COMMON SECURITY

Common Security

in the Indo-Pacific Region

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Contents

Acknowledgments

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Foreword

SAYO SARUTA

As countries compete to expand their power in the Indo-Pacific region, the possibility of military conflicts is increasing. Under these circumstances, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the authors and organizations that have created this book, ***Common Security in the Indo-Pacific Region***, to change the current situation.

Everyone understands what needs to be done to avoid military conflicts — steps such as arms control, easing tensions through diplomacy and dialogue, and institutionalizing relationships between hostile nations. Even so, many leaders of each country keep saying, "We can't do that because the other side will not do so"; these governments continue to focus on expanding their own military power, thereby increasing tensions. Critical and pressing problems that require the cooperation of countries around world, such as climate change, cannot be treated appropriately in this context. There are even whispers of the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons, but if nuclear weapons are used, even the survival of the human being will be at stake.

Western powers' rhetoric is "the battle between democracy and autocracy." Those same countries have defined the state of the world since the end of World War II, or at least since the end of the Cold War, but they have already realized that they can no longer determine the world order solely by their own will. In this age of multipolarity, many countries now have a voice. The perspectives of the so-called Global South nations are attracting more attention than ever before. Those countries have shown their own neutrality, and share the policies of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) founded more than 60 years ago.

In 1982, at the height of the Cold War, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme convened the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. The Commission united to promote "common security," based on the premises that no nation can feel safe when its actions lead its rivals to feel threatened, and that therefore international peace depends on a commitment to joint survival rather than the threat of mutual destruction.

The world needs common security now more than ever. Many people *want* to change the current global direction, and are seeking to understand how to change it. The answer is in this book.

These authors have raised many voices in many countries, writing articles and traveling internationally to work actively toward the realization of peace. Together, they have created this practical and instructive resource to help shift the Indo-Pacific region in a different direction. Together with them, I hope this book will be shared throughout the Indo-Pacific and the world, and that its specific recommendations will serve as a guide for countries, regional organizations, and international institutions.

It is all of us who will make this possible. It is of the utmost importance that those who wish to achieve this goal work together within our own countries, as well as across national borders. If we can find hope anywhere in this war-torn world, it is in the networks among such people. I won't be afraid to be one of those people to raise my voice with this book in my hand.

Introduction

ANURADHA CHENOY

SECURITY NEED NOT BE VIEWED IN BINARY TERMS. BY CLOSELY EXAMINING THE VIEWS OF ADVERSARIES, AND BRINGING THEM TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SECURITY CAN BE REACHED.

Welcome to *Common Security in the Indo-Pacific Region*, a new resource that builds directly on *Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future* and on the earlier, foundational document *Policies for Common Security*.[1,2] This collection of essays by scholars, national movement leaders, and others committed to peace and pluralist co-existence applies the insights of those earlier works specifically to the Indo-Pacific region, which is today a theater for intense competition, inter-state rivalries, and conflicts both old and new. We believe that the principles, proposals, and framing of common security are relevant here to show that alternative methodologies for security are possible and needed in this region.

Most of the writers in this collection hail from the Indo-Pacific and are rooted in the study of security issues specific to their region. Three organizations collaborated on producing *Common Security in the Indo-Pacific Region*: PEACEMOMO in South Korea; the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament, and Common Security in the United States; and the International Peace Bureau, which is based in Berlin.

This document adds to the security and strategic debates and narratives concerning the Indo-Pacific. We show that the dominant narrative on security has thus far excluded the perspectives of those most directly affected. Moreover, we argue that security need not be viewed in binary terms, and that by closely examining the views of adversaries, and bringing them to the negotiating table, different approaches to security can be reached.

These essays are also part of a global and ongoing conversation among peace and security analysts, policy makers, concerned people, and activists. As we witness an unfolding genocide in Gaza, with the spillover of additional unnecessary deaths and destruction in the West Bank, Lebanon, and the Middle East — and as wars escalate and threaten the wider region — our call for a ceasefire and common security is urgent and necessary. This plea for international cooperation, trust, and solidarity has been voiced by United Nations member states in the recently adopted Pact for the Future, which recognized the need for urgent and comprehensive action to safeguard our planet, our humanity, and our common destiny. The precarious international situation calls for a rational choice of sustainable and inclusive security. We hope to encourage this community to include the multiple narratives embedded in national and local realities of the Indo-Pacific in all discussion and discourses, in order to better understand the complexities of security and their common roots.

ABOVE: ACTIVISTS AT WORKSHOP ON CHALLENGES OF A COMMON SECURITY POLICY; BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 2019 (CREDIT: JOSEPH GERSON)

A Note on Terminology

With considerable reluctance, the authors of this collection have agreed to use the term "Indo-Pacific" to describe the important geographic area explored in their essays — rather than the term "Asia-Pacific," which emerged from Japanese strategic discourse and predominated in strategic references to the region for much of the second half of the twentieth century. The term "Indo-Pacific" predated this phase, having been coined in the mid-nineteenth century to frame colonial Britain's strategic planning for the region from the Gulf of Aden on the western flank of the Indian Ocean, across South Asia, to the eastern coast of China, where British hegemony was consolidated in the Opium Wars. The term reflects the ambitions of the United States and its allies across the Indian and Pacific Oceans and continental Asia. With Japanese concerns about the rise of China and its "string of pearls" military access to Indian Ocean ports — soon followed by China's Belt and Road initiative — Japan sought to integrate India into its strategic planning. Australia, long a major Anglo-American ally in the eastern Indian Ocean, promoted the term to reinforce its own alliance with the United States. The term went through several iterations during the Obama administration, and was finalized as Indo-Pacific under former president Donald Trump.

We have opted to use this term to help readers understand more deeply the dangerous great power and allied competition affecting an increasingly integrated region.

Endnotes

1. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (1983). *Policies for Common Security*. Taylor & Francis.
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Toward Common Security in the Indo-Pacific Region

JOSEPH GERSON

Today's intense great-power and related geo-strategic competitions, termed by some a new cold war, threaten civilization and even humanity. Based on the dangers of nuclear war, the climate emergency, and the rise of authoritarianism and misinformation, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Doomsday Clock warns that humanity is 90 seconds from midnight, the closest we have ever come to an existential cataclysm.

Facing these crises, PEACEMOMO in South Korea, the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament, and Common Security in the United States, and the International Peace Bureau convened a network of scholars and peace movement leaders from across Asia and the Pacific to identify the roots of conflict, discern promising efforts already underway, and propose common security solutions to serve current and future generations. We intend this report to be a foundation for advocacy and diplomacy. Recognizing our limitations, we anticipate that this living document will be updated and improved over time by the insights, reviews, and critiques of others.

U.N. General Secretary António Guterres has warned that "The world is becoming unhinged. Geopolitical tensions are rising. And we seem incapable

THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION.

WE INTEND THIS REPORT TO BE **A FOUNDATION FOR ADVOCACY AND DIPLOMACY**.

of coming together to respond."[1] Indeed, there are disturbing parallels between today's stressors and the forces that triggered the first, and by extension, the second world wars: tensions between rising and declining powers, arms races with new technologies, complex alliance structures, intensifying nationalism, territorial competition, economic integration and intense competition, and wild card actors. Yet unlike the shots fired in Sarajevo in 1914, an incident, accident, or miscalculation today could trigger thermonuclear war.

The military, technological, and economic competition building up between the great powers is not only dangerous in itself, but impedes the cooperation we so urgently need to stanch the climate emergency and reverse ecological devastation. Catastrophic floods, droughts, and fires are claiming tens of thousands of lives and fueling an increase in destabilizing and deadly mass migration as well as military conflicts. Without meaningful international coordination and cooperation, these dangers will only worsen.

The Quest for Dominance

Together, the "rise of China" and the Gaza and Ukraine wars — with their profound reverberations across the world — mark the end of *Pax Americana* and the emergence of multipolar systems that are still fluid and largely undefined. With these changes comes a new competition for power, privilege, and security.

It is clear from its National Security Strategy that the United States' first strategic priority is maintaining its Indo-Pacific and thus its global dominance in the face of China's rising power and influence. China is named as the "pacing challenge" that drives U.S. military planning and operations, and is described as "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power" to do it.[2]

From the perspective of China and much of the Global South, (and, to a lesser degree, Russia), the "rules-based order" and related institutions — from the United Nations to the International Monetary Fund — were imposed almost a century ago by the United States, former colonial powers, and their allies when the rest of the world was comparatively poor and weak. Those marginalized nations did not make the rules, and now that their elites — and in the case of China, its military — have greater power and influence, they are pushing back to change or at least modify these rules. Challenging the old cynical description of the Pacific as an "American lake," and in violation of both the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, China proclaims and seeks to militarily enforce its own nine-dash line, claiming sovereignty over more than 90% of the South China (or West Philippine) Sea. This has led to armed incidents with Vietnam and the Philippines, and to military tensions with other nations with claims to these strategic and mineral-rich waters traversed by up to a third of the world's trade.[3]

U.S. and Chinese ambitions and military operations related to this body of water and to Taiwan, the self-governing island separated from China by Japan in

1895 (and functionally a U.S. protectorate since 1945), are creating a tinderbox situation, where a single incident or miscalculation could easily trigger escalation to cataclysmic war. To the north, military and nuclear tensions between North and South Korea, compounded by the U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance and by the China-Russia-DPRK entente, have escalated to the point that some observers are sounding an early warning of the danger of war.[4] Finally, militarized territorial disputes, especially those between Japan and China in the East China Sea and between China and India in the Himalayas, carry the potential of exploding into hot wars.

Adding another dimension to geopolitical competition is BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, with more nations now joining), a diverse network led by Global South nations that is emerging as a potentially powerful third force in global relations. Limited by U.S.-centered and -dominated trade and other economic systems, BRICS nations are determined to make global financial governance more equitable. Beyond the global economy, and reinforced by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, they seek a greater role in global governance, which of necessity would reduce the power and influence of the U.S. and its allies.

Common Security Alternatives

There is an offramp: common security diplomacy. In the face of the U.S.-China "security dilemma," with warships, warplanes, and weaponized technologies in almost daily confrontation, the dangers of catastrophic war in and beyond Northeast Asia are palpable and serve as major barriers to collaborations that are urgently needed to address the climate emergency.

In the early 1980s, at the height of the spiraling and extremely dangerous U.S.-Soviet nuclear confrontation and arms race, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme convened the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. This initiative brought together senior figures from the United States, the Soviet Union, and Europe, including former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance; U.S.S.R. President Mikhail Gorbachev's top security adviser, Georgy Arbatov; German statesman Egon Bahr; and other current or former senior officials. In its 1983 report, the Commission reminded the world that no nation can feel safe when its actions lead its rivals to feel threatened.

The report declared that diplomacy must identify the security fears that drive nations' preparations for nuclear war and address them with win-win solutions. Recognizing that there are "no winners in a nuclear war," the Commission stressed that "A doctrine of common security must replace the present expedient of deterrence through armaments. International peace must rest on a commitment to joint survival rather than the threat of mutual destruction." The Commission announced its support for "the goal of general and complete disarmament."[5]

That report and its common security paradigm served as a foundation for negotiating the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which functionally ended the Cold War two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. That treaty prevented deployment in Europe of Russia's SS-20, U.S. Pershing II, and nuclear-armed cruise missiles, which would have threatened not only the people of Europe, but human survival itself.

In 2021 and 2022, as great power confrontations again posed existential threats to human survival, and as the Doomsday Clock approached midnight, nongovernmental organizations updated the call for common security diplomacy to prevent catastrophe and provide a foundation for a sustainable, if not perfect, peaceful international system. Led by the Palme Center, the International Peace Bureau, and the International Confederation of Trade Unions, and backed by a commission of present and former government and U.N. officials, a group of scholars and human rights advocates from China, Russia, the United States, and the Global South produced a successor report, *Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future*. Drawing on the Palme report, this document reiterated that "global peace and security are created jointly — that when your counterpart is not secure, you will not be secure either," and pointed to the potential of common security to "bring us back from the brink."[6]

In the following pages, a diverse group of engaged scholars and activists explain crucial challenges to common security in the region, and propose important and realistic steps to address each one. The most

PRINCIPLES OF COMMON SECURITY

Common Security 2022 was based on six principles that remain equally applicable to preventing war and to building a more just and secure Indo-Pacific order:

1. All people have the right to human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want.
2. Building trust between nations and peoples is fundamental to peaceful and sustainable human existence.
3. There can be no common security without nuclear disarmament, strong limitations on conventional weapons, and reduced military expenditure.
4. Global and regional cooperation, multilateralism and the rule of law are crucial to tackling many of the world's challenges.
5. Dialogue, conflict prevention, and confidence-building measures must replace aggression and military force as a means of resolving disputes.
6. Better regulation, international law, and responsible governance also need to be extended to cover new military technologies, such as in realms of cyberspace, outer space, and "artificial intelligence."

essential of these are grouped together in the "Recommendations" section at the end of this collection. These steps, which courageous communities in the Indo-Pacific and around the world are already actively pursuing, will take us not only back from the brink of disaster, but further — toward a thriving interdependence where human ingenuity is dedicated to collectively solving the real challenges we face.

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Tectonic Shifts

Seeking Common Security amid Geopolitical Changes

REINER BRAUN

No country in the world exists on its own; rather, its interactions with others contribute to a complex system of international relations. In turn, the dynamics of this system shape the behavior of subsystems, nations, and other actors. During the Cold War, the international system was characterized by bipolarity, eventually replaced by the unipolarity of U.S. hegemony. This period in turn is now coming to an end, and the struggle for a new multipolarity is all around us.

At the same time, the international system is anarchic, with only a low density of regulation and no legitimized monopoly on the use of force. It remains hierarchical and dominated by violence, despite both U.N. efforts and international law developed over decades.

Turning to multilateralism does not guarantee peaceful conflict resolution, but if this shift is inclusive and based on a policy of "common security," it can create the opportunity for a more peaceful world.[1, 2] A multilateral framework requires both new independent regional structures for common security and a new, fairer global economic system. Disarmament is indispensable to finance the global challenge and as a materialization of cooperation; "dedollarization," too, is indispensable.

The peaceful resolution of conflicts (processes that are often regionally oriented and are increasingly enforced by the states of the Global South) and comprehensive disarmament are central components of a multipolar world order.

Power Factors

Hierarchy in the international system is based on power and resources — first and foremost military power, with its modern equipment and military deployment potential, but also economic strength, a country's technologies, so-called soft power, and political stability. The more power and resources a country commands, the more options that country has for action. The most convincing example of such potential is the development of China, which freed itself from colonial and development-inhibiting forces to become a major economic, geostrategic, and military power active on the international stage. Similar development is manifesting itself in many of the world's emerging economies, most notably India and Brazil.

The end of the Soviet Union and Russia's ensuing period of economic and social weakness from 1990 to 2000 transferred the dominance of action to the

CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK / SAN LEE SAMUNA VATA

BACKGROUND: RAINBOW MOUNTAINS, FORMED BY PLATE TECTONICS, IN ZHANGYE NATIONAL GEOPARK

WORLD POLITICS IS UNDERGOING **THE END OF A 500-YEAR ERA OF DOMINANCE BY THE GLOBAL WEST**, COLONIALISM, NEO-COLONIALISM, AND THE HEGEMONY OF THE UNITED STATES.

United States and to some extent the European Union. The (almost) global triumph of neoliberalism is the economic and social expression of this hegemony, while the international and specifically eastward expansion of NATO (especially to Asia) is its logical strategic-military consequence.

The economic crisis of 2007/08 and the rise of China marked the beginning of a longer process of change in international geostrategic constellations. Political expressions of these changes include the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the (now expanding) BRICS alliance — along with a more active role for the Global South in the U.N., the G20, and regional alliances, and in the peaceful resolution of wars and conflicts. Meanwhile, Western capitalism is on a global downward spiral that can be observed in the distribution of international gross national product, trade flows, patent applications, the development of science, the availability of economic and technological resources, and many other areas.[3] This process of economic, political, but also ethical and moral changes in the international constellation of forces has been dramatically intensified and dynamized by the war in Ukraine and the Gaza conflict.

World politics is undergoing the end of a 500-year era of dominance by the global West, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the hegemony of the United States. Emblematic of these changes, the 2009 Yekaterinburg BRICS Statement declares that "we want a multipolar world of international law, mutual respect, cooperation, joint action and collective decision-making by all states."[4]

Instability in a Time of Change

This shift towards a multipolar world is characterized by fierce political and military conflicts, some of them fought by proxy. Longstanding agreements on international arms control — an instrument for regulating at least the threat of nuclear war — have been abandoned. International law has eroded and is being misused in the service of double standards and one-sidedness. The claim to leadership by the U.S. and the NATO West with their few Asian allies (Japan, South Korea, partly the Philippines) is being openly questioned, as inclusive multilateralism is being called for by the vast majority of the world's states.

In Southeast Asia, the conflicts are also an expression of the geostrategic struggle between historically "old" dominant powers and emerging new ones. The struggle for equality, respect, recognition of a nation's own path, cooperation, and dialogue are all expressions of this fundamental — and historically unprecedented — reorganization of the world as a multipolar community. Heightening the danger and uncertainty of this transitional phase is a climate of confrontation, illegitimate sanctions, and instability provoked by the United States and NATO. Furthermore, every development is taking place under the sword of Damocles of ecological destruction, with global effects that are further exacerbating all conflicts.

While individual conflicts and developments may be halted, the tectonic shifts underlying them are irreversible. Only a nuclear war catastrophe would halt their progress.

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Nuclear Threats and Common Security Today

ENKHSAIKHAN JARGALSAIKHAN AND SEAN CONNER

China, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and France — which are the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, or "P5," and also the five nuclear-weapon states recognized by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — jointly declared in 2022 that a nuclear war "can never be won and must never be fought."[1] These governments made known that the reduction of strategic risks and the avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon states would be their foremost responsibilities. Unfortunately, the practical actions of these governments do not fully reflect such commitments.

The Effects of Common Security Failures in Europe

Increasingly dangerous developments in post-Cold-War Europe demonstrate that the core concept of common security articulated in the 1982 Olof Palme report — i.e., that nations can only feel safe when their counterparts feel safe — has not been taken to heart.[2] With the end of the East-West cold war, many looked forward to the gradual abolition of the two major opposing military blocs in Europe and a shift in the nuclear arms race toward balanced nuclear weapons reduction, leading to disarmament. However, while the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, NATO by contrast has gradually expanded to include Central and Eastern European states and even some former Soviet republics. This geopolitical development is construed by Russia as a deliberate policy of the West, affecting its national security interests and inflicting a strategic defeat to Russia.

U.S. withdrawal from some nuclear arms reduction agreements has further fueled political disagreements, suspicion, and recriminations. Russia's attempts to strengthen its security environment through the show of force have prompted additional post-Soviet republics to defend *their* security interests by joining NATO. Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 strained its relations with NATO; the rebuff of its attempts to conclude an agreement with the U.S. and NATO on non-expansion of NATO and to acquire security assurances led to the unprovoked Russian war against Ukraine under the pretext of limited military operations in Ukraine. The ensuing threat of the possible use of low-yield nuclear weapons in the war[3] creates the danger of a domino effect, with such weapons potentially used in conventional conflicts and even against or on the territory of a non-nuclear-weapon state. Such a tendency contradicts the statement that a nuclear war could not be won and must therefore never be fought, and weakens the nuclear taboo.

Indo-Pacific Nuclear Tensions

In the Indo-Pacific region, rivalry has intensified between the U.S. as the remaining superpower and China as a gradually rising global power, influencing most areas of bilateral and multilateral interactions. North Korea's growing nuclear weapons program has affected the situation not only on the Korean Peninsula with the failure of the Six Party Talks, but throughout Northeast Asia and far beyond. As NATO turns its attention to the Indo-Pacific, and the U.S. strengthens ties with its bilateral allies in the region, the volatile situations in Europe and the Indo-Pacific are becoming linked. In both regions, the 2022 Common Security Report's recommendations to strengthen the global architecture for peace, promote a new peace dividend, revitalize nuclear arms control, and restrain new military technologies are yet to be realized.

As tensions rise both within and around the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia is facing a de facto nuclear arms race. Russia, China, and the U.S. are each building their nuclear arsenals or strengthening their presence in the region. In response both to North Korea's growing nuclear weapons program and to its declared deterrence policy, the U.S. and its regional allies are broadening their nuclear cooperation. If this situation is not seriously addressed, Northeast Asia could soon witness other states in the region going nuclear, or hosting nuclear weapons — which would surely have a domino effect in the region or even beyond it. Australia, though a state party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, is being encouraged to acquire nuclear submarines under the trilateral AUKUS security partnership, a step which would violate both the NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency restrictions.[4] In an illustration of connections between events in the Indo-Pacific and developments in Europe, Russia is broadening its military cooperation with North Korea, while South Korea is providing military products to Ukraine.

The 2023 U.S.-China summit meeting held in San Francisco contributed to the resumption of military-to-military relations and high-level bilateral dialogue on arms control and non-proliferation; however, it is too early to foretell the effectiveness of such agreements. The nuclear and conventional arms races in the region, current flash points, and unresolved territorial

disputes may lead to open conflicts with unpredictable consequences. China, like Britain and France, is not ready to consider limits on its nuclear arsenal until the United States and Russia bring down their nuclear stockpiles. Hence there is hardly any chance for the U.S. and China to undertake meaningful nuclear arms control talks.

As members of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN) have pointed out, while there are different views on the great power geopolitical rivalry, nations in the region agree that it is long past time to prioritize nuclear arms control and risk reduction, taking unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral actions in this direction.[5]

Taking Steps to Reduce Nuclear Threats

To raise awareness of the increasing threat of nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia, some regional and U.S. think tanks have undertaken studies on the risks of nuclear weapons use, while other groups work to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) there like those in Southeast Asia and Central Asia. Many experts believe that with sufficient political will, Japan and the two Koreas can form such a zone to which China, Russia, and the U.S. could provide legally based security assurances; this is known as the NEA-NWFZ 3+3 formula.[6] So far, however, none of the region's states except Mongolia has supported the initiative. Mongolia is also the only state in the region that has become a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Another direct risk reduction measure in the region could be a "no first use" (NFU) agreement by the U.S. and the two nuclear weapons states of the region, Russia and China (in spite of the likely objection of some U.S. allies). Such a move could set a precedent in preventing actual direct nuclear attacks, which was the original intention of the policy of nuclear deterrence, instead of deliberately maintaining nuclear ambiguity. The NFU policy would also halt the tendency of the nuclear weapon states to broaden exceptions to the non-use of such weapons, including by threatening or involving non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWSs). Politically, the NFU gesture would support the positions of nuclear-armed China and India, which have committed to NFU. This risk reduction measure would entail discussion of de-alerting and reducing the number and type of such weapons. Finally, if successful, the NFU policy could set a precedent for the rest of the region and Europe to follow suit.

When dealing with nuclear power rivalry, the adage *lupus non mordet lupum* (a wolf does not bite a wolf) is instructive. Rather, the wolf would prefer to bite a weaker adversary. Therefore, measures must be taken to promote confidence-building and an inclusive regional security mechanism so that smaller states' security interests are duly addressed and protected, thus contributing to strategic stability.

Another concrete confidence-building measure in the Indo-Pacific region would be to reduce the U.S.-China rivalry in the vast and strategically important Pacific region by supporting the wish and initiative of states in this region to establish a zone of peace or a zone of non-aligned territories. Such a move would broaden and enrich the NWFZ regime.[7] Recognition of the right of individual states to establish single-state zones would provide them not necessarily with Cold-War-era hard security assurances, but instead with 'security assurances lite'; that is, in response to a country's legislation or declaration prohibiting nuclear weapons on its territories, the three nuclear weapon states in the region (the U.S., China, and Russia) or the P5 could jointly commit to respect this declared status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it. An effective system of monitoring and verification would make these arrangements credible and sustainable. It should go without saying that each state must be provided with the option to make use of international legal or political protections, or it will find other ways to promote its security interests. Together, these individual single-state zones, or small island states with vast exclusive economic zones and continental shelves, could serve as zones of stability and building blocks in establishing a nuclear-weapons-free world. Toward this end, a second comprehensive study on establishing NWFZs should be undertaken by the United Nations General Assembly (the first was conducted in 1975), bringing together the experience of the five established NWFZs[8] and recognizing the special cases, including single-state zones.

Such concrete measures could positively affect the overall nuclear environment and the policies of other nuclear-armed states in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Raise awareness throughout the Indo-Pacific region of the increasing threat of nuclear weapons.
2. Develop regional risk reduction and confidence-building measures as well as an inclusive regional security mechanism to address pressing security issues.
3. Press for a no-first-use treaty between the U.S., Russia, and China.
4. Support the establishment of a Northeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone, as well as a zone of peace or a zone of non-aligned territories in the Pacific region.
5. Recognize the right of individual states to establish single-state zones as a form of NWFZs.

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7. There are nearly two dozen non-nuclear-weapon states that due to their geographical location or for credible political or legal reasons cannot be part of traditional 'group state' NWFZs, and are thus left in political and legal blind spots forming the Achilles' heel of the NWFZ regime.
8. There are established NWFZs in Latin America and the Caribbean; in South Pacific; Southeast Asia; ion the African continent and Central Asia.

Choppy Waters in the Taiwan Strait

ZHIQUN ZHU

Since his inauguration as president of the Republic of China (ROC) on May 20, 2024, Lai Ching-te has publicly claimed that the ROC in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are "not subordinate to each other," and that China and Taiwan are essentially two separate countries.[1] For Taiwanese who still follow the ROC constitution, which is based on "one China" — and for most people on the Chinese mainland who oppose Taiwan independence — Lai's remarks advocating "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" are provocative and unacceptable. Days after Lai's inauguration speech, the People's Liberation Army conducted a military exercise around Taiwan to express the Chinese government's dissatisfaction.

The Biden administration, for its part, has remained silent on Lai's remarks, thereby raising questions about the United States's own longstanding "one China" position. In recent years, some U.S. scholars such as Bonnie Glaser and Biden administration officials such as Daniel Kritenbrink have argued that because U.N. Resolution 2758, passed in 1971, did not mention Taiwan, the island's status is therefore undetermined.[2,3] However, there was no need to mention Taiwan in UN Resolution 2758 since it was the fact that both Chiang Kai-shek's government in Taiwan and the PRC government in Beijing were competing to represent China with the understanding that China included both Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. Chiang's government occupied the China seat before 1971, and the PRC has occupied it since 1971.

The United States has long followed "strategic ambiguity" on whether it would intervene militarily to protect Taiwan in the event of an attack by mainland China. President Biden has said several times that the United States would defend Taiwan. However, each time he said it, the White House would quickly backtrack, with a senior Biden administration official saying that U.S. policy with regard to Taiwan had not changed.[4]

Why do some people call the Taiwan Strait "the most dangerous place on earth"?[5] What exactly are the fundamental problems in the Washington-Beijing-Taipei relationship? There are many contradictions and dilemmas in policies from the three parties. Here are some examples of such paradoxes.

TAIPEI, WASHINGTON, AND BEIJING EACH HAVE A HUGE STAKE IN THE PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF THE TAIWAN STRAIT, BUT THEY HAVE **CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND GOALS AND** ARE ADVANCING **INHERENTLY CONTRADICTORY POLICIES.**

TAIWAN

1. Seeking to boost its international status, Taipei shuns Beijing, which holds the key.

The United Nations and other international organizations follow Beijing's "one China" principle and do not recognize Taiwan as an independent state. Since Tsai Ing-wen took office as president of the ROC in 2016, Taiwan has lost nine diplomatic allies and has not been able to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA). Taiwan's official diplomatic allies are down to 12 as of 2024. Though Taipei has done a remarkable job at navigating the international system, upgrading substantive relations with Washington in particular, it is unable to change its international status and obtain diplomatic recognition.

Given China's clout in international affairs today, it's clear that Taipei's shortcut to an expanded international space is through Beijing; yet both Tsai and Lai from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) have opted for an anti-China approach and have joined hawks in Washington to counter China, inducing Beijing to ramp up military and diplomatic pressures. Without improving relations with Beijing first, Taipei faces an uphill battle to become a normal member of the international community.

2. Rejecting "one China," Taipei imposes a precondition for cross-Strait talks.

Both Tsai and Lai have expressed interest in a "meaningful dialogue" with Beijing based on respect and equity. This sounds promising, but the DPP government claims that the two sides are two separate countries and that "one China" has been unilaterally imposed on Taiwan by Beijing as an unacceptable precondition. The truth is that the ROC constitution is a "one China" constitution, and Tsai's predecessor Ma Ying-jeou from the Kuomintang (KMT) party was able to maintain friendly cross-Strait ties based on the one-China "1992 Consensus."[6] "One China" is Beijing's red line that cannot be crossed.

The Ma administration used "Chinese mainland" to refer to the other side of the Taiwan Strait, while the Tsai and Lai administrations have routinely used "China" instead to intentionally disassociate Taiwan from the mainland. By asserting that Taiwan and China are two separate countries, the DPP government not only violates the ROC constitution but also imposes a precondition to normalization that Beijing simply cannot accept.

THE UNITED STATES

1. Attempting to maintain the status quo, Washington increasingly tilts toward Taiwan.

Despite longstanding U.S. policy to oppose unilateral change of the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, Washington has never clearly defined that status quo and has not done much lately to encourage peaceful dialogue between Beijing and Taipei. Washington has criticized Beijing's aggressive behavior without opposing Taipei's troublesome policies. After taking office in 2016, Tsai ditched the "1992 Consensus," the foundation of cross-Strait exchanges since official contacts were initiated in the early 1990s — and now Lai publicly claims that the two sides are two independent countries. These are unmistakably serious unilateral changes to the status quo, and yet Washington has remained silent.

Furthermore, Washington has itself changed the status quo. In recent years the U.S. Congress has passed a series of bills to support Taiwan and the State Department has revised provisions governing unofficial contacts between Washington and Taipei, significantly upgrading bilateral relations. Washington has arguably broken its commitment to maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, shifting the vaguely-defined guardrails of "one China."

2. Following its "one China" policy, Washington is actually helping create "one China, one Taiwan."

U.S. officials like to distinguish America's "one China policy" from Beijing's "one China principle." The letter and spirit of "one China" are contained in the three Sino-U.S. joint communiqués. The 1972 Shanghai Communiqué states that the United States "acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States government does not challenge that position." The 1979 and the 1982 Joint Communiqués contain similar expressions.

The Taiwan Relations Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1979 essentially treats Taiwan as an independent state, contradicting the concept of "one China" to which Washington tacitly agreed. Besides the three communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act, Washington recently added the Six Assurances as the basis of America's "one China policy." However, Washington has been elusive about Taiwan's legal status under its "one China policy," creating a gray area for implementing a de facto "one China, one Taiwan" policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. China, Taiwan, and the United States must take coordinated action to lower tensions and avert potential war and demilitarize the Taiwan Strait, with a shared understanding that the ultimate solution of the Taiwan issue should not be achieved by military means.
2. For Taipei, following the "one China" ROC constitution to manage cross-Strait relations is crucial. To advocate the notion that Taiwan and China are two separate countries is to court disaster.
3. For Washington, playing the Taiwan card against Beijing is tempting, but risky. Supporting Taiwanese independence as a way to irk China should not be mistaken for expanding economic and cultural relations with Taipei.
4. For Beijing, offering carrots is better than waving sticks in order to win the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people. China must dial down military and diplomatic pressures on Taiwan and commit to resolving cross-Strait disputes peacefully.

CHINA

1. Treating Taiwan like Hong Kong or Macao serves to widen, not narrow, the cross-Strait gap.

The "one country, two systems" model has been unpopular in Taiwan. The status of Taiwan is different from that of Hong Kong and Macao. The ROC government was defeated by the Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War and retreated to Taiwan in 1949, but it did not perish. Instead, the ROC has prospered and democratized in Taiwan. Beijing is unwilling to face the reality of the ROC's continued existence. When Hong Kong and Macao were returned to China as former colonies, the people there had no input. To reunify with a democratic Taiwan, Beijing will need to respect the wishes of the Taiwanese people.

Beijing has stated that under "one China" anything can be discussed. Shouldn't Beijing offer a better option to Taipei and invite proposals from Taipei about future cross-Strait relations? What is Beijing's strategy to attract, not coerce, the Taiwanese?

2. Punishing Taiwanese independence strengthens the separate non-Chinese identity in Taiwan.

President Xi Jinping has noted that cross-Strait unification is not just the integration of territory but also the synchronization of hearts and minds of the people. Beijing strongly opposes Taiwanese independence and will penalize those pursuing the independence cause. But how can Beijing distinguish the desire of ordinary Taiwanese to be the masters of their own future from the attempts of those who promote Taiwan independence?

Beijing continues to stifle Taiwan's international space, for instance by blocking its participation in the WHA as a way to punish the DPP government. It has alienated many Taiwanese, who have grown resentful of Beijing's intimidation. Beijing not only gives the DPP ammunition to attack it, but also helps consolidate the DPP's support base in Taiwan.

Taipei, Washington, and Beijing each have a huge stake in the peace and prosperity of the Taiwan Strait, but they have conflicting interests and goals and are advancing inherently contradictory policies.

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Conflict Prevention and Common Security

Complex Crises in Northeast Asia

FRANCIS DAEHOON LEE

INCREASED U.S. INTERVENTION HAS PROMPTED AN UNEASY CHAIN REACTION AS ASIAN COUNTRIES RESPOND MILITARILY AND IN THEIR SECURITY POLICIES.

Crises in security, ecological balance, democratic institutions, and international cooperation are being exacerbated in the Northeast Asia region by the escalation of military power struggles both within and between nations. These overlapping challenges are creating an unprecedented level of danger that is only beginning to be recognized and addressed.

Security crises render ecological management impossible, while sharply increasing environmental pollution and institutional destruction. For instance, the damage to marine ecosystems caused by the world's largest military exercises, which occur almost every year in Korea, the East Sea, and the adjacent western Pacific, remains unmeasured. A cooperative response is required, but action from governments and civil society has been exceedingly slow.

Northeast Asia at a Threshold

Recently, Northeast Asia has seen extreme levels of military buildup and military exercises, exacerbating hostilities and the breakdown of dialogues.

In 2012, U.S. President Barack Obama announced a restructuring of his nation's armed forces to maintain the world's strongest military position while slimming the forces down in scale and operations. In this context, the Obama administration decided on the "Pivot" or "Rebalance" to Asia, a policy which outwardly expressed recognition of Asia's importance and a willingness to cooperate with the region — but whose actual intention was largely to restrain China. Far from abandoning the U.S.-centric, unilateral system, the Obama administration simply shifted the axis of U.S. diplomatic and military policies from the Middle East to Asia.

In this context, the "Indo-Pacific" region became a new policy focus of the United States, continuing through the Trump administration that ended in 2020. The Biden administration redefined Trump's Indo-Pacific strategy to emphasize the three Ps: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region, while also evaluating China, Russia, and North Korea as regional security forces and identifying any cooperation among these countries as a threat to U.S. security.

China, Russia, and North Korea all reacted against such U.S. foreign policies. Furthermore, the countries mentioned by the U.S. as risk factors for its security, and those designated as U.S. allies, have formed two camps, heightening military tensions in the Asian region. Increased U.S. intervention has prompted an uneasy chain reaction as Asian countries respond militarily and in their security policies.

With the advent of the Yoon Suk-yeol regime in 2022, South Korea began actively cooperating not only with the U.S.-led anti-China and anti-Russia military/security alliances, but also with other U.S.-led military/security alliances. Even before taking office, the Yoon Suk-yeol government actively cooperated with the U.S.-led military/security alliances, including by adopting tough policies on the "Kill Chain" and preemptive strikes. The Yoon Suk-yeol government declared its intention to confront North Korea militarily and aimed for regime collapse, implying war and continuously escalating military tensions. The Yoon government also began to replace the term "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," which had been used in the past, with "denuclearization of North Korea." This expression places the responsibility for denuclearization solely on North Korea, reducing opportunities for dialogue and undercutting denuclearization efforts. Furthermore, South Korea has reaffirmed strong alliance relationships with the U.S. and Japan, and is emphasizing "peace through strength" policies.

Multilateral Power Alliances and their Destabilizing Effect

The shift in South Korea was evident in 2022 in the form of unusually prolonged and repeated joint military exercises with the U.S., as well as with the U.S. and Japan together. According to the South Korean 2022 Defense White Paper, 256 joint military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea were conducted in one year, or approximately one every 1.5 days. During the joint air exercise "Vigilant Storm," in which "decapitation operations" training was conducted, missiles from North and South crossed the Northern Limit Line once each, dangerously increasing the risk of armed conflict.

In June 2022, Japan announced its intention to increase defense spending annually, with the goal of reaching 2% of the nation's GDP by 2027. Furthermore, at the end of 2022, Japan revised three key security documents for the first time in 10 years, specifying its Self-Defense Forces' "counterstrike capability" (attack capability against enemy bases). Japan actively cooperates in war exercises with the U.S. and South Korea.

North Korea launched missiles 40 times in 2022 — a notably high number compared to the frequency of such launches in the positive atmosphere of inter-Korean relations in 2018 (0 launches) and 2019 (13 launches). In September of 2022, North Korea formalized the use of nuclear weapons, stating that it would immediately launch a nuclear strike if its command were under threat. And in response to joint U.S.-South Korea military exercises in 2023, North Korea launched ballistic missiles and cruise missiles 25 times. This is linked to the risk of armed conflict between the U.S. and China in the Taiwan Strait.

The situation in Northeast Asia became still more dangerous in 2023 as South Korea strengthened its diplomatic and military ties with major powers. Large-scale joint military exercises have significantly increased Since President Yoon Suk-yeol took office, with 23 joint exercises conducted in one year on the deployment of U.S. strategic assets — weapon systems capable of striking targets such as military bases and defense industry facilities that significantly affect war operations.

In 2023, during a summit held in Washington D.C., South Korea, Japan, and the U.S. issued joint statements called the "The Spirit of Camp David" and the "Camp David Principles," which outlined the

TIMELINE OF MILITARY ESCALATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA

2012:
Obama administration shifts military/diplomatic energies from the Middle East to Asia.

2019–:
DoD under Trump and Biden defines "Indo-Pacific" region and lays out program of "preparedness, partnerships, promoting a networked region" as crucial to U.S. national security and deterrence strategy.

2022

2022:
DPRK drastically increases number of missile launches from previous years to 40.

Japan and ROK drastically increase defense budgets, strengthen diplomatic ties with, and cooperates in war exercises with U.S. and other major powers.

framework for trilateral cooperation and a commitment to coordination in crisis situations. The three countries stated their objectives as promoting peace and stability in the region, supporting the complete denuclearization of North Korea, and "a free and peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula." Based on this joint statement, the three countries planned long-term military exercises, shared real-time missile alert information concerning North Korea, and expanded security cooperation into space.

With neighboring countries directing strong criticism at China for its territorial claims in the South China Sea, the cooperation between Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. is not just military but also diplomatic. The U.S.-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty stipulates that these two nations will respond to armed attacks in the Pacific region; but demonstrations of military cooperation between South Korea and Japan in U.S.-led security response and war preparedness go beyond the scope of that treaty.

On January 11, 2023, President Yoon of South Korea heightened tensions by stating, "If the North Korean nuclear issue worsens, South Korea may deploy tactical nuclear weapons or even possess its own nuclear weapons." South Korea decided to strengthen the execution capability of the U.S.-led extended deterrence aimed at "suppressing North Korea's nuclear and missile threats." The government revised its tailored deterrence strategy for the first time in nine years, enhancing the "Korean-style three-axis system," and increased the defense budget to 57 trillion won in 2023.

At almost the same time, Japan reaffirmed its security alliance with the U.S. for "peace and stability" in Northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula, in a joint statement criticizing China as a "strategic challenge" undermining regional security and emphasizing the U.S.-Japan alliance as the "cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region." The U.S. and Japan began relocating military bases to enhance their alliance, announcing plans to reorganize the U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa Prefecture into a Marine Landing Regiment capable of conducting amphibious operations and deploying a small amphibious assault unit to the "Yokohama North Dock" U.S. military facility, preparing for potential Chinese attacks in the Taiwan Strait.

Fukushima

In August 2023, the Japanese government initiated the discharge of radioactive water stored at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean. Since the Fukushima nuclear accident caused by an earthquake in 2011, Tokyo Electric Power Company has been continuously injecting coolant water to cool down the reactor fuel rods. The Japanese government had discharged four batches of the water by March 2024. Prior to the water discharge, the Japanese government requested safety reviews of the nuclear contaminated water discharge plan and its implementation process from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which found that the plan complied with international safety standards. However, concerns about neutrality and fairness regarding the IAEA's investigation have been raised, and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), composed of nuclear physicists, oceanographers, and scientists from 18 countries including Fiji, Tuvalu, Australia, and New Zealand, have contested this finding on scientific grounds. Greenpeace International has accused Japan of violating the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, the London Convention, and the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and is calling for Japan's international legal responsibility. South Korea's opposition party submitted a petition to the U.N. Human Rights Council, and despite explanations from governments, citizens of South Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, and other areas have expressed strong opposition to the discharge.

2023 **2024**

JAN 2023: ROK president Yoon threatens counternuclearization efforts in response to nuclearization efforts of DPRK.

AUGUST 2023: Camp David Principles commits U.S., ROK, and Japan to deterring further nuclearization of DPRK.

NOVEMBER 2023: The "Two Koreas" annul their 2023 Miltary Agreement.

MARCH 2024: Japanese government discharges radioactive water from Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor accident into ocean.

JUNE 2024: DPRK and Russia sign Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty.

Rising Tensions

In November 2023, the two Koreas nullified the 2023 Military Agreement that was designed to lower military tensions, and at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea held at the end of 2023, North Korea defined inter-Korean relations as a "relationship between two hostile countries" in a state of war.

In early 2024, the North Korean Supreme People's Assembly declared that "The concepts of 'unification,' 'reconciliation,' and 'compatriots' should be removed from the history of the Republic." Organizations in the field of inter-Korean affairs such as the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland and the Council for National Reconciliation were reorganized. The South is scattering leaflets, and the North is responding with sewage balloons.

In South Korea, loudspeaker broadcasts against the North have resumed in full force, and anxiety is rising — especially among residents of border areas. Furthermore, in June 2024, North Korea established a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty' with Russia, which includes a clause on 'automatic military intervention in the event of an emergency,' restoring the long-absent military alliance between these two neighboring countries.

Summary and Recommendations

Northeast Asia urgently needs an early warning system for the possibility of armed conflict, and diplomatic discussions are necessary for changes in the security structure to establish a regional common security structure. Military, security, and diplomatic developments in 2022 and 2023 seriously threaten everyone's safety. The response to military tensions in Northeast Asia should not overlook movements aimed at responding to increased military buildup and shows of force. Such movements are claimed to be aimed at preventing provocations, but in reality, they lead to mutual escalation of provocations, thereby preparing for armed conflict, i.e., war. This is putting everyone in a more dangerous situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recognize the serious crisis of military conflict in Northeast Asia and engage in active dialogue with domestic and international stakeholders to prevent escalation.
2. Devote diplomatic efforts to involve all countries in resolving military conflicts; the current military tensions involve all countries in Northeast Asia, including North and South Korea.
3. Warn against military demonstrations and hostile rhetoric from each country.
4. Closely monitor increases in military budgets and military exercises, and urge the reversal of these trends.
5. Promptly establish an international multilateral conflict prevention organization in the Northeast Asia region.
6. Implement measures to build common security and cooperation in the region by promoting democracy, ecology, and security stability. Interrelated crises require comprehensive solutions.
7. Invest in preparation and response capabilities and resilience to recover from crises. Build capabilities to detect signs of increasing threats and to ease tensions.
8. Ensure the full participation of marginalized groups — such as youth, women, laborers, the poor, and peacebuilders — in decision-making in the security sector, and share their information and interests.

A Dangerous Chessboard

The Philippines and the South China Sea

BY WALDEN BELLO

If geography is indeed destiny, the Philippines is Exhibit A. Perhaps no one captured its enduring geopolitical value better than General Arthur MacArthur, father of the more famous Douglas, who led the U.S. expedition that subjugated the country in 1899. The Philippines, the elder MacArthur wrote,

> *...is the finest group of islands in the world. Its strategic location is unexcelled by any other position in the globe. The China Sea, which separates it by something like 750 miles from the continent, is nothing more nor less than a safety moat. It lies on the flank of what might be called several thousand miles of coastline; it is the center of that position... It affords a means of protecting American interests which with the very least output of physical power has the effect of a commanding position in itself to retard hostile action.*[1]

These words have a very contemporary ring as the Philippines once again becomes a key pawn in Washington's increasingly militarized strategy to contain China.

Early in 2023, Manila and Washington announced that the Philippines would give the United States four more military bases to add to the five it already had. Both governments maintain the fiction that this deal did not create U.S. bases but only, like the existing five, provided Washington with "access to Philippine bases."[2] This charade is necessary since the Philippine Constitution states that "foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate."

Why Are the Bases Back?

The reestablishment of foreign bases on Philippine soil has puzzled many who still have vivid images of the hasty U.S. exit from the massive Subic and Clark bases in 1991 and 1992. While that departure, which supposedly marked the end of the American military presence in the region, has been largely attributed to the Philippine senate's rejection of the basing agreement negotiated between Washington and the administration of the late president Corazon Aquino, three other factors played a role.

One was the eruption of the volcano Mount Pinatubo in 1991, which Washington saw as severely disrupting operations at Subic and Clark; another was the collapse of the Soviet Union that same year, which removed the Soviet Pacific fleet as a major competitor to American naval power in the area; and the third was the de facto alliance between China and Washington, a key element of which was Deng Xiao Ping's policy of adopting a low military profile and focusing on economic development with the help of American capital.

It was during this same period — the early 1990s, which were marked by Washington's complacency towards the Philippines — that China began to make its moves in the South China Sea. The most significant step was the creeping occupation of Mischief Reef, which lay within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Philippines, under the pretext of building shelters for Chinese fishermen. It was most likely the increased Chinese activity in the area, along with the sharpening of the China-Taiwan conflict in 1995 and 1996, that motivated the U.S. to reestablish an active military presence in the Philippines.

In 1998, the U.S. and the Philippines signed a new Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which provided for the periodic deployment of thousands of U.S. troops to participate in military exercises with their Filipino counterparts. This was followed by what eventually became a permanent deployment of U.S. Special Forces on the southern Philippine island of Basilan as part of President George W. Bush's War on Terror. Like foreign bases, foreign troops were constitutionally banned from being permanently stationed in the Philippines, so to get around the ban, the Special Forces and other U.S. troops were portrayed as being in the country on a "rotational basis," in order to engage in exercises with Filipino troops and provide them with "technical advice," and without authority to use firearms except in self-defense.

China, Aquino III, and the United States

China's territorial incursions became bolder and more frequent in the 2000s, and in 2009 it submitted its controversial Nine-Dash-Line map to the United Nations.[3] The map claims as Chinese territory some 90% of the South China Sea, including significant sections of the EEZs of five Southeast Asian states: Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines.

Things came to a head during the administration of the Philippines' late president Benigno Aquino III, who served from 2010 to 2016. Chinese coast guard vessels began aggressively driving off Filipino fishermen from their traditional fishing grounds. One of the richest of these was Scarborough Shoal, some 138 miles from the Philippines — firmly within the country's 200-mile EEZ. After a two-month confrontation between Chinese and Philippine vessels in 2012, the Chinese ended up seizing the shoal.

Aquino's response was twofold. First, he elevated the issue to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, which eventually declared China's claims invalid. Not surprisingly, China did not recognize the court's ruling. But the Aquino administration's more consequential move was to enter into the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the Obama administration. The EDCA places no limits on the number of bases, weaponry, and troops that the U.S. can have in the country, though it explicitly bans bringing in nuclear weapons. This arrangement was presented as an executive agreement and not as a treaty; the Supreme Court concurred, ruling that the deal was not a treaty and thus did not need senate approval.

The Duterte Interlude

President Rodrigo Duterte's election in 2016 was heralded as bringing about a major shift in U.S.-Philippine relations. Duterte moved closer to China, downplaying the significance of the Hague ruling and refusing to take up the cudgels for Filipino fishermen chased off from their traditional fishing grounds by Chinese coast guard vessels. He also successfully promoted a populist anti-American image by harnessing the undercurrent of resentment at colonial subjugation that has always coexisted with the admiration of the U.S. in the Filipino psyche.

For all his anti-American posturing, though, Duterte was more bark than bite. He did not interfere with the close relationship between the U.S. and Philippine militaries, which came into play when U.S. Special Forces assisted Philippine troops in the bloody retaking of the southern city of Marawi from Mus-

CHIEF AMONG THE ISSUES FUELING THE AMERICAN BUILDUP IN THE PHILIPPINES IS **THE UNRESOLVED STATUS OF TAIWAN**, AT THE NORTHERN EDGE OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

lim fundamentalists in 2017.[4] Nor did he ever follow through on his vow in 2020 to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement.[5]

Indeed, by the end of his term, Duterte was extolling the VFA, voicing approval of the AUKUS security pact joining Australia, Britain, and the United States,[6] reestablishing the Philippines-United States Bilateral Strategic Dialogue, and launching expanded joint military exercises with the U.S.

China's Lesson from the Taiwan Strait Crisis

Chief among the issues fueling the American buildup in the Philippines is the unresolved status of Taiwan, at the northern edge of the South China Sea.

While Beijing considers its sovereignty over Taiwan non-negotiable, its strategy has been to promote cross-Strait economic integration as the main mechanism that would eventually lead to reunification. In Taiwan, however, being tough on Beijing plays well with voters, and nothing plays better than the threat to declare formal independence. When Taiwanese leaders display such behavior, Beijing has felt compelled to put them in their place.

In 1995, China launched missile drills to teach Taiwan a lesson following President Lee Teng Hui's visit to the United States.[7] It did so again in 1996 just before Taiwan held its first democratic presidential election. The Clinton administration responded by sending two supercarriers to the Taiwan Straits in March 1996. This was the biggest display of U.S. power in the region since the Vietnam War — and it was intended to underline Washington's determination to defend Taiwan by force. Washington's intervention was cold water splashed on Beijing's face, for it revealed just how vulnerable the coastal region of east and southeast China, the industrial heart of the country, was to U.S. naval firepower. As analyst Gregory Poling notes, "One can draw a straight line from the PLAN's [People's Liberation Army Navy] humiliation in 1996 to its near peer status with the U.S. Navy today."[8]

Overall, China's strategic posture remains defensive, but in the East and South China seas, the country began a "tactical offensive" aimed at enlarging its defense perimeter against U.S. naval and air power with a strategy of "forward edge" defense consisting of expanding its maritime defense perimeter and fortifying islands with anti-aircraft and anti-ship-missile systems designed to shoot down hostile incoming missiles and aircraft in the few seconds before they hit the mainland. Though this strategy is defensive in its strategic intent, what has enraged Beijing's neighbors is the unilateral way Beijing has gone about implementing it, with little consultation and in clear violation of such landmark agreements as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Washington on the Offensive

Beijing's unilateral acts in the South China Sea have provided ammunition for the U.S. containment strategy towards China, which has been unfolding since the Obama years. But Washington's rhetoric now elicits worries among some Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) governments that they are being drawn into a regional confrontation that is not in their interest. Particularly alarming is a recent leaked memo from General Mike Minihan, who heads up the U.S. Air Mobility Command, declaring, "My gut tells me we will fight in 2025."[9]

Even without such statements, the level of hostile activity from all sides of the South China Sea dispute has been alarming. During a visit to Vietnam I made as a member of Congress in 2014, top Vietnamese officials expressed concern at how, owing to the lack of agreed-upon rules of engagement, a collision by American and Chinese warships "playing chicken" — according to them, a common occurrence — could immediately escalate to a more intense level of conflict.

Like the Philippines, Vietnam has criticized Beijing's moves; the aggressive posture of the Biden administration, however, has led Hanoi to affirm a posture of neutrality in any brewing superpower confrontation. In a recent visit to Beijing, the secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Truong, assured Chinese President Xi Jinping that his government would continue to hew to its "Four Nos" foreign policy approach in the region: that is, that Vietnam would not join military alliances; side with one country against another; give other countries permission to set up military bases or use its territory to carry out military activities against other countries; or use force — or threaten to use force — in international relations.[10]

Blackmail as Diplomacy

Members of the Marcos dynasty are said to have been apprehensive about visiting the United States ever since they last left it in the early 1990s, when they'd come as exiles there following the uprising that ousted Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., in 1986. The reason is a standing $353 million contempt order against Marcos Jr., related to U.S. court judgment awarding financial compensation from the Marcos estate to victims of human rights violations under the dictatorship.[11] A new judge extended the contempt order to January 25, 2031, which would render the current President Marcos theoretically vulnerable to arrest anytime he visits the United States during his term, which ends in 2028.

Marcos also cannot be unaware of how the U.S., with its global clout, has often been able to freeze the assets of people linked to regimes considered undesirable; the Marcos family has some five to ten billion dollars in landholdings and other assets distributed throughout the world. Being on the wrong side of the United States, especially in a dispute as central as the China-U.S. conflict, could have devastating financial consequences for the Marcos dynasty.

With this threat hanging over him, Marcos, Jr. is not someone who would dare cross Washington. Indeed, when it comes to negotiating an independent path between two superpowers, he is the wrong person at the wrong place at the wrong time — which is another way of saying that from Washington's point of view, he's the right person at the right place at the right time.

China's Image Problem

Opponents of the U.S. buildup have been vocal about the U.S. making the Philippines a sitting duck in the event of a hot war between the U.S. and China. They are not wrong. Beijing's agenda for Taiwan has always been unification via cross-Strait trade and investment integration, with the prospect of invasion mainly serving as a rhetorical threat. Washington's real intent is to build up the Philippines as a launching pad for the containment of China.[12]

The problem faced by all those critical of the U.S. buildup is that China's unilateral claim of more than 90% of the South China Sea and its crude high-pressure waterhosing of Filipino fishing boats have given Beijing the image of a big bully and the U.S. that of a savior to many Filipinos.[13] That Beijing's intent is defensive — that is, to extend its defense perimeter several hundred miles to the west in order to protect the country's industrial infrastructure on the eastern and southeastern coasts — is, not surprisingly, lost on Filipinos and Vietnamese, who see only naked territorial aggression in these actions.

Washington took advantage of the waterhosing incidents, summoning Marcos to Washington with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to extend what President Biden called an "ironclad" commitment to retaliate for attacks on Philippine vessels carrying out supply missions or engaged in fishing in the South China Sea.[14] If Washington moves to classify waterhosing incidents as falling in the category of an attack, that could trigger a response under the Cold War era U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty.

Waterhosing incidents are not the only possible triggers of conflict. The South China Sea is filled with rival warships performing naval "exercises," including vessels from France, Germany, and Britain, U.S. allies dragooned from NATO's traditional area of coverage to contain China. U.S. and Chinese ships have been known to play "chicken," that is, heading for each other, then swerving at the last minute. A miscalculation of a few feet can result in a collision, which has the potential of escalating to a higher form of conflict since there are no rules of the game in this maritime Wild West. Fears that the South China Sea could be the next site of armed conflict after Ukraine and Gaza are not groundless.[15]

A Common Security Solution Is Imperative

In the absence of rules of conflict resolution, the balance of power is what keeps conflict from breaking out. Balance of power regimes, however, are prone to breakdown, with catastrophic results, as was the case in 1914, when the collapse of the European balance of power led to World War I. With Washington aggressively marshalling Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, five task carrier task forces of the U.S. Navy, NATO, and AUKUS into a confrontational stance against China, a rupture in the East Asian balance of power regime is becoming more and more likely — maybe just a collision or waterhosing incident away.

The author would like to thank The Nation *for granting permission to reproduce sections of "The American Repossession of the Philippines," which appeared in the periodical's March 3, 2023, issue.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: The following recommendations are drawn from an opinion piece by the author published in the New York Times *in 2016, outlining confidence-building measures aimed at demilitarizing the South China Sea and creating an atmosphere conducive to the peaceful negotiation of territorial issues.[1] This proposal is even more urgent at the moment than it was then.*

1. Since it is the fear of military encirclement by Washington that is driving China's behavior, the Philippines and China should engage in bilateral talks to reduce tensions. The aim of these talks should be military de-escalation, not to settle the territorial question. One possible proposal could be a freeze in China's base-building activities in exchange for a freeze in the implementation of the [U.S.-Philippine] Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.
2. ASEAN and China should start long-postponed multilateral talks to govern the maritime behavior of all parties with claims to the South China Sea.
3. Should the two measures above succeed, ASEAN and China should negotiate the demilitarization and denuclearization of the South China Sea, with the goal of signing a multilateral treaty that would be binding on all parties, including third parties like the U.S. Such an agreement would require the Philippines to abandon the EDCA, and China to dismantle military structures in the South China Sea.
4. These measures, if successful, would pave the way for the fourth step: Talks aimed at a final settlement of the territorial issue.

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Balancing Acts

Considerations for Promoting Common Security in South Asia

BY ANURADHA CHENOY

Like other diverse regions, South Asia faces complex entanglements, historically unresolved conflicts, and overwhelming human security challenges. Underlining the importance of strengthening common security in the region, two South Asian countries — India and Pakistan — possess nuclear weapons, and are not signatories to either the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Yet if common security, human security, and development can be made to take precedence over contested border claims and militarist approaches, an alternative paradigm will emerge throughout the region and beyond. South Asia must navigate some roadblocks to achieve common security, but also has some nascent successes.

Finding Security while Managing Imbalances

South Asian security paradigms are embedded in the region's history of British colonial rule and post-colonial state formation. The region borders Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Middle East in the west; touches China in the north; and in the east continues into Myanmar and Southeast Asia. Historical continuities for nations in this area include the legacies of British colonialism, the 'Great Game' paradigm of inter-imperialist rivalries, and post-colonial competition between great and regional powers. South Asia is characterized by asymmetries and inequalities that stem from India's disproportionate size and historic influence, with many different South Asian identities — for example, the Tamil ethnic minority in Sri Lanka and Bengali Hindus in Bangladesh — linked to this subcontinent. Such confluences and pluralities underlie security challenges as well as opportunities.

Each of the South Asian states (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Republic of Maldives) has specific security challenges. For India, the unresolved dispute over the demarcation of its border with China, Pakistan's claims on Kashmir, and the use of terror tactics as an asymmetric method to harm Indian interests are serious security issues. Pakistan sees its claim on Kashmir as unfinished business, and values its own border with Afghanistan and Central Asia for providing strategic depth and geopolitical leverage. Pakistan also maintains both a deep strategic partnership with China and close relations with the United States.

Interestingly, the smaller states of South Asia have fewer confrontational security issues with India, and are able to resolve potential conflicts. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives Islands in the Indian Ocean navigate diplomatically between India, China, and even the U.S. and Russia to secure their interests. Their shared position is characterized by neutrality in conflicts between their great neighbors, India and China; by abstaining from military alliances; and by not possessing weapons of mass destruction. These states have benefitted from their position of neutrality in the regional and international system, with an approach that makes them ideal candidates for the common security paradigm.

The China-India Conundrum

Differing perceptions and claims regarding border demarcations along the "Line of Actual Control" (LAC) in the Himalayan region are at the heart of the conflict between India and China. Infrastructure-building and transgressions by border patrols and villagers on both sides contribute to tensions, and a major war in 1962 remains a historic sore point. For several decades after that clash there was reasonable restraint, but since 2020, when India detected increased Chinese military activities on its border, tension along the Sino-Indian border has been high; skirmishes have included a December 2022 encounter in Doklam that injured several Indian military personnel. On the positive side, ongoing talks between commanders of the opposing forces have functioned successfully to prevent escalation, with the most recent round of talks (as of this

writing) held in March 2024. During the seventeenth round, both sides agreed to withdraw from some hot spots and to maintain military and diplomatic channels of communication. The Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs also meets regularly, with 30 events held between 2012, when the group was established, and August 2024.[1]

This tension, referred to by some observers as "the China factor," is a driver of Indian strategic engagement with the U.S. and has made India an enthusiastic partner in the Quadrilateral Security Forum, known as "the Quad" (India, Australia, Japan, and the U.S.). In response to a resurgence of formal Quad activity after some years of dormancy, China increased the deployment of its Western Theatre Command along the LAC in 2022. The U.S., in its containment plans for China, sees India as a potential partner in the Indo-Pacific, and has signed a logistics agreement with India that allows U.S. Navy facilities in specific Indian ports. Meanwhile, India has kept up a deep strategic partnership with Russia since the 1950s. India's defense imports and military equipment from Russia have decreased to about 45% of its total imports, but India refused to condemn the Russian aggression in Ukraine and continues to increase the purchase of hydrocarbons from Russia.[2] In this context, India-China talks have made minimal progress, and Sino-Indian-U.S. tensions are fostering militarization and confrontational competition, while siphoning attention from common security approaches.

Pakistan's foreign policy is managed by its military. Pakistan has deep strategic ties with the U.S., and provided logistic facilities for U.S. operations in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistan has continued its engagement with the U.S. since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan's "all-weather" relationship with China and with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative assist in both 'containing' India and safeguarding Pakistani interests in its turbulent northwestern frontier and on the contested Durand Line border with Afghanistan. Pakistan faces internal security issues in its tribal areas like Balochistan.

Pakistan sees its interests strongly aligned with one or another great power. The country is deeply in debt, with an ongoing economic crisis — but nevertheless maintains high military spending.[3] Pakistan is unlikely to contribute to a shift toward common security in this region.

For Promising Models of Stability, Look to the Small States

Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives have become adept in practicing neutrality, first during the Cold War and more recently in the disputes between India and Pakistan and between India and China. In this balancing act, they preserve their sovereignty while looking to common security. Yet these nations have their own precarious internal issues. Sri Lanka's 26 years of civil war ended with charges of genocide perpetrated against its Tamil minority citizens; currently, the nation is in a debt crisis and takes loans from the World Bank, India, and China. Landlocked Nepal has agreements with India that provide visa-free mobility to Nepali citizens, millions of whom work in India without permits since Nepali citizens do not require visas or work permits in India.[4] Bangladesh, whose economy is one of the fastest-growing in South Asia,[5] witnessed student-led mass protests that led to the dramatic fall of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and a takeover by the army. This small state will be unstable in the near future. Bangladesh has been reckoning with Islamic radicals, border issues, and Rohingya migrants from Myanmar — but in the last decade has signed border and development agreements with India, and has agreements with China, Russia, and other countries. Bhutan has resolved a contentious border issue with China and maintains close relations with India. The Republic of Maldives gets assistance from both India and China. The regimes in all these states use nationalism as a card in their elections, with political parties inclining towards one or another power within the region.

Conclusion

All the countries of South Asia are developing, capitalist states with major domestic issues. They carry out strategic balancing with each other and with great powers outside the region. All of them call their foreign policies "multivector."

India and Pakistan both have ambitions to become regional great powers, and each is leveraging its own strategic advantages in its relationship with world superpowers. Pakistan remains vulnerable because of its fragile economy, indebtedness, and compromised military-civil elite. India has a larger space for strategic autonomy; the U.S. appears to be looking for proxies in the region, but India is likely to remain strategically

independent, with multiple strategic allies that include the U.S., the E.U., and Russia. China is an important actor in this region, and it too is seeking to increase its leverage. Pakistan would like to support both the U.S. and China, but is under pressure from both. India allies with the U.S., since its own interests are against China. Neither India nor Pakistan will join any common security proposal until their border issues with each other are resolved. If not bilaterally managed, the hostility in Sino-Indian relations may fuel any other conflagration that erupts in the Indo-Pacific.

The smaller states are the space to watch, as their position inclines them naturally towards a common security paradigm. Without contentious border hostilities to manage, these nations attain higher human development as measured by the United Nations Human Development Index. Experience shows that when small states manage their internal stability, sustain common understanding with their neighbors, and stay out of military alliances, they achieve stability and common prosperity. However, when they engage in majoritarian politics, as Sri Lanka did against its Tamil minority, they face civil conflicts. There is a lesson to be learned by using the ideas of common security both for domestic-national cohesion and for peace and development regionally and internationally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Regional bodies for peace and development like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation should be revived and revitalized.
2. Smaller countries in the region should maintain non-alignment and strategic autonomy, since these policies have served them well.
3. The countries of South Asia should stay out of the coming great power confrontations and military alliances.
4. All outstanding issues between nations should continue to be negotiated bilaterally, and with regional support if chosen by the parties concerned.
5. The region should consider a common security platform for collective peaceful engagement.

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Obstacles To Common Security

Overcoming the Resurgence of Alliances and Alignments

JOSEPH GERSON

At the dawn of the twentieth century, complex alliances between major and lesser European powers helped transform the assassins' gunshots into a spark that ignited the catastrophic first World War. A century later, analogous structures of alignment are being consolidated into bloc systems across Asia and the Pacific and raising the specter of a new world war — this time with nuclear weapons, artificial intelligence, and high-tech arsenals that together could threaten human survival. It is thus a critical priority to create common security alternatives to these alliance systems.

At the core of the competing great and middle power tensions, reinforced on each side by additional strategic partnerships, are two alliance and quasi-alliance systems. Growing out of post-World-War-II conquests and military occupations is the recently consolidated U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral alliance. Challenging this group, as manifested in growing military cooperation, summits, and trade ties, is the more defensive but no less dangerous China-Russia-North Korea alignment. Augmenting the U.S.-led alliance and replacing what was long a "hub and spokes" system is a lattice-like network of alliances that includes the AUKUS (Australia-U.K.-U.S.); the strategic but less militarized QUAD alliance (U.S.-Japan-Australia-India); the emerging trilateral U.S.-Japan-Philippines alliance; the

THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION AND BEYOND

tacit U.S. alliance with Taiwan; and partnerships with Singapore, Vietnam, European powers, and a number of Pacific island nations. Adding to the reach and influence of the China-Russia-led alignment are the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (see "The Role of Regional Organizations in Promoting Common Security") and other partnerships.

Each of these blocs has its structural flaws. The possible return of Donald Trump or another "America First" administration to power in Washington leads allies to question the staying power of U.S. commitments. Unresolved wounds from Japan's colonial conquest and rule in Korea make the depth of South Korean commitment to cooperation with Japan uncertain. Further north, both Beijing's 2023 territorial claim to a Russian-governed island, and the limits of Chinese support for Russia's war in Ukraine, demonstrate that these two nations' strategic ties are not unlimited. It is important to understand the origins and machinations of today's evolving military alliances in order to clearly delineate and advocate for common security alternatives based on diplomacy and mutual security.

The U.S.-Japan-ROK Triangle and its Origins in Conquest

The Biden Administration's National Security Strategy declares that "our alliances and partnerships around the world are our most important strategic asset and an indispensable element contributing to international peace and stability. A strong and unified NATO, our alliances in the Indo-Pacific, and our traditional security partnerships elsewhere do not only deter aggression; they provide a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation that strengthens the international order." Washington is committed to preserving the post-WWII Bretton Woods "rules-based order" created when China and still-colonized nations of the Global South had negligible influence, resulting in unfair advantages accruing to the U.S. and to the

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE ORIGINS AND MACHINATIONS OF TODAY'S EVOLVING MILITARY ALLIANCES **IN ORDER TO CLEARLY DELINEATE AND ADVOCATE FOR COMMON SECURITY ALTERNATIVES** BASED ON DIPLOMACY AND MUTUAL SECURITY.

now former colonial powers. This stance exacerbates tensions with China and other nations that are seeking to eliminate systemic obstacles to their own rise.

As early as 1821, the U.S. Navy created its East India and Pacific squadrons. These troops joined in the first and second Opium Wars against China, the forced "opening" of Japan, combat in Korea, and anti-piracy efforts to protect U.S. mercantile interests. In its first allied intervention, the United States joined the colonizing powers Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom in response to the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China.

The roots of the modern U.S. alliance system reach back to the Spanish-American War colonial conquests of the Philippines, Guam, and Samoa, and to a World War II Pacific theater alliance with Australia and Britain. In 1951, anti-communist treaties with the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand followed, designed to reinforce the Pacific as — in the widely quoted words of an earlier American expansionist — an "American lake."[1] The U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty was imposed on Japan in 1952 as a condition for ending the post-war U.S. military occupation. The alliance with South Korea was formalized with the U.S.-sponsored Syngman Rhee military dictatorship in 1953 at the end of the Korean War. And the treaty with Taiwan (abrogated in 1980 with U.S. recognition of the People's Republic of China) was proclaimed in 1954.

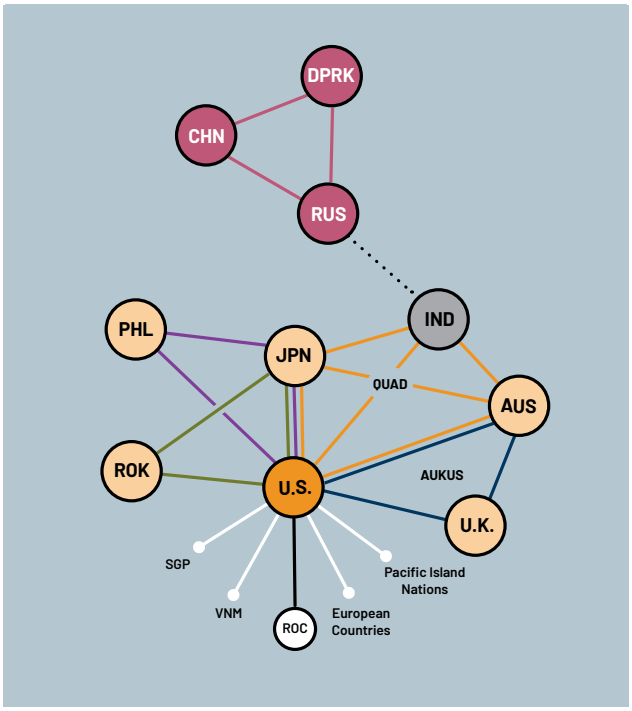
Jake Sullivan, the current U.S. National Security Advisor, has explained that the U.S. Indo-Pacific alliance system is bolstered by the U.S.-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology; the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity; the I2U2 coalition of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States; and what Admiral Lisa Franchetti described as the "growing connective tissue between U.S. alliances in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe."[2]

That "connective tissue," fostered with the goal of increasing the United States' strategic flexibility, was reinforced by the "upgrading" of the U.S.-Japan alliance in April 2024.[3] Deepening what a senior Biden administration official termed the United States' most important alliance,[4] numerous commitments were announced to further integrate and Trump-proof U.S. and Japanese military operations, resources, and capabilities. The two governments announced "a new era of cooperation" to counter China. Augmentation of the alliance included deeper Japanese integration into the AUKUS alliance; Japanese participation in U.S., Australian, Philippine, and British South China Sea military exercises; the creation of a joint defense council to coordinate weapons development and Japanese weapons exports to the United States; and cooperation in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and space technologies.

Layered Commitments in the China-Russia-DPRK Triangle

Ties between China, Russia, and North Korea fall short of constituting a traditional alliance, but their increasingly close military, diplomatic, technological, and economic alignment and cooperation serve many of the purposes of an alliance. All three countries share an interest in overcoming what they experience as U.S.- and Japanese-led actions and policies designed to contain and manage them militarily, economically, and technologically. However, both historic and contemporary fault lines make the long-term future of this trilateral alignment questionable.

Russian-Chinese military cooperation includes provocative joint shows of naval and air force strength directed toward Japan and the United States; technology and intelligence sharing; and the co-development of weapons systems. (The first of the People's Liberation Army's aircraft carriers is a hand-me-down from the Soviet Navy.) Although Beijing has refrained from direct military involvement or weapons transfers in support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it has buoyed Russia's wartime economy — compensating for western sanctions with massive discounted oil purchases and other economic assistance. This support is stra-



STRUCTURE OF INDO-PACIFIC ALLIANCES AND TIES
(CREDIT: CENTER FOR PEACE, DISARMAMENT, COMMON SECURITY / JEFF NGUYEN)

tegically intended to offset pressure on China's frontiers from the U.S., Japan, and their Western partners. In 2023, reversing the tradition of DPRK's dependence on Russia and China, Pyongyang came to Moscow's aid with the transfer of hundreds of thousands of artillery shells for use against Ukraine.[5]

Over the preceding centuries, Russia and China have been both enemies and allies. In the tradition of colonial settler states, Russian expansion across Siberia and along the Amur River, which began In the 17th century, came largely at Chinese expense. Vladivostok was once a Ming Chinese settlement. Soviet-Chinese ideological and territorial competition led to armed conflict in the 1960s, with tensions so high that Moscow considered using nuclear weapons.

Formal ties between Tsarist Russia and the Korean Kingdom date to 1884 and to the period in which Japan, European colonizing states, and the United States competed for interest and control over the vulnerable Hermit Kingdom. Following Japan's defeat in 1945 and the division of the Korean peninsula, the United States sponsored the creation of the Republic of Korea, ruled by the Syngman Rhee military dictatorship. In response, the Soviet Union created its dictatorial cflient state in the North, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, led by Kim Il-sung. In the wake of the Chinese Revolution, Beijing joined Moscow in supporting and competing for influence in the DPRK. It was Stalin who gave the green light for the North's invasion of the South in 1950, while Chairman Mao sent hundreds of thousands of military "volunteers" to drive U.S.-led United Nations forces back across North Korea to the 38th parallel.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, China and Russia have negotiated a series of treaties to stabilize their relations and to serve as foundations for deepening collaboration. The 1991 Sino-Soviet Border Agreement appeared to resolve their border disputes. A decade later, the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation provided for economic, trade, and counter-terrorism cooperation. And after a series of summits in 2023, presidents Putin and Xi promulgated a joint statement on "Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era." Despite these commitments, tensions rooted in race, economic and population disparities, and lingering territorial anxieties persist.

China and North Korea formalized their mutual commitments in their Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, signed on July 11, 1961. It has since been renewed in 20-year extensions.

Since 2012, when Moscow forgave 90% of North Korea's $11 billion debt to Russia, ties between the two nations have deepened.[6] In 2023, following an eight-day visit by the DPRK's supreme leader Kim Jung-un to Russia, North Korean state media celebrated the consolidation of "the traditional ties of good neighbor and cooperation…based on the comradely friendship and militant unity."[7] The term "militant unity" reflects commitment to a military alliance against their common enemies.

A Growing Role for the Philippines and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The April 2024 U.S.-Philippines-Japanese summit and a one-on-one meeting between presidents Joe Biden and Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., reconfirmed "ironclad" commitments to their nations' Mutual Defense Treaty.[8] This step, in turn, linked Manila to the AUKUS and QUAD alliance systems and built on the 2023 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), described as "as a key pillar of the U.S.-Philippines alliance, which

supports combined training, exercises, and interoperability between our forces…[that] will accelerate the modernization of our combined military capabilities."[9] EDCA also expanded U.S. access to "Philippine" military bases.

First conquered by the United States in the 1898 Spanish-American and 1899-1903 U.S.-Philippine wars, the Philippines gained formal independence in 1946. U.S. military bases remained there, and in 1951 the Mutual Defense Treaty was signed. While not guaranteeing that the two nations would come to one another's defense if attacked, this document implied a U.S. commitment in its obligations to "consult," if either nation's territorial integrity were threatened.[10] Following the 1986 revolution that ousted the U.S.-backed dictator Ferdinand Marcos, in 1991 Philippine anti-colonial forces won the eviction of U.S. military bases. This victory was short-lived, as the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement provided for the return of the U.S. military under the diplomatic cover of being deployed at Philippine bases.[11]

Despite the U.N. International Court of Permanent Arbitration's 2016 decision against Beijing's South China Sea territorial claims,[12] including of the Spratly Islands claimed by Manila and Hanoi, the Philippines' Duterte government tilted toward Beijing and ignored the ruling. In 2020, the Philippine Defense Secretary notified the U.S. that the Philippines planned to withdraw from the Visiting Forces Agreement, but this threat was withdrawn two years later. In that same year, Ferdinand ("Bong Bong") Marcos was elected President, and under increased pressure from Chinese maritime forces he has fully embraced the Mutual Defense Treaty and expanded strategic partnerships with Japan and Australia.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), also something short of a formal alliance, is geographically and economically positioned to play a potentially pivotal role in regional geopolitics. Created in 1967 to promote peace, security, and economic development in Southeast Asia, its members now include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. As economic strength in the region grew in the 1990s, ASEAN became an increasingly important political and economic force. The association operates with commitments to maintaining diversified union and inclusive development, and has established an ASEAN Economic Community. It has sought to resolve territorial disputes among its members, and between China and ASEAN member states in the South China/West Philippine Sea, in large measure through ongoing negotiations for a South China Sea Code of Conduct. With near equal economic dependency on China, the United States, and the European Union, the bloc has sought to build regional cooperation and to maintain relative neutrality.

Reinforced by the ASEAN Plus Three and East Asia Summit processes, ASEAN's inclusion of Japan, China, and South Korea, followed by India, New Zealand, Russia, and the U.S., has enhanced its regional influence — in some cases leading the greater powers to integrate ASEAN economic and security priorities into their own policies.

Toward Common Security Alternatives

Given the fears, powers, and vested interests that fuel alliances, the process of replacing the 21st century Indo-Pacific bloc system will require patience and persistence. For this project to succeed, mutual recognition and commitments to trust-building will be essential among all parties to these dangerous military and national tensions. Change is possible, and trust-building measures must be the top priority to reduce fears and provide a basis for common security diplomacy. Replacing the military alliance model will further depend on the development of alternative visions and policies for national and regional security; multifaceted advocacy; and inspired diplomacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Acknowledge past violations and identify the most urgent threats to national and regional security.
2. Communicate with transparency about strategic arsenals and cyber capabilities.
3. Reduce and eventually eliminate provocative military shows of force.
4. Conduct step-by-step diplomacy leading to a Northeast Asia that is free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
5. Diplomatically resolve territorial disputes in the South, East, and West China seas, including through negotiated codes of conduct.
6. Resume arms control and disarmament negotiations.
7. Collaborate to reduce and reverse the climate emergency, and use diplomacy to address other common interests.
8. Track II, track 1.5, and people-to-people diplomacy.
9. Strengthen scientific collaborations and reduce military budgets.
10. Employ popular advocacy, civil society, and peace movement pressure from below.

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Regional Matters

The Role of Regional Organizations in Promoting Common Security

ANURADHA CHENOY AND JOSEPH GERSON

Regional and international organizations and forums play a critical role in promoting common and human security and peace. The Indo-Pacific region benefits from several such organizations that facilitate economic trade and human security for their partners and give a collective voice to the idea of regional peace, sending a message which in turn informs international peace paradigms.

In recent decades, many multilateral and regional forums have emerged in the Global South, like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and BRICS (originally Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, recently joined by Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates). Other configurations, like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), are designed as regional security organizations; the SCO, originally comprising China, Russia, and the Central Asian republics, has grown to include India, Pakistan, and Iran, while Saudi Arabia and Turkey are aspiring members. This essay looks into the common interests of these organizations to match them with the ideals of common security.

Interestingly, all these forums have evolved to be compatible with the ideals of NAM — the oldest such organization and the most representative of the Global South (as the former European colonies once referred to as the Third World are now known). The transition to independence for former colonies in the wake of World War II coincided with the Cold War and the rise of the bipolar international system. Newly independent countries resisted being drawn into this bipolar competition, joining together as a "non-aligned movement" on the basis of the historic meeting in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 and outlining principles that include: mutual respect for nations' sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in the internal affairs or other countries; equality and mutual support; peaceful co-existence; nonparticipation in military blocs; and non-aggression.[1] Countries that join NAM are expected to adhere to these principles, though there is no treaty to enforce them.

While NAM member countries are seen to be 'neutral' in international politics, they do make political choices on most issues that involve countries of the Global South. Despite the volatility of the international system, NAM has stayed together, growing to include 120 countries; stays out of military alliances, and strives not to get involved in rivalries between major powers. NAM members' common interests, reiterated during the association's 19th meeting in Kampala, Uganda, in January 2024, are: (i) Assert and safeguard their sovereignty and territorial integrity; (ii) Independent foreign policy whereby they have the right to make strategic choices; (iii) Construct and support a

LEFT FROM TOP: FORMER U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN WITH MINISTERIAL DELEGATION OF NAM IN 2005 (CREDIT: U.N. PHOTO/EVAN SCHNEIDER); DELEGATES AT 2024 BRICS MEDIA SUMMIT (CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK / GALINA SAVINICH)

multipolar global system; (iv) Oppose unilateral economic measures such as sanctions; (v) Look for the best development choice and multiple partners — from both West and East; (vi) Support global peace.[2]

Managing Differences, Finding Commonalities

Regional organizations in the Indo-Pacific hold similar positions to those of NAM, but have been hampered by differences and disagreements between member states; for example, SAARC is bogged down because of the India-Pakistan bilateral disputes, while ASEAN, despite 50 years of attempting economic integration, has been unable to to reach a consensus on economic integration or address many common issues of security and concern like labor migration, rights, and climate change.

Nevertheless, these regional associations meet regularly, engage on common issues, and try and forge consensus; furthermore, they have achieved successes that support common security approaches. ASEAN, despite its shortcomings, is a success story as a regional grouping that acts together on many economic issues of common interest. For example, it has negotiated free trade agreements for a number of countries including India, China, and Australia. ASEAN meets with global powers, in events such as the ASEAN-U.S. Summit and the ASEAN-China Summit, to protect the region's security. ASEAN has also managed and mediated several intra-ASEAN disputes, while others have been submitted to the International Court of Justice. However, several disagreements between member states of ASEAN persist, especially regarding overlapping maritime and territorial claims. Thailand and Cambodia have had border clashes, and there is civil war in Myanmar. But ASEAN provides a forum for managing these disputes.

The SCO, an initiative of China and Russia to foster regional engagements among Central Asian states, has expanded into a regional organization focused on trade and investments, connectivity and regional stability, countering terrorism, and curbing radicalism. Instability in Afghanistan has been a major concern of the SCO, but the organization is not a security alliance like the Collective Security Treaty Organization, in which an attack on one member state can be taken as an attack on all and can involve a joint response.

Both the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the League of Arab States (known informally as the Arab League) facilitate the resolution of economic and security concerns. Regional organizations with purely economic interests — such as OPEC and the South Asian Free Trade Area — play a focused role in regional trade. Most of these groupings have been lackluster, but Israel's actions in Gaza have activated both the Arab League and the OIC in defending the Palestine cause, calling for a ceasefire and giving humanitarian aid.[3]

The BRICS grouping of emerging powers, formed at the initiative of Moscow in 2009, is both institutionalizing and expanding — with five new members added in 2024. Collectively, the founding members' economies contributed 36% of world output in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, leaping to 56% of PPP output and 79% of world growth by 2015.[4] These countries' common interest is in showing that a lens based only on the advanced Western economies is an outmoded tool for viewing the world economy. In its very first meeting (the 2009 BRICS Summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia), BRICS declared twin goals of reviving the global economy and emphasizing the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace. BRICS is committed to U.N. goals on sustainable development, a global commons for trade and development, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 on enhancing women's roles and participation in peace and security. BRICS is committed to international law and fair rules for trade and finance, and established a New Development Bank that is leading initiatives in the use of national currencies among U.N. member countries.

The BRICS international agenda of sovereignty, multipolarity, non-interference, non-intervention, and opposition to sanctions and other coercive economic

DESPITE THE VOLATILITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, **NAM HAS STAYED TOGETHER**, GROWING TO INCLUDE 120 COUNTRIES; STAYS OUT OF MILITARY ALLIANCES, **AND STRIVES NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN RIVALRIES BETWEEN MAJOR POWERS.**

measures reflects key principles of peace. Although BRICS has not taken up any directly security-related projects, it has opposed terrorism and favors holistic peace. BRICS is opposed to all forms of hegemony and unilateralism, favoring instead multilateralism and respect for sovereignty. This BRICS agenda and commitment is endorsed by regional organizations associated with the Global South, including NAM and the SCO. Global South nations look to BRICS to lead, and especially to take developing countries along the growth trajectory.

Conclusion

Regional organizations are an established site for interactions in the Indo-Pacific, just as they are in the Global South. A survey of these organizations shows that their focus is on regional peace, security, and economic development, which they see as interlinked. These organizations have derived strength and vision from the Non-Aligned Movement, the oldest of the regional organizations of the Global South.

A comparison of the Indo-Pacific's regional organizations shows certain similarities in aims: sovereignty and territorial integrity; nonintervention in each other's domestic affairs; not participating in global military alliances or taking sides in international conflicts; and pursuing independent foreign policy and strategic autonomy. Not one of these regional organizations sees the West or any grouping as an enemy or threat; rather than opposing these powers, regional organizations in the Indo-Pacific seek to co-exist parallel to them. Consistent with this stance, such entities have an interest in the peaceful resolution and negotiation of interstate conflicts; a commitment to development and to reducing poverty; and the desire to carve out a path independent of those traditionally laid down by the superpowers.

Their goals resonate with the paradigm proposed in the Olof Palme International Center's Policies for Common Security and Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need for regional common security, and regional organizations like ASEAN should consider this.
2. Any conflict within the region needs to be resolved through negotiations and mediations within the region. Superpowers should keep out of regional disputes.
3. Most Indo-Pacific countries do not want to be part of strategic containment against another country. Such containment leads to an arms race and exacerbates tensions within the region.
4. Introduce a moratorium on all wars for a two-year period as a global trial.
5. Neutral, non-aligned states and regional organizations should follow their own paths, without pressure to choose military alliances.

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CREDIT: UN PHOTO/LOJE FELIPE

MOHAMED MUIZZU, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES, ADDRESSES U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Small But Significant

The Role of Small States in Promoting Common Security

ENKHSAIKHAN JARGALSAIKHAN

The great majority of the world's nearly 200 sovereign nations are considered "small states." These nations pursue the same objectives of ensuring security, prosperity, and well-being for their peoples as their larger counterparts. Though many criteria may be used, there is no consensus definition of what makes a "small state," but in general, they are characterized by having limited human and material resources and by the lack or absence of hard power to defend their security, developmental, and other interests.[1]

All sovereign states are considered equal in international relations and recognized as such by the United Nations Charter and contemporary international law. Thus their security and other interests and needs are determined by those states themselves, mindful of the prevailing environment and factors such as their material and human resource base, level of development, and geographical location — including proximity to areas of great power interest or rivalry. Like other states, small countries differ — with some preferring to be rather passive in international relations, while others tend to promote an active policy or maintain the status quo. Many work closely with their peers; others choose to work closely with great powers or become their allies. Many are well-organized middle-income states with proactive foreign policies and can serve as models for others. No state is too small to contribute to a common cause or to be a relevant international actor.

Leverage through Cooperation

In this era of transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world, the emergence of the G20, BRICS, and other international or regional forums provides opportunities for small states to enhance their engagement with the outside world, amplify their views and voices, and level the playing field in international diplomacy. In this sense, small states can be considered natural generators of smart power, as they make judicious use of both hard and soft power to achieve their goals.

Though the specific national interests of small states depend on their location, relations with other states, and many other factors, some nevertheless play an important role in international relations. For instance, the initiative of Malta and the active involvement of Sri Lanka and Singapore have contributed to the development of the principles and norms of the contemporary law of the seas.[2] Small states also played an important role in promoting the goal of establishing the International Criminal Court; the conclusion of the Ottawa treaty on prohibiting landmines and the Arms Trade Treaty; and the conclusion and entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Historically, small states have often been treated as objects of more powerful nations' international ambitions, rather than as full partners. The Charter of the United Nations, by recognizing the sovereign equality of all states as the basis of international law, allowed small states — as the saying goes — to be at the table instead of on the menu. Since then, a number of international conferences have involved universal participation of U.N. member states to codify and progressively develop international law such as the law of the seas mentioned above, diplomatic and consular relations, treaty law, humanitarian law, international trade regulations, and more. In all these processes small states have played their due role in considering the issues as well as expressing their support by signing and ratifying conventions and treaties. They also express their interest in the further development and strengthening of international law and justice.

Meeting Shared Challenges

Globalization through the rising role of modern information and transportation technologies has led to the broader movement of people, goods, and ideas, bringing states and peoples closer together. Meanwhile, threats to humanity such as nuclear weapons proliferation, climate change, and the COVID pandemic vividly demonstrate the need for all to pitch in on jointly addressing such challenges, with each contributing based on their comparative advantage. Hence small states must be considered not as mere *beneficiaries* of security, but also as potential *contributors* to common security based on their comparative advantages — including geographical location as well as observation, experience, and intuitive foresight.

"NO STATE IS TOO SMALL TO CONTRIBUTE TO A COMMON CAUSE OR **TO BE A RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ACTOR."**

Whereas today's great powers continue their rivalry to shape post-Cold-War international relations with little regard for the interests of the international community as a whole, small states by their very nature are invested in the promotion of common interests through diplomatic and political means and multilateral cooperation. On many occasions such states have proven to be honest brokers, benefitting global interests by using diplomacy to peacefully address issues of common concern — as is seen by the third-party mediator role of Qatar since the 1990s between the U.S. and the Taliban, between Hamas and Israel, and in other conflicts and international issues. In northeast Asia, Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status policy has demonstrated that ensuring security primarily by political and diplomatic means is possible, while its Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asia Security initiative is contributing to confidence-building by bringing together the region's main actors and stakeholders to address common challenges and goals.

In all the examples above, small states leverage diplomacy as an engine of good will, understanding, and possible solutions, while framing challenges as opportunities to use common sense, patience, and perseverance in addressing controversial issues. Their approach is based on solidarity; focusing on concrete objectives; promoting the rule of law; and searching for creative, mutually acceptable solutions rather than zero-sum games.

The attitude that "might makes right" is contrary to the principles and norms of contemporary international law. That is why small states are natural champions of protecting and strengthening international law as a force for justice, rather than only when it is in the interests of a particular state or group of states. Likewise, small states are strong supporters of preventive diplomacy and cooperation, and are often the source of constructive ideas and proposals.

Principles to Fully Involve Small States

The special challenges of small states must be recognized, and support provided to help them overcome these challenges, so as to leverage their indispensable role in international relations.

In this increasingly interconnected world, all states — big and small alike — need to contribute to common security that is based on the understanding that nations and peoples can only feel safe when their counterparts feel safe — a concept as true today as it was four decades ago when it was first developed and promoted. Today there is a broad recognition that security, stability, and prosperity are closely connected with ensuring basic human security goals such as the reduction of poverty and inequality, the promotion of social justice, and the prevention of human suffering — as reflected clearly in the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Raise awareness that the role of small states is acquiring global significance; their support is important for strengthening common security and promoting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
2. Raise awareness that the collective voice of small states is the expression of hopes and challenges of the overwhelming majority of the international community, including in practically addressing the issues of survival and joint development.
3. As the renewed rivalry among the great powers threatens to involve small states as their accessories, supporters, or useful pawns, small states need to play the roles of contributing to confidence-building and bridge-building.
4. Mindful of the role of non-nuclear-weapon states in promoting non-proliferation and disarmament, small states need to play an active role in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones or areas as practical contributions to creating a nuclear-weapon-free world without any exceptions.
5. The common security challenge of climate change must be addressed universally, with people urging their governments to be proactive and not focus only on their own priority areas.
6. Promote multilateralism and level the playing field for all, reducing asymmetry between states and incorporating the indispensable role of small states.

The Climate for Change

Common Security — The Only Rational Approach To Halt Climate Change And Restore our Environment

BY SEAN CONNER

Climate change and environmental degradation are among the most urgent challenges of the 21st century — and may illustrate better than any other issue the urgency of adopting a common security framework. These twin concerns require global cooperation and immediate action with a long-term strategic view if we hope to mitigate the worst consequences and reestablish a sustainable and resilient climate.

Climate Change and Human Conflict

Non-academic local and indigenous experts, as well as credentialed scientists from all backgrounds, attest to a severe increase in extreme weather events, melting glaciers and sea ice, and heat waves. In East Asia specifically, the strength and intensity of typhoons, cyclones, and monsoons has notably increased; rising sea levels threaten the destruction of small islands and coastal cities and towns; and agricultural production is at risk, threatening food security and supply chains across the region.

These and other already-present effects of climate change exacerbate ongoing conflicts and threaten to spark new ones. Food and water insecurity, physical and mental health impacts, and a sharpening of economic disparities are some of the many conflict-related factors of climate change. As the impact of climate change becomes even more acute, we can expect these factors, and their resulting outcomes such as increased migration,

LEFT: SAILORS IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH PREPARING FOR MONSOON SEASON (CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK / NASMUL ISLAM)

socio-political crises, and violent conflict, to spread. At the same time, the activities of militaries around the globe are a major contributor to the climate crisis, with a recent study estimating their footprint to include 5.5% of all global greenhouse gas emissions; only four of the world's nations produce more.[1]

The Distinct Challenge of Environmental Degradation

While often mentioned only as an afterthought or in relation to climate change, environmental degradation is itself an existential challenge that has developed in parallel to the climate emergency. Key contributors include the exploitation of plants, animals, and other organisms; the increase in invasive species; air, water, and soil pollution; and the destruction of natural habitats and ecosystems. Like climate change, environmental degradation leads to the loss of sources of livelihood — agriculture, fishing and hunting, and clean air and water — which can in provoke conflicts over resources and forced migration from newly uninhabitable land. Drastic shifts in the environment also increase the risk of global health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there may still be room for national-level maneuvering on environmental regulation and restoration, many factors are now beyond the control of any single state. International trade has become a staple for most nations, but is also a leading driver of the spread of invasive species. Pollution ejected into the oceans or skies can easily cross borders, as noted in China's objections to the discharge of radioactive water from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The shipping of waste from the West to the Global South, in particular Southeast Asia, is another illustration of the international character of environmental destruction.

The role of military facilities in environmental degradation must also be noted. For instance, the chemicals used in fire extinguishing exercises, particularly per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also referred to as "forever chemicals," have been found around military facilities throughout the East Asia region, in many cases spreading across national boundaries. These chemicals are known to have deadly effects on human, animal, and plant life alike, and contaminate natural environments for extensive periods of time. Furthermore, the construction of military bases and the pollution from military exercises are known to have irremediable effects on their surroundings, as seen in the construction of a new military base on Okinawa which threatens the bay's dugong population.

Common Security Solutions

The evident overlap of climate change, environmental degradation, and militarization is proof of the need to immediately address climate change in order to ensure human and common security for the future. Neither the causes nor the effects of climate change and environmental destruction are bound by state borders. Moreover, leaders cannot fight against climate change through traditional security infrastructures like the military. These problems can be addressed only through international coordination, diplomacy, and political will.

Such arguments have been made to a limited degree through multilateral gatherings such as the Conference of Parties of the U.N. Climate Change

WHILE THERE MAY STILL BE ROOM FOR NATIONAL-LEVEL MANEUVERING ON ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION AND RESTORATION, **MANY FACTORS ARE NOW BEYOND THE CONTROL OF ANY SINGLE STATE**. INTERNATIONAL TRADE HAS BECOME A STAPLE FOR MOST NATIONS, BUT IS ALSO A LEADING DRIVER OF THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES.

Conference and U.N. Biodiversity Conference, and through bilateral approaches, such as the attempt by the United States and China to compartmentalize their relations and make progress on climate change and environmental damage.

These efforts, while meeting the bare minimum requirements for multilateral exchange, have not achieved the progress necessary, with many experts now arguing that there is a very narrow gap to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. What could cooperation on climate change look like if we took the issue as a serious threat to our common security?

The recommended steps below, which are especially focused on East Asia, can serve to build trust between parties and help them find common ground on win-win climate solutions. However, a significant portion of the responsibility for change must fall upon the largest historic polluters, many of which are outside of the region. Therefore, it is recommended that the East Asia region simultaneously work on regional solutions while also negotiating with outside historic polluters from a position of unity, demonstrating leadership by positive example.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Achieve mutual reductions in military expenditure and military exercises.
2. Direct funding toward compensation for loss and damage experienced by small island populations.
3. Require all states in the region to report on military greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Share and support transitional technologies to green energy.
5. Create procedures and institutions to ensure representation of the most strongly affected populations, and particularly indigenous communities, in all climate and environmental policy spaces.
6. Invest responsibly in green/sustainable infrastructure.
7. Draft regional plans and strategies for extreme weather events and storms.
8. Seek to resolve existing regional conflicts through diplomatic, non-military means.
9. Encourage the exchange of experts and professionals in the science and technology sectors to learn from different contexts and consider different solutions.
10. Raise the voices of those experiencing the most drastic effects of climate change.
11. Encourage regional forums for exchange, similar to the Conference of Parties.
12. Involve civil society in the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions and the implementation of green technologies.

Conclusion:

Why We Need Common Security in the Indo-Pacific

ANURADHA CHENOY & JOSEPH GERSON

Escalating Danger

All strategic indicators point towards a global confrontation in the Indo-Pacific. This region is bordered by six nuclear powers (the United States, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea) – with China and the U.S. confronting each other militarily, both over Taiwan and in the South China Sea.

Under the Biden administration, the U.S. has built up a lattice of military alliances designed to contain China. Seeking to create a buffer region analogous to that defined by the U.S. Monroe Doctrine in 1823, China has both declared and asserted its sovereignty via its "nine-dash line," claiming more than 90% of the South China Sea. Russia, caught in a confrontation with the U.S. in Ukraine, has established a comprehensive strategic partnership with China as part of a Russian-Chinese-North Korean entente. Russia has stitched a military alliance with North Korea that asserts Russian interests in the region. Riddled with hundreds of U.S. military bases and installations, this region contains several inter-state and intrastate conflicts that are frozen or unresolved; these are susceptible to external interventions, which when fused with the great power competition may erupt into dangerous military conflagration.

The Indo-Pacific region is in need of a security paradigm shift away from confrontational competition; common security is both an obvious and a viable alternative.

In 2011, the U.S. administration announced a "pivot to Asia" policy and a 'rebalancing' with the intention to maintain U.S. hegemony by restraining China.[1] This process, accelerated under President Trump in 2017, was intended to show the indivisibility of U.S. and NATO security interests across the Pacific and Indian oceans, and reframed the region as the "Indo-Pacific." With the Ukraine war in 2022 and a policy of dual containment (of Russia and China), the U.S. revitalized an interlocking network of military alliances in the region, involving its allies in this great power competition and exerting itself to maintain American primacy.

Hot Spots

Several locations in the Indo-Pacific warrant special concern and attention:

- Taiwan, which China insists on reclaiming as its integral province; China considers this reunification non-negotiable, while the U.S. seeks to protect, or at least encourage, Taiwan's de facto independence.
- The Korean Peninsula, which remains divided — with hostility between the North and South and no peace treaty more than 70 years after the Armistice Agreement.

- The geostrategically vital South China and West Philippine seas; the Philippines, whose territorial waters are being contested by China, having deepened its alliances with the U.S. and Japan as part of those nations' containment strategies.
- Frozen and unresolved India vs. China tensions and the related India-Pakistan border hostility.

Taiwan

As of this writing, the most volatile situation in the region is the competition over the future of Taiwan. The province was separated from mainland China in 1895 and ruled by Tokyo as a colony, as a consequence of the first Sino-Japanese war. The severance was perpetuated with the Chinese nationalists' defeat in China's civil war, and Taiwan became a de facto U.S. protectorate. Beijing has long been resolved to reclaim Taiwan as a Chinese province — preferably by peaceful means, but militarily if Taipei takes irreversible steps toward full independence. In the 1970s, when the U.S. and China normalized their relations, and at a time when the Nationalist government in Taiwan still claimed to be the legitimate rulers of all of China, the U.S. and China agreed to the "One China Policy." However, the U.S. Congress then immediately adopted the Taiwan Relations Act, which reinforced the U.S. protectorate role.

In recent decades these tensions have become further complicated by the development of democratic culture and the growing identity of many in Taiwan, especially younger people, as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. In violation of the normalization agreement with China, the U.S. has increased its sales of advanced weapons to Taiwan, and U.S., Chinese, Japanese, and European naval and air forces have all engaged in provocative military maneuvers in which a single incident, accident, or miscalculation carries the possibility of triggering massive military escalation.

North and South Korea

The Korean peninsula is another high-risk, high-stakes area. It has now been 71 years since the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed, yet this area remains one of the most militarized and dangerous places on earth. More than a million heavily armed South Korean and North Korean forces face one another across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Both sides, as well as the U.S. and Japan, have engaged in provocative military actions. North Korea developed a deterrent nuclear arsenal in response to numerous U.S. threats, preparations, exercises, and explicit threats to initiate nuclear attacks. In 2023, facing the risk that South Korea might develop its own nuclear arsenal to counter that of its northern neighbor, the Washington Declaration provided guarantees of U.S. extended deterrence, and since then the U.S. has dispatched "nuclear assets," including a nuclear-armed warship, to South Korea and its surrounding waters.

The South Korean and U.S. militaries have also conducted numerous and massive "decapitation" and regime change military exercises, and in 2023 and 2024 Presidents Biden and Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida consolidated their tripartite alliance. North Korean agents have infiltrated South Korea, and North Korea has dug tunnels under the DMZ; challenged South Korean naval forces militarily at their contested maritime border; and, by revising its constitution, reaffirmed its status as a nuclear weapons state. Its missile and nuclear weapons tests have violated United Nations resolutions.

In 2024, North Korea's Supreme Leader appeared to rule out reunification with the South, saying that South Korea is just another foreign state and ending decades of intra-Korean diplomacy. This change opens the door to either diplomatic normalization or po-

THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION IS IN NEED OF **A SECURITY PARADIGM SHIFT AWAY FROM CONFRONTATIONAL COMPETITION**; COMMON SECURITY IS BOTH AN OBVIOUS AND A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE.

tential conflict. North Korea and Russia have recently signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that talks of mutual security guarantees in the event of an attack. This increases threat perceptions in the region.

The South China Sea

Bordered by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei, the South China Sea is perhaps the world's most strategically vital waterway. Its waves lap China's southern and eastern coasts; since the Opium Wars, military threats to China have primarily come from the sea. Roughly one-third of world trade, including fuel oil from the Middle East, transits the sea, making it essential to Chinese and other East Asian economies, and one of the most valuable prizes in the U.S.-Chinese cold war.[2] Since the end of World War II, the Sea has been dominated by the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

Recently, China's maritime incursions have become bolder and more frequent. Since the 2000s, China has laid claim to about 90% of the South China Sea, including significant sections of the Exclusive Economic Zones of five Southeast Asian states: Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines. China does not recognize the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ruling in favor of the Philippines' claims to the Scarborough Shoal, which the Chinese forcibly overtook. Instead, the Chinese in response are rapidly militarizing islands on their maritime borders and beyond — both to ward off possible U.S. attacks and to pursue wider regional ambitions. The Philippines is caught in the crossfire of U.S. and China hostile activity in the South China Seas, while the rest of ASEAN does not want to be drawn into a regional confrontation that is not in their interest.

Since 1898, U.S. military bases in the Philippines have served as jumping off points for U.S. wars and military operations across the region. In 2022, Washington announced plans for more military bases to add to the existing five, and in 2024 committed to deploying medium-range missiles in the northern Philippines capable of reaching coastal Chinese cities. United States and allied "Freedom of the Seas" forays, as well as U.S. and Chinese provocative operations in these waters, increase the dangers of unintended conflict.

Such confrontations are backed by new security formations like the QUAD and AUKUS alliances that bring NATO partners like Australia into arrangements that are seen as steps towards the containment of China. The PRC views U.S. security alliances in the Indo-Pacific as assertions of U.S. hegemony, threats to Chinese interests, and instigations of international instability. In reaction, China is forging comprehensive strategic relations with Pacific nations like Fiji and the Solomon Islands, with which it signed a security cooperation agreement in 2022. Russia is concentrating on developing its easternmost territory and the port of Vladivostok on the Pacific, undertaking many collaborations with the Chinese and others.

India

India has unresolved border problems with both Pakistan and China — and all three of these nations are nuclear powers. Pakistan is a strategic partner of both China and the U.S., while India has a long and unwavering strategic partnership with Russia. The U.S., which supported Pakistan against India in the 1970s, seeks to balance the two, and has tried to pull India into a closer strategic alliance; however, India so far remains committed to strategic autonomy and to a multi-vector policy of engaging with all and resolving foreign policy issues bilaterally. India and China are engaged in continuous commander-level talks on their border issues, with sporadic but minor standoffs. Nevertheless, the border demarcation remains contentious.

The Small States Factor

Attuned to today's global transition toward a multipolar international system, the many smaller states in the Indo-Pacific region see an opportunity. These countries view regional alliances, bodies like ASEAN, and forums like BRICS and the G-20 as a protective and collective shield. Further, small states find the opportunity to amplify their voices in the international system through such entities. Small states can be considered natural generators of smart power, and have contributed to important institutions for peace like the International Criminal Court, the Arms Trade Treaty, and the conclusion and entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Putting Survival First

Common Security in the Indo-Pacific Region points the way to an offramp from the escalation taking place in the Indo-Pacific. Under the shadow of warships, war-

planes, and weaponized technologies being wielded in the name of the U.S.-China "security dilemma" — tools that make the daily confrontations occurring in regional hot spots extraordinarily dangerous — we call for regional common security, specifically in Northeast Asia and more broadly in the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. *These essays explain the need for collaborative de-escalation.* We call for a moratorium on further nuclear and conventional and maritime one-upmanship, an immediate return to diplomacy, and a serious engagement on global disarmament. All regional actors must play a role in this deescalation. These governments urgently need to engage in comprehensive risk assessments and involve regional bodies in decision-making.

The real crises are those of climate change, irreversible environmental degradation, and omnicidal nuclear war. Wars and militarization only exacerbate these existential threats. Many indebted countries and a large portion of the world's poorest people live in the Indo-Pacific; conflict and an embittered competitive polarization draw them into further impoverishment and debt, and destabilize a region struggling for development. It is critical to recognize how the serious military crises in Northeast Asia and the South China Sea could drag the Indo-Pacific into a spiral of arms races and militarization while deprioritizing development and peace. To counter this danger, we need to promote active, life-affirming common security dialogue; diplomatic engagement; reignited nuclear disarmament talks; and mechanisms to monitor and control military budgets.

The Indo-Pacific is home to diverse peoples, resources, sea lanes, delicate ecologies, and a layered history; these must not be reduced to chess pieces in the game of geopolitics. Countries in the region that have remained out of the orbit of 'great power politics,' eschewed military alliances, and opted for neutrality — such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam — have retained elements of social cohesion and diversity within their societies and made great steps towards development and security. Such countries practice a form of common security in the region as well as some elements of human security domestically.

Common security for the Indo-Pacific calls for further development and regionalization of common security as outlined in *Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future* and *Policies for Common Security*, offering viable alternatives to the threat of mutual destruction and focusing instead on our joint survival.[3,4] Small states have found ways to support this vision, as have many regional organizations such as ASEAN, the SCO, Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries, and others. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which is once again gathering force in the Global South, advocates neutrality and staying independent of military blocs, and is popular with most countries of the Indo-Pacific. NAM shares a vision of common security; it supports independent and sovereign foreign policy for its members and is actively fostering multipolarity.

Common security can be thought of as inclusive security. This framework strengthens the architecture of peace and security; is linked to disarmament; intersects with human security; supports the U.N. Women, Peace and Security Agenda; is grounded in tolerance, anti-racism, pluralism, and co-existence; and promotes shared prosperity. In this interconnected world, states need to consider a shift away from their hard security paradigms in favor of common security and common solutions. Including individual states in the nuclear-weapon-free zone regime would ensure that there would not be blind spots or grey areas in the nuclear-weapon-free world we are working to establish, but that these nations would instead be important building blocks thereof.

Endnotes

1. Eckert, P. (2011, November 11). Clinton declares "America's Pacific century". *Reuters*.
2. Center for Strategic & International Studies (2021, January 25). How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea? CSIS China Power Project.
3. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (1983). *Policies for Common Security*. Taylor & Francis.
4. Olof Palme International Center, International Peace Bureau, & International Trade Union Confederation (2022). *Common Security 2022: For Our Shared Future*. Olof Palme International Center, International Peace Bureau, & International Trade Union Confederation.

8 Vital Recommendations

to Promote Common Security in the Indo-Pacific Region

1 Commit to common security diplomacy

Exclude war under any circumstances, instead building common security through negotiation, diplomacy, trust, tolerance, and understanding of other cultures. Advance common security as an organic process — endorsed by the people who are most directly affected, and flowing from civil society and parliamentarians to those who exercise state power. Establish an inclusive mechanism for regional threat reduction, confidence-building, and security promotion.

2 Reduce tensions in the Taiwan Strait

The U.S., China, and Taiwan must take coordinated action to avert potential war. These governments should all demilitarize the Taiwan Strait, with a shared understanding that resolution of the Taiwan issue should not be attained by military means. For Taipei, following the "one China" ROC constitution to manage cross-Strait relations is crucial. For the U.S., supporting Taiwanese independence as a way to irk China should not be mistaken for expanding economic and cultural relations with Taipei. For Beijing, offering carrots is better than waving sticks in order to win the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people.

3 Declare an End to the Korean war and Conclude a Peace Treaty

Reduce conventional armaments in Northeast Asia, denuclearize the Korean peninsula, and establish a Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Support the Ulaanbatar Dialogue and establish war prevention and peacebuilding forums involving all parties to the Six-Party Talks.

4 Demilitarize and Denuclearize the South China Sea

Respect the security interests of all nations involved for Law of the Sea Treaty and the U.N. International Court of Arbitration decision. Support both multilateral and bilateral ASEAN-Chinese negotiations for a South China Sea code of conduct. De-escalate military confrontations, cease military base construction, and withdraw missile deployments. Create a regional conference for security and cooperation in the South China/West Philippine Seas.

5 Recognize and Support the Role of Small States

The legitimate security interests of small states must be respected by the major powers, and their role in facilitating regional security cooperation recognized and supported. Promote regional stability and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in an inclusive process. Ensure that sufficient preparations are in place as sea levels rise and extreme weather events threaten people's security and survival, especially in small states.

6 Directly Address the Threats Posed by Nuclear and High-Tech Weapons

Universalize "no first use" nuclear policies and resume U.S.-Russian arms control negotiations. Support strategic stability diplomacy between the U.S., China, Russia, and Japan. Establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. Freeze military spending and halt artificial intelligence and other high-tech weaponization research, development, and deployment.

7 Avoid Strategic Bloc-Building and Military Alliances

As an alternative to dangerous and destabilizing global military alliances, develop inclusive regional common security culture and structures. Address regional conflicts within the Indo-Pacific region, independently from great power rivalries.

8 Strengthen civil society

Common security requires the enlightened commitment of many social forces. The active engagement of the peace movement — nationally and internationally — is indispensable.

We urge deeper collaborations between peace movements, freedom of speech and freedom of nonviolent action, and more people-to-people cooperation:

- ✓ Promote the necessity and benefit of preventive actions, policies, and diplomacy to reduce the risk of war.
- ✓ Raise awareness of the gravity of the militarization-war continuum and the imminent danger of recent massive military build-up and confrontational activities by all sides in Northeast Asia.
- ✓ Warn regional policymakers of the potential outbreak, escalation, or recurrence of violent conflict and the necessity of preventive measures and platforms.
- ✓ Build support for a regional and international conflict prevention mechanism towards common security, working at multiple levels of civic and governmental diplomatic platforms.

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