that struggle in the first place.

Participants stressed the need for a multijurisdictional, multinational, cooperative regional approach to the fight against terrorism. In this, the UN will have an important role to play. (The UN can also help in preventing the kinds of regional conflicts that often drive the formation of terrorist cells.) Terrorism is a global problem, with the potential to touch all nations in equal measure. It requires a global response.

3. State failure

Terrorism has also been at the heart of a recent renewal of interest in international policy circles in the twin problem of state failure and state building: internal decay made Afghanistan the base from which Al-Qaeda sprouted and the September 11 attacks were planned. The international community faces a spectrum of options in responding to state failure, including diagnosis, prevention, intervention and rehabilitation. Region-wide lack of development has made the problem particularly acute in Asia since, as one participant noted, “every emerging developing country is a potential failed state”. Indeed, a number of intervention missions have been launched in the region in recent years, from UNTAC and UNTAET to the Australian- and New Zealand-led operation in the Solomon Islands. Policymakers in the region will face a serious dilemma over the coming years in determining exactly what kind of shape resuscitated and rebuilt failed states should take. One participant argued that strong, more socially restrictive states may be better placed to prevent the spread of terrorism than democratic, open ones.

Participants identified a number of further challenges for the region over the years ahead. First, the most

logical and effective approach to the whole problem is to prevent states from failing in the first place. Accordingly, there must be a far greater focus on developing robust mechanisms and institutions for diagnosing and preventing state failure before it occurs. Some countries are already heading in this direction — the UK, for instance, has initiated a program through the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit to track early warning signs of state failure and target preventive aid accordingly — but more needs to be done on a coordinated regional and international level. The UN in particular faces a twofold challenge: firstly, to become more creative, assertive and dynamic in developing a strong analysis and early warning system (there are signs the Department of Political Affairs is already moving in this direction, and the currently preferred model at the High-level Panel is for the creation of a new body to work on peace building); and secondly, since state failure often springs from internal armed conflict, to make greater use of its preventive diplomacy mechanisms to nip potential conflicts in the bud, before they grow and come to the attention of the Security Council.

The second and perhaps even greater challenge is to prevent those former failed or failing states that have been resuscitated and rebuilt from sliding back into chaos. History shows that the continuing presence of military and police forces on the ground is the surest way of preventing regression. Participants endorsed this approach, but stressed the following two caveats: the size and quality of the force must be tailored to meet the demands and particularities of the specific state; and interveners must always beware of the potential tipping-point when gratitude on the part of locals turns into hostility (the Solomon Islands operation, for instance, has kept an appropriately low profile, and has made diligent attempts to communicate with the local population).

Even then, maintaining law and order alone will not be enough to prevent the slide back into instability. State

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building calls for the rehabilitation of every aspect of a country's life, not just security. Often resuscitating the economy, reforming agrarian law, and repairing broken social relations can be just as important as restoring law and order. However, even many of the so-called 'success stories' of intervention do not exhibit the long term characteristics necessary to guard against future regression. In East Timor, internal security has been stabilised, but institutions of governance remain weak, and the rule of law is not firmly established. Long term development challenges have not yet been addressed, compounding the fragility of the situation. The overall impression is that the danger of a return to conflict cannot be ruled out. In Haiti, the situation is even more alarming: according to one participant, there is virtually nothing to show for 10 years of intervention.

There is no quick fix solution to state building: it is a long term task, requiring long term financial and personnel commitments. Participants identified disarmament, democratisation, reintegration and reconciliation as each being of equal importance to the process. They further stressed the importance of the rule of law. The temptation might be there to mark political and institutional success according to how soon elections are held, or how many political parties have been created, but in the long term, building a culture of adherence to law — ensuring respect for law, and establishing durable legal institutions — is a far more critical and formidable task.

Viewed in this way, state failure is merely the symptom of a more deeply embedded regional malaise: state weakness. There are many states in the Asia-Pacific that, while not at immediate risk of failure, are nevertheless profoundly weak. The real problem in these places is not conflict *per se*, but weak institutions. The third and final challenge for the region will be to address this problem, and to begin to think of ways to build effective, sustainable and durable institutions in those countries beset by weakness.

Part IV: Asia's Future Relationship with the United Nations

Asian governments have demonstrated a renewed willingness to work within the United Nations and other multilateral forums to develop a response to these non-traditional threats. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in engagement of Asian states at the UN, both in the General Assembly and through increased participation and leadership in the Security Council. Though promising, it would be premature to herald these developments as proof of a significant commitment on the part of Asian states to play a more robust role. Nonetheless, this may open the door to the possibility of a new relationship between Asian states — and the region as a whole — and the UN. Almost all states in the region are willing to acknowledge a role for the UN in addressing non-military threats such as the spread of disease. Increased cooperation in addressing such 'soft' threats may be an entry point for a revitalised relationship, as would the use of 'soft' tools such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the office of the Secretary-General.

It should be noted that support for increased engagement with the UN was not shared by all conference participants. Some were critical of the UN for failing to listen to the concerns of Asian states; at least one expressed scepticism about the significance of multilateral institutions *per se*.

1. An Asian Secretary-General?

The signs of increased engagement by key Asian member states coincide with early discussions on the selection process for the next UN Secretary-General, after Kofi Annan's term expires in December 2006. Traditionally, the Secretary-General has rotated by region, and it is widely perceived that the next Secretary-General will be from Asia (although one participant noted that Poland has made a credible case that Eastern Europe

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should be next). It would doubtless be a boon to Asia if a credible, internationally acceptable Asian candidate were to emerge, but most participants rejected the notion that Asia should have a 'turn' at Secretary-General without a corresponding imperative to front a strong candidate.

Although it is early to speculate — historically, the person chosen as Secretary-General has not been on the consideration list when the selection process began — what might the profile and worldview of an Asian Secretary-General resemble? Given the nature of the election process, major powers tend to veto anyone with a controversial track record in world affairs. Many conference participants agreed that any internationally acceptable candidate from Asia would have to demonstrate strong support for universal values and could hardly have been a proponent of the 'Asian values' argument. An Asian Secretary-General would also have to transcend his or her national identity, and demonstrate commitment to addressing global issues such as human rights violations, nuclear proliferation, AIDS and migration.

2. The High-level Panel and UN reform

Asia's future relationship with the UN is likely to turn on reform of the UN as an institution. The High-level Panel, due to deliver its report in December 2004, will be taking on the issue of institutional reform.¹ Preliminary feedback from the Panel suggests that the real focus of the report will be on institutional delivery, and strategies to enhance the legitimacy and credibility of key UN institutions, starting with the Security Council, and addressing composition, structure, and process. Although the Panel must be seen as a response to the changed security environment and to concerns about the decline of the UN's influence since the US-led intervention in Iraq, it also must address a more general disaffection with the UN system in the rest of the world and the extent to which it is seen to privilege

the concerns of a few powerful states over the concerns of the rest of the member states.

The Panel has identified six categories of threats: interstate rivalry and the use of force; intrastate violence (including state failure); weapons of mass destruction; terrorism; organised crime; and poverty, disease, and environmental degradation. Every one of these threats will have manifestations in Asia, but each will resonate differently from state to state, and each state will locate these threats in a different hierarchy of urgency. None of these threats are of zero significance anywhere, and none can be addressed unilaterally. The emphasis will be on the interconnectedness of these threats, and the need to develop traction for a collective system to address these threats.

There is likely to be a strong focus on regions in the institutional recommendations that emerge in the final report, specifically a proposal that the Security Council be remodelled around four major regional groups for electoral purposes: Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, and Americas, all divided along the natural geography of the regions. Early hints are that the recommended composition of the Council will be along the lines of four groups with six seats each, renewable for four- and two-year terms. This is partially a response to the dysfunctionality of the current 'West Europe and Other' electoral group, which has become unworkable for countries outside the EU, for example Australia and New Zealand. It is hoped that the new orthodoxy, with relatively equivalent numbers of states per region, will alleviate some of these tensions.

The Panel report is also likely to address the subject of regional security organisations and will come out in favour of regional organisations playing a more substantive role in international peace and security issues, as envisioned in the language of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The report will also acknowledge how far in practice the regional organisations will have

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to go in meeting the increasing expectations placed on them. One participant noted that it is believed that the Panel has been genuinely impressed with African Union (AU) leadership and commitment to a regional security mechanism for Africa; however, there still exists a clear gap between rhetoric and ability to deliver on this mandate. The Panel will emphasise that the central organs of the UN — the Security Council and the P5 — must not use enthusiasm for regionalism and regional organisations to abdicate their own responsibility. The notion that all problems can and should be solved by regional organisations is seductive, but conference participants were unanimous in emphasising that corresponding attention must be paid to the relative capacity of such organisations to deliver solutions.

Many have tried to reform the UN and many have failed. Prospects for UN reform always depend upon the political will of its member states. However, the anticipation surrounding the release of the Panel's report is due in no small part to the efforts made to test its proposals and build up a supportive constituency among key actors at the UN. Asian states will play a crucial role in this debate, particularly China, as the lone Asian representative among the P5, and Japan and India, who have pinned their hopes on becoming major players in the Security Council. With so much at stake, it is hard to imagine that Asia will stand by the sidelines as a passive recipient of reform proposals. If Asian states are able to re-engineer the UN collective security mechanisms into something more representative of their concerns, then the current reform process may mark the turning point in Asia's relationship with the UN.

Endnote

¹ The account here reflects discussion at the conference of the High-level Panel's deliberations. The High-level Panel has since delivered its final report. See *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, UN Doc A/59/565 (2 December 2004).

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Appendix

A list of participants and their sponsoring organisations

Participant	Affiliation
Mr Nobuyasu Abe	Department for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations
Mr Marc Ablong	Department of Defence, Australia
Professor Amitav Acharya	Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
Ambassador Hasmy Agam	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia
Ms Rosemary Banks	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
Mr Anthony Bubalo	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Professor Kevin Clements	Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Australia
Dr Malcolm Cook	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Professor Rawdon Dalrymple, AO	ASEAN Focus Group, Australia
The Hon Alexander Downer, MP	Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia
Dr Alan Dupont	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
The Hon Gareth Evans, AO	International Crisis Group, Belgium
	High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change
	Consultant, Australia
Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Dr Michael Fullilove	Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore
Dr Rohan Gunaratna	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Mr Allan Gyngell	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Mr Owen Harries	International Peace Academy, United States
Ms Vanessa Hawkins	Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control, New Zealand
The Hon Marian Hobbs, MP	Yonsei University, Korea
Professor Lee Chung Min	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China
Mr Liu Yuyin	Government of New Zealand
Ms Jennifer Macmillan	International Peace Academy, United States
Dr David M. Malone	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Ms Caroline Millar	Australian National University, Australia
Professor Anthony Milner	Embassy of Japan, Australia
Mr Fumito Miyake	Embassy of the Russian Federation, Australia
H.E. Mr Leonid Moiseev	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia
Dr R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa	High Commission for Malaysia
H.E. Mr Hussin Nayan	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Professor Bob O'Neill, AO	

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H.E. Ms Cristina G. Ortega	Embassy of the Philippines, Australia
H.E. Mr Kenzo Oshima	Embassy of Japan, Australia
Ms Ou Boqian	Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Australia
H.E. Dr Surin Pitsuwan	House of Representatives, Thailand
Ms Kirsti Samuels	International Peace Academy, United States
H.E. Mr Yukio Satoh	Japan Institute of International Affairs, Japan
Mr Pangeran Ibrani Situmorang	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia
Major General Michael G. Smith, AO (Retd)	AUSTCARE, Australia
Mr David Stuart	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Professor Ramesh Thakur	United Nations University, Japan
Mr Aaron Timms	Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia
Mr Koji Tsuruoka	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
H.E. Mr Wang Yingfan	Foreign Affairs Committee, National People's Congress, People's Republic of China
Mr Hugh White	Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Australia
Mr Richard Woolcott, AC	Consultant, Australia