

# **Perspective on Asia-Pacific Security for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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## **Regional Security in Oceania and East Asia : Continuities and Discontinuities**

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This first session this morning is to be an assessment of the history and development of security cooperation and dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region.

This is too big a subject for three speakers in 90 minutes. Some focus is needed. I intend, therefore, to say a few words about what I think security means for many of us in the Asia-Pacific in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Then I will look more closely at the part of the region where New Zealand is placed – the Pacific.

I hope that this approach is relevant for each of you. Many of the challenges that Oceania faces reflect those evident elsewhere. However, the priorities of small Pacific Island states, and their capacity to meet those challenges, are different, particularly from those of the region's larger members. That difference is worth exploring.

At the strategic level, the United States, with its military and technological dominance, continues to focus attention on, and more significantly, to underwrite stability across the Asia Pacific region. Inevitably, much of this attention remains directed towards various long-standing hotspots, many in North Asia, which are of continuing and unchanging concern. These remain serious issues, especially for the major players. Kishore Mahbubani has noted, sagaciously, that “the history of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will largely be determined by the relationship that emerges between the world's greatest power and the world's greatest emerging power.”

What has changed over the past four years, however, particularly for smaller and less well resourced countries, is the number, nature and impact of other security challenges. Recognising, accepting, defining and responding to these is also important.

In the post-9/11 era security agenda, states threatening others and inter-state conflict have been relatively rare. However, in some countries under stress, internal conflict continues to occur, and multilateral assistance and/or solutions are still sought. In 2005 the United Nations has nearly 80,000 personnel deployed, on

a budget of US\$3.2 billion. This includes five new missions in the past two years, the latest being the peace accords in the Sudan.

However, putting peace support operations to one side, both within our region and globally, international violence and disruption is being manifest more in the activities of the political terrorist or criminal and by what academics have labelled asymmetric threats.

Terrorism itself is not a new phenomenon. It burst on to an unprepared world thirty years ago at the Munich Olympic Games. But it is now of a different order and frequency, and it has a global reach. The examples are obvious. New York 11 September 2001, Bali 12 October 2002, Madrid 11 March 2004, London 7 July 2005.

No country is immune from terrorism. No country is immune from weapons proliferation, from the spread of infectious diseases, from transnational crime – that is, drug trafficking, money laundering, people smuggling – or from illegal resource extraction.

These threats transcend borders. Where people are directly involved, the non-state actors need not be many, nor overly sophisticated. They can feed off the readily available mechanisms of the global economy and its communications and information structures. They can move easily from country to country. They can utilise cheap, easily accessible technology. They are hard to identify, hard to defend against and hard to stop.

For most countries in the region, then, the new security paradigm is vulnerability. Meeting this requires a change in mindset, from threat-based assumptions to interest-based calculations. The best response is interdependence, mutual support, information sharing and defensive systems. As US Ambassador Robert Fitts said recently, “doing it alone is doing it wrong.”

This response does not necessarily require large armed forces, nor sophisticated high tech weapons systems or platforms. Indeed, for many states the appropriate security responsibilities do not even lie with the military, but with other domestic agencies. Police, border control, intelligence, finance, health and quarantine organisations.

What it does require is a new balance being found, both internationally and domestically, between what UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan calls hard and soft responses. And it requires leadership from those with the expertise and capacity to exert influence and to manage change.

Events since 2001, and the increasing international expectations on countries to meet new common standards and requirements, have revealed faultlines and conflicts in the existing international security system and shortfalls of capacity in many countries. Appropriate security structures have not been developed, either internally or externally, to confront and handle these new challenges and the global and regional response is still fragmented and disjointed.

Indeed, there is a danger in international forums of reducing the issue to a debate over language and priorities. This could be the fate of the excellent 2004 report of the United Nations High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change – called “*A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility.*” This report was to be the centrepiece of the Summit on UN Reform, meeting in New York this weekend (16-18 September). Reaching a “new security consensus” is central to the report, and to the future of the UN, but some members appear to have been diverted by disagreements over issues of organisational membership and semantics.

At the United Nations, the security debate has revealed two opposed poles:

- at one end those countries who consider mass casualty terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and transnational organised crime to be the principal global security challenges;

and at the other

- those who consider intra-state conflict, governance, economic and social issues to be more important to them.

Regrettably this is largely a North-South divide. But between those two book-end groups, each with their legitimate concerns, there are many of less dogmatic disposition whose broad definition of security embraces all of these security challenges in more or less equal manner. For those in the middle, security cannot be reduced to a conflict over responses and resources.

For any country, a determination of what constitutes a threat, and the causal connections between a threat and a response (that is, what a country can do about it) is highly complex. There can be no universal definitions, no hierarchy of priorities, and no universal solutions. Defense planners are paid to think of the worst possible case, not the most likely.

To underline this point we only have to look around us. The Asia-Pacific region is not a homogeneous entity. There are geographic, cultural, religious and economic divisions within Asia and between Asia and Oceania. The region is replete with security contradictions and paradoxes.

The Asia-Pacific does not have Europe’s sophisticated security architecture, nor its well-established conventions of consultation, openness and common cause.

These problems are recognised. Comprehensive and cooperative security is not a new or novel idea for our region. It featured at the first Asean Regional Forum in 1994. The Chairman’s Statement at the end of that meeting said, “*The ARF recognises that the concept of comprehensive security includes not only military aspects but also political, economic, social and other issues.*”

The ARF remains the premium track one organisation for regional security. Its track two handmaiden is CSCAP – the Council for Security Cooperation in the

Asia –Pacific. They both remain heavily and healthily engaged on this topic. They each play an important part in raising comfort levels and understanding amongst member states.

I expect we will hear more about these organisations later in this Conference.

Now I want to take those general comments and focus them onto Oceania. This is where we are today, amongst a region of micro-states which, along with Australia and New Zealand, constitutes East Asia's southern flank.

The security challenges which Oceania faces are similar to those of the wider Asia Pacific region. More importantly, perhaps, Oceania's response to meeting these challenges, building a more integrated and dynamic security framework based on common interests and shared concerns, both reflects trends in other parts of East Asia, and offers some useful lessons for the wider region.

Apart from four years of the Second World War and isolated periods of Cold War confrontation or nuclear weapons testing, Oceania has been marginal to global security events. In some respects, the realignment of world order that has been underway since the end of the Cold War, has seen the Pacific region slip even further off the screens of the major players. Post-Cold War agendas are not configured for micro-states, it seems, unless those micro-states occupy pivotal geographic locations; have strategic energy resources; have the potential to support or to harbour international terrorists; or are in a position to exploit competition, (for instance, between China and Taiwan), for diplomatic recognition or favours.

A corollary of this is that, in the absence of an unexpected security issue of significant international importance, the Pacific region, and the micro-states within it, cannot expect the major players to be greatly active in helping to resolve their problems.

The Pacific's geo-developmental characteristics may be unique, and its many countries remote and isolated, but in our globalised, interconnected world the region can no longer rely on geography, uniqueness or irrelevance for protection or immunity. Oceania already shares many of the same security challenges facing the wider region. I have mentioned the growth in transnational crime. But there are others.

For example, in the last twenty years the Pacific region has experienced a decade-long secessionist war on the island of Bougainville, tribal fighting in the Highland provinces of Papua New Guinea, military and civilian coups in Fiji, and civil war and state failure in Solomon Islands. At the height of the crisis in Solomon Islands, the rate of ethnic cleansing through dislocations on the island of Guadalcanal was proportionally higher to that seen in the Balkans.

South Pacific countries are vulnerable to natural disasters, which invariably overwhelm the limited capabilities of the country or countries concerned. A

regional response is therefore almost always required, including the deployment of foreign military assets and, in some cases, foreign military personnel.

The Pacific region, like ASEAN , is also looking to reconcile the contradiction between non-involvement in the internal affairs of another country and the need to act collectively in confronting crises.

These challenges, plus a heightened sense of vulnerability to transnational crime, including terrorism, and to health and quarantine issues, have obliged countries in the region to re-think questions of Pacific security and to broaden engagement strategies. This process has two main strands.

The first strand covers external threats.

Forum Island countries regard transnational crime as a major issue in the region; and the linkages between transnational crime and terrorism are internationally well established. A major concern for the Pacific region is that organised criminals, under increasing pressure elsewhere, may move their operations to regions where they perceive a lack of deterrence capability. The discovery last year of a massive metamphetamine laboratory in Fiji underlined the vulnerability of Pacific Island countries to trans-national criminal groups.

At a recent Forum meeting focused on counter-terrorism, held in Auckland, almost every Pacific Island delegation spoke about problems common to transnational crime and to terrorism. They ranked border security as their highest vulnerability. They talked about threats arising from the traffic in small arms, illegal movement of people and drug trafficking. They mentioned the need for more training of border officials and better control of passports. They also spoke of problems with port and airport security, of the considerable difficulties they were having in policing some of the world's largest and richest Exclusive Economic Zones, and protecting their other natural resources.

The second main strand of threats to security identified in Forum Declarations are those which are internal to each country. As well as civil defence issues, typically these problems include cumulative stresses arising from population growth, ethnic tensions, governance failures, fragile economies, and regrettably, undisciplined military forces that are more often part of the problem, rather than the solution. These are the domestic equivalents to what Kofi Annan, has referred to as the "soft threats" to international security.

I now want to turn to how the region has responded to this spectrum of "soft" and "hard" threats.

It is a fact that many small Pacific states do not have the legal systems, bureaucratic structures or security forces to control their own territory or to protect their economy or their resources. They quite regularly need help from outside. New Zealand and Australia are important in this regard.

Collaborative responses have long been a core part of dealing with crises in the South Pacific. Drawing on the ARF model these initially took an evolutionary

approach extended over three broad stages – confidence building among participants; development of preventive diplomacy; and elaboration of ways to resolve conflict.

But they have been significantly refreshed and recalibrated, as well as being made more robust, under the new regional security agenda. While the Pacific region has been slow to replicate ASEAN's example of working toward economic integration, in other areas, in particular security, Pacific Island countries have pursued some cutting edge solutions. A little detail is unavoidable here.

Within the region, security challenges are being addressed collectively through the Pacific Islands Forum, an organisation which includes Pacific Island states and both New Zealand and Australia. Following the coup in Fiji in 2000 Forum leaders met to reconcile the contradiction, mentioned earlier, between the traditional Pacific way of non-involvement in the internal affairs of other countries and the need collectively to confront crises in the region.

The result was the Biketawa Declaration in 2000. This recognised the need for the region to act together in a time of crisis or when members requested assistance. It also set out procedures to be followed when this occurred.

The crisis three years later in the Solomon Islands provided the first opportunity to apply these principles in practice. The Solomon Islands had suffered from many years of ethnic tension. Armed militias, motivated as much by criminal intention as by ethnic considerations, had undermined the rule of law. The economy and social services collapsed. And the elected government was powerless to respond.

At the request of the Solomon Islands government, and with agreement of every member of the Pacific Islands Forum, an Australian-led mission supported by New Zealand and other Pacific Island countries was sent into the country. Two years after its inception, the Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands, or RAMSI, has been an undoubted success. Working together with their Australian and Pacific counterparts, our police, military, diplomatic and support personnel have been able to restore security in Solomon Islands and to commence rebuilding its economic structures. While there is still a long way to go, international experts view RAMSI as a potential model for assisting other "fragile states".

In looking ahead, it is not enough to think only of *ad hoc* security responses or military intervention. Nauru has sought a lifeline from the Forum in order to stop its slide towards economic and social collapse. We have had to address in other countries other root causes of instability and conflict: poverty, land issues, and economic stagnation. We must also find acceptable regional ways around highly contentious issues of governance and corruption, which are key enablers of transnational crime.

In Auckland, in 2004, Pacific Leaders set out a vision for the Forum. This vision embraced four key goals: security, governance, economic growth, and sustainable development. It also called for a comprehensive Pacific Plan. This job was given

to the Secretary-General of the Forum, who will present a draft plan to Pacific leaders in Port Moresby later this year.

The Pacific Plan aims to strengthen regional cooperation and integration. Increased cooperation will mean better linkages between national polices on issues of regional importance, including security. More integration should lead to the pooling of resources to create, for instance, model legislation covering the suite of counter-terrorism obligations or a regional financial intelligence unit.

The Pacific Plan will be another piece of Oceania's emerging comprehensive security framework. It is another measured step. In the words of the Chinese saying, "without drops of water a river cannot flow".

A final word on defence force involvement. As perceptions of security change, military forces, once a key instrument in regional security, are being re-aligned away from their traditional task of responding to military threats to states. Increasingly, military forces are being involved in non-military security threats and being asked to respond to a wider range of actors besides states.

This shift has impacted on New Zealand's defence planning, defence decision-making, and force structure. In particular, it has underlined the importance to us of a holistic whole of government view of security; the need to be ready for unexpected changes in the security environment; and the need for a flexible, self-reliant defence force, with multi-role capabilities, that is interoperable with all of our likely partners.

The New Zealand Government's moves to refocus its Defence Force are also about providing improved means to operate more effectively in the Pacific region, in all its environments. We cannot always expect our allies and friends to be giving the same attention to Oceania's problems that we feel an obligation to do.

In conclusion, my comments have broadly, and inevitably somewhat briefly, addressed three areas.

The first was to outline aspects of the post-Cold War security environment. The second was to indicate some of the wider security issues confronting Oceania and how the region is seeking to address those issues. The third looked at what New Zealand is doing to ensure that its Defence Force is equipped into the future to meet the full range of contingencies in the region.

The message I want to leave for consideration is that, within the context of international security considerations, we should not overlook the specific, complex and deep-rooted security challenges which small countries, like those in the Pacific, face. Nor should we ignore the useful lessons the South Pacific experience has for the wider Asia-Pacific region. Big or small, we are all in this, together.