Asia-Pacific Security

Policy Challenges

EDITED BY

David W. Lovell

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Notes on Contributors

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Preface to the second printing

This collection began its life in discussions held in Canberra in August 2001 between the School of Politics of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy (UNSW@ADFA) and the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS). The results of that very productive dialogue seem to have struck a chord both among readers of the book, because their demand for it has led to a substantial second printing, and among the contributors themselves. I am pleased to record here that a second set of discussions was held in Shanghai between SIIS and UNSW@ADFA in May 2004, focused on security issues in the Asia-Pacific region since the 'war on terror' began. It is clear that Chinese scholars of international relations have much to add to the general understanding of Asia-Pacific security. We need to do more to ensure that their voices are heard.

This book first went to press just before the war against Iraq in 2003 was officially declared. There was enough information available even then to suspect that the advertised reasons for starting such a war were weak, dubious, or dangerous. Those suspicions have now been confirmed. What was perhaps less appreciated before the war was that as a result the United States would be on trial as much as the terrorists it sought to pursue, if not more so. This is not to say that international terrorism is not a major problem. But it highlights a key message of this book: that putting terrorism into its context, not forgetting the abiding security concerns, and responding appropriately, are central to the security challenges of the current period. Foreign-policy professionals, to whom this book is first and foremost addressed, must always keep an eye on the larger—regional, international, conceptual and historical—pictures. I have addressed these matters in an 'Epilogue' written especially for this second printing.

This book remains a tribute to the participants in the original discussions of 2001. I was impressed by the good spirit evident in those discussions, and that spirit remains in all my dealings with my colleagues in the SIIS. The collection does not speak with one voice, but I think that is one of its strengths.

I want to record again my thanks to the original contributors, and those who helped me bring this work to completion. I continue to be grateful to the excellent editorial staff of ISEAS in Singapore, especially for the opportunity they have now provided to update this work and give it an even wider distribution. As always, any errors that remain are my responsibility.

David W. Lovell

Contents

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Australia and Asia-Pacific security after September 11: an introduction

David W. Lovell

The aim of this collection is to examine the long-term security issues and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, with particular reference to Australia and its regional role. The Asia-Pacific is large and diverse, and has only recently begun to acquire a sense of itself as a distinct region, committed to a security dialogue. Since the end of the Cold War a positive regional role for Australia has become as imperative as it is difficult. This book is designed chiefly for those involved in the policy-making process. It therefore tries to avoid scholarly jargon as much as possible, but it tries also to be clear and precise in what it says.

At least two major assumptions were made in putting together the brief for this work: first, that Australia can have, and should have, an important role in the region (though it may not be decisive); second, that the core strategic realities are for the foreseeable future bound up with the dispositions of China, Japan and the United States. How Australia might rise to the challenge of a constructive regional role in light of the realities of power, and in light of its long and dismal record of relative uninterest in the region, is a matter that exercises politicians, foreign-policy professionals and academics alike. It calls for intelligence and sensitivity, for a modulated approach to Australia's key alliance relationship with the United States, and for a clearer definition of the goal of regional engagement. In the sometimes volatile arena of world politics—and especially when the powerful demand that others make a choice between 'us' or 'them'—intelligence and sensitivity are put to the severest test.

There is little doubt that the Asia-Pacific region is of enormous importance to Australia, in that it encompasses the bulk of Australia's trade, is a source of diverse cultural influences, and is inextricably bound up with Australia's security. But in engaging with the region, there is a pervasive sense among commentators

that Australia has handled the challenges, on the whole, rather poorly. Australia is a rich country that looks both miserly and cruel in its treatment of refugee claimants, and has acted with little sensitivity in relations with South Pacific states, even passing on its refugee problems to some of them. It appears too eager to go to US assistance in the 'war on terror', and has blundered in some of its public pronouncements on pre-emptive strikes against possible terrorist threats against Australia. And its relations with its closest neighbour remain damaged after East Timor's independence, at a time when Indonesia could do with some support in its democratization process. Whatever the rights and wrongs of each of these points, Australia appears remote from regional feelings, and is regarded as a fair-weather friend to regional states.

In their various ways, the contributors to this book have addressed the realities and particular challenges confronting the region and Australia. This introduction will outline some of the main themes examined in the book, but it will also discuss the security implications of the current 'war on terror', and how they relate to the long-term strategic realities in the region. The 'war on terror', important though it may be, threatens to obscure the long list of security concerns that remain pressing and contentious. And this new 'war', by appearing to be a war on Islam, threatens to widen the gulf between Australia and its neighbours. Now is the time for calm thinking about long-term interests, and intelligent diplomacy in their service.

The changing security agenda

Even before the end of the Cold War there was a growing awareness that traditional understandings of security—as chiefly a matter of secure national boundaries, defended by military force—were inadequate to describe the range of threats to states and peoples. Non-traditional threats to security encompass a range of matters, from ethnic and religious conflict, people-, drug- and arms-smuggling, through terrorism, environmental degradation, deforestation and water scarcity, to transnational crime and natural disasters (Chalk 2000). They cross borders with impunity; they cannot be solved by individual states, nor by the employment of armed forces alone. Non-traditional threats to security have the potential to destabilize states and whole regions (Dupont 2001). Maintaining security is no longer simply about defending the state from armed invasion by other states.

Such a broadened understanding of security means that we must look not just to a range of new threats to national security, new ways of dealing with those threats (where military might is not always appropriate), and new (non-state) actors in security matters. It means that we must consider the goals of security as consisting of the safety and well-being of individuals (Buzan 1991) and the stability of regions, as well as the territorial integrity of particular states. The reference points of 'security' have changed. We need also to ensure that 'security' itself, despite its expanded meaning, continues to have a genuine content, and does not simply become an all-embracing 'hurrah!' word.

Though the 'new security' models originated among theorists, they are beginning to have a wider currency among policy-makers because they represent matters of genuine concern. Theory, as theorists rightly keep telling us, is essential to policy-making, and even unreconstructed pragmatists have some theory of international relations or security on which they (often unconsciously) rely. The theory provides a framework within which empirical material is chosen, examined, sorted and arranged. Theories give us clues about what to look for, what is 'significant', and what is expected (they therefore help us to recognize the unexpected). As Joseph Nye (1989, 339–40) has explained, 'Theory ties facts together. It helps the policy-maker to understand and predict. Even the most pragmatic policy-makers fall back on some theoretical constructs because neither all the facts nor their relationships are ever known'. Without good theory linking parts of the larger picture together, we are like the six blind men who each examined a part of the elephant, and did not recognize that it was an elephant.

Studies of contesting theoretical approaches to international relations—realism, neo-realism, liberalism, behaviouralism, and so on—may seem to get bogged down in abstruse jargon, and may have only a limited utility in generating predictions, but they are nevertheless important in our overall understanding of security situations. Though this book is not primarily about theoretical debates, except in so far as Chen Dongxiao explores how constructivism might help policy-makers to understand better the realities of Asia-Pacific security, each of the chapters implicitly challenges policy-makers to be self-conscious about their assumptions, preconceptions, and perspectives. Being theoretically self-conscious also means being culturally self-conscious, since the major tools we have for analysing inter-state relations have grown out of European experience, and the balance of power assumptions at the heart of realism, for example, may not translate easily into the Asia-Pacific situation—a point well made by Baker and Sebastian (1996).

The new security issues raise particularly intense challenges for the Asia-Pacific region (Tow, Thakur and Hyun 2000, Part 3). The whole range of 'human security' issues are present here, as are the difficulties of identifying whose responsibility they are. Indeed, the Asia-Pacific region throws into sharp relief the tension between 'sovereignty', on the one hand, and intervention on behalf of human security matters, on the other. For 'sovereignty' is a way of quarantining issues, of locating the state responsible for particular issues, and of saying to others: this is our business, keep out! This view of sovereignty and the related notion of non-intervention has been at the bedrock of international relations since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

The new security agenda cuts across this old assignment of responsibilities—and it is important to note that 'sovereignty' implies not just rights to adjudicate within a territory, but also responsibilities—and creates considerable consternation over whether it may give a licence to meddling and interference. Where should the line be drawn about when outside intervention is

justified, and when it is not? In whose interests can intervention be undertaken, and whose culture and values will prevail? In all these respects, human security concerns create problems for states and non-state actors trying to deal with them. Yet to insist on 'sovereignty' in the face of pressing transnational issues often means that no-one will take responsibility for addressing or solving them.

The new security agenda highlights legitimate areas of cross-border concern, but Asia-Pacific states have responded cautiously to its imperatives. Non-intervention in the affairs of others is an established part of the practice of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but states are beginning to recognize their complex interrelations and to cooperate in numerous areas (Funston 2000). Caution is understandable, since in some respects the new security agenda might become a recipe for enlarging the scope of issues over which conflict may occur. The key issue, therefore, is how intervention can be advanced in ways that are not destructive of existing inter-state relations. Thus, reconceptualizing 'security' to take greater account of the individual, human dimension as well as the state does not mean that security is any easier to achieve. The United Nations' intervention in East Timor (with the major impetus from Australia, but with the participation of a number of Asia-Pacific states) was perhaps a triumph of humanitarian intervention, but it continues to sour relations between Australia and Indonesia.

The rethinking of 'security' is slowly but surely feeding into security practice in the Asia-Pacific. It has paralleled the emergence of the region's sense of itself, as it becomes more committed to the institutionalization of a regional security dialogue. Des Ball (1996) has argued that institutionalization of the confidence and security-building measures (CSBM) process in the Asia-Pacific is a major step forward in the region, and was previously thought unachievable. The rapidity of this change gives hope that even more can be done. Meetings of government officials in the so-called 'first-track' process—the forum of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—have been joined by non-government meetings and workshops in the 'second-track' process. The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), established in 1992, discusses traditional security matters as well as supporting formal working groups on 'Transnational Crime' and on 'Comprehensive and Cooperative Security'. But it remains true that ASEAN must do a great deal more if it wants to become a genuine security community; in particular, it must move beyond the existing CSBMs to preventive diplomacy. The courage to take that step is still some time away. In the meantime the region, like the world, has become transfixed by US responses to the dramatic terrorist attacks of what is popularly known as '9–11'.

The region since September 11, 2001

On the morning of September 11, 2001, two large passenger aircraft were hijacked and flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third

aircraft was flown into the Pentagon building near Washington, DC (the home of the US Defense Department), and a fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania, apparently foiled in the attempt to be used as a missile against the Capitol building in Washington. These attacks led to the deaths of nearly 3,000 people, of diverse nationalities and religions.

The hijackers were soon identified as members of an extremist Muslim terrorist network, al-Qa'ida, led (or at least greatly influenced) by a wealthy and charismatic Saudi, Osama bin Laden. Al-Qa'ida was based and trained in Afghanistan, and was supported by the government of that war-ravaged country. Osama bin Laden, while never claiming direct responsibility for the attack on the United States or articulating any immediate demands, nevertheless made it clear that this was part of a war between 'Islam' and 'the west'. This war had unknowingly been 'declared' by the bombing of US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania in August 1998, and by the suicide bombing in Yemen of the American warship USS Cole in October 2000.

This series of events, but especially the destruction of the World Trade Center (WTC), was dramatic and shocking, and caught US intelligence and law-enforcement agencies—embroiled in 'turf-wars' and personality clashes—unprepared. The WTC impact and collapse were televised, and repeated again and again. They struck at the symbolic centres of US power. But most of all, they struck at the very core of the American psyche. For Americans, wars and battles occurred elsewhere, in other parts of the world. Their homeland, secure through every war in the twentieth century, was no longer untouched. The 'war on terror' has now become an American preoccupation.

Regional reactions to the September 11 attack varied. The Australian Prime Minister, who was in Washington, DC on the very day of the attack, responded quickly and strongly in support of US efforts to track down and destroy the perpetrators and their backers. He cited the 1952 ANZUS Treaty as the basis on which Australian support for the United States could be justified. In Australia itself there was incomprehension mixed with outrage against the terrorists. Many governments and intellectual elites in the Asia-Pacific region were formally supportive of the United States—even if spurred to comment by the US demand that everyone must take sides—and were concerned about the stirrings of radical Islam within their own communities; but many ordinary citizens seemed to have rather mixed feelings, including the view that the United States deserved terrorist punishment. The latter response reflects a widespread resentment at US power, both military and economic, which is experienced as arrogant. Pakistan—which had formerly been a pariah because of its military dictatorship and support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan—regained some international standing (and considerable aid) by assisting the United States against terrorist bases in Afghanistan. Other states paid greater attention to detecting and combating Islamic extremist groups in their midst.

The terrorism associated with extremist Islam will not simply disappear with the demise of the Taliban, or any other, regime. It is born of despair, poverty and helplessness, and is channelled by fanatical Muslims who, according to Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, have misinterpreted and deliberately ignored the peaceful teachings of Islam (Mahathir 2002). This is one reason why leadership is needed to translate Muslim hostility against 'the west' into a program for self-reliance and pride. It is also the reason why a 'war' on terrorism is misleading either as a description or as a metaphor. The causes of terrorism cannot be eradicated militarily. The continuing terror campaign of Islamic extremism was duly confirmed in October 2002, when a nightclub popular with western tourists in the Indonesian resort of Bali was bombed, and more than 190 people from 18 countries died in the explosion and subsequent fire. The group responsible for this attack, Jemaah Islamiyah, has links with al-Qa'ida.

The Bali bombing put an end to the scepticism which had earlier greeted US claims that the Asia-Pacific region was a base for terrorism. But terrorism is a security issue only partly in the narrow, military sense of that term. It is also, and perhaps more fundamentally, a human security issue. For the main reasons for the rise of extremist forms of Islam can be found in the continuing poverty and deprivation of many people in states that have significant Muslim populations. These states have proved to be fertile ground for recruits for terrorist groups, who find readily available images of a prosperous and decadent west to feed the resentment of their own powerlessness. The rise of extremist Islam can also be seen as a consequence of the disastrous Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, from 1979 to 1990. Muslim groups began organizing against the Soviets, and continued when they had left, a struggle which ultimately resulted in the Taliban regime and its al-Qa'ida partners.

The initial regional responses to the attacks of September 11 meant that many countries jumped onto the US-led bandwagon against terrorism. There were many advantages for joining, at least rhetorically, the 'war on terrorism'. China's relations with the United States—under great pressure over the 'spy-plane' collision earlier in 2001—thawed after China's expressions of regret over the attacks. The United States lifted sanctions against India and Pakistan, imposed after they had tested nuclear weapons in May 1998. The Philippines gained US military advisers to help in its continuing struggle with bandits, now dubbed 'terrorists'. There were, of course, different levels of support in the region for the US military campaign in late 2001 against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (Operation *Enduring Freedom*), with only Australia and Japan supplying military forces. And there has been much less support for the imminent US-led war against Iraq, not just because of doubts about the extent of Iraq's program for weapons of mass destruction (WMD), nor simply because of widespread scepticism about the Iraqi regime's support for terrorist groups such as al-Qa'ida, but also because there is no evidence of an immediate danger to the United States from Iraq. For the

United States, the 'war on terror' seems to have become a ready excuse for furthering existing campaigns.

It is not just the Americans for whom 'terrorism' has become a convenient label. In the Asia-Pacific region, there is a fear that the looseness of the term can be used by governments to stifle political dissent. Some states—notably Malaysia and Singapore—have imprisoned suspects under their respective Internal Security Acts, after apparently foiling bombing plots. But the lack of trials and public evidence in these cases unavoidably raises suspicions about the motives behind the arrests. Using the threat of terrorism to manipulate domestic political outcomes, rather than addressing genuine security concerns, is undoubtedly a temptation. Other states, notably Indonesia, denied that terrorism was a problem. The Bali bombing put an end to that complacency, and has seen the Indonesian authorities taking a much more active stand against terrorist suspects within the country. And in the aftermath of the Bali bombing, there has also been an extraordinary level of cooperation between police forces, especially the Australian Federal Police and Indonesian police, in tracking down the bombers.

Terrorism is a method of struggle to achieve political objectives. It has been used by the advocates of many political ideologies, and is not confined to any one. There have been many attempts to define it exhaustively over the past 18 months, and many of these have foundered on details. But this imprecision does not hide the fact that terrorism has been with us for a very long time, that it tends to be a weapon of the weak (a fact acknowledged in the current descriptions of 'asymmetric warfare'), and that as a method of struggle it will be with us for a long time to come. Terrorism associated with extremist Islam is the result of deeply disaffected young people in Muslim countries, disgusted with the poverty of their own countries, and their own powerlessness; they believe that western exploitation accounts for their situation. If the globalization championed by the west seems to make their situation worse, it also gives them tools to fight back, in that money, people and ideas now flow readily across borders, nourishing the networks of terror that confound (western) hierarchical notions of organization and authority.

Change and continuity

Much has changed, but much remains the same, since September 11, 2001. It is true that many other issues and concerns have been pushed off the front pages of newspapers, and that some existing problems have been reformulated as problems of terrorism; but the other concerns have not disappeared. What has changed is that there is an almost overwhelming urgency about terrorism, and a gearing up of intelligence, policing and military preparations for potential terrorist attacks, which are all the more fearsome in the public mind for being unpredictable, arbitrary, and indiscriminate.

It is notable that until September 11, the preoccupation of security thinkers was over proposals by the administration of then-new US President George W. Bush to revive anti-missile missile development, under the rubric of 'national missile defence' and 'homeland security'. Many were concerned that American signals on this issue, and Australian support for them, were unnecessarily raising the strategic temperature in the Asia-Pacific region, could be interpreted as a strategy for the 'containment' of China, and were likely to lead to a deterioration of the security scene in the region. It hardly needs saying that in diplomacy, as in much else, the intentions of the communicator are much less important than the way messages are understood by the audience. 'Homeland security' has, following September 11, been given a distinctly anti-terrorist emphasis by the Americans (and now has a government ministry devoted to it), but the work on anti-missile missile technology continues, as does the appeal of an isolationist, fortress-like, mentality. Both the latter seem deeply unhelpful to the anti-terrorist cause, and to the larger cause of security in the Asia-Pacific, in which the United States has a direct interest.

The United States is now mobilized and interested in the matter of 'terrorism' (though it is actually more interested in a particular terrorist campaign). There is, in other words, a change of priorities. That change has major ramifications. What the United States thinks is important, *is* important. In addition, and linked to the 'war on terror', is a change of thinking about the use of force, operational concepts, and capability requirements. Defence forces will no doubt make the most of the current opportunities to convince their governments of the need to buy new equipment and raise their intelligence capabilities.

The issue of change and continuity has also arisen in a new debate about Australian strategic doctrine, which has for 15 years or more been associated with continental defence and the interdiction of hostile forces in the 'air–sea gap' between Australia and its northern neighbours (Dibb 2002). Such a doctrine has meant a steady downgrading of the size and capability of the army, and a boost to sea and air power. It is now being challenged by those who point to the record of Australian military involvements during the past 10 to 15 years, centred on peacekeeping but also in support of US operations, which have relied heavily on the army (Dupont 2002). Australian military practice has not changed fundamentally since September 11, but there is a growing view that strategic doctrine might have to put more emphasis on army capability and the reality of remote deployments. The official Australian *Defence Update* (Department of Defence 2003), released late in February 2003, reflects that view.

But what does all this really mean to the practice of world politics? The early turn by the United States after September 11 to multilateralism has been followed by a return to the underlying unilateralism of US foreign policy. Indeed, extensive worldwide opposition to the imminent war in Iraq has underlined the US sense that it is compelled to 'go it alone', and that it has a historic mission to accomplish. As Waltz has persuasively argued on this issue, 'New challenges [for the US] have