

Keynote Speech

New Roles of the Military in the 21st Century: Issues and Prospects in the Asia-Pacific Region

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I. Introduction

At the outset, let me make some observations on the transformation of human society in these last few, but fast-moving years. “Change” is not merely accelerating. Change is also growing in scale, and spreading geographically wider and wider. The result is the growing unity of human experience. Nowadays, even the poorest countries look to some aspect of modernization to lift up their people’s lives. Not just material artifacts and techniques but also ideas and institutions are spreading more relentlessly. The marked transformation of the international community in our time comes from the revolution in computing and communications, and the resurgence of “globalization” induced by this technological revolution. Put most simply, “globalization” is shorthand for the way trade, investment, technology and industry are spreading around the world in a more or less uniform pattern, overleaping political frontiers and national cultures. In recent years, globalization has spread so fast and so widely that its perceived disadvantages have generated an ideological backlash, which has itself become a worldwide counter-movement.

The transformative power of globalization

Actually, globalization is nothing new. The process has been going on - in fits and starts - at least since the eruption of the western powers on the world scene in the 15th century. Japanese intellectuals like to recall an even earlier period, when a pre-industrial trading system pioneered by the Arabs stretched from the Mediterranean and West Asia across the Indian Ocean through southeast Asian clear to China and the Japanese home-islands. Throughout all this time, the dominant states have sought to reduce barriers to the movement of goods, capital, and technology. Often enough, this was done forcibly, just as the British opened up China, the Americans opened up Japan, and the Europeans opened up Africa. In our time, the information and communications revolution - by overcoming the tyranny of distance - has speeded up this historical process. The populist backlash against globalization has been caused by rising income inequality; by job insecurity in a rapidly changing and harshly competitive environment; and a sense of individual and even group powerlessness and uncertainty about the future. But, despite the protests of those who oppose it, globalization in our time is not likely to be reversed. Not only does it promise the best results as a development model. The only alternative - autocracy under a command economy - has become thoroughly discredited, with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The center of gravity shifts to the east

Already the open trading system has shifted the world's economic center of gravity from the Atlantic to the Pacific and the South China Sea. Over the foreseeable future, the European Union is likely to be inward-looking, as it accommodates 10 new members (ranging from Poland to Cyprus and Malta) and mediates the economic and political affairs of 25 individual countries, each with its own interests and demands. By contrast, export-oriented Asia - having survived two successive recessions - is once again beginning to multiply its GNP. America's trade with East Asia long ago exceeded its trade with Western Europe. American business sees Asia's economic potential as enormous. And, thanks to U.S. recovery, Asia's developing economies will grow faster (by 5.8%, according to the *Asian Development Bank*) than other regions in 2003. Of course, East Asia's developing countries - if they are to take advantage of the coming growth - will also have to put their houses in order. For instance, while international loans and foreign aid are helping to keep Indonesia afloat, these can only be palliatives until Jakarta restores confidence both at home and abroad in the economy and in the country's political stability.

The transformative power of technology

Meanwhile, technology is also working its own transformative power on economies, military strategy and on the whole of national society. What the economist Joseph Schumpeter called "creative destruction" - which is the continuous process by which emerging technologies push out the old - is perpetually rearranging the ranking of countries in the international economic hierarchy. And technology is also the reason the U.S.S.R. has been consigned to the dust-bin of history. It is capitalism's ability to produce a continuous stream of successful innovations that makes it the best economic system yet for generating growth. Under capitalism, innovative activity - which in other types of economy is fortuitous and optional - becomes mandatory. New technology is spread much faster under capitalism, which can protect and compensate innovators for their new creations - thus providing material incentives for them to share and spread their knowledge. The U.S. economy based on individualism, entrepreneurship, and social fluidity has benefited the most from the accelerating pace of globalization and technological change. American entrepreneurs have embraced cutting-edge technologies more avidly than other peoples. That is why the U.S. is riding high on the current technological wave of growth and is forcing its toughest competitors (the welfare states of Western Europe) to dismantle the elaborate safety nets they have spread over these last generation for their work-people.

The digital divide

Between the technologically-rich and the technologically-poor countries, the information revolution is creating a "digital divide." In the United States, Canada, Australia and Singapore, 40% of the population are in the web; in Papua New Guinea, the comparable figure is less than

1%. The ratio of Internet use in the U.S. is one hundred to two hundred times the level in some of the developing Asia-Pacific countries. As the 20th century ended, Americans accounted for more than 20% of global output, although they made up only 4% of world population. Technology-driven changes are likely to become even more important in transforming the U.S. economy over this next decade. Here in Asia, biotechnology - the genetic modification of plants and animals to make them both productive and resistant to pests and disease - promises to transform our backward rural villages in ways we cannot yet imagine. The new strains of rice alone seem near-miraculous. One variety is pest-resistant - another is rich in zinc and iron - and still another is full of vitamin "A." But the most promising is a rice strain which is apparently 35% more productive than today's highest-yielding rice varieties. Biotechnology is also being applied to other commercial crops - such as bananas, abaca, ornamental flowers, and spices - as well as to livestock and fish.

Technological change and military strategy

On military strategy, technological change has already produced what American military leaders call the "integrated battle space" - which gives them unprecedented access to intelligence information from any place around the globe. A high-tech command and control center could bring together disparate information systems - satellite, live feed from the ground, data from sensors, etc. - to put together a complete picture of the battlefield for senior commanders, support elements, and even platoon leaders at the frontlines. Radio transmissions would be augmented by e-mail. The command and control center can be situated half-a-world away from the battle zone: it would "telecommute" to commanders of large forces as well as to small-unit operators on the ground. To these forces transforming military doctrine, we must now add the transformative power of terrorism and asymmetric warfare. The "democratization" of technology has been diffusing power away from governments and "empowering" fanatic individuals and conspirational groups to play powerful roles in world politics - including that of inflicting massive destruction - once reserved to governments and their armed forces. Terrorism has privatized even war - as we can see from Osama Bin Laden's *Jihad* against the whole of western christendom. It no longer takes another super-power to pose a dire threat to Americans. The Pentagon's world view has been transformed by September 11th. While the U.S. nuclear arsenal may deter other powers from attacking America, it cannot deter terrorists of the September 11-type. For president George W. Bush (reports the American journalist Bob Woodward in his little book), "the realities at the beginning of the 21st century are two: the possibility of another massive, surprise terrorist attacks similar to those of September 11th, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction - biological, chemical or nuclear. Should the two converge in the hands of terrorists or a rogue state, the United States could be attacked and tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands of people could be killed."

Terrorism has brought the East Asian states together

On the broad canvas of East Asia, the security picture in the wake of September 11th has ironically been optimistic. By seeing how easily terrorism could transcend political boundaries, governments throughout the region have realized how much national security nowadays depends on cooperation among sovereign states. This is why almost all the East Asian states - Japan and China included - have signified their support for the U.S.-led anti-terrorist coalition. Not only has the anti-terrorist war brought Beijing and Washington together; Tokyo has also been able to show the flag in the Indian Ocean - thus establishing a useful precedent for its intervention in future conflicts away from its home-waters. Washington's warmer relations with Beijing are smoothing the way for the Chinese leadership to accept U.S. military action against Iraq. China's tacit consent is also considered important if the United States is to keep warplanes and troops on China's western doorstep in Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian counties.

II. Issues and prospects in the Asia-Pacific

China has certainly been behaving more constructively in its international dealings. It supported a United Nations Security Council resolution on Iraq well before Russia or France; shared intelligence on Islamist terrorism with the United States; and has recently been invited a security dialogue with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Over this past quarter-century, China has undergone a sea-change. No longer is China a totalitarian society; no longer does it seek to control every aspect of the lives of the Chinese people. And, no longer does it espouse a revolutionary or an expansionist ideology. China now is closer to the familiar East Asian model of the authoritarian developing state than it was to the old U.S.S.R. Its leaders are concerned above all with economic growth, social equity and political stability as the basic imperatives for staying in power. Beijing no longer runs a command economy; its transition to a market economy now seems irreversible. The Chinese media - whether state- or privately-owned- are increasingly outspoken. More and more villages are now holding competitive elections. And China's galloping economy is nurturing a large middle class with rising incomes: for instance, some five million Chinese tourists visited Southeast Asia last year. Even China's relations with its estranged off-shore island of Taiwan have benefited from the liberalization of its political and economic policies. Cross-straits relations are stabilizing - as Taiwan has come to recognize its economic need for Chinese labor and markets. Trade and investment, as well as travel exchanges, are relaxing political tensions. Integration of the China-Taiwan economies is really the best way of reconciling the two sides politically.

The U.S.-China-Taiwan security issues

Most recently, president Jiang offered to freeze or to withdraw China's short-range ballistic

missiles deployed opposite Taiwan in return for American restraint in its arms sales to Taipei. To this offer, Washington should respond seriously. For the greatest danger to East Asia lies in a clash of arms across the Taiwan straits. That the outer group of islands enclosing the China Sea should remain in friendly hands has been a key concern of American geopoliticians since the 19th century naval strategist, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan. Captain Mahan urged the projection of U.S. naval power in the Western Pacific as an early strategy of “forward defense.” While America’s Atlantic coast was protected by friendly Europeans, the East Asian mainland and the first group of islands enclosing the China Sea were occupied by peoples alien to the Americans ethnically and culturally. And so it is from there that an invasion of the American mainland would threaten. In keeping with that strategy, the Americans seized the Philippines from the Spaniards in 1898 and kept it in the teeth of desperate resistance from Filipino nationalists. The rivalry between the United States and China today is reminiscent of that between the hegemonic maritime power, Britain, and the emerging land power, Germany, beginning in the late 19th century. Just as Britain tried to contain Germany’s economic and military power, so did Germany try to break Britain’s naval superiority. But, in our time, the outcome of the natural rivalry between the hegemonic state and the resurgent power need not be unavoidable conflict - if we acknowledge China’s need for space and respect in international relations. In the Korean Peninsula, in recent weeks, Pyongyang has been trying to stir up a crisis over its efforts to build nuclear weapons. Fortunately, there the interests of all the great powers coincide in preventing the eccentric North Korean dictator from disrupting Northeast Asia’s stability. I for one am confident that the North Korean question will be resolved by diplomacy and compromise.

China and Japan

As for the relations between Beijing and Tokyo, Chinese security intellectuals now acknowledge that Japan is soon to become a “normal state” and that it is “bound to have a security role equivalent to its economic power.” Many of them concede that a Japanese role in regional security is unavoidable. Some Chinese intellectuals also concede that substantive political changes have taken place in Japan during the last 50 years and that internal change is, in fact, accelerating. In a word, Japan is no longer the totalitarian country that it was during the Pacific War; and its neighbors must acknowledge Japan’s new circumstances and adapt to them. Among the questions Japan’s neighbors are asking themselves are: How will a “normal” Japan use its tremendous economic - and military - power?; and can Japanese democracy restrain the conservative and nationalist elements that seem to remain so strong in Japanese society? These are serious and perplexing questions this symposium must ponder.

American strategy in East Asia

Let us now consider briefly America’s role in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific. For the moment, Washington seems to view its bilateral relations in the region from the prism of its

global war on international terrorism. Thus, its renewed interest in Southeast Asia - which is home to the largest Muslim populations. As soon as the Afghanistan campaign had developed sufficiently, Washington opened a second anti-terrorist front against the extremist *Abu Sayyaf* outlaws in the southern Philippines. In Indonesia, the pentagon is working to restore military aid suspended since the Indonesian military's "rape of East Timor." It also seems the Bush administration is seizing the opportunity of its war on terrorism to consolidate America's global hegemony. President Bush apparently sees the world as more evil, more dangerous, and more threatening than did either his predecessor, Bill Clinton, or his own father - who, while president, had fought Saddam Hussein but stopped short of unseating him. For 2003, America's military budget is equivalent to about 40% of all the money all other nations combined spend on their militaries. And if this money translates into new military capability, it will enhance many times over American superiority over any other potential adversary.

In Asia, the *Rand Corporation* sees Washington's basic priorities as two. The first is to prevent the growth of rivalries and insecurities that could lead to war. And the second (which really dates back to Captain Mahan) is to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon that could undermine the U.S. role in the region and subsequently - given Asia's enormous resources - pose a global challenge to U.S. power. A Pentagon study of potential U.S. security problems by 2025 agrees "the threats are in Asia." But it apparently sees no early threat from China. While China is indeed preparing to fight a high-tech war against technologically superior enemies, "its significant shortcomings" will leave it unable to challenge the U.S. for "an indefinite period of time." Meanwhile, Washington must sustain Asia-Pacific stability; manage events so that they do not spiral out of control; and maintain policies that favor free trade and financial stability - which help the United States increase its economic access to the region as a whole. Not only must the U.S. deepen bilateral security treaties with South Korea, Japan, and Australia, and widen these pacts, possibly to include Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand - so that multilateral partnerships can create militaries which can respond to regional crises as coalitions. With Japan, America must also reach agreement on a joint strategy in Asia - and support Japan's efforts to revise its constitution; expand its security horizon and acquire appropriate capabilities to support coalition operations. To preserve continental stability, Washington must nurture a balance-of-power structure involving China, India, and Russia - to deter any of them from threatening regional security; dominating one another; or coalesce against the united states. At the same time, Washington must promote an Asia-wide dialogue to dampen regional conflicts; build mutual confidence; and ultimately, establish a broad, multilateral security framework.

Toward a new stage of regional cooperation

Already Asia seems to be moving toward this new stage of regional cooperation. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) - which is still the region's only venue for political problem-solving - is apparently preparing to move from confidence-building to preventive

diplomacy. ARF has established experts and eminent persons group for fact-finding missions, mediating disputes, and offering practical solutions to disputed issues. It is also thinking about setting up a secretariat; establishing a system of self-reporting, through which member-states would report on their own perception of existing or potential security concerns; and developing an “early warning system” to identify danger points and emerging crises. ARF will also begin looking into “non-traditional” security issues such as environment, the safety of nuclear power plants, and human rights.

Meanwhile, Japan and China are competing to offer free-trade agreement with the 10th Southeast Asian states grouped in ASEAN. As we know, the Southeast Asian Free-trade Area (AFTA) is already operating. Since January 2001, tariffs on at least 85% of all the goods traded among the six oldest ASEAN members have been cut to between zero and 5%. Vietnam will have until 2006; Laos and Burma until 2008; and Cambodia until 2010 to accede to this AFTA Treaty. In November 2001, Premier Szhu Rongji offered a free-trade agreement with all the ASEAN 10 - details of which the two sides are now negotiating. Two months later, in January 2002, Prime Minister Jun-ichiro Koizumi in turn proposed a series of bilateral free-trade agreements. Singapore has already signed up, and the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Mexico have all expressed interest. In separate talks (on the sidelines of the annual ASEAN Summit, in which they all take part), China, Japan and South Korea have also agreed to develop closer economic and trade cooperation. Most observers thought Tokyo was implying to try to play catch-up with Beijing. To my mind, whatever stimulates economic development in the region is welcome - since it will benefit everyone. For the time being, however, Japan is less attractive a trading partner than China. While China's economy posted year-on-year growth of 8.1% in the third quarter of 2002, Japan's grew by only 2.6% - its first positive growth in five quarters. Japan's aggressively protectionist farm lobby is another stumbling block, and it makes ASEAN negotiations with Tokyo difficult. Even Singapore had to exclude its modest exports of ornamental goldfish from its free-trade agreement with Tokyo, in response to this lobby's pressure. All the other ASEAN states have much larger agriculture sectors avid to tap the rich Japanese market.

An East Asian economic grouping

The likely overall result of all these free-trade negotiations is an East Asian economic grouping of the 10 Southeast Asian states, first with China (CAFTA) and eventually also with Korea, and Japan. This would create a unified market of almost two billion people, with a combined GDP of U.S. \$6.2 trillion - big enough to compete with both the North Atlantic Free-Trade area (NAFTA) and the European Union (EU). Such an East Asian economic grouping can easily become the core of an East Asian community, whose concerns would then gradually encompass security and political issues, on the model of the European Union. The pace and direction of East Asian regionalism is increasingly being driven by Northeast Asia's

growing economic power and Southeast Asia's imperative need not to allow itself to fall too far behind. Since the financial crisis of July 1997, East Asia's center of economic gravity - once centered on ASEAN's dynamic economy-has shifted markedly toward Northeast Asia.

III. The new role of the military

Lastly, let us consider the new role of the military. Here, too, technological change has generated a revolution in defense and military affairs. This revolution is based on four key technologies. They are: Digital communications, which allow the compression of data and, therefore, their swift transmission; GPS, the global positioning of satellites, which makes possible more exact guidance and navigation of missiles and war machines; Radar-evading stealth weapons; and Computer processing.

I am sure the security experts at this symposium will discuss thoroughly every aspect of this military revolution. Let me just point out that it strengthens the offense against the defense - and gives the American superpower riding its crest a new basis for coalition leadership. What the new military technologies can do in combination, the Americans displayed in the 1991 Gulf War - which, incidentally, opened Chinese eyes to the revolution in military affairs. Recognizing its technological inferiority, the PLA now emphasizes preemptive strikes launched in great secrecy, mobility, highly-accurate concentration of firepower - and strategic surprise. To cope with the technological revolution, the P.L.A. is downsizing - reducing its basic organizational units from armies to brigades. It is also investing in training - particularly in in-flight refueling, to make up for its lack of forward airbases. It has also invested in a new generation of nuclear submarines (some capable of launching ICBMs), and in Russian destroyers tough enough to threaten American aircraft carriers. The PLA is apparently also close to deploying its own cruise missiles. Beijing's military budget is the third largest in the world - after those of Washington and Tokyo. American experts estimate it to be three times its official \$20 billion. But much of it is still being eaten up by personnel salaries and by maintenance.

The U.S. as balancer in East Asia

Over the foreseeable future, the United States sees itself continuing its role as "balancer" in East Asia - using its weight to stabilize opposing indigenous forces. In Southeast Asia, Washington wants permanent bases no longer. All it seeks is occasional access to facilities, and the ability to work with local troops - as in its Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines. U.S. forces also hold joint exercises with Australians, Thais and - starting in 2002 - also with Singaporeans. Singapore has built a pier capable of berthing U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. Washington is apparently trying to arrange the same berthing arrangements with Hanoi.

Like Beijing, Washington is shifting its military focus from Northeast Asia broadly

southward - toward the Philippines for its strategic location; toward Vietnam for the access it provides to the South China Sea beyond that which Singapore and Thailand can offer; and toward Oman on the Arabian Sea for the access it offers to the Indian subcontinent. It is also building up Guam as a hub for power projection throughout Asia and setting up forward operating locations in the southern Ryukyus as support bases for Taiwan. Against the day that political and military restrictions limit American access to overseas bases - requiring its military to sustain itself while operating at long distances from supply bases closer to home - the United States is developing "long-range power projection" for its Pacific operations. These will involve both airlift capacity and high-speed, long-range strike aircraft. The Pentagon is also developing air-naval operational concepts that can enable carrier-based fighters to provide air-to-air and defense-suppression support for long-range bombers. The U.S. Air Force is beginning to place greater emphasis on long-range combat platforms and arsenal planes that deliver a large number of smart weapons from a stand-off range beyond the enemy's defensive envelope. Meanwhile, Washington is putting its money on new weapons systems - on smaller aircraft carriers less vulnerable to missiles; and on long-range bombers and unmanned aircraft rather than on short-range fighters.

In its East Asian alliances, Washington is de-emphasizing bilateral relationships in favor of multilateral regional cooperation focused on "shared interests in peaceful development" and in combating "common security challenges" posed by drug-trafficking, piracy, terrorism, international crime and natural disasters. Three yearly bilateral exercises - with Australia, Thailand and the Philippines - have been linked up under an umbrella strategy involving humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief scenarios.

Our longer-term imperatives

Let me sum up the imperatives for our longer-term benefits to happen. Unification of the Korean Peninsula and the resumption of "normal state" status for Japan will make sustaining the American military presence in Northeast Asia on a large scale difficult to justify for Washington policy-makers - either at home or in East Asia. Thus, America's forward military presence in East Asia will decline - particularly since the new military technologies will enable the pentagon to cut down its foreign deployment levels. What base-access arrangements remain will be more sustainable - both politically and financially. And as the international environment changes, Washington will seek new ways of asserting its influence. U.S. security involvement will have to be transformed both in form and substance.

Washington will emphasize increasingly the political rather than the military function of its alliance structure. It will cultivate closer diplomatic consultation and coordination with its allies. With the American forward military presence smaller and security alliances less relevant as an instrument of U.S. policy, a pluralistic security community is likely to emerge in East Asia and in the larger Asia-Pacific region. This is not as far-fetched as it sounds - since states in the region

have shared interests in a peaceful and stable security environment and because they benefit increasingly from growing - and mutually beneficial - economic interaction. China's leaders need to assure Washington and the other Asia-Pacific powers that China does not intend to upset the existing regional order; and that for as long as its legitimate security interests are accommodated, it can live with a regional security structure in which the United States plays a leading role.

A pluralistic security community can ultimately lead to the genuine Asia-Pacific community our intellectuals dream of. Events in the world make clear we have no alternative to economic integration and political solidarity. Our object should be to replace the balance of power as the organizer of state relationships in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific with the "balance of mutual benefit."