Terrorism, the War on Terror and the Asia Pacific Security
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Abstract: The presentation will cover how the threat posed by terrorism and the war on terror waged by the US and its allies have altered great power relations in the Asia Pacific region, benefiting some more than others. Who are the winners and losers in the war on terror? Next, the presentation will look at the nature and scope of regional cooperation that has developed in response to the terrorist threat, including bilateral cooperation and cooperation undertaken through global and regional multilateral organizations such as the UN, ASEAN, APEC, and the ARF. The impact of the war on terror on bilateral alliances in the region will also be analyzed, underscoring the tension between the need for multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation involving China and the underlying purpose of US-led bilateral alliances to counter the rise of Chinese power.

1. September 11, 2001 ushered in the “post-post-Cold War era” in Asia-Pacific security. The pre-September 11 Asia-Pacific security environment had been shaped by four factors: regional concerns about the changing regional balance of power due to the rise of China and the prospects for Sino-US power rivalry; the danger of war in persisting regional flashpoints such as Korea, Taiwan, Kashmir and the Spratly Islands dispute, the political and strategic fallout of the Asian economic crisis, and the emergence of regional multilateral cooperation, with the establishment of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). While the above sources of regional instability have not disappeared, they have been overshadowed and their management reshaped by the impact of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

2. This analysis examines the major implications of the war on terror launched by the United States for Asia-Pacific security order. While a good deal has been written and said about the threat posed by terrorism in Asia, especially South and Southeast Asia, there has been little work analyzing the geopolitical consequences of the war on terror on Asia-Pacific security order as a whole.

3. This analysis focuses on two areas which would be relevant to such an assessment: The first is the impact of the 9/11 attacks and the war on terror on the strategic policies and role of four powers in the region: the US, China, Japan and India. This second is the state of regional cooperation against terrorism and its impact on regional stability.

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1 This paper is based on notes for a lecture delivered as part of the Murdoch University Asia Research Centre’s Public Seminar Series on “Conflict, Security and Political Regimes in Asia”, 17 June 2004.
4. The main argument of this paper is that the war on terror has hastened the transition of the region from the “unipolar moment” to “asymmetric multipolarity”. To be sure, as the analysis will demonstrate, not all the changes that have contributed to this shift can be attributed to the war on terror. Some predated 9/11, while others have been accentuated by factors other than it. It is conceptually difficult to separate the impact of the war on terror from other geopolitical currents sweeping the region since the end of the Cold War. But while a shift from unipolarity would have happened in any case, without the war on terror, this transition might have taken longer, and we might have got, at least for some time, a bipolar world dominated by US-China rivalry. While the US remains dominant, the primary objective of its grand strategy is now being “subcontracted” to regional actors, India, Japan and Australia among them. And the rise of these three nations, helped by the war on terror, would preclude the prospects of either a Sino-centric regional order, or a Sino-US bipolarity.

5. An analysis of cooperation against terrorism offers a window to assess the nature and prospects for rivalry and cooperation in this emerging strategic environment. It is a microcosm of the divergent interests, differing priorities and capabilities, domestic imperatives and external linkages of Asian powers that will drive Asia Pacific regional security in the 21st century.

The US: The Diminished Superpower

1. Prior to 9/11, the US enjoyed unprecedented global power and influence. In the Asia Pacific, US strategic policy in Asia was almost entirely focused on how to respond to the rise of China and prevent serious crisis in the Korean Peninsula, and deal with India-Pakistan rivalry in a nuclearized South Asian subcontinent. Southeast Asia received little attention. None of these challenges posed a fundamental challenge to US hegemony. While China might have been expected to reduce the gap, this would have been a natural consequence of China’s own rise, not due to the shortcomings of the US policy. Although the fundamental goals of US policy remain, its ability to realize them have been affected.

2. 9/11 and the war on terror affected US strategy in the region in three main ways. The first concrete shift in US policy in the region was the increased direct strategic involvement in Southeast Asia. The region was labeled as the second front in the global war on terror. Southeast Asia earned this labeling for two ostensible reasons – the existence of a terrorist network (Jamaah Islamiah or JI) and the perceived links between this and Al-Qaeda and the insurgency carried out by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Southern Philippines. Increased levels of military engagement and security assistance to states in the region testify to this trend. Assistance ranges from operations in the Philippines to cooperation with Indonesia and Malaysia. Operations in the Philippines kicked off in January 2002 with a deployment of 660 US troops to Southern Philippines to participate in what was termed as hostage rescue and counterinsurgency operations.

3. The war on terror also helped the US to further consolidate its alliances with Japan and Australia, and developed new relationships or proto-alliances with India and Singapore. Some of these efforts predated 9/11, and were directed at China and in the case of Japan, North Korea. But the war on terror provided new pretext and opportunity, partly because these countries’ own security and political concerns dictated moving closer to the US. The US had to do little to bring these governments to line with its war on terror policy.

4. The war on terror also provided an additional rationale for restructuring US force deployments. Such restructuring was already on the cards. It made little sense to maintain large troop presence in Germany and anti-US sentiments in Korea called for redeployment outside of Seoul. Hence, “Administration officials have talked for more than two years about their intention to move 60,000 troops out of Europe, mostly from Germany, and 30,000 from East Asia, mostly from Japan and South Korea.” But Iraq war made the redeployments opportune. As Bangkok Post editorial: “But the war on terror is the key reason for the U.S. redeployment.”

5. What are the costs and consequences of the shift in US strategy? Some argue that the US capabilities in the region have suffered. But this is questionable. The August 2004 plan: “The heart of the plan is to move 30,000 U.S. troops from Germany and approximately 15,000 from South Korea, and rebase some of them in the United States and others in a network of smaller bases in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. Despite the partial withdrawal from South Korea, the number of U.S. forces in Asia would increase.” “The Asian redeployment sacrifices leverage with North Korea to gain military advantages in resisting Chinese attempts to assert hegemony over the South China Sea and Taiwan Straits, and their littoral.” “Some leverage is lost with North Korea, but the U.S. trip wire on South Korea's border serves little purpose when North Korean military action is only likely to occur in the unlikely event of an American preemptive strike. U.S. troops are on the border to guarantee an American response to North Korean aggression, not a North Korean response to American aggression. Indeed, withdrawal of U.S. troops to areas south of Seoul makes a preemptive war against North Korea far less costly in lives for the United States.” “An increase of forces in Asia and a freeing of some of them from confronting North Korea is a signal to China that the United States is serious about containing China's regional ambitions.”

6. Philip Saunders of NDU: the US redeployments in Asia will have a “limited impact” on the US military presence in Asia. Because US military position in the region rests primarily on air and sea power. And its offset by transformation of

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5. Asian editorial excerpts, *Asian Political News*, August 30, 2004, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2004_August_30/ai_n6270378](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_2004_August_30/ai_n6270378)
US military, changes to alliances, realignment of US bases. Argues that the rise of China might have increased support for US regional military presence in Asia.\(^7\)

7. What is less debatable is that the US soft power has declined considerably. While US relations with governments has remained solid and may have improved, there is growing anti-Americanism at the societal level. **Pew poll.** While most regional governments condemned the September 11 attacks on the US and sympathised with its citizenry, this did not translate into support for the response to the attacks. There were significant gaps between governmental responses and popular ones. Though it can hardly be labeled as a ‘clash of civilizations’, resentment of the US remains visibly widespread among regional populaces. In Malaysia and Indonesia, national leaders spoke out against the US military strikes in Iraq. Throughout Southeast Asia popular perceptions of the US response to Sept 11 is seen as focusing too much on military and too little on addressing the root causes, notwithstanding the increase in US aid budget and assistance to governments such as that in Pakistan, Philippines and Indonesia. The US is also seen as doing little to address the Palestinian cause, a root cause of global Islamic extremism and terrorism. Hence, in taking a cautious stance on the US role, governments of Muslim-majority states are very much constrained by their own concern for regime legitimacy and survival. Supporting US invites danger to regimes in the absence of concessions by the US on Palestine. The US attack on Iraq has added substantially to such perceptions. Attacks on a Muslim nation were openly opposed by Malaysia on the basis of American double standards. The Bush administration’s obsession with Iraq was seen as detracting from the war on terror and producing the neglect of the crisis in the Korean peninsula over North Korea’s nuclear programme.

8. Overall, 9/11 has resulted in the diminished hegemony of the US both globally and regionally. The geopolitical gains made by the US in purely strategic terms may be short-lived and offset by countervailing forces. Russia’s strategic reassertion in Central Asia may challenge US interests. Other strategic considerations are the emerging uncertainties and challenges to US alliances with its Asian partners – mainly Japan’s new security role (and China’s reaction to that) and the loss of legitimacy Australia holds in the region. The US has lost its ability to either contain China directly, and would be far more reliant on others such as Australia, Japan and India.

**China: A Soft Power Offensive**

1. The direct impact of the war on terror on China’s grand strategy has been insignificant. Moreover, China’s putative geopolitical gains from the war, mainly due to US distraction and preoccupation in Iraq, have been offset by US policies both before and after 9/11. Where China has clearly made gains during the period since 9/11 is to project its soft power at a time America’s has declined.

2. 9/11 did present China with an opportunity to gain sympathy for its own brush with terrorism. To be sure, China lost no time in publicising its victimhood after 9/11. As the spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Sun Yuxi put it: “We

\(^7\) “The United States and East Asia after Iraq,” *Survival*, vol.49, no.1 (Spring 2007), p.144.
hope that efforts to fight against East Turkistan terrorist forces should become part of the international effort, and should also win support and understanding.”

Former president of China, Jiang Zemin, declared at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting in October 2002, “China has suffered much from terrorism, and it strongly condemns and opposes terrorism in all forms and manifestations.”

3. The most significant impact of 9/11 on China’s regional strategy was the lessening of tensions with the US. As Chinese experts Wang Jisi and Yuan Jian pointed out, thanks to 9/11, China has been taken off the list of America’s enemies post-September 11th, and that there is a new willingness to address and resolve problems in the US-China relationship.

4. Moreover, 9/11 and the war on terror provided occasion for China to find important common ground with the US. Rather than resort to its traditional policy of abstaining, China’s voted in support of UN Security Council Resolution 1368 authorizing the use of force against the Taliban, marking the first time that Beijing supported a US-led military intervention since the end of the Cold War.

5. China also offered to cooperate with the US on a wide range of security issues related to the war on terror. This included the sharing of intelligence on Al Qaeda and the Taliban, securing its remote mountain borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan with rapid-response units, granting approval for a US aircraft carrier battle group, bound for action in the Persian Gulf, to make a port call in Hong Kong, participating in US-led moves against terrorist financing, allowing the FBI to open an office in Beijing to help coordinate anti-terrorist activities, and signing the US-led Declaration of Principles on Enhanced Security Cooperation, geared to ensuring the safety of maritime trade.

6. These efforts secured for China praise from the US. President Bush China for standing “side by side with the American people as we fight this evil force" of terrorism. China also secured US designation of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement on its list of terrorist organizations. But Bush also reminded Beijing that terrorism "must never be an excuse to persecute minorities." For its part, various administration officials made clear that there would be no trade-off for PRC cooperation in the war on terrorism for benefits in other aspects of the relationship. The two issues that appeared to be at the crux of these statements were Taiwan and criticism of the PRC's human rights record.

7. But Sino-US cooperation on terrorism has had its limits. Along with Iran, China was the only country bordering Afghanistan not to grant overflight rights to the US, not to mention basing rights. No Chinese forces were committed to the

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Afghanistan operation, not even non-combat units such as engineers, construction workers, or equipment to assist with the reconstruction effort. China also did not help with the training of the Afghan army or police forces. Instead, China’s Chief of the General Staff Fu Quanyou warned: “Counter-terrorism should not be used to practice hegemony.”

8. As Jing Dong Yuan has noted: “China faces a serious dilemma in crafting its response to the U.S. war on terrorism. On the one hand, it wants to be seen as resolute and unfailing in its political support for action against terrorism. On the other, it does not want to be closely associated with U.S. military actions that violate state sovereignty and invite retaliation. Beijing wants to join international efforts in the fight against terrorism because international support may help it confront growing terrorist activities in support of separatist movements in Xinjiang. At the same time, China is concerned that U.S. military operations may set precedents for future interference in domestic affairs and the further erosion of the UN’s authority. China wants to seize the opportunity to improve Sino-U.S. relations, but also wants to exploit the opportunity to extract U.S. concessions on Taiwan, missile defense, and its policy toward Xinjiang and Tibetan separatists.”

9. The growing US presence in Central Asia diminishes China’s clout over the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). They also, as scholar Lin Huisheng summarized, “constitute a severe challenge to the security interests of China.” This, combined with the closer US security ties with India, Philippines, Indonesia, and the Japanese naval presence in the Indian Ocean are clearly not welcome to China, even though Beijing can live with them for the moment. These come in the wake of other US measures predating 9/11, such as the revitalization of the US-Japan security alliance, increased US arms sales to Taiwan, normalization of US-Vietnam relations, US program for theatre ballistic missile defence with Japanese and possibly Taiwanese participation, development of a national missile defense system to negate China’s nuclear deterrent and the redeployment of US forces from Europe to Asia, all of which undermines Beijing strategic position.

10. Thus, China’s has made no net geopolitical gain from the war on terror. The improvement of relations with the US was welcome, but it was never China’s intent to use this to create a peace dividend by reducing its defence spending. While creating a peaceful regional environment to pursue its national economic development is the stated Chinese policy, this does not entail reducing China’s own defence spending and military modernization which has been the basis of an

emergent military arms race, hence a putative source of regional instability. Moreover, while China does not want war with the US, it is quite happy to maintain an adversarial relationship that makes China the leading challenger to the USA. Such a position, and international recognition of it, feeds Chinese nationalist pride. The war on terror has done little to change this, since the US has not abandoned its strategy of preventing Chinese hegemony over the region.

11. On the other hand, China has been expanding its influence in the region through a “charm offensive” while US remains preoccupied in the war on terror. Improvement in relations with US may have benefited China’s quest for influence in the region. Some conservative analysts in the US allege that US distraction in Iraq gave China opportunity to expand its own influence. But this may be a coincidence rather than calculated strategic move. China was already on the rise.

Japan: An Uncertain Gamble

1. Unlike China, Japan does not face a domestic terrorist group with links, real or imagined, with Al-Qaeda, although it has had its own brush with homegrown terrorism (Tokyo subway attacks by the Aum Shirinkyo group). This, however, did not prevent Japan from offering quickly to participate in the war on terror. As a treaty ally of the US, Japan could of course be expected to provide support to the US. But unlike the US-led attack on Iraq in 1991, Japan’s help this time was not financial. The most important move in this regard was the passing of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, passed soon after 9/11, which authorised the use of Japanese forces to offer logistics support to US and allied forces operating in Afghanistan and nearby areas. Empowered by the Anti-Terror Special Measures Law, 10 days after the bill was passed, Japan sent three destroyers, two supply ships and a minesweeper to the region. The main task of the destroyers and supply ships was to get fuel from Singapore, Bahrain, Australia and elsewhere and supply it to US ships. In addition, Japan flew six C-130 transport planes and other aircraft to establish a logistic chain between US bases in Japan with those in Guam, Singapore, and elsewhere. Japan later sent another destroyer and a landing ship carrying construction equipment as well as a 140-member Thai army engineering battalion. Most notably, in early 2003, Japan sent an Aegis-class destroyer to replace one of the destroyers escorting support ships involved in the refueling mission.

2. Japan’s support was praised by the Bush administration. In 2002, Bush noted that Japan’s “response to the terrorist threat has demonstrated the strength of our alliance, and the indispensable role of Japan - a role that is global, and begins in Asia.” Later, in a joint press appearance with Koizumi on 23 May 2003, President Bush noted that US and Japan were “partners in the war on terror.”

Christopher Hill, Assistant Secretary for East Asia in Bush’s second term in office, regarded Japan’s “contributions to Iraq, Afghanistan and the War on

Terror,” as part of a process whereby “Japan is changing its own role in the international system.” In his words:

Japan has been a significant contributor to the War on Terror, providing at-sea refueling to Coalition vessels from twelve countries performing maritime interdiction operations in the Indian Ocean. Without the 103 million gallons Japan has provided to date -- worth about $150 million -- some Coalition members would not have been able to participate at all.... This is the most significant military mission that Japan now undertakes in the war on terror.18

3. In reality, Japan’s role in the war was a classic case of a nation using its foreign alliance for domestic purposes. It enabled Koizumi to push forward with his nationalist policies, which may have been a reaction against China’s rise and the relative slippage of its own power. Japan had genuine reasons to be worried about instability and threat of terrorism from West Asia, due to its dependence on imported oil. But terrorism and war on terror camouflaged concerns about the rise of China. In a perhaps revealing political move, Koizumi had made a quick visit to China after the passing of the Anti-Terrorism Law to reassure its leaders that the law was not aimed at China and that it did not presage a more assertive Japanese security posture. While the Chinese expressed understanding of Japan’s move then, later in 2003, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji would tell Koizumi: “I want Japan to be careful about expanding the SDF’s role.”19 The China Daily, an official newspaper, feared that increased US-Japan cooperation would be “a threat to security in East Asia.”20

4. In reality, the war on terror has been a pretext, rather than a cause, for Japan to engineer major changes in its security policy. But these will not translate into gains for Japanese influence in the region. Like the US, Japan’s soft power in the region has suffered. This has to do less with its involvement in the war on terror itself, but the later was part of an overall shift in Japan under Koizumi to break out of its post-war constitutional framework. While the war on terror was the ostensible motive, Koizumi’s gamble was in keeping with what one observer noted as a “more personal assertion of nationalistic pride,” which “often take the form of visiting the Yasukuni Shrine to pay respects to deceased members of the old Imperial Army, including convicted war criminals,” and which saw the “‘War on Terrorism’ as a chance for Japan to be more ‘international’”.21 Japan’s actions in turn stoked Chinese nationalism, thereby undermining Koizumi’s initial efforts to reassure China about its participation in the war on terror.

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5. Moreover, Koizumi’s move was domestically divisive. After Koizumi’s successor Shinzo Abe resigned partly due to an impending failure to secure the agreement of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (which controlled the Upper House in the 2007 elections), and controversy surfaced that fuel supplied by Japanese ships might have been diverted for the war in Iraq, Japanese paper Asahi Shinbum editorialized: “There is no denying the situation in Iraq is dire. But can we really call it "a war on terror" that is widely supported by the international society? Japan’s failure is that it supported the Iraq war out of consideration for the U.S. administration of President George W. Bush. Japan should not have taken part in a war that neither has the broad consensus of international society nor a just cause.”

India: A Victim and a Winner

1. India’s own strategic policy and role have been significantly affected by the war on terror. First, 9/11 helped India to publicize its victimhood. Indian analysts claim that India was the experimental hub for the various kinds of terrorist tactics long before they were used against Western targets. For example, the coordinated bombings in Bombay, India’s commercial hub, on 12 March 1993 and the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane from Nepal by Taliban elements on 13 March 2000, are cited as representing different kinds of terrorist tactics which India had to endure before the West finally woke up to the terrorist problem. The attack on Indian parliament in December 2001 further underscored India’s predicament as a victim of international terrorism. As C. Raja Mohan, one of India’s most respected strategic analysts put it, “India's experience with terrorism since the late 1980s underlines the assessment that the combination of WMD, terrorism and extremist ideologies has emerged as the single biggest threat to the international system.”

2. Arun Jaitley, a senior BJP minister, stated in August 2002, offered a statistical survey of Indian casualties from terrorism:

“In the four conventional wars that we have fought, I am also including Kargil in it, the total number of people who lost their lives, i.e. the security people, is 9,857. So, little less than 10,000 people lost their lives, in all the conventional wars that India has fought till date. In the last 15 years, the number of civilians who have lost their lives to terrorism is 62,221. A figure almost 6 to 7 times more than those who have lost their lives in conventional wars. The security personnel killed in various terrorist actions is again over 9,000. You can add this to the 62,000 figure and you can find that conventional wars, which now don't seem to be a recurring

occurrence, is very insignificant in comparison to this proxy war which has continued.”

3. Western observers generally accept India’s predicament as a victim of terrorism. “Since 1994, India has suffered almost 20,000 fatalities as a result of acts of terror, losses that dwarf those suffered by the US and Israel.”

4. As such, in contrast to China, India was gain significant political mileage out of 9/11. As Raja Mohan summed up: “the fundamental shift in the international perceptions of cross-border terrorism. Until recently the international community, was reluctant to confront the issue directly. But after September 11 and December 13, the United States and Britain have sent unmistakable signals to Pakistan that its sponsorship of cross-border terrorism must end forthwith. The international community has also put down a marker to Pakistan — whatever the nature of its grievance in Kashmir may be, its use of terrorism as an instrument of policy is unacceptable.”

5. Not all Indian analysts agree with the support of the US to India in its war on terror. The BJP government was disappointed that the US opted for Pakistan’s support for its campaign against the Taliban, even though India had offered its operational support, including the use of Indian military bases, for the US in attacking Taliban before Pakistan changed its support for the Taliban regime which its intelligence services were responsible for creating. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told visiting US. Secretary of State Colin Powell that Indians were hurt by the perceived unfairness of the US. As the editor of Hindustan Times, an Indian daily, argued:

A nation that is the victim of terrorism has the right to strike at the roots of that terrorism. But here's the moral contradiction: if the U.S. has the right to bomb terrorist camps in Afghanistan, then why doesn't India have the right to bomb terrorist camps in Pakistan? The moral imperatives are exactly the same. To tell us, as some Western observers have, that we should not fight terrorists but instead engage in a dialogue with Pakistan over Kashmir is not particularly useful. It is like telling the U.S., "Don't bomb Osama, talk to him." Or, "Don't use violence, try to find out why the Islamic world hates you so much." Dialogue is important, but it only works if fanatics and terrorists are removed from the equation.

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27 Vir Singhvi, “The U.S. is Ignoring India’s War on Terrorism,” http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,181662,00.html
6. 9/11 enabled India to present the militancy in Kashmir as a terrorism issue, rather than a national liberation issue. The putative benefits for India were such that a hardline anti-terrorist figure, KPS Gill, credited with suppressing Sikh terrorism in Punjab, advised Indian not to launch cross-border counterstrikes on Pakistan, because, thanks to 9/11, “India stands to gain the most, in the present international context, by projecting itself as a mature, stable democracy, deeply committed to the war against terror, but not given to arbitrary and aimless acts of aggression, even though the provocation be great and sustained.” KPS Gill, “Are we imitating the Pak model?” Hindustan Times, October 19, 2001)

7. “There is much greater empathy and support for India from the international community in its war against terrorism. India's efforts since the late 1990s to gain cooperation bilaterally and multilaterally has paid dividends since September 11.” It was a big factor in India’s ability to overcome the criticism of and sanctions imposed against its nuclear tests in 1998, and to forge close relationship with the US, although China is a major factor in this partnership as well.

8. In the wake of 9/11, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee described India and the United States as "natural allies," Partnering the US in the war on terror enabled India to project power into Southeast Asia, especially when Indian naval ships provided escort to US ships through the Straits of Malacca, “the first time that the American and Indian navies undertook a joint mission outside of India's territorial waters.” Richard Haas, US State Department’s Director of Policy Planning Staff, noted: “He is right”. The United States and India: A Transformed Relationship, Richard N. Haass, Director, Policy Planning Staff, Remarks to the Confederation of Indian Industry, Hyderabad, India, January 7, 2003, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/16399.htm

9. President Bush would note in February 2006: "Our two governments are sharing vital information on suspected terrorists and potential threats," he said. "And these cooperative efforts will make the Indian government more effective as a partner in the global war on terror and will make the people in both our countries more secure." Defence cooperation key elements include: revival of the India-U.S. Defense Policy Group (DPG) — moribund since India’s 1998 nuclear tests and ensuing U.S. sanctions —in late 2001 and meets annually. In June 2005, the United States and India signed a ten-year defense pact outlining planned collaboration in multilateral operations, expanded two-way defense trade, increasing opportunities for technology transfers and co-production, expanded collaboration related to missile defense, and establishment of a bilateral Defense Procurement and Production Group. The agreement may be the most ambitious such security pact ever engaged by New Delhi. A Maritime Security Cooperation Agreement, inked in early 2006, commits both countries to “comprehensive cooperation” in protecting the free flow of commerce and addressing a wide array of threats to maritime security, including piracy and the illicit trafficking of

weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related materials. A “series of unprecedented and increasingly substantive combined exercises involving all military services.” “Cope India” air exercises, U.S. and Indian special forces soldiers have held joint exercises near the India-China border, annual “Malabar” joint naval exercises are held off the Indian coast. The seventh and most recent of these came in September 2007, when India hosted a total of 27 warships from five countries — including the United States, Japan, Australia, and Singapore — for maneuvers in the Bay of Bengal. U.S. and Indian officials tout such exercises as evidence of a deepening bilateral defense relationship. United States welcomed Indian requests for information on the possible purchase of F-16 or F/A-18 fighters, and indicated that Washington is “ready to discuss the sale of transformative systems in areas such as command and control, early warning, and missile defense.” The United States views defense cooperation with India in the context of “common principles and shared national interests” such as defeating terrorism, preventing weapons proliferation, and maintaining regional stability. Many analysts view increased U.S.-India security ties as providing an alleged “hedge” against or “counterbalance” to growing Chinese influence in Asia, though both Washington and New Delhi repeatedly downplay such probable motives. K. Alan Kronstadt, India-U.S. Relations, CRS Report for Congress, updated 2 October 2007, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, http://opencrs.cdt.org/rpts/RL33529_20071002.pdf

**Terrorism and Regional Security Cooperation: Much Ado?**

1. Asia’s response to terrorism has been primarily at national and bilateral levels, the latter especially involving the US and to a lesser extent Australia. Bilateral and sub-regional (sub-ASEAN) frameworks seem to have been preferred over purely multilateral ones. Thus, one of the more important initiatives undertaken in the region after September 11 was the signing of a trilateral agreement between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The Agreement provides for: anti-terrorism exercises as well as combined operations to hunt suspected terrorists, the setting up of hotlines and sharing of airline passenger lists, aimed at speeding intelligence exchanges between the three neighbors. However, all governments realize that to combat terrorism, regional multilateral cooperation is necessary given the transnational nature of the perceived threat. The objective of regional and international cooperation against terrorism has not been so much to develop regional collective mechanisms, but to shore up national capabilities.

2. The UN remains the key multilateral framework in the response of Southeast Asian states to terrorism. An ASEAN Declaration dated 5th November 2001 called upon members to ratify of all anti-terrorist conventions, including the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. It urged compliance with UN instruments and resolutions. In addition, the Convention aims to curb terrorist activity by severing financial sources through the creation of new offences under international law. Countries are required to
criminalize the provision or collection of funds used or intended for the use of committing terrorist acts. There are also provisions for the extradition or prosecution of those who raise or provide funds to terrorists.30

3. Among Asian regional organizations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has pursued the most ambitious form of security measures against terrorism. This role predates September 11, and is driven by China’s efforts to suppress Uighur separatists. The SCO’s target is the threat of “terrorism, separatism and extremism”.

4. In Southeast Asia, ASEAN has also brought terrorism to the centre-stage of its security agenda. One of the first acts of ASEAN after September 11 was to issue, on 5 November 2001, a Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism. The Declaration condemned “acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed wherever, whenever and by whomsoever”, as a “profound threat to international peace and security.”31 Measures taken by ASEAN to combat terrorism include cooperation amongst law agencies; exchange of information and intelligence on terrorist organizations, their movement and funding, regional capacity building programmes for investigating, detecting, monitoring and reporting of terrorist acts. The Workplan adopted by the Senior officials of the ASEAN Ministers’ Meeting for Transnational Crime (AMMTC) in Malaysia in May 2002 envisaged establishment of national focal points for information exchange and sharing of technical expertise and best practices through training workshops. Developing a common front against terrorism has been one of the objectives of the idea of “ASEAN Security Community” pursued by Indonesia.32

5. In general, regional organizations including ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have undertaken a number of initiatives. These include: Promoting common adherence to international conventions on terrorism and integrating them with ASEAN mechanisms; calling for the early signing/ratification of or accession to anti-terrorist conventions; designating principal contact points in all ASEAN member countries on counter-terrorism (CT); holding meetings of ASEAN Police Chiefs to discuss practical measures and explore avenues of cooperation against terrorism; increasing cooperation among front-line law enforcement agencies in combating terrorism and sharing "best practices"; providing for greater exchange of information/intelligence on terrorists and terrorist organizations, their movement and funding, and other information needed to protect lives, property and the security of all modes of travel; development of regional capacity building programmes to enhance the existing capabilities of ASEAN member countries to

31 ASEAN Secretariat. ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism. 5 November 2001. Available at <http://www.aseansec.org/5620.htm>.
investigate, detect, monitor and report on terrorist acts; and measures against terrorist financing such as that undertaken by the ARF. The last measure has been particularly important for the ARF, which in a 30th July, 2002 declaration called for freezing terrorist assets; international cooperation on the exchange of information and outreach; compliance and reporting. It has formed an Inter-Sessional Group ISG on counter-Terrorism and Translational Crime (co-chaired by Malaysia and US).

6. In dealing with terrorism, regional groupings have been better at issuing declarations and identifying principles than developing concrete operational counter-terrorism mechanisms. Cooperation undertaken by regional organizations focuses on intelligence and information exchanges and regional capacity building. Several factors militate against closer counter-terrorism cooperation in Southeast Asia. These include different national priorities and interests, domestic political consideration and sensitivities, inter-state suspicions, and a lack of capacity to implement counter-terrorism measures, which in turn, leads to a dependence on outside powers. This explains the high level of cooperation with Western countries, chiefly the US. Hence, a key security framework to emerge after September 11 is the ASEAN-United States of America Joint Declaration for Cooperation To Combat International Terrorism, which seeks to create “a framework for cooperation to prevent, disrupt and combat international terrorism through the exchange and flow of information, intelligence and capacity-building”. US security policies aimed at drawing Asian countries into its war on terror have also proved a source of intra-regional tension. A prime example of this is the Regional Maritime Security Initiative, proposed in early 2004, under which the US would have carried out military interdiction of vessels suspected of carrying terrorists. This unilateral declaration of intent received support from Singapore, but was opposed by Indonesia and Malaysia, who argued that the primary responsibility for such intrusive maritime counter-terrorism should belong to the littoral countries of the Malacca Straits. Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have since agreed to “coordinated patrols” (rather than having more integrated “joint” patrols) in the straits, backed by intelligence and training cooperation with the US. But this episode shows the reactive nature of regional security cooperation, which reflects disagreements over the threat posed by terrorism and the desired extent of security relationship with the US in the context of the Bush administration’s Iraq policy.

7. Within Southeast Asia, however, perspectives differ as to the extent of danger posed by terrorism to the region. Singapore’s perspective in largely in tune with the US in so far as both see Islamic terrorism as the main danger to national and regional security. Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Security and Defence, Tony Tan, described terrorism as the most “immediate

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security threat" facing the region. In his view, "the new terrorism is a networked, multinational enterprise with a global reach which aims to inflict death and destruction on a catastrophic scale." The Indonesian perspective (at least under the Megawati government) has diverged from the overly strategic view of terror held by Singapore and the US. Neither Malaysia nor Indonesia has acknowledged terrorism as an existential threat in the manner of Singapore, Australia or the United States. For Indonesia, terrorism is a political issue, closely tied to domestic political dynamics. Counter-terrorism and electoral politics made uneasy bedfellows in a majority Muslim nation.

8. Not surprisingly therefore, there exists considerable divergence among Asian countries over the definition of the sources of terrorism. Malaysia and Indonesia are wary of what they see as the US’ attempt to associate terrorism with Islam. For Singapore, the detention of several members in 2002 with suspected links to Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network was reason enough to identify terrorism with radical Islam. Singapore sees the terrorist threat at home and in the immediate neighbourhood as the result of a combination of local muslim radical and the global terrorist network Al-Qaeda. By contrast, former Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, angrily refuted reports linking Malaysian political and religious organizations to the global Al-Qaeda network. Thailand conveniently prefers to associate terrorist incidents as “the work of the thugs and gangsters”.

9. In other parts of Asia, perceptions of terrorist threat and national responses to it are shaped by domestic concerns as well as alliance compulsions. India views terrorism as a long-standing problem has recently begun to receive the recognition it deserved from the international community only after September 11. India sees itself as the original setting or even a testing ground for terrorist tactics, citing examples of the 1993 bombing of the Mumbai stock exchange and the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight by Pakistani nationals forced to land in Afghanistan, as precursors to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and

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34 “Singapore remains at risk of terror attack: minister”, Agence France Presse, September 6, 2002, Singapore
the Pentagon using hijacked airliners. China also sees terrorism in terms of its own preexisting domestic security challenges. Its policy framework equates terrorism with separatism and extremist activities in its Western provinces. Neither Japan nor South Korea face threats from Islamic terrorist organizations, indeed, Japan’s main brush with terrorism came from an indigenous group, Aum Shinrikyo. Both continue to be preoccupied chiefly with the North Korean challenge. Beyond this, it is the compulsion to join US-led war on terror in order to maintain their alliance relationships with the US, rather than an existential threat of terrorism, which shapes the security policies of the two states, leading to their support for the US attack on Iraq (although only Korea provided combat troops; Japan’s support being limited to logistics).

10. Given the differing understanding of terrorism as a security threat, it should be hardly surprising that differences exist over counter-terrorism strategies and the resources channeled towards even among states where terrorism is perceived as a direct security threat. At one extreme is the Philippines, where terrorism is treated mainly, if not exclusively, as a form of heightened insurgency carried out by the MILF in Southern Philippines which must be defeated through military means. For India, given the close links between terrorism and the Kashmir issue, counter-terrorism has included a strong, or even dominant, military aspect. Singapore, which sees itself as a tempting target of Islamic terrorists because of its wealth, the heavy concentration of its national infrastructure within a limited geographic space, and its close security links with the US (which had become closer since September 11), focuses heavily on the hybrid politico-security approach of homeland security, which stressed infrastructure protection and heightened surveillance.

Conclusion

1. Of the four powers: US and China are both winners and losers, Japan the biggest loser, India the biggest winner. American losses are mainly due to Iraq, its own making. China’s gains have less to do with conscious exploitation of the war and more due to its new diplomacy.

2. The war on terror is supposed to have led to a significant improvement in great power relations. For example, America’s preoccupation with terrorism might have led the Bush administration to ease its hardline stance on China, thereby altering the climate of tension and conflict created by the 2001 spy-plane incident off Hainan Island. This has created better prospects for cooperative regional conflict management, one of result of which is the six party talks on the Korean peninsula nuclear crisis. Moreover, the war on terror has led to improved relations between the US and India, which in turn creates a better climate for India and Pakistan managing their conflict over Kashmir.

3. But India and China disagreed over the US attack on Iraq and have not supported US appeals for troops to help restore order in post-Saddam Iraq. The security ties that the US enjoys with the Philippines could be a setback in the US-China relationship if and when Manila invokes its new ties with the US to back its claims in the Spratly Islands vis-a-vis China. The warmth in Sino-US relations does not ease Sino-US tensions over Taiwan, which has worsened in the past year.

4. Many changes are due not to war on terror, but other factors. But war on terror has helped to legitimize gain political support for moves that had basis in other developments, including the rise of China.

5. The changes in power distribution cannot be explained just by the war on terror. Other factors like rise of China predate it.

6. Terrorism has not brought about the kind of unity expected. It is a common threat. Tells us that a common threat is not a sufficient condition for regional cooperation.

7. While terrorism remains and will remain for some time a challenge for regional countries, the nature and extent of this challenge will differ from country to country, thereby posing an obstacle to regional consensus and cooperation, including the role of regional groups such as ASEAN and the ARF.

8. The “gains,” of the war on terror has also to be seen against the persistence of regional conflicts and rivalries and its potential costs, including the renewed justification of security measures that can impede democratization.

9. Moreover, the growing unpopularity of the US and the declining credibility of the US strategic umbrella in the region due to its preoccupation with Iraq are likely to introduce new uncertainties in the regional balance of power. It is these uncertainties created by the war of terror, rather than terrorism per se, which in the final analysis may pose the most serious long-term challenge to Asian regional order.  

10. Neither has the concern with terrorism led to the disappearance of other sources of regional conflict. While terrorism is touted as a major threat to Asian stability, in reality, the potential for conflict in the Taiwan Straits and in the Korean Peninsula are more important regional dangers with global ramifications. While the war on terror might have dampened the Indo-Pakistan and Sino-US rivalries, as will be discussed in the following section, it has not necessarily engendered greater stability in the regional balance of power.


APEC and the U.S.-led war on terrorism, CNN.com, October 17, 2001 Posted: 3:03 AM EDT (0703 GMT),