Security and Development in Asia: New Threats and Challenges In the Post–Postwar Era

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Conference Report

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I. Introduction

On June 2-3, 2008, the Institute for Security and Development Policy hosted a two-day conference on its premises that convened a number of academics from Europe, the United States, and Asia. The title of the conference was "Security and Development in Asia: New Threats and Challenges in the Post-Postwar Era."

Reflecting the broad title of the conference, the number of topics presented and discussed was wide-ranging and allowed all participants to gain knowledge of areas and subjects outside of their specific fields of expertise. Moreover, while Asia was the focus of the conference, discussions also encompassed more generic subjects, recognizing that security and development in the "Post-Postwar era" exhibits trends and challenges not only apparent in Asia but also in other countries and regions of the world, including Sweden.

Of note were a number of paradoxes or key challenges highlighted during the course of the conference, including among others external versus internal security, national problems necessitating transnational solutions, and the perceived dichotomy between economic development and climate change abatement. Providing some of the red threads through the conference, the first section of the report accordingly elucidates the key arguments and discussions concerning the above. Second, of further – if not necessarily in-depth – focus during the conference was a look at emerging – or perhaps more accurately, evolving – powers, their roles, and their "challenge" to the international order. Of particular interest here was China but also Japan. Discussions and presentations on key bilateral relations in Asia, furthermore, constituted a third important component of the conference.

While there was some degree of divergence but also overlap during the proceedings of the conference, particularly during discussions, for example of China's rise linking in with themes such as military transformation, for the

sake of conciseness and ease of reading the authors find it conducive to structure the report into the three separate sections, as outlined above. Moreover, while the report sketches out the main arguments presented, it also accords attention to the discussions and any interesting points of convergence or contention among the participants.[1]

Defining the Post-Post War Era

For the sake of clarity but also for the interest of readers, the authors of this report deem it important to provide some definitional perspective to the term "Post-Post War Era" used in the title of the conference. While it is here defined as the period in time – i.e. now – following the Gulf War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the reunification of Germany – commonly referred to as the end of the Cold War – there are important differences or distinctions to be made when discussing the term in a European or Asian context.

Firstly, there is a need for an understanding of which war is being referred to – the reference point from which subsequent developments can be sited. In a European context, this would almost certainly be the Second World War, while in Asia this is a much more open question that could also embrace other wars. For instance, the Vietnam War was of defining significance especially for Southeast Asia, just as the Korean War was for Northeast Asia. The ensuing postwar era could be described as a period of time dominated by collective memory and the trauma of war. And while decades have elapsed since major violent conflict in East Asia, many countries of the region could be said to have *not* fully normalized or transcended a conflict state of mind. This could be particularly argued to be the case in Northeast Asia, where tensions over historical issues remain a thorny impediment to the improvement of relations. By some measures, only when a country is no longer dominated by a conflict state of mind could a post-postwar era said to result. Thus, before heralding the start of a post-post war era the authors of

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[1] The conference took place under Chatham House Rules meaning that participants' names and affiliations are not revealed. It is important to note, furthermore, that the report does not aim for a complete description of the schedule and content of the conference. Instead, an edited volume of papers presented at the conference will be published by ISDP later in the year.

this report also regard when to declare the end of a postwar era to be a moot point.

If the period in time referred to connects to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War – an epoch-changing event – why not then call it the post-Cold War era? This is arguably even more of a misnomer, however, since so many of the attributes of the Cold War still continue to exist in Asia and would fall prey to the argument of being Euro-centric: in Asia, several communist regimes (at least in name) continue to exist and Cold War-related conflicts still predominate, such as between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, and the unresolved conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

Moving beyond engaging deeper in a debate over semantics, Asia today would seem to face a complexity of not only continuities rooted in previous conflicts, but also clearly newer challenges such as climate change and an increasing focus on fulfilling the human security needs of individuals – which distinguish the situation today from eras past: it was the aforementioned that provided a key theme of the conference.

II. (Re) conceptualizing Security and Development Challenges in Asia

Conceptualizing, and indeed reconceptualising, the main security and development challenges facing Asia provided the core focus to the conference. Accordingly, five main themes can be discerned which are dealt with separately below: 1) Reconceiving security; 2) Challenges facing regional organizations; 3) Military transformation; 4) The race for resources and climate change; and 5) Islamic radicalism.

Reconceiving Security

The need to move overriding emphasis away from, if not to fully abandon, traditional conceptions of security was seen as important by all participants. In view of that, significance was attached to the increasing emergence of new actors, threats, and issues in the security domain. It was asserted that while the Cold War was characterized by "state-driven security," there has since been an "off-loading" from the state. In this context, the presence of private armed forces in Iraq was named as but one example. One participant further stated that there had been a recalibration of the borders between the state, market, and society with the emergence of new actors.

In terms of issues – defined as non-traditional security threats and often transnational in nature – avian influenza, social unrest, violent religious groups, water and soil degeneration, SARS, and global warming, among others, were all variously mentioned. It is important to note, as was questioned during the conference, whether issues such as climate change and transnational crime should in fact, however, be viewed as "new" security issues, or whether they were just previously hidden in the "fog" of the Cold War. The authors of this report thus argue that many of these new issues are only new, or have become more visible, to the extent that increased

importance has been attached to them – which, of course, has been facilitated by the end of bipolar confrontation.

The above notwithstanding, the term "security" came in for particular attention with a distinction being made between internal and external security risks, and also the term *human security*[2] was used on many occasions to distinguish from traditional state-driven security concerns. One participant remarked upon its frequent usage as a sign of its acceptance as an established term.

Though imbuing the whole conference, a majority of the focus of the debate on distinctions of security *per se* was in a presentation of the case-study of Okinawa in Japan. It was asserted that the residents of Okinawa viewed the *internal* risks of living next to U.S. military bases, such as through incidents of crime and rape perpetrated by American soldiers, as greater than the *external* security risks stemming from North Korea or Japan. And, furthermore, that the bases were constructed by leaders more to maintain the alliance with the United States rather than to counter external security threats as such. This was an interesting perspective as it illustrated local people's security concerns and fears – and ones that diverged from those of the Japanese state. It is worthy to note, however, that the example of Okinawa came in for some contention with one participant pointing to other explanatory variables such as the Okinawan sense of identity and that they felt they were being unfairly burdened by the security arrangement; it was also pointed out that U.S. bases elsewhere in Japan were welcomed by citizens because of the employment opportunities.

Nevertheless, the external–internal, or state–local, security divide was seen to be a significant issue, and interesting, as one participant said, in that different issues were being securitized. Another participant neatly captured

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[2] The human security paradigm is an attempt to redefine the understanding of security, and was launched in a 1994 UNDP report. The traditional definition of security is centered around the national security paradigm, based on the security of the state, i.e. military and political security. The concept of human security is cross-disciplinary and addresses areas such as economy, environment, social and human rights. Furthermore, human security focuses on the individual rather than the state. In thus doing, it opens up for a more complex concept of security. Widening the security paradigm has also brought difficulties: too wide a definition makes the security paradigm hard to use as an analytic tool.

the paradox by saying that the state can be a threat to the human security of its own citizens in steps that it took to ensure its own security. This was seen to have important implications, for it could give rise to new actors that could have the potential to influence negotiations, and that Japan, but also other powers, would have to look at the impact of alliance structures on local populations.

What is more, the rise of non-traditional security threats and the recasting of conventional conceptions of security were held to also have important consequences for regional organizations and military transformation, dealt with separately below.

Challenges Facing Regional Organizations

Regional organizations were the focus of two presentations, with one focusing specifically on the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF),[3] and the other looking at regional organizations in Asia more generally. It was stressed that regional organizations in the 21st century face challenges of globalization as well as new security threats such as increased involvement of non-state actors, logging, and piracy, among many others (although it was also pointed out that the latter was not a new threat in Southeast Asia but had existed for centuries). In the second presentation, it was highlighted how the very absence of effective cooperative structures between states actually facilitates and exacerbates transnational phenomena of organized crime, narcotics, and environmental problems – and that the only solution to tackle this could come through effective regional level organizations. Indeed the "dilemma" was noted wherein transnational threats impact the national level but require transnational solutions – this was perceived to be one of the major challenges facing Asia.

Accordingly, of particular interest was the inefficacy – but also potential – of existing regional organizations in Asia in dealing with non-traditional security threats. One participant said that very little had been done and the actual implementation of measures had been very weak due, in part, to a lack

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[3] Established in 1994, ARF consists of 23 countries and provides a forum in which members can discuss regional security issues and develop cooperative measures aimed at enhancing peace and security in the Asia Pacific region.

of legalistic tradition. This tied in with the presentation on ARF, which the presenter claimed remained underdeveloped as it functioned as more of a dialogue mechanism than anything else. Yet, at the same time, it was also noted that ARF had the potential to serve as a framework for discussing threats related to human security such as avian flu, but that more needed to be done to prioritize and take action on such issues. It was also said that a large number of members was a strength of the organization in such a context, as many shared common problems. A number of recommendations were outlined – such as setting up a permanent secretariat and issuing a mission blueprint. Importantly, fitting in with the red thread of non-state actors and human security during the conference, the presenter also held that the relationship between track 1 and 2 actors and activities should be formalized and that track 3 i.e. NGOs should also be involved.[4]

In the more traditional domain of security, meanwhile, other limitations of regional organizations pointed to were: 1) institutional challenges – competing models of security cooperation with many different organizations and mechanisms. For instance, it was posited that ARF is in danger of being diluted, threatened by other organizations being established such as the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (NAPSM); and 2) in Asia – Northeast Asia in particular – there is a lack of trust between actors and fears of one actor "running the show." During the discussion, it was pointed out by one participant that China was worried about Japanese fears of interference, for example in ARF, and that therefore there was a reluctance to equip the organization with greater powers. Moreover, while it was reiterated that ARF has a lot of potential in addressing human security issues, it was also speculated that in traditional security terms there was little that could be done as China wanted to avoid external involvement in Taiwan. Notably, one presenter asserted that containing conflict in the traditional security realm had more to do with strong powers than the role of regional organizations as such, citing the China/U.S. balance in Northeast Asia and that of Russia and China in Central Asia.

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[4] Track 1 refers here to official talks and activities conducted between governments of states. Track two refers to activities at an unofficial level involving influential non-governmental representatives, and track 3 typically involves non-state actors such as NGOs working at the grassroots level, commonly referred to as "citizen diplomacy."

In conclusion, it was pointed out by one participant that there are more reasons to be pessimistic than optimistic when discussing regional organizations, in part *because* we compare with other more developed regional actors such as the EU. It was argued that it would be perhaps more beneficial to view regional organizations free of the value of comparing. It was pointed out that positive steps albeit slow were being undertaken, for example in ASEAN with the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and the ASEAN Charter.[5] Following on from this, it was asserted by another participant that an "Asian line" also had its merits and that sometimes more could be achieved through informality and Confidence Building Measures than through more bureaucratic structures such as the EU. Further, it was said that it would take time to create multilateral mechanisms, and that instead of grand schemes, there should be a focus on practically realizable goals.

Military Transformation

Since the end of the Cold War, armed forces have faced the challenge of reforming and adapting to the new security challenges of the 21st century. Transformation refers not only to the use of new technology, but also a "revolution," as one participant put it, in the way we think about the military and use it. In the discussion session, one participant brought up the fact that armies are configured to fight set-piece battles that are ill-designed to counter the threat of terrorism. It was further posited that there are unlikely to be many set-piece battles in the future, and that the military's role was being redefined for increasing usage in natural disasters, fighting terrorism, and in international peacekeeping operations.

Accordingly, one presentation during the conference addressed, generally, the subject of military transformation. It was stressed, moreover, that this was applicable to armed forces around the world that were all "struggling" to reform, though there was in the discussion specific recourse to the case of

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[5] The ASEAN Charter establishes the group as a legal entity and includes a human rights body. The charter aims to consolidate the group, giving it legal strength and obligations, and set up rules in financial, trade, and environmental matters. If it is ratified by the member states, it will come into effect in 2009.

China. It was also a topic that proved of great interest to all participants, prompting many questions and much discussion.

Humans versus Technology

A significant thread to the presentation was that of the so-called human factor versus technology, in other words the relative merits of military technology vis-à-vis the utility of soldiers. A contrast between U.S. and classical European military thinking was made to illustrate the former's industrial approach and the more human-focused approach of small nations to make up for technological inferiority. While one participant claimed there had been a revolution in military affairs with the use of information technology and appearance of cyber warfare, it was cautioned that there were clear limits to technology – the case of Kosovo was taken as an example where only a small percentage of targets were actually hit due to the employment of camouflage and fake targets. The presenter warned against the "euphoria of technology," saying that it was not a panacea. It was held, furthermore, that some military organizations even with inferior technology could be better than those with superior hardware. In elucidating the human factors, creating trust and confidence, group cohesion, and the role of commanders were all posited as factors determining better functionality. This was further expanded upon by saying that new functions such as peacekeeping operations required human-based skills such as the ability to communicate with people. A significant overall problem identified, however, was that technology was cheaper in the long run than personnel – and that in Western countries, furthermore, there was a real lack of soldiers, which was attributed to demographic trends and a fewer number of young people wishing to join the army.

The Asian Context

In the more specific case of China, it was postulated that it would be several years at least before Chinese military capabilities would become visibly significant – and that it would require the build up of human capacity to operationalize new technology most efficiently. It was stressed too that it takes a long time to train military units – not less than 20 years to go through

the whole process – so that caution is needed when predicting the outcome of current developments.

Above all, in transforming militaries the need for flexible organizations with flexible minds was stressed. In line with this, it was argued that China would have to rethink when it came to leadership, with the claim that the current environment was not so conducive for commanders to take the initiative. The transparency of the Chinese armed forces also came in for discussion. It was predicted that China will desire to engage in more international operations in the future and, in order to do so, would have to become interoperable with multinational forces – which makes transparency essential. While much is made of the transparency, or rather the lack thereof, of China's armed forces, one participant was more sceptical of how much we did not actually know.

One participant sought to expand the discussion of military thinking, by mentioning the Chinese paradigm of warfare and the stress on diplomacy as an extension of warfare by other means, rather than on the battlefield as such. This, it was said, could be seen in the thawing of relations between China and Japan.[6] The classic text *The Art of War* was mentioned; and that China was starting up research centres on this book, bearing witness to a renaissance in classical Chinese military thinking.

Another aspect of the military brought up, particularly in the context of Southeast Asia (namely Indonesia), was the army's substantial control over natural resources and that there exists a de facto military business empire. In response to the participant's observation, it was asserted by the presenter that there should be a division of tasks, that conflicts in Southeast Asia would be better addressed if the military was not tied up with other interests. In China – though it was argued that the PLA was well-trained and modern – one participant further claimed that it was arguably also the most corrupted section in China. In sum, therefore, such observations pointed to the supposition that Asian countries were negatively impacted by the blurred divisions between military, political, and economic interests.

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[6] See the section on China–Japan relations for further discussion of this.

Race for Resources and Climate Change

Three presentations in all focused on various aspects of the competition over energy resources – namely oil and gas – and also the implications of climate change. The conference took place at a time of record high oil prices and the reasons behind this, as well as the availability of resources, were subject to considerable conjecture.

Various reasons were put forward for the high prices, including domestic strife (for example in Iraq), peak production theory,[7] and the increasing demand for energy from countries such as China. In response, one participant contested theories of peak production, saying that the problem was more one of distribution rather than lack of available resources; this, in turn, was also challenged, with a participant counter-arguing that oil was the most energy-rich resource, and that as such there was little left to explore. Other sources of energy in this context also briefly came in for speculation. One participant expressed the opinion that nuclear power was still too expensive and that alternative technology would not provide a magic solution. It was mentioned, furthermore, that while coal was still available in great amounts, cleaner forms of usage would have to be found. The issue of transparency, particularly in regard to Saudi Arabian oil reserves, was also mentioned. There was some speculation over the United States' persuasion of Saudi Arabia to produce more, but that the latter had not been forthcoming: was OPEC policy behind the lack of transparency or was it more the lack of resources? It was clear therefore that energy availability was a debatable issue among participants with no clear answers.

In relation to China and India, it was said that both countries faced the prospect of dire situations and that there was no exchange of energy resources: instead both countries are seeking to own oil when loaded, viewing energy security as a zero-sum game. Subsequently, the question was raised by one participant of what kind of guarantees China and Russia could be given by the international community to treat energy more like a commodity – there seemingly existing a paradox between securities of supply and demand making it difficult to reconcile the two. In terms of China's supply,

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[7] Such theories contend that the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction has been reached where after production will decline.

one participant mentioned that Xinjiang will be important and that there would be increasing Han Chinese migration there, with Central Asian oil and gas also playing an increasing role; but it was equally stressed that the dependence on maritime routes would still be paramount, in particular through the Malacca Strait. Interestingly, in a related question about U.S. energy needs and the extent oil considerations were behind the War on Terror, it was pointed out that Asia was in fact much more dependent on Middle East oil than the United States.

While the continued dependence on Middle East oil was recognized, one presentation outlined the growing geostrategic importance of the Arctic. This was of timely importance, as the Arctic had appeared prominently in the media as a growing area of competition over the preceding year, not least prompted by a Russian expedition in 2007 that planted a flag on the seabed of the North Pole. While the region is changing rapidly with climate change enabling, theoretically, the emergence of new and shorter Sea Lanes of Communication,[8] the construction of transit ports, and the prospect of exploiting untapped energy resources, it was also emphasized that predictions were difficult to make. For example, oceanographic surveys of the continental shelf remain incomplete. At the same time as it was claimed that the Arctic concerned not just the Arctic states but also external actors too, little was mentioned in terms of Asian states' potential Arctic ambitions. It is interesting to note, however, that China is investing more in icebreakers and polar research.[9]

Climate Change
The matter of climate change was addressed by several participants as one of the core issues among the new security threats. It was not only seen as a threat towards human security, but also as a phenomenon with possible implications for the traditional security paradigm since it could herald geo-political alterations.

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[8] There is evidence that the ice has retreated sufficiently enough to allow an ice-free route for ships in summer through the Northeast Passage, along Russia's coastline, and the Northwest Passage, through Canada. Using such routes would potentially shorten existing shipping lanes by thousands of kilometers.
[9] China joined the Inter-governmental Arctic Council in 1996; it opened an Arctic Scientific Research Station on Svalbard (Norway) in 2004.

Accordingly, it was asserted during the conference – though not necessarily recognized by all participants – that climate change is one of the greatest global security threats in the 21st century. China's economic and military rise is resulting in a massive increase in energy consumption, particularly oil. It was postulated that this would have a major impact on the progression of global climate change. It was presented that China accords lesser priority to climate change, however, viewing it as a more long-term prospect, and that the focus lies on economic growth – and that it won't pursue a policy that undermines this. One participant expressed the concern that China is on a knife-edge, faced with sustaining economic growth to prevent social instability. For this reason, it was argued that for China climate change abatement versus economic development would constitute a key challenge in the 21st century. In response, a participant questioned the above thesis to some extent by saying that China was opening up on climate dialogue – citing Chinese efficiency goals – and that energy security and climate change were not necessarily conflictual, it being economically beneficial to address both energy efficiency and economic development at the same time. It was further said that it was a problem that was not only affecting China but the whole world; the suggestion was consequently made that this could spur cooperation such as through the transfer of "clean technology," for instance between Japan and China.

Islamic Radicalism

While not a major theme of the conference as such, a discussion with interesting nuances of opinion was initiated on the subject of the threat of radical Islam in Central Asia. Given the presence of the Muslim separatist Uyghurs in the Chinese province of Xinjiang, this is also clearly a significant issue for China.

One participant claimed that the threat from Islam as a political force in the region was low, outlining various reasons ranging from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) crackdown on radical groups, the outdated Taliban model, and that the Central Asian states had recognized Israel with evidence of growing cooperation. Another participant, while agreeing that the short term risk was low and that the problem had been

overblown, suggested that there were certain worrying tendencies. It was asserted that there is increasing Sufism among the younger generation in reaction to the corruption of governments – and that it was this section of society that was being targeted by more radical groups. One participant likened what happened in Kashmir to what could happen in the Ferghana valley,[10] with a united front between Sufi traditionalists and Wahabbis – responding to this, though, another participant said that he did not see a united front on a large scale but did raise the prospect of isolated terrorist cells.

Of further example, the analogy of the Shah of Iran and his ousting from power was employed to demonstrate what may happen if Islamic expression is the only form of opposition and organizing mechanism, and that in the long term this could happen in Central Asia too. It should be noted in this context that repressive rule has been advocated in the name of social stability to foster national security and development and has, despite some situational and historical differences among the states, become the norm for the region. The development towards increasingly repressive states has partly been driven by the short-term stability agenda, which in fact could have quite the opposite effect in a long term perspective.

One participant sounded a cautionary note by saying that one should be careful not to conflate Islamic radicalism with legitimate opposition. Accordingly, a different participant expressed the opinion that the Andijon "massacre" in Uzbekistan in 2005 was not driven by radicalism but rather by local economic grievances. It was thus identified that a real threat was local grievances flaring up because of corruption with the result that people take things into their "own hands."

Some discussion was accordingly triggered on how the West could foster reform of Central Asian societies. It was expressed that through soft power, for example through exchanges with the West and by working at lower levels such as providing medical assistance, more could be achieved, albeit slowly, than through sending high level delegations and issuing pronounce-

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[10] The Ferghana Valley is a fertile plain located within the borders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Potentially one of the most unstable regions in Central Asia, it has witnessed a growth of radical Islamic organizations.

ments. The issue of "ripeness" was brought up, furthermore, with the argument that a problem can't be solved *per se* but only managed to preserve stability. Tajikistan and the civil war there (1992–97) was cited as an example to avoid, and that South Korea could prove a successful model[11] to follow having achieved economic development and a transition from authoritarianism to democracy in the space of twenty years.

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[11] Kazakhstan, for example, sees South Korea and Malaysia as its development models. See Ariel Cohen, *Kazakhstan: The Road to Independence*, 2008, CACI-Silk Road Studies Program: Washington D.C. & Stockholm.

III. Powers in Focus

Evolving Powers: Rise, Roles, Limitations

The conference started with a keynote speech providing an overview of the world order and the rise and decline of powers. It was contended that the old order led by the United States was falling behind with Asia rising in the pecking order, and that this would create a new balance of power system in the world not predicated on the old European system of order. The major challengers to the existing order were identified by the speaker to be China and India. It was posited that China would join the United States as a superpower by 2020, and that also by the same year India will have joined Japan as a "second-tier" power. While identifying the latter emerging powers, the projected decline of Russia also came in for noteworthy attention. Somewhat contentiously given Russia's seeming rise with booming energy exports and its reassertion of power after the relative obscurity of the 1990s, the speaker made a strong point for Russia's decline over the next one-and-a-half decades.

An outline of the main arguments and points of contention voiced during the conference in regard to China, Japan, and Russia are provided below. While India and also other powers such as the EU were accorded some attention, they were not discussed in any detail.

China

The rise of China in particular was a major subtheme of the conference and provided a focal lens through which many of the challenges such as energy security, military transformation, and climate change were analyzed (see previous section). Moreover, just as all participants were unequivocal on the fact that China was rising, concerns and constraining factors were also equally stressed by many participants. First, while projecting that China would "draw level" with the United States by 2020, the same keynote speaker

held important reservations: it would take China a long time to gain international *acceptance* and *capability*. Indeed, *soft power* was seen to be a valuable asset, the importance of which was illustrated by the loss of it – with damaging consequences – by the United States in the wake of its invasion of Iraq in 2003.[12] To operate as an effective superpower, then, it was put forward by the speaker that China will have to gain sources of both hard and soft power and that it would encounter great difficulties in filling the U.S.'s "shoes."

Second, there was much speculation over China's military capability. One participant noted that it would take time for China to master new techniques, such as operating aircraft carriers.[13] In regard to the latter, one participant questioned whether China would acquire such a fleet; a participant answered that it would but that it would take 10–20 years or more. This tied in with another participant's view that it would be several years at least before its military capabilities became significant, cautioning that it takes time to build-up human capacity and to effectively implement new technology. Therefore, while there was little doubt over China's eventual rise to superpower status, the time frame and the lack of transparency caused some uncertainties among participants. Notwithstanding this, one participant predicted that China would become the world's second superpower together with the U.S. by 2050 – positing a 42 year plan – and be able to take on a modern military force. In the more middle-term, it was said that in 10–15 years China would be a major military force in East Asia able to influence events in each East Asian country.

Japan

Japan was a specific focus of two of the presentations and one of the keynote speeches. Arguably having experienced a "decline" in recent years with

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[12] In this context, and from the perspective of the authors of this report, it was interesting to note how China had "lost" much soft power during the unrest in Tibet in March 2008, only to regain it in the wake of the government's widely lauded response to the earthquake in Sichuan two months later; particularly when compared to the negative media coverage generated by the Myanmar government's delayed response to Cyclone Nargis just weeks earlier.

[13] Its significance here in the discussion was that the possession of aircraft carriers is often taken to symbolize military strength and the ability to project force.

souring neighbourly relations and a deteriorating economy, the keynote speaker on the second day of the conference strikingly declared that Japan, having resolved its economic problems and improved relations with its Asian neighbors, particularly China,[14] was "back." And, furthermore, that this raised positive prospects of Japan playing an increasing role in the international community.

Of particular interest concerning Japan was the question of under what circumstances rearmament could be considered?[15] The answer to the latter was seen to be contingent on how China behaves and the level of U.S. engagement – that if the U.S. pulled out, Japan would feel threatened and in such a case may rearm. Indeed, in the discussion session, one participant used the analogy of a cork in the bottle: the U.S. is the only factor stopping Japan from rising militarily, and that once this "cork" was removed, Japan would automatically rise again. On the other hand, it was also pointed out that Japan is *not* abandoning the U.S.-Japan security treaty and that Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) was enmeshing Japan further into the U.S. security shield. It was further argued – and in contrast to the loosening of Korea-U.S. military cooperation – that Japan's autonomy was undermined as it cannot independently define who its enemies were. Moreover, it was noted that there are important constraining factors to Japan's military rise, among them that it does not possess a military-industrial complex to produce weapons cheaply.

A second major thread of the conference in regard to Japan concerned its role in the world, more specifically as a peace-builder in foreign policy and the motivations and characteristics of such a role. It was put forward that Japan under Prime Minister Fukuda, at least in rhetoric, wanted to shift away from overdependence on the U.S. and carve out a role for itself in peace-building – it was postulated that Japan would increasingly emerge as a significant actor in peacekeeping operations over the next two decades. In the discussion session, a participant made reference to Japan's "check book diplomacy" of the early 1990s, when Japan was criticized for providing money instead of

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[14] Sino-Japanese relations are dealt with in more detail in the next section.

[15] For a fuller discussion of Japanese foreign and defense policy, see Ingolf Kiesow and John Rydqvist, Japan as a "Power" Discarding a Legacy, *Asia Paper*, June 2008, Institute for Security and Development Policy: Stockholm

troops during the Gulf War. It was questioned why this was necessarily a bad thing. In reply, the presenter said that in principle there was nothing inherently wrong, but that the term had negative connotations and that Japan wanted to move away from bankrolling infrastructural building projects and become more proactive with a greater focus on peace-building.

There was some question over whether Japan would actually operationalize its rhetoric of peace-building, a respondent arguing that it *should* be taken seriously; that it is the second largest economic power in the world and that no other power could match Japan in its extent of activities in Asia, for example in Sri Lanka and Indonesia. A further explanation was cited in that peace-building was inextricably linked with Japanese identity. Others expressed skepticism over Japan's motivations, however, with some speculation that Japan was burnishing its image as a peace-builder in its attempt to obtain a seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC). In reply, the presenter countered that Japan wished to play a larger role in international affairs – commensurate with its economic status – and that even if its long-term goal was to obtain a seat on the UNSC, it was not the only propelling dynamic behind Japan's peace-building image.

Some time was devoted to outlining the characteristics of Japanese peacebuilding, which were said to include the following: an emphasis on human security (it was pointed out that Japan has played an important role in defining human security); reliance on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) as a carrot; operation within the framework of UN peacekeeping operations, with the exception of Afghanistan and the 2004 tsunami disaster relief; and the avoidance of the militarization of peace enforcement. Significant examples put forward included Japan's role in East Timor, Aceh, Sri Lanka, Mindanao, and how it had brokered peace between the two opposing sides in Cambodia in 1997. In looking beyond Asia, it was posited that the next frontier for Japan would be Africa. A participant later responded to this by saying that Japan should extend its role in West Asia and the Middle East, since this is where 90 per cent of its oil is derived from – and that there would accordingly be an expectation to play more of a role there. While it was answered that Japan does indeed play a role in Afghanistan in Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration, its main

focus is on *post-conflict* peace-building not in active warzones. Further limitations to the expansion of Japan's role were cited in the constitution (i.e. the rebuilding of forces in Afghanistan contradicts the constitution), domestic politics, and a shrinking ODA budget. In terms of the latter, a participant expressed some criticism that Japan's ODA was serving to prop up authoritarian regimes. While it was conceded that this to a small extent might be true in the case of Myanmar, it was asserted that there was in any case a changing dynamic in Southeast Asia – a significant sphere for Japanese activities – with the collapse of the junta in Thailand and the democratization process in Indonesia.

Russia

While not strictly an "Asian" power as such – nor a specific focus of the conference – a large part of Russia's landmass is nevertheless situated in Asia and it is inextricably involved in its "backyard" of Central Asia as well as a territorial dispute over the Kurile Islands with Japan. From the perspective of the authors of this report, it is clear therefore that Russia's future rise or decline has important implications for Asian security.

In the first keynote presentation of the conference it was strongly argued that Russia is a declining power with a shrinking population, grave environmental conditions, and a dwindling supply of energy resources – all of which prevent Russia from becoming a superpower. While not explored in depth, there seemed to be a consensus among several participants that Russia would gradually diminish in status and become less of a key player in world affairs. It was thus contended that Russia would be passed by China and other powers, including India, and that Russia could even "join the ranks" of such countries as Brazil or South Africa by 2020. This assessment was subject to some contention though, with one respondent arguing that Russia has a history of rebounding and that it had vast natural resources. The two paragraphs below reflect two main arenas in which it was felt by several participants – and the authors of this report – that Russia's influence should not be discounted.

In the latter context, an important point was made in one presentation that Russia has an important stake in the opening up of Arctic resources: this

could provide it with new resources for its energy-driven economy. Methane gas reserves in Siberia, particularly on the seabed, were highlighted by one participant as another major energy source apart from oil. Russia was highlighted as the most important actor in the Arctic and that it has increased ambitions, laying claims to resources and increasing activities (as previously mentioned) such as planting a flag on the seabed of the North Pole. In terms of resources, moreover, it was contended that Russia is marking out its untapped resources and that it would save them for a "rainy day" once its existing resources have been used up.

Second, Russia's influence was also expounded upon in one of the presentations on Central Asian security. It was argued that Russia's population encompasses twenty million Muslims, and that the radicalization of Islam on its southern borders is seen as one its key security threats. Further, there was some discussion of Russia leaving the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and/or that there could be increasing friction with China. One participant responded that Russia would not leave the playing field to China, and that Russia was keen on bringing in other members to the SCO such as India to "water down" Chinese ambitions. In sum, it was argued that Russia would not any time soon be usurped by China in Central Asia.

IV. Key Regional Relations

China–Japan

Sino-Japanese relations constitute the most significant bilateral relationship in Northeast Asia. While not a specific presentation topic, the conference came at a time when a discernable improvement in relations between the two states had taken place, and a keynote speech illustrated some of the positive developments of recent months. This included Japan being the first nation to dispatch a medical-rescue team to China in the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake in May 2008. A Chinese newspaper picture of a Japanese team helping Chinese victims of the quake was held up to be highly symbolic. Factors behind the improvement in relations were contended to be primarily domestically-driven, with the Emperor of Japan being cited as a positive bridge-builder in his trips to China, and also Chinese President Hu Jintao who has adopted a flexible Japan policy that had previously, under Junichiro Koizumi, been hostage to the Yasakuni Shrine issue.

Notwithstanding the above, the obstacles to and the dynamics propelling the seeming improvement of relations came in for more sobering scrutiny. On a cautionary note, the speaker identified the issue of Taiwan and the history issue as the two core concerns in relations that would take time to resolve. As such, it was expressed that relations were still fragile and that there was a lack of trust between the actors with fears on the part of Japan of Chinese expansion. It was postulated, furthermore, that Hu Jintao was not fully consolidated in power and that there were some internal disputes within China about rapprochement with Japan, with criticism of the concessions China had made over the East China Sea. One participant raised the point, furthermore, of whether China was trying to prop up Fukuda,[16] worried that more hard-line China hawks would come to power.

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[16] At the time of the conference, Prime Minister Fukuda had less than 20 per cent support in opinion polls.

One arena in which Japanese and Chinese ambitions may clash is in Southeast Asia. A participant asserted that the region will be a "litmus test" of China's peaceful rise rhetoric and that there was growing competition with Japan for influence in the region. It was illustrated that when China proposed a Free Trade Agreement,[17] Japan counter-offered saying that it would *also* assist in resolving internal conflicts, such as offering money to Thailand and the Philippines to enable them to be involved in sending troops to East Timor.

In terms of external factors, it was mentioned that the North Korean nuclear issue had driven the United States and China closer together, thus facilitating an improvement in Sino-Japanese relations given the Japan-U.S. alliance.[18] On the other hand, another participant put forward the argument that China's view of the world order is based on a rule-based international system *not* a liberal internationalist one. Accordingly, China is worried about powers such as Japan and India and has launched charm offensives with both countries so as to "muddy the waters" with their relationships with the United States.

China–Taiwan

China-Taiwan relations were the focus of one of the conference presentations. Similar to Sino-Japanese relations, there was optimism expressed that there had been a positive change in relations, especially since the DPP had lost the presidential elections.[19] More significantly, the presenter pointed to more underlying shifts in perceptions among Taiwanese themselves that may portend greater rapprochement with China. Indeed, it was illustrated how the younger generation of Taiwanese increasingly do not view themselves as Taiwanese. Aligned to this is that the younger generation sees economic growth in China and how this presents new opportunities,

[17] This refers to China's attempt to establish an ASEAN-China free trade area, which is expected to be established in 2010.
[18] It should be noted, however, that it is technically not an alliance *per se* since there have been constitutional barriers to full military cooperation and reciprocal defense.
[19] The Kuomintang (KMT), winner of the election in 2008, has been open for unification with mainland China at some unspecified point. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), on the other hand, has promoted independence for Taiwan.

with benefits deriving from increased interaction with China – this was a reason put forward for the KMT having won the presidential election. Second, it has become abundantly clear that China can isolate Taiwan both diplomatically and economically with damaging consequences. Later, in the discussion session, the above was held to represent a "paradox" in that, on the one hand, there is growing economic growth and cooperation but that, on the other, China is squeezing Taiwan both diplomatically and politically. An example given was China's increased interaction with African countries and how the latter are bending to China in derecognizing Taiwan.[20]

In spite of the above, it was asserted that perceptions in China toward Taiwan had also changed. Just as one participant had pointed to Japan's role in the earthquake relief effort, the presenter mentioned that Taiwan was one of the most generous contributors to the disaster relief in Sichuan. This was, moreover, seen to represent a new avenue for growing cooperation. The latter prompted a question by another participant of what kinds of incentives were needed to jointly pursue such non-traditional threats. The presenter argued that if there was a greater shift to the non-traditional domain, China would be less aggressive toward Taiwan and that more resources could be put into education and the environment; uncertainty was expressed, however, how far China would shift.

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[20] Until 1970, the world community recognized Taiwan and its government as the official government on both side of the strait. Through a vote in the UN in 1971 the PRC was given the seat and Taiwan lost its recognition. Today only 23 countries recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state. The PRC has managed to shrink the support and recognition of Taiwan through diplomacy and economic leverage. While many countries have no official diplomatic relations, they do have unofficial representations in Taiwan.

V. Conclusion

In a conference addressing a large number of diverse topics, a single conclusion that ties all arguments together is difficult if not impossible. In spite of this, an overarching conclusion to the conference was that, in the "post-postwar era," the world, not least Asia, finds itself in a period of flux. In light of the uncertainties and changing dynamics, one participant even went so far as to claim that we might be witnessing a pre-war era. On another concluding note, it was sounded that a conference of such sorts was prone to "strategic worrying" and that there was no certainty as to how the trends, opportunities, and challenges would ultimately play out – conflictually or peacefully.

Precursors to conflict or not, two emerging trends are becoming increasingly discernable. Emerging and evolving powers are questioning not only the Asian regional order but the world order; and non-traditional security threats are becoming as important as traditional security threats. In regard to the latter, however, the authors of this report issue a more cautionary note that while changes in perceptions and conceptions are occurring, this does not necessarily equate with developments on the ground. Indeed, we see traditional military conceptions continuing to predominate thinking in Asia.

Interestingly, however, new avenues for cooperation are opening up: the Sichuan earthquake inadvertently helped to improve Sino-Japanese and Sino-Taiwanese relations through the provision of disaster relief. In the wake of 2004 Tsunami in Southeast Asia efforts have been made to implement an Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System with a wide coalition of partners. And other threats and challenges affecting the region necessitate greater thinking outside of the "traditional security box," as one participant put it. Existing nation-state structures are ill-equipped to deal with such challenges. A lot needs to be done to optimize not only regional and international organizations, but also NGOs as they are more efficient than larger

organizations, particularly when addressing individual human security needs. In sum, responses to new challenges and threats need to be multi-level, reflecting the complex nature of the issues themselves.