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## SECURITY THREATS AND RESPONSES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Since the World War II the Asia-Pacific region witnessed great turmoils—two major wars and several smaller ones have been fought in the region, mostly with the involvement of big powers. As a consequence, major realignments among the countries of the region took place during the time. Most notable were the once unthinkable Sino-Soviet rift in the 1960s and the rapprochement in the early 70s between the USA and the PRC, the two former cut-throat enemies. These developments together with China's opening to Japan and the West have drastically changed the total strategic outlook in the Asia-Pacific region. By the end of the 1970s there were further developments—the fall-out of Vietnam from the once 'tooth-and-lips' relationship with China, a Vietnamese-dominated Indochina and the emergence of a powerful Soviet Pacific fleet with base facilities in Vietnam.

Therefore, looking at the array of things it can be said that a new balance of power has made its way in the region, with two rather loosely connected groups emerging : those aligned in varying degrees with the USSR include Mongolia, North Korea, Indochina ; and those aligned formally or informally with the US are Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, the ASEAN countries, Australia and New Zealand. As a result of this ongoing polarization process, the turbulence-ridden region is likely to undergo new stresses and strains. East Asia already ranks second only to Central Europe as the most

heavily armed region in the world. Together with ASEAN defence budgets, average defence spending in the region rose by 30 percent during the 1970s, double the average rate of increase for all developing countries.<sup>1</sup>

Recent years have witnessed an increase of interest among analysts in the problems of Asia-Pacific security. This was not dictated by the strategic factors alone. Over the years the region, more accurately, the non-communist part of it proved to be the most dynamic and fastest growing among all the regions of the world. These countries have achieved an average economic growth of 7.5 percent a year over the last 20 years.<sup>2</sup> Already the volume of US trade with the Pacific outweighs its trade with Europe. These are some of the new facts which naturally aroused a revitalised attention on the part of the four major powers—USA, USSR, China and Japan, directly interacting in the region, each of course with its own interests and perspectives.

Of late there is talk of creating a 'regional order' in South-east Asia.<sup>3</sup> Of course the idea of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) for the region, endorsed by the ASEAN member states in 1971 as a long-term objective was indicative of this direction. Further, there is much discussion over the likelihood and viability of forming a collective security system involving the like-minded countries of the region or at least forging some kind of a transregional approach to security efforts in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>4</sup> But feasibility of the above approaches to security in the region depends to a great extent on the attitude, perceptions and behaviour

1. Cited by Peter Polomka in "The Security of the Western Pacific: The Price of Burden Sharing", *Survival*, January/February 1984, p. 12.
2. *Bangladesh Observer*, Dhaka, 16 May 1984.
3. See for details: Jusuf Wanandi, *Security Dimensions of the Asia Pacific Region in the 1980s* (CSIS, Jakarta, Oct, 1979), and Hadi Soesastro, "The US and the USSR in the Second 'Cold War' and its Implications for Southeast Asia", *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1982.
4. See Peter Polomka, *op. cit.* and W.T. Tow and W.R. Feeney (eds), *US Foreign Policy and Asia-Pacific Security* (Westview Press: Colorado, 1982).

of the countries of the region as widely dispersed and disparate, politically, economically and culturally as the Asia-Pacific, which in reality covers several sub-regions, such as, South east Asia, Northeast Asia and Southwest Pacific (mainly Australia and New Zealand).

Therefore, there seems to remain an underlying need to closely examine the threat perceptions of the countries in a region whose size, economy and military strength greatly differ. Naturally the question arises—how much do the regional countries appreciate each other's security needs and aspirations? Then, to what extent is there a convergence of security interests among them? Because on all these will depend the future security framework likely to be taking shape in the Asia-Pacific region. The present paper is an attempt to deal with these pertinent questions. In this effort, the author tries to view the region's security dimensions with a future perspective. The scope of the paper will cover the security aspects of the non-communist part of the region, plus China.

## I

The threat perceptions of the Western Pacific are largely conditioned by their historical pasts and the experiences they underwent since independence. The countries of the ASEAN view the greatest threats to their security and integrity to be emanating from internal sources of instability where extra-territorial inputs tend to further the destabilisation process.<sup>5</sup> One of such internal problems is national unity in view of the multiracial composition of their population, perhaps except in Singapore. The forces of separatism are strong especially in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, of course with differing degrees. To this added is the common problem of communist insurgency in almost all the ASEAN countries. The danger it poses varies from country to country but all of them share

5. Jusuf Wanandi, *op. cit.*, and "Conflict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region : An Indonesian Perspective, " *Asian Survey*, Vol. No. XXII, No. 6, June 1982

a common interest in containing communist-inspired insurgency. Then other problems, such as evolution of a stable socio-political structure, equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth and leadership succession, pose formidable threats to the unity and cohesion of the states as a whole. As a result of such inward-looking approach to security by the ASEAN countries, their defense forces were largely geared to meeting the internal threats and thus to maintain domestic order.

Externally, the five countries of Southeast Asia, namely Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines created ASEAN for increasing economic and cultural cooperation on a multilateral level. Initially there was no political overtone in the Bangkok Declaration, apart from a mere desire to maintain peace and stability in the region<sup>6</sup>. In 1971 the Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak initiated the proposal of establishing a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) for Southeast Asia and it was endorsed by the other ASEAN countries. The implementation of ZOPFAN for the security of the region includes the maintenance of equidistance of the states with the big powers. This means that the former should not get involved in big power problems and should not let them interfere in domestic and regional affairs.<sup>7</sup>

However, there was a visible shift among the ASEAN leaders in perception of external security threats after the fall of South Vietnam

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*There is wide divergence in threat perception among the ASEAN members. Vietnam's military offensive in Indochina once increased ASEAN unity and cohesion, but her gradual consolidation there tends to unravel that unity.*

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and Kampuchea into the hands of the communist regimes in 1975. This prompted the first summit of all the ASEAN heads of government in

6. *10 Years of ASEAN* (Asean secretariat, Jakarta, 1978), p. 14.

7. E. D. Solidum and N.M Morales, "A Comparative Study of Collective Security Plans for Southeast Asia," *Asia Pacific Community*, Fall 1982, No. 18 p. 29.

Bali in 1976 where through the Treaty of Concord, the leaders stressed the need for political collaboration among the countries.<sup>8</sup> The member for cooperation in the political field among the ASEAN countries got an added fillip after the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea in the early 1979, thus placing Thailand on a front-line position.

Despite the spirit of increasing solidarity, the threat perceptions of the ASEAN member-states differed considerably as to the Vietnamese domination of all over Indochina. Thailand and Singapore view Vietnam and its patron the Soviet Union the biggest threat to the region, while PRC is viewed to be so by Malaysia (till mid-82) and Indonesia. This was evident in the declaration of the 'Kuantan Principle' by Indonesia and Malaysia in 1981 which maintained that if Thailand accepted the status quo in Kampuchea and Vietnam assured its respect for Thai sovereignty, then the present tension along the Thai-Kampuchean border could be defused, thus bringing peace to the region.<sup>9</sup> However such perceptions about China are conditioned by the historical experiences of the countries concerned. These areas experienced intense interference in their domestic politics by Imperial China even prior to the period of Western colonization. The PRC also has supported the indigenous insurgent groups in all the ASEAN countries. There is too the problem of the economically important Chinese minority, numbering about 15 million in ASEAN countries who unfortunately becomes the easy scape-goat for domestic discontent.<sup>10</sup>

However, since mid-82 Malaysia adopted a softer view of China as was evident in her hosting of the formation of an anti-Vietnamese Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea which united all the Khmer resistance factions. Now Malaysia views more of less

8. *10 Years of ASEAN. op. cit.*, p. 111.

9. Cited by M. R. Khan in the "The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea: A Solution in Sight?", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 3. No. 2. 1982, p.42.

10. C.M. Seah, "Asia-Pacific Security and the Resuscitated Containment Policy," *Asia Pacific Community*, Summer 1982, No. 17, p. 43.

evenhandedly both the communist giants, as is clear from Prime Minister Mahathir's statement that "Malaysia does not differentiate really between the role of China and the role of the Soviet Union. Both are equally disruptive, we want to keep them at arms length."<sup>11</sup> But Indonesia, despite expressing apparent solidarity with all the ASEAN initiatives so far regarding the solution of the Kampuchean crisis, still views China threat to be greater, more urgent and more immediate.<sup>12</sup> This is evident from her individual overtures towards Vietnam. Recently when General Beni Murdani, after his visit to Hanoi commented that Vietnam like Israel was surrounded by hostile states, it raised an uproar in other ASEAN capitals. Then in a special meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Jakarta in May 1984, differences were ostensibly patched up to put forth again a unified stance on Kampuchea. As a matter of fact, the non communist countries of the Asia-Pacific region support a policy on Kampuchea which aims at reducing Vietnam's growing dependence on Moscow and releasing Bangkok from strategic reliance on Peking. With this end, they continue keeping the door open to Vietnam for a negotiated settlement through peaceful means. But because of Vietnam's continued intransigence, those overtures were to no purpose so far.

There are serious perception gaps between the US and its Pacific allies and friends. All the non-communist countries in the region and China welcome a strong US military presence with its renewed commitment to the region, but many tend to disagree with the single-minded anti-Soviet approach of Reagan's Asia-Pacific policy. The present US policy is prone to looking at every development any where through the prism of East-West conflict, thus providing a simplified approach to real problems. Therefore the US Pacific allies and friends, the ASEAN countries in particular, who long hoped for a more consistent US policy, now are apprehensive of the ideological simplicities of the Reagan policy approach. These coun-

11. Lee Poh Ping, "The Indochinese Situation and Big Powers in Southeast Asia : The Malaysian View," *Asian Survey*, June 1982, Vol. XXII, No. 6, p. 518.

12. Hadi Soesastro, *op. cit.*, q.

ties believe that singling out the Soviet threat in a regional perspective would encourage, rather than discourage, her growing military presence in the Western Pacific. As compared with other Asian countries, Japan and South Korea could be said to be closer to the

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US in their perception of Soviet threat because of their geopolitical compulsions. The problem is that Washington always seeks to play its role as a global power whereas Tokyo and Seoul tend to think of fulfilling theirs only as a local or regional one. While Japan looks at Soviet Union as her most potential threat, she seems unwilling to be part of an anti-Soviet alliance with the US and China. Because of obvious reasons—specially economic and strategic—Japan unlike many others, has an abiding interest in seeking a *modus vivendi* with the USSR.

Regarding the apparent US-China-Japan strategic triangle, the component countries have differing approaches despite their seeming unity being forged by the Soviet threat. The US encourages the PRC to join her in facing the Soviet threat regionally as well as globally. This can be done through China's continued tough stance towards the Kampuchean crisis and Sino-Soviet border disputes, which have direct implications for the region. However, as is now clear, China's perception of her security interests does not seem to include forming a clear-cut anti-Soviet alliance. She sees greater advantage in manoeuvring between the two Super-powers while trying to build her own international standing partly on an anti-Super-power platform.<sup>13</sup> In case of Japan, the importance of her economic self-sufficiency and security of supplies of raw materials, food and energy, tends to overshadow that of military power; and Japan

13. Peter Polomka, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

cannot rule out the longer-term possibility of intensifying rivalry with China in Southeast Asia.<sup>14</sup>

The other fellow countries of the region do not see the above triangular relationship with the same vision. If the US and Japan go helping too far in China's four modernisation programmes, a stronger and revitalized China would pose a still greater threat to the ASEAN countries, as the reading goes there.<sup>15</sup> In that case there might arise some problem in the relationship between the US and the ASEAN member countries.<sup>16</sup> Most notably Indonesia is dissatisfied over Washington's alleged approach of evaluating the situation in the region as a function of her strategic equation with Tokyo and Peking. On the other hand, South Korea seems to enjoy the resultant benefit out of the growing US-China relations in terms of a reduced prospect of an armed invasion from the North in view of China's great leverage over the former. Unofficial contacts—both political and economic—are increasing between China and South Korea. Seoul seems to be optimistic that ultimately Beijing would yield to the cross-recognition scheme, thus establishing a permanent status quo in the Peninsula.

As regards Japan's role in the region, all the countries agree on the premise that she should play a greater part in regional and global affairs commensurate with her economic Superpower status. While these countries welcome an active and mutually beneficial economic and political relationship with Japan, a stronger defense posture by the latter is viewed with mixed reactions, because of the former's past experiences under Japanese occupation prior to and during the World War II. Memories of the harsh occupation period are still vivid, as shown most clearly by the region-wide protests during the Japanese text-book affair in 1982. Although the regional countries appreciate Japan's legitimate self-defence efforts, they are scared if that goes beyond a certain limit.

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14. *Ibid.*

15. A Suhrke, "ASEAN: Adjusting to New Regional Alignments," *Asia Pacific Community*, Spring 1981, No. 62, pp. 53-24.

16. Hadi Soesastro *op.cit.*, p.58.



Australia also holds the same concern about Japan's greater defense role in the region particularly in Southeast Asia in view of the fact that "such a development would introduce the power projection capabilities of another power into the region, possibly to the detriment of Australia's Security".<sup>17</sup> Apart from having concern in major power's increasing involvements in the Western Pacific, Australia views with suspicion the sophisticated arms procurement by the countries of Southeast Asia, especially by Indonesia. As Paul Dibb has pointed out, in the 1990s Australia itself could face for the first time a "potential regional threat from a force in-being".<sup>18</sup> Besides, Australia views with great concern the likely influx of refugees in future from the North through her long coastline, thus posing a threat to her internal order.

Finally, there is a strong feeling among the countries of the region that the US policy as a whole is not consistent and coherent in the Asia-Pacific region. This perception grew with the enunciation of Nixon's Guam Doctrine, where the US took a policy of disengagement from the mainland Southeast Asia, thus leaving the region mainly to their own defense efforts. That apprehension was exacerbated by Carter's announcement of troops withdrawal from South Korea. However the scheme was shelved following the developments in the region by the end of the 1970s. Despite Washington's renewed commitments to Pacific defense, there is widespread perception that in times of a crisis in the Middle East or Europe, her Pacific forces will adopt a 'swing' strategy, thus leaving the region to its own efforts.

## II

Having analysed the threat perceptions of the US allies and friendly states in the Western Pacific, let us now turn to briefly review the security framework presently existing among these states. This

17. T. Huxley, "Southeast Asia and Australia's Security," *Asia Pacific Community*, Winter 1984, No. 23, p. 47.

18. Cited in *Ibid*, p. 45.

would help us obtain a reading about the security network likely to be taking shape in the foreseeable future.

Security efforts of the Pacific countries can be viewed at individual, bilateral and multilateral levels, although all the three levels are closely connected, for they serve one and the same purpose. Over the last few years all countries of the region have significantly increased the defense allocation for upgrading their defense forces both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Table-I shows that over the period 1978-82 all countries increased their defense expenditure, but in percentage points South Korea, Singapore, North Korea and Thailand recorded the highest increase. If we see defence allocation as percentage of total government spending, such countries as Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore rank higher in a descending order while Japan and Philippine showed a decline. North Korea, Malaysia and South Korea rank higher in percentage appropriation of GDP/GNP to their defence efforts. The number of armed forces increased in all the countries of the region over the period 1978-82 but the highest increase was recorded in Malaysia, North Korea and Singapore. It is evident from the Table that the ASEAN members of the mainland Southeast Asia, that is, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore boosted their individual defence efforts relatively more than Indonesia or the Philippines. This is presumably due to the fact that a Soviet-backed Vietnam is seen by them as a far more formidable and immediate threat than China. Besides, still Vietnam's forces alone far outweigh the combined military strength of the ASEAN.

Let us now turn to the bilateral military cooperation that exists between the states of the region. First the bilateral military relationship among the ASEAN states. Although ASEAN was formed in 1967 as an economic and cultural grouping, developments in the region by the end of the 1970s dictated intensive political cooperation among the member states. As a result, the group gradually emerged as a cohesive one with largely-shared political and security interests. Despite its leaders, persistent confirmation that ASEAN could not and would not become a security organisation along NATO lines,

**Table-I**  
**Defence Expenditure and Armed Forces of the Pacific Countries**

	US \$ Million <sup>a</sup>			% of Govt. Spending		% of GDP/GNP <sup>b</sup>		Numbers in Armed Forces(000)		
	1978	1982	% of change	1978	1982	1978	1982	1978	1983	% of change
Australia	2,975	4,497	+52.0	7.2	10.2	2.6	3.1	70.1	72.4	+ 0.3
Indonesia	2,036	2,926	+44.0	n.a.	12.4	4.0	n.a.	247.0	281.0	+ 14.0
Japan	9,033	10,361	+15.0	5.8	5.5	0.9	1.0	240.0	241.0	+ 0.004
North Korea	1,034	1,916	+85.0	14.2	16.2	9.8	10.2	512.0	784.5	+ 53.0
South Korea	2,603	5,173	+99.0	33.3	35.0	5.5	7.6	642.0	622.0	- 0.97
Malaysia	712	2,077	+192.0	n.a.	15.2	4.5	8.0	64.5	99.7	+ 54.0
New Zealand	315	493	+56.0	4.4	6.2	1.7	n.a.	12.6	12.9	+ 0.02
Philippines	794	878	+10.0	17.9	12.5	3.3	2.2	99.0	102.0	+ 0.3
Singapore	444	852	+92.0	n.a.	17.0	5.7	5.6	36.0	55.5	+ 54
Taiwan	1,872	3,323	+78.0	n.a.	39.4	7.9	n.a.	-	464.0	-
Thailand	794	1,437	+81.0	20.0	21.7	3.4	3.9	212.0	235.3	+ 11.0

Source : *The Military Balance 1983-1984*

a Current US \$

b Based on local currency.

tacit understanding among the members over mutual cooperation in the field of defence has gradually emerged. The ASEAN countries already succeeded in creating an informal defence infrastructure network to facilitate defence cooperation which in fact assumes a multi-lateral character. This is manifest in their joint air and sea exercises. The joint Malaysia-Thailand air exercises are codenamed **EXERCISE AIR THAMAL** which take place regularly since 1979 between the two countries.<sup>19</sup> The other ASEAN countries also conduct similar exercises, such as regular naval and air exercises between Singapore and Indonesia and between the Philippines and Indonesia. Only one joint land operation took place between Thailand and Malaysia in 1977 codenamed **DAYAI MUSNAH**.<sup>20</sup> Presumably there are internal political inhibitions not encouraging land operation since then.

Besides combined exercises the five ASEAN countries mutually offer member countries advanced military training in their respective defence institutions. The present cooperation also extends to the fields of technology transfer and regular exchange of information and intelligence on communist insurgency.

Due to technical skill Singapore leads the other ASEAN nations in technology transfer. She sells small arms, boats, fast attack crafts and a range of other ammunitions to other ASEAN members. Besides, Singapore has joint venture with Thailand in producing grenade launchers.<sup>21</sup>

There is special treaty relationship between individual countries of the region and the US, such as Philippine-US, South Korea-US and Japan-US security ties (with US base facilities in these countries). They regularly perform joint exercises to increase the level of coordination and preparedness necessary in times of any crisis. Besides, there is a special security link between Thailand and the US through

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19. N. A. Hamzah, "ASEAN Military Cooperation Without Pact or Threat," *Asia Pacific Community*, Fall 1983, No. 22, p. 43.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Brig F. W. Speed, "The Maturing of the Singapore Defense Forces," *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. No. 2, April 1982, p. 158.

the Manila pact, through which Australia and New Zealand are also committed to Thai security. In June 1982 the US Navy conducted one of the biggest joint military exercises with Thai Naval forces in the Gulf of Thailand. In October the same year Singapore Navy and Air force had a joint exercise in South China Sea with ships of the US Seventh fleet.

At the multilateral level two pacts are presently operative in the region. The Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) since 1971 where Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore are members. The Defence Arrangement of the five commonwealth countries was in fact to confirm the continuing presence of British, Australian, and New Zealand forces, mainly air and naval, in the Malaysian-Singapore area. After the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea by the end of 1979, the Five Powers decided in July 1980 to resume annual joint military exercises and in January 1981 to hold regular joint consultative council meetings. In June 1981 the Five Powers' naval exercise for ten years was held, followed the next month by army manoeuvres in Australia. Since then such war games have been held subsequently on a regular basis.<sup>22</sup> Although ANZUK ground forces have been withdrawn from Singapore, presently two squadrons of *Mirage* fighter aircrafts (Australian) are still based at Butterworth in Malaysia, with upto eight aircrafts always detached to Singapore.<sup>23</sup>

Another treaty working at multilateral level in the Southwest Pacific is ANZUS which the US initialled with Australia and New Zealand in the early 1950s. The treaty declared that none of its signatories would ever stand alone against aggression directed towards any of them. Unlike the more specific collective defence arrangements which the US sponsored following the Second World War, ANZUS does not designate a precise area of coverage beyond a general reference to the Pacific area.<sup>24</sup> Since its inception the ANZUS states support

22. Tim Huxley *op. cit.*, p- 41.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 40

24. W. T. Tow, "ANZUS and American Security," *Survival*, November/December 1981, p' 261.

the Western global strategy by serving as host countries for US military communication facilities at North-West Cape, Pine Gap, Nurrungar, and other locations in Australia and at Mt. John and the Transit circle observatory and tracking facilities in New Zealand. In February 1980 the ANZUS powers for the first time conducted joint exercises codenamed RIMPAC with Canada and Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces (MSDF). Since then the MSDF announced that it would be a regular participant in future RIMPAC manoeuvres.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, it is fairly evident that the existing security framework in the Asia-Pacific region is a loosely-knit and multidimensional endeavour. Of course the efforts got a boost after the developments in Afghanistan and Indochina. The US also expressed a renewed resolve to maintain her military deterrence in South Korea to meet both the threats from the North and buildup of the Soviet military forces in East Asia. The non-communist countries of the region were

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pressing for more economic aid from Japan and increased military aid and arms sales credit from the US. All indications suggest the gradual fulfilment of this demand. Japan also agreed to supply sophisticated military-related technology to the US. Through overlapping efforts, such as, through FPDA, Manila Pact and ANZUS, Australia and New Zealand are committed to the defence efforts of the region. Besides, under Australia's Defense Cooparton Programmes (DCP) military aid, although modest, is extended to all the ASFAN countries in different forms, Bur given at least certain level of defense infrastructural facilities, technical expertise and resources, bilateral military cooperation in terms of joint venture projects seems to be still not sufficiently developed, as could have been.

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25. *Ibid*, pp. 262-68.

## III

From the above discussion it is clear that there are differences in threat perception among the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, but these differences are only in degrees and not antagonistic in character. Both the US and its Pacific allies and friends do share significantly common interests and values such as commitments to the free-market system as well as an understanding of the need for regional security cooperation. However certain differences in threat perceptions naturally entail some diverse approaches to meeting the challenges faced by them.

As mentioned earlier, multifaceted problems of internal stability still figure prominently in the overall security outlooks of the ASEAN countries. Under Indonesian stewardship the concept of national and regional resilience seems to be the desired response to security threat of the ASEAN members, keeping in view their long-term goal of a ZOPFAN. So these countries would prefer the terms 'security' and 'threat' to be given a broad meaning and interpreted flexibly to include political, economic, cultural and ideological aspects for these aspects have both their domestic and external dimensions.<sup>26</sup>

Looking at the theoretical plane, most strategists rightly suggest the existence of some preconditions for forming a military alliance, such as, identification of a common threat by all the component parts and non-existence of serious differences and mutual suspicions towards each other. A close scrutiny of the existing strategic outlook in the Pacific does not however suggest the total existence of the above conditions. The US total obsession with Soviet military expansion in the region does not wholly fit in the region's current perspective. The ASEAN countries as a whole are concerned with the growing Soviet military might in the Pacific and its entrenched perpetuation in Indochina. That is why they seem to be unanimous against the total polarisation process in Southeast Asia, thereby obviating the intensity of the big power rivalry in the region. But that is only one side of

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26. Jusuf Wanandi, *op. cit.*, *Asian Survey*, June 1982, p. 503.

the coin. The Soviet Union still could not and, in all likelihood, would not be able to translate her vast military might into political or economic leverage in relation to the nations of the Pacific. Through her recent policies towards the region she had evoked hostility of most of her neighbours, including China and Japan. In this sense it is ironic that the USSR was stronger politically in the Western Pacific in the 1950s than at present. Then she had a total alliance relationship with China, North Korea, good connections with Indochina, Indonesia and a very weak Japan. As for her economic relations are concerned, presently Soviet trade with the region comprises only 6-7% of her total trade turnover, and more than half of this is with only Japan.<sup>27</sup> In the foreseeable future Soviet trade and economic relation with the region are likely to increase to some extent. But that would region for from offsetting the West's interaction with the region.

Under these circumstances, most countries of the region will not like to project their security posture through a rigid defence alliance. Specialists like Robert Scalapino or Peter Polomka view the conditions that would guarantee more meaningful regional security arrangements in Asia of a NATO-type do not exist at present in the Pacific region.<sup>28</sup> As Polomka writes, "The Western preference for all-encompassing, exclusive security relationships rests uneasily with the circumstances of the Western Pacific. In Western Europe, shared political values, economic interests and cultural roots have helped underpin NATO. These circumstances have never remotely existed in East Asia, and a sense of common security interest cannot be created artificially by policies of confrontation and polarization". Robert Scalapino is of the view that "one of the most profound changes in global politics is the shift from *alliance* to *alignment*. The all-encompassing, exclusive relationships of the past are in the process of changing to more porous, less intensive relations. The commitments of

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27. Paul Dibb, "Soviet Capabilities, Interests and Strategies in East Asia in the 1980s," *Survival*, July/August 1982, p. 159.

28. See for details : Robert A. Scalapino, "The US and East Asia : Views and Policies in the Changing Era," *Ibid*: and Peter Polomka, *op. cit*.



the 'major' party are more flexible, less certain, the obligations of the 'minor' party are less binding, permitting of greater independence of attitude and action". This seems to be the approach of most of the Asia-Pacific countries towards a formal structure of defence relations. There are many reasons for this. The spectacular economic development of the region and the resultant interdependence among the nations tend to increase their confidence and self assertiveness which in turn reinforces the nationalistic feelings in the region. Under such conditions many nations might feel that membership of a formal security arrangement will infringe upon their autonomy and freedom of action. Therefore they would rather prefer a more flexible approach of accomplishing their shared goals and aspirations in the external sector. These nations would probably increase the defence cooperation on a bilateral, even multilateral basis among themselves without giving it some kind of formal trappings.

As for the China-Japan-US triangular relations are concerned, the Soviets always tend to pass it as an already military alliance. But this is far from the present reality. The future also does not seem close to that direction. Because of her security needs vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and for speeding up her four modernisation programmes, China is likely to be closer to the West in the coming decade. But as mentioned earlier, her present pragmatic policy would prefer not to totally distance herself from the Soviet Union, thus reaping the maximum benefit to further her national objectives. US, on the other hand, being somewhat discouraged with China's slow modernisation process, her somewhat balancing posture towards the Soviet Union and with Taiwan problem, is not likely to find the sufficient unity of purpose, necessary for forging a strategic understanding on a long-term basis. This is evident from a subtle shift in US policy from the earlier much-publicised 'China card' to playing the 'Japan card.'<sup>29</sup> But here too all indications suggest that no dramatic outcome can be expected in the immediate future.

29. See for details, Richard Nations, "A Tilt Towards Tokyo," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 April, 1983, pp. 36-40.

It is evident that Japan's present defence posture indicates certain shift from its earlier policies in the field. The present leadership is more open and explicit in publicly expressing Japan's security needs, specially the need to defend the sea lanes extending several hundred miles between Guam and Tokyo and between the strait of Taiwan and Osaka. Japan's perception of threats, her economic muscle and the potential of its industries in production of arms and weapons—all are plus points in the direction of a more active political and defense role for Japan at least in the regional context. But the sensitiveness of the Japanese public towards defence and their war-hating psyche still serve as formidable obstacles towards such a posture. This was very much evident in the LDP's significant setback in the last lower house elections when the party under Nakasone's leadership lost quite a number of parliamentary seats. Since then Nakasone's position became somewhat precarious and in the coming election of November 1984 for LDP leadership, the Prime Minister's position is less certain. Although the Japanese are gradually coming to perceive the rightful place they should have in world politics as an economic Superpower, seem to be still unwilling to achieve it through force postures. So a greater consciousness among the general public over security issues is still far from taking a concrete shape.<sup>30</sup>

Under such an ambiguous and ambivalent internal situation, Japan is not likely to go far with defence at least in the immediate future. It is true that gradual upgradation of JSDF would take place, but at a slow pace. On the otherhand, cooperation with the US in the field of Japan's defense technology sharing would perhaps be increased. What may be predicted from current trends is that some tacit security understanding might emerge between Japan and South Korea over the strategy of bottling up the Tsushima strait, thus closing the exit route of the Soviet Pacific fleet to South China Sea in times of any crisis. Besides, Japan can be expected to further increase her economic aid to the countries of the region, as they would like

30. M. R. Khan, "Emerging Debate Over Japan's Defense Under Nakasone", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1983-

to, thus gradually forging more political understanding between herself and the rest of the region.

Another direction Japan's defence efforts might take recourse to is to expand her already established informal military cooperation with the ANZUS powers. Although Japan's internal constraints along with the historical Australian-New Zealand preference for a 'strict constructionist' approach to ANZUS would seem to preclude the formation of a 'JANZUS' arrangement (with inclusion of Japan) in the immediate future, the momentum of Asia-Pacific strategic developments seems to be increasingly favourable to a still closer

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*Looking at the growing defence cooperation between Japan and ANZUS, a JANZUS option can not be ruled out in the long-term perspective.*

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evolution of defence cooperation between Japan and the ANZUS members at the highest levels.<sup>31</sup> In the long-term perspective, the JANZUS option cannot be ruled out, for it would allow Japan with her highly developed state of electronics and related technologies to play a role in regional security setup that precludes the potentially volatile overtones which would inevitably be imposed by upgraded Japanese security ties with either South Korea or China. This option would also allay the fears and suspicions the regional countries have over the prospect of a Japanese military resurgence.

As for the future role of the US in the Asia-Pacific region, the revitalized interest in and renewed commitment to the region's security needs are likely to persist in the coming years. Both demographic and economic trends will continue to elevate the Pacific's importance in terms of both its contribution to global stability and to American prosperity. Present thinking of the US Administration is indicative of this direction. So learning from the past incoherence

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21. W. T. Tow, "ANZUS and American Security," *op. cit.*, p. 268.

and ambivalence the US had in policies towards the region, she can be expected to be more careful and attentive to the region's needs and aspirations. Together, her apparent preference for bipolar military orientation may witness an adaptive and fluid security environment.

As for the US military presence in the region is concerned, most of the countries would welcome it in an increasing scale. Unlike uneasy views towards China or Japan's increased security efforts, US strong presence would be preferred by the regional countries. Therefore, the US positively considering that sentiment would, in all probability, like to expand her security network in the Asia-Pacific through formal and informal base facilities in the region. This expansion would carry further urgency should future domestic political instabilities preclude a continued American presence in the Philippines

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*Unlike Chinese or Japanese increased defence efforts, US strong military presence in the Asia-Pacific seems to be welcomed by the regional countries.*

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or South Korea, although with Marcos' recent election victory or South Korea's slow but gradual democratization process, the immediate trend does not seem to be so. In any way the US needs to be adopting a comprehensive policy approach to the regional needs blending her economic, military and diplomatic initiatives both at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Finally the US, her allies and friends in the region require jointly to adopt a flexible, coordinated and integrative approach towards security efforts of the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard all the multilateral security ties, such as, the Manila Pact, FPDA and ANZUS might be fashioned in a way so that in times of any crisis, they can evolve and function in a well-planned and coordinated manner. These efforts might be reinforced by bilateral security links, both formal and informal (such as Indonesia-US joint patrolling of the former's extended straits or US reconnaissance flights from

Singapore air bases) of the Pacific countries with the US. All these can possibly be done without creating a formal transregional machinery which most of the regional countries are reluctant to, given a strong sense of shared values and interests sufficient to synthesise together all the diplomatic and strategic acumen on all parties concerned in the Asia-Pacific region.