

Needless Entanglements Washington's Expanding Security Ties in Southeast Asia

by Doug Bandow

Executive Summary

The end of the Cold War has reduced the danger to the United States everywhere in the world, including Southeast Asia, but Washington hasn't seemed to notice. Instead of reducing America's commitments and force presence in Southeast Asia, as would be appropriate, the Clinton administration expanded the U.S. role. Washington added new agreements, training exercises, naval visits, weapons transfers, and implicit security guarantees for nations such as Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, and even erstwhile adversary Vietnam. The Bush administration seems determined to continue that course.

There is little that the United States can do to maintain stability in Southeast Asia. Cross-border wars are not threatening to overwhelm the region. If it is not willing to use U.S. forces, there is little Washington can do to prevent such wars from breaking out in the first place. America's security interests in the region are modest, at best, and do not warrant military intervention.

Indeed, the region's most serious problems are internal: ruthless repression in Burma, poten-

tial disintegration in Indonesia, political unrest in the Philippines. In such cases, a U.S. pressure is apt to prove ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst.

The other concern is aggression from an outside power, namely China, but Beijing's ambitions seem limited to the South China Sea. Even there, China has been only cautiously assertive; its greatest success has come as a result of disarray among its competitors. In particular, the Philippines' lack of a serious military provides an open invitation for Beijing to push its claims to the Spratly Islands.

Instead of entangling itself in squabbles of limited international significance, Washington should encourage friendly states to better arm themselves and to create cooperative relationships with each other, for example, through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and with reliable outside players, particularly India and Japan. The United States should adopt a lower military profile in the region and abandon expensive and risky commitments that no longer serve the interests of the American people.

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Introduction

The Cold War may have ended, but Washington doesn't seem to have noticed. Instead of reducing U.S. military ties around the world as serious threats against America recede, the Clinton administration actually increased Washington's commitments, and the Bush administration seems inclined to follow the same path. That trend is evident in Southeast Asia, a region that is, at most, marginal to genuine American interests. Indeed, President Clinton even proposed enhancing military relations with former adversaries in the region: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam—the latter two of which remain formally communist.

Instead of intensifying security ties, Washington should focus on expanding cultural, economic, and political relations, which matter most in a region that is populous (about 500 million people) but still relatively poor (some \$700 billion gross domestic product). Although the United States should preserve specific useful defense links, for instance, intelligence gathering, it should begin devolving defense responsibilities to friendly democratic states in the region. And that means reducing U.S. forces, a prospect once envisioned even by the Pentagon, in the aftermath of the Cold War, and more recently raised by Richard Armitage, now deputy secretary of state and formerly assistant secretary of defense and an adviser to Bush during the 2000 presidential campaign.

Washington's policy toward Southeast Asia is embarrassingly out of date. The United States emerged from World War II as the only power strong enough to contain an aggressive and dangerous Soviet Union. America's policy of containment was implemented through a global network of alliances, bases, and forward deployments, literally ringing the USSR and its new ally, China. In Asia, mutual defense treaties were negotiated with Japan and the Philippines in 1951, along with the Australia–New Zealand–United States (ANZUS) pact. A mutual defense treaty with the Republic of

Korea (ROK) was inked two years later. In 1954 came the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), an amalgam of Asian, South-Pacific, and Western states.

Although President Dwight Eisenhower rejected direct military involvement in Vietnam in the mid-1950s as France lost its grip on Indochina, his successor was more willing to “bear any burden” to preserve a pro-Western regime in South Vietnam. Interventionists warned that the fall of the South would topple geopolitical dominoes as far away as Japan. However, 58,000 American lives later, U.S. efforts came to naught as Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam fell under communist control.

Ironically, that collapse, though demoralizing at the time, provided a practical experiment to test the claim that Vietnam was critical to U.S. security. Barely 15 years after Washington was unceremoniously kicked out of Indochina, the communist threat had faded dramatically: the Soviet Union had disappeared; China had moved from Maoism to markets; South Korea had far surpassed the communist North; and Cambodia's Khmer Rouge had been deposed. At the same time, the power of America's allies had grown dramatically: Japan possessed the second largest economy in the world. Even Vietnam sought to draw closer to the United States.

Fewer Threats Justify More Security Ties?

In that strategic environment, the United States faces few deadly threats. There are security problems, of course, but they involve primarily allied rather than American interests. North Korea's military is poised on the border of the ROK, not America. The contested seas surrounding the Paracel and Spratly Islands are near the Philippines and Vietnam, not the United States. Unrest, repression, poverty, and disorder in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines threaten local ruling establishments, not the American people. Even China

is years away from possessing the military wherewithal to pose a serious challenge to the United States in East Asia, let alone elsewhere in the world. Even Adm. Dennis Blair, commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, says that drugs, kidnapping, and piracy are the region's most serious problems. "I don't see threats. These aren't situations we think of in terms of military threats."¹ While the future development of Southeast Asia may be of some interest to America, the lack of a global hegemonic threat has eliminated the reason the United States believed its vital interests required military intervention in Vietnam.²

Given those changes, it would be logical for Washington to diminish its military ties in the region. But, even though the Pentagon made modest reductions in U.S. forces in East Asia in the early 1990s, by 1995 the Department of Defense was reaffirming "our commitment to maintain a stable forward presence" of 100,000 troops in the region.³ The Pentagon's 1995 report on East Asia explained that a host of bilateral ties—not only with such Northeast Asian allies as Japan and South Korea but also with Southeast Asian countries, including Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, the Philippines, and Thailand—"remain inviolable, and the end of the Cold War has not diminished their importance."⁴ Indeed, the Pentagon also lauded the growing links with Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam.⁵

Although one could imagine that Southeast Asian security relationships had at least some value during the Cold War, it is hard to conceive how their worth could be undiminished with the end of hegemonic communism. To make such a claim suggests that institutional preservation is more important than national security in the formulation of American foreign policy.

In its follow-up report released in November 1998, the Pentagon announced a number of goals for Southeast Asia, including "continued enhancement of our alliance

relationships with . . . Australia, Thailand and the Philippines" and "broadening of cooperation with the nations of Southeast Asia on security and confidence building."⁶

Indeed, military arrangements in the region "have become increasingly important to our overseas presence."⁷ As DOD explains:

For example, Singapore announced in early 1998 that its Changi Naval Station, which will be operational in the year 2000, will be available to U.S. naval combatants and include a pier which can accommodate American aircraft carriers. In January 1998, the United States and the Philippines negotiated a Visiting Forces Agreement that, when ratified, will permit routine combined exercises and training, and ship visits. Thailand remains an important refueling and transit point for possible operations to neighboring trouble spots, including the Arabian Gulf. Australia has long provided key access to facilities for U.S. unilateral and combined exercises in order to ensure readiness and coordinated responses to regional contingencies. The existence of such arrangements throughout the region underscores the increasing importance of Southeast Asia and Australia to regional security, and their commitment to a credible and potent U.S. overseas presence as a cornerstone of their security interests.⁸

ANZUS: Dead Alliance Walking

"The U.S.-Australia alliance remains as close as any alliance we maintain in the region," explained DOD in its 1998 report.⁹ Indeed, this is an alliance "not just for this time, it is for all time," President Clinton told the Australian parliament.¹⁰ That attitude reflects long-standing policy. Adm. Charles Larson, then-commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, argued in 1993 that "our bilateral relationship

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with Australia under the ANZUS Treaty is the basis of stability and peace in the South Pacific and Southeast Asia."¹¹

In reality, the ANZUS agreement imploded in 1986 after Wellington barred visits by nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered U.S. vessels. But there are an additional 250 bilateral legal arrangements and agreements in place that are specifically defense related.¹² Among the most important are the Joint Security Declaration (or Sydney Statement) of 1996, which encourages combined military exercises and training, and the Australia Ministerial agreement, which provides for regular visits by U.S. officials. In March 1997 the two countries conducted military exercises with some 17,000 American and 5,000 Australian troops—the largest exercises since World War II.

Additional exercises were undertaken in 1999, and maneuvers involving tens of thousands of troops are now planned every four years. Indeed, according to the Pentagon, "With continued development and planning, Australia will provide an increasingly important regional locus for both unilateral and joint training."¹³ The two governments intend to cooperate in UN operations spanning the globe, from Southeast Asia to the Middle East.

In December 1998 Washington and Canberra reached a general security agreement involving additional surveillance cooperation, technology sharing, added military education and training exchanges, and an expanded Australian relationship with the U.S. Central and Atlantic Commands. In mid-2000 the two countries inked an accord for military technology sharing. Then-secretary of state Madeleine Albright called the military alliance "strong and vital to all that we are trying to do together in this region and beyond. We are the first of all global partners."¹⁴ The Pentagon envisions continued expansion and deepening of the U.S.-Australia alliance over the coming years.¹⁵ Indeed, such military cooperation is evident in East Timor, even though the United States resisted Canberra's pressure to take the lead role.

A military rapprochement also seems to be building between the United States and New Zealand. In March 1999 Wellington

proposed a 32-part package to improve military ties. New Zealand has also suggested conducting joint military exercises. A top American military official recently visited New Zealand—the first such trip in years. Moreover, Wellington decided to lease (with an option to buy) 28 F-16s, though the new Labor Party government later cancelled that contract. Wellington hopes to develop mutual cooperation despite the continuing ban on nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed ships docking in New Zealand. Air Marshal Carey Adamson, chief of New Zealand's Defence Force, explained, "We have to be interoperable with the United States."¹⁶

Thailand: The Ties That Bind

Another long-standing U.S. security relationship in Southeast Asia is with Thailand. During the Vietnam War Thailand was a critical player, hosting 50,000 U.S. troops. All but 200 are now gone, but, argues the Pentagon, ties with Thailand remain important not only for the region but also for the world: "Our longstanding alliance with Thailand remains strong and serves a critical function in enhancing our strategic interests worldwide."¹⁷

Bangkok has provided base access, stockpiled war materiel, and hosted Cobra Gold, "the largest joint training opportunity in Southeast Asia and the centerpiece of an impressive joint exercise program."¹⁸ Thai military officers regularly participate in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program; in fact, Bangkok provides the largest contingent. In 1999 the administration announced plans to sell used F-16s to Thailand: "This will further reinforce our strong bilateral security relationship," said Albright.¹⁹ (This came only a year after Washington purchased from McDonnell Douglas eight F/A-18s that Bangkok had ordered but said it could no longer afford in the wake of Asia's economic downturn.) The U.S. Army is also training the Thai military in anti-drug operations.

Observed the Pentagon, "Expanded U.S. access, joint activity and interoperability with Thai forces" will remain "critical to address mutual interests."²⁰ Particularly pleasing to the administration was the fact that "Thailand has been a consistent supporter of the U.S. overseas presence in Asia."²¹

Resurgent Philippine Entanglements

The administration has also reinvigorated defense ties with the Philippines.²² Those ties were badly frayed in 1992 when a combination of uncompromising Philippine financial demands, rising nationalist sentiment in the Philippines, and the destructive effects of the Mt. Pinatubo volcano caused Washington to yield Clark Field and Subic Bay Naval Base.

Since that acrimonious episode, explains DOD, the two nations have been "gradually establishing a post-bases relationship that is consistent with our activities elsewhere in the region—exercises, ship visits, exchanges, and policy dialogues."²³ The new Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), ratified in 1999 by the Philippine senate, was to "facilitate expanded military cooperation," including training exercises.²⁴ Then-secretary of Defense William Cohen also suggested combined training and ship visits, though not bases: "We are embarking on a new phase in our security relationship as partners, friends and allies."²⁵

Where that may lead is not clear. Port visits, which were discontinued in December 1996 after the last VFA expired, have restarted (not without some public protest, however). In February 2000 the two nations held their first military exercises, Balikatan 2000, in five years.

Certainly, Philippine leaders also expect increased arms transfers. Former Philippine president Joseph Estrada lobbied on behalf of the VFA, arguing, "We should be able to use our alliance to assist the urgent task of modernizing our armed forces."²⁶ Then-defense minister Orlando Mercado also promoted the VFA by arguing that after ratification his coun-

try could expect further arms assistance.²⁷ In October 1999 Cohen agreed to launch a modernization program and signed an agreement to resume joint military exercises.

Such a program could be quite expansive and expensive. For instance, Edwin Feulner, president of the Heritage Foundation, advocated providing the Philippines with older aircraft and ships should Manila approve the VFA. Such aid, he contended, "should proceed in the context of renewed U.S.-Philippine military cooperation."²⁸ Then-Heritage analyst Richard Fisher, now with the Jamestown Foundation, suggested subsidized sales of F-16s, F-18s, and naval frigates. David Wiencek of the International Security Group proposed making available "quickly and at low, or no, cost to Manila" surplus stocks.²⁹ In December 1999 the United States prepared to turn over \$10 million worth of surplus equipment, including A-4 planes, amphibious landing craft, and UH-1H helicopters.

The Spratlys Dispute and the Philippine Alliance

There's more, however. Philippine military weakness caused Fisher to complain that Washington had allowed its "alliance with the Philippines to languish." Now he worried:

Manila lacks a navy or air force to defend its territory. Increased U.S.-Philippine military cooperation is important in deterring China from militarily enforcing its claims in the South China Sea, and also may lead to more base access options for U.S. forces in times of crisis. The Clinton Administration's weak response to China's 1995 occupation of a reef near the Philippines undermined confidence in U.S. leadership in that region.³⁰

Indeed, he advocated that Washington "modify its neutral stand toward the contending claims in the Spratly group."³¹

Manila appears to believe that ratifying

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the VFA will aid its claims to the Spratly Islands. In the late 1970s Manila attempted to expand the Mutual Defense Treaty to cover the Spratlys, but Washington demurred. In 1999, however, Estrada specifically cited Manila's dispute with China over the Spratlys in lobbying for the VFA, noting in a television interview that the VFA would help block Chinese expansion in the South China Sea.³²

That is a common assumption in Manila. Several Philippine senators have cited the VFA as a way of strengthening security links to America.³³ There were obligatory denials from U.S. and Philippine officials: Adm. Dennis Blair, commander in chief of the US Pacific Command, stated that the VFA was "not a security guarantee."³⁴ However, U.S. ambassador Thomas Hubbard and Philippine defense secretary Mercado emphasized that the United States already had an obligation to defend the Philippines under the separate Mutual Defense Treaty. Sen. Francisco Tatad, vice chairman of the Philippine senate's Foreign Relations Committee, stated bluntly that the "VFA is simply there to strengthen the MDT."³⁵

Whether or not the VFA creates new defense obligations, it seems likely to entangle America in potentially dangerous Philippine developments, both domestic and foreign. There is some evidence that President Estrada stoked tensions with Beijing to encourage his senate's approval of the VFA.³⁶ Moreover, the rebel National Democratic Front has threatened to "punish" any U.S. soldiers who commit "crimes" while on maneuvers in the Philippines.³⁷

Renewed Ties to Indonesia

The Pentagon wants to maintain "a cooperative bilateral defense relationship" with Indonesia.³⁸ Currently, U.S. naval vessels make periodic visits; more significant, Jakarta provides ship repair facilities, a bombing range, and an aerial training site. The two nations also

engage in joint training operations. In the past, at least, Indonesia endorsed a continued U.S. military presence in the region, and the Pentagon promised that "U.S. engagement in Indonesia will help promote the stability necessary to manage" that nation's movement into the post-Suharto era.³⁹ Fisher has gone so far as to criticize the Clinton administration for not preventing Indonesia from suspending its own participation in the IMET program by defending Jakarta from congressional criticism about human rights abuses. John Haseman, a former U.S. defense attaché, calls on "the international community," presumably including America, to "help Indonesia's moderate military officers gain influence and stature within a responsible, respectable and respected government and military establishment."⁴⁰

Despite Jakarta's failure to exercise effective control over the military, elements of which have aided so-called Islamic jihad warriors in the Moluccan Islands, Washington is moving to restore military ties. Adm. Blair visited Indonesia in mid-2000 to discuss reestablishing bilateral military links. Washington later invited Indonesia to observe U.S. military exercises in Thailand and participate in a disaster relief exercise. Indonesians have lobbied for renewed military cooperation, including new arms sales, arguing that shortages of spare parts were grounding equipment needed to quell ethnic disturbances.⁴¹

However, during the height of the conflict in East Timor, the United States was perceived as arrogantly criticizing Jakarta and allying itself with even more despised Australia. That gave rise to protests against America. Suspicion of U.S. intentions began with Islamic newspapers and was even heard from President Wahid Abdurrahman. More recent criticisms of Jakarta's policy by U.S. ambassador Robert Gelbard and American support for Israel in light of the recent Mideast violence led to constant demonstrations and even closure of the U.S. embassy for two weeks. The State Department warned American citizens to avoid nonessential travel to Indonesia.⁴²

The Singapore Connection

Singapore has steadily increased access for U.S. naval vessels, in large part to replace facilities lost when the U.S. military was ousted from the Philippines. The city-state is even building a new harbor to accommodate large, nuclear-powered U.S. aircraft carriers. (In March 2001 the carrier *Kitty Hawk* was the first large U.S. warship to dock there.) Washington used Singapore as a transit point for U.S. forces during the Gulf War and stages regular air and naval visits. Observed former National Security Council adviser Anthony Lake, "We have magnified the power of our forward-deployed forces by expanding our access to military facilities with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) such as Singapore."⁴³

Singaporean pilots train in the United States, and the two air forces fly together; Washington operates Combat Sling, a year-round program in which U.S. and Singaporean fliers test each other's skills. In 2000 Singapore participated in the annual U.S.-Thai Cobra Gold exercise. Lt. Col. Michael Lepper, commander of the 36th Fighter Squadron, observes: "Singaporeans are our allies. It's their desire, and ours, to maintain close ties."⁴⁴ Cohen opined that "Singapore and the United States maintain a very strong security partnership," one which "helps the United States maintain a highly visible military presence in Southeast Asia."⁴⁵

Washington has also increased military exercises with and ship visits to Singapore's neighbor, Malaysia, another country that, the Pentagon proudly announces, "supports a continued U.S. military presence in Asia and makes available naval and air maintenance and repair facilities."⁴⁶ Last year U.S. Marines staged an amphibious assault exercise and trained Malaysian military units. DOD intends to "look for ways to expand our access to, and engagement with the Malaysian defense establishment."⁴⁷

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itary relationship to Laos, a nation that remains formally communist, and Vietnam, which the United States was bombing three decades ago.⁴⁸ Washington's interest in the latter reportedly includes naval access to Cam Ranh Bay (currently leased to Russia through 2004) and radar stations along the border with China. However, Hanoi's chilly response to Clinton on his visit may have cooled DOD's expectations. Party secretary Le Kha Phieu "just blew it" for additional cooperation, one U.S. diplomat told the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.⁴⁹

Interventionist Justifications

Washington's justification for such a promiscuous expansion of security relationships apparently is that the world, including Southeast Asia, remains full of dangers that can be countered only by the United States. For instance, routinely cited but rarely substantiated is the threat of "instability." The Pentagon's November 1998 report is replete with references to potential instability and uncertainty, which, apparently, only the United States can counteract. At the press conference introducing the report, Cohen stated, "We are committed to maintain stability."⁵⁰ Put another way, "The United States aims to promote a stable, secure, prosperous and peaceful Asia-Pacific community in which the United States is an active player, partner and beneficiary."⁵¹

Similarly, Col. Larry Wortzel, then-director of the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, contended that any withdrawal of U.S. forces "would be disastrous for the stability of the region and for the security of the United States."⁵² Indeed, "the main purpose of contemporary alliances is not to deter threats," writes William Tow of the University of Queensland, "but to underwrite regional stability." Thus, America's "Asia-Pacific alliances are the only real framework available with sufficient resources to deal with regional flashpoints and crisis."⁵³

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According to this view, America cannot escape the consequences of instability and uncertainty elsewhere. Feulner goes so far as to argue that “the fate of Asia is also our fate. Our freedom and prosperity depend on the freedom and prosperity of Asians.”⁵⁴ Argues Cohen, “When America neglects the problems of the world the world often brings its problems to America’s doorstep.”⁵⁵

Unwarranted U.S. Activism

It is extraordinarily difficult to discern security threats to the United States emanating from Southeast Asia. There, as elsewhere, American security is often involved only because Washington chooses to make the problems of other nations its own. In any case, no Southeast Asian country faces a serious external military threat. Today, at least, the greatest challenges to almost all of those nations are internal—economic recession, internal insurgencies, and the like—and not susceptible to international solution.

Australia’s Advantageous Position

Although Australia’s relations with Indonesia have been tense at times, the latter, beset by economic crisis and political instability, is in no position to threaten Australia. As columnist Brian Toohey observed, “Mob violence is not the same thing as a serious military assault upon Australian territory.”⁵⁶ And Canberra has traditionally made its own accommodations: Australia was, for instance, the only Western nation to recognize Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor, and it initiated military cooperation with Indonesia.⁵⁷ Jakarta could conceivably impede the ocean shipment of Australian goods, but that would also bring conflict with Canberra’s trading partners.

Australia’s main worry is increased refugee flows—the number of illegal immigrants is up sharply over the past decade—generated by the violent disintegration of Indonesia.⁵⁸ That may be a legitimate concern for Australia, but it in no way justifies an

American military presence in the region.

An attack by a more serious military power, such as China, India, or Vietnam, is a paranoid fantasy. Those countries have neither the ability nor the incentive to wage war Down Under. Against lesser foes, Australia, blessed with economic prosperity and geographic isolation, can defend itself; it has improved its forces significantly over the last two decades and, in the aftermath of the East Timor crisis, plans to further boost military outlays. Canberra is also developing a more assertive diplomatic strategy, building or improving ties with China and both Koreas (Australian officials held talks with North Korea in Bangkok in June 1999). Canberra also accepted the new Japan-U.S. defense guidelines, which presaged a marginal increase in Tokyo’s regional military role.

Problems Elsewhere Are Mainly Internal

Thailand faces obvious economic challenges, but they seem manageable. Democracy is well entrenched a decade after the last coup, despite problems of fraud, fears of electoral deadlock, and populist economic pressures.⁵⁹ No military threats loom, despite the ongoing insurgency and drug trade in neighboring Burma. (Rangoon’s repression has created a humanitarian tragedy, but one largely beyond Washington’s reach.)⁶⁰

Likewise, there is no prospect of a foreign invasion of the Philippines. In fact, this is one reason why successive Philippine governments allowed the nation’s military to deteriorate. The conflicting claims to the Spratly Islands are worrisome but unlikely to yield full-scale war. Manila feels threatened by Chinese activities in the South China Sea, but those fears reflect the Philippines’ minuscule military more than any overt threats from Beijing. Moreover, although the Philippines is never likely to be a great military power, it could do far more than it is doing now.

The problems facing Manila are primarily internal—economic stagnation and an ongoing Islamic insurgency. The country’s finances are a mess, and separatists continue

to oppose the central government. One guerilla group abandoned its demand for independence and agreed to autonomy in 1996; last year the government launched an offensive against another rebel force, as well as the separatist gang that kidnapped a score of Filipinos and Westerners. Corruption charges led to the impeachment and subsequent extraconstitutional ouster of former president Estrada, who demonstrated neither managerial competence nor good judgment in friends. But Manila's manifold troubles are of minimal international concern.

Malaysia also faces few security threats. Its most important challenges are domestic. For instance, Kuala Lumpur's economic performance remains shaky, especially given the government's refusal to adopt basic reforms. And democratic political values are under siege. Premier Mahathir Mohamad persecuted political and journalist opponents, including his former deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, and played the anti-foreigner card to raise support for the ruling National Front coalition in the November 1999 elections.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Islamic Parti Islam se-Malaysia made the biggest gains, winning control of an additional state, and Mahathir's government has begun to play to Islamic sentiments.⁶² There has been a recent spate of violence between Malays and ethnic Indians. Nevertheless, Malaysia remains stable and heavily dependent on Western economic investment and trade.

Washington is understandably dissatisfied by the quasi-dictatorship in Cambodia. Phnom Penh's internal politics remains unsettled; an apparent raid by a U.S.-based opposition group occasioned speculation of government involvement or factional fighting within the ruling party.⁶³ Foreign investment remains in short supply. The main international issue involves the United Nations' involvement in any trial of former Khmer Rouge operatives; Cambodia poses no threat to its neighbors, let alone the United States.

Nastier is the dictatorship in Burma, which suppresses democracy-minded students and ethnic separatists with equal brutality.

However, while Rangoon is deservedly a human rights pariah, it poses no security risk to its neighbors. Moreover, Washington's military presence in the region is irrelevant, unless the United States actually bombs Rangoon, as some ethnic Karen leaders desire.⁶⁴ Problems such as those in Burma demonstrate the limits of American power.

Laos is a similar backwater. Persistent poverty has been joined by evidence of popular and ethnic unrest—a student demonstration and several bombings in Vientiane and an armed raid by insurgents based in Thailand. The country remains largely irrelevant to regional affairs, however. Dominated by Vietnam, which maintains around 10,000 troops in Laos, the latter does not seem vulnerable even to Chinese influence.

A quarter century after America's abrupt ejection from Vietnam, relations between the two states have warmed, highlighted by the signing of a bilateral trade agreement and Clinton's visit last fall. Although tensions will inevitably remain between Hanoi and Washington, including those caused by the former's request for aid to deal with continuing effects of the war, the two are not likely to be antagonists. Vietnam's greatest problems are internal—the lack of economic reform and persistent rural unrest.⁶⁵

Indonesia's Troubles

The greatest potential locus of instability today is Indonesia. Although that country, the globe's fourth most populous nation, has the potential to become a serious international player, its focus is likely to remain inward for some time. The good news is that the social catastrophe predicted by some observers has not yet occurred.⁶⁶ However, the potential pitfalls for Indonesia are huge. The economy has ended its free fall (a 14 percent contraction in 1998), but recovery has only barely begun. Barriers to serious reform, including pervasive corruption, legal favoritism, and continuing ethnic violence, remain daunting.⁶⁷

Moreover, the nation's move toward democracy poses its own pitfalls. Crime and vigilanteism are rampant. Attempts to expose

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pervasive corruption are another unsettling factor.⁶⁸ So too are ineffective efforts to investigate ousted dictator Suharto and his family and punish military officers involved in the East Timor massacres.⁶⁹ The militias responsible for the violence in 1999 continue to conduct attacks from camps in West Timor, which is still part of Indonesia. Former guerrillas in now-independent East Timor are threatening to retaliate. The discrediting of the Indonesian military has weakened one of the most important national institutions, "the most organized, or at least the least disorganized, of all the disorganized elements in society," in the words of former defense minister Juwono Sudarsono.⁷⁰

At the same time, the civilian authorities seem to have only limited control over the military. "There is a disconnection between formal command and effective control," admitted Sudarsono.⁷¹ His successor, Mohammed Mahfad, discounts the likelihood of a coup but says, "If things descend into anarchy, I am worried that the military will take its own action."⁷²

Finally, Indonesia faces multiple centrifugal forces. John Bolton, President Bush's choice to be under secretary of state for arms control and international security, has warned that the sprawling archipelagic nation of 6,000 inhabited islands that span three time zones and include some 300 ethnic groups could become Asia's Yugoslavia and disintegrate.⁷³ East Timor successfully broke away, and there are potent separatist movements in Aceh and Irian Jaya. Under significant political pressure, President Abdurrahman Wahid has dropped his originally more accommodationist policies and returned to the Suharto prescription of military repression.⁷⁴ In past years Jakarta also faced resistance in Kjakarta, Riau, South Molucca, and Sumatra (on which Aceh is located). Sectarian violence, especially in the Moluccas, could turn into a serious destabilizing force.⁷⁵

Even an energetic and agile political leadership would have difficulty meeting so many challenges. Alas, President Wahid's government

is disintegrating. He is disengaged and obstinate; his uncooperativeness and ineffectiveness, combined with two minor scandals, have led to a legislative reprimand and possible impeachment. The ruling coalition has fractured, and violence on the streets has only inflamed the crisis. Michael Vatikiotis and John McBeth report: "Wahid's desperate reaction was to reach for the tools of authoritarian rule. He first suggested to the local media that he might freeze parliament. Then, behind closed doors, he asked the military to support a state of emergency."⁷⁶

Indonesia and the Limits of American Influence

As worrisome as Indonesia's current state may be, all of America's horses and men can't put the Suharto-style stable system back together again. Washington can encourage economic and political reform, but it cannot create the necessary political will in Jakarta. And stronger pressure is apt to backfire. U.S. ambassador Robert Gelbard's vocal criticism of the Wahid government has generated no small amount of resentment, and security threats caused Washington to briefly close its embassy last fall. The government, seemingly at President Wahid's behest, condemned Gelbard.

Another potential lever for forcing change is foreign assistance. However, there is no evidence that financial aid can generate reform; to the contrary, Jakarta expects continuing assistance despite its manifold failures.⁷⁷

Military-to-military engagement is also no answer. In mid-2000 the Clinton administration resumed contacts with the Indonesian military, but there is no evidence that the military is dedicated to democratic values or human rights; providing more weapons would not guarantee their use for such purposes. Nor is it obvious that the IMET program transforms participants or attracts more liberal-minded officers. Certainly, Jakarta's past cooperation with IMET did not prevent the Indonesian military from supporting the Suharto dictatorship or backing "pro-integration" militias in terrorizing independence supporters in East

Timor. Washington helped train Kopassus, the particularly brutal special forces unit.⁷⁸ A few weeks or even months in America are unlikely to transform officers trained in and destined to return to Indonesia's autocratic, kleptocratic system. "There is no way that the American military can argue today that going through military exchanges turned these Indonesian officers into human rights paradigms," observes Sydney Jones, the Asia director of Human Rights Watch.⁷⁹

Direct U.S. military involvement would be especially unwise. Theodore Friend calls on Washington to "recognize that Islamists in Southern Malaysia are expressing sympathy with arms and money to separatists in Aceh" and to prepare "for restrained action if necessary."⁸⁰ What that would be is unclear. The multiple threats of secession are worrisome, though Indonesia seems unlikely to dramatically implode (or explode). However, if the country did begin to disintegrate, all of America's military power would be of little avail—unless Washington was prepared to occupy Aceh, Ambon, Irian Jaya, or other restless regions of Indonesia.

Doing so would also generate enormous hostility and resistance to the United States. Ambassador Gelbard points to false rumors of American intervention in the Moluccas as triggering violent demonstrations outside the U.S. embassy. The basic problem is that Indonesia is an artificial state, an outgrowth of Dutch colonialism rather than any genuine sense of nationhood. The United States is incapable of providing the latter.

The Not-So-Tranquil South Sea Islands

Other potential sources of instability abound. Coups and ethnic strife in both Fiji and the Solomon Islands have proved to be messy. Political instability has spawned economic instability. One slightly hysterical observer worried, "Low-intensity conflicts in Fiji and the Solomon Islands underscore the fact that peace, and Americans or U.S. allies, may become imperiled at any time."⁸¹ In terms of actual international impact, however, the twin crises did little more than incon-

venience tourists. Some observers have worried about nationalist forces acquiring ship-threatening missiles or inviting Chinese intervention, but such worries seem far removed from the actual controversies. Contends Anthony Bergin, director of the Australian Defence Studies Centre at the Australian Defence Force Academy, "The main security threat facing the region is not military incursions, but the Caribbean scenario—criminals destabilising, toppling or crippling governments."⁸²

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Earl Halliston, the troop commander on Okinawa, points to ethnic conflict stretching from Indonesia to Sri Lanka and argues that "peace enforcement and peacekeeping is certainly not going to be limited to the Balkans."⁸³ Indeed, the East-West Center in Honolulu estimates that almost half of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region have a significant risk of social unrest.⁸⁴ But the daisy chain connecting most of these problems to U.S. security is long indeed. Moreover, armed intervention against the will of the respective local governments is inconceivable—as it was in East Timor. Peacekeeping is likely to rely on regional forces. In all of these cases, generic recitations of the alleged importance of American forces in promoting stability find little application in specific situations.

China's Challenge

Some U.S. policymakers would internationalize those conflicts because they believe doing so is the only way to deter aggression from a more serious quarter. To withdraw American forces from anywhere in Asia, warned Adm. Charles Larson, Blair's predecessor as commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, would run "an unacceptable risk of crises." In particular, "some aggressive nation might once again miscalculate."⁸⁵

Exactly who would do what is left unclear. Although the Southeast Asian states are capable of committing acts of war against

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one another, they lack the capability and will to engage in large-scale aggressive war. And no potential hegemon is hovering nearby contemplating conquest. The only conceivable candidate is China. But whatever the future direction of Chinese military policy, the most important imponderable, China does not appear to be contemplating attacking its southern neighbors.⁸⁶ The contretemps with the United States over the spy plane reflects growing Chinese assertiveness that nevertheless remains much constrained. Indeed, Beijing enjoyed very limited success in “punishing” Vietnam in a border war two decades ago.

The Multisided Spratlys Spat

The only serious possibility of war in Southeast Asia involves the conflicting territorial claims in the South China Sea. The islands, some of which are often under water, have little intrinsic value. Rather, sovereignty over the islands carries with it ownership of nearby natural gas and oil deposits and control of sea lanes near the Strait of Malacca.

The greatest concern is raised by China, given its long-term potential as a regional and even global power. In January 2000 the Philippines continued a string of confrontations, boarding two Chinese fishing vessels on the Scarborough Shoal, within the Spratlys. Manila filed a diplomatic protest about Chinese incursions. Beijing responded by reasserting its ownership claims.

Other nations are involved in those disputes as well. Malaysia has constructed a building on Investigator Shoal in the Spratlys. In October 1999 the Philippines accused Vietnamese forces on one reef of firing on one of its planes. Worries Milagros Espinas of the University of the Philippines, “What stops other claimants, Vietnam or even rich Brunei, from building structures in the area?”⁸⁷ Bothersome though this quarrel may be, however, it threatens no nation’s survival, independence, or even well-being. Even a highly improbable naval battle is unlikely to turn into an invasion of Luzon.

The Spratlys also illustrate the limits of

U.S. military power—a Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa will not influence events unless the parties believe that Washington will deploy it in the Spratlys, which is highly unlikely.

Exaggerating the Chinese Threat

The only serious argument for U.S. involvement is that Chinese belligerence in the Spratlys is a prelude to something more serious. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) calls Beijing’s construction activities and naval visits “an alarming Chinese military build-up.”⁸⁸ The International Security Group’s Wiencek warns that Chinese encroachments in the South China Sea “hold very serious implication for U.S. and Western security. In due course, they could compromise freedom of navigation and pose a threat to the substantial flow of goods and resources to Japan, Korea, Australia, and other friends and allies.”⁸⁹ Similarly, Fisher worries that Chinese structures on Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands will permit placement of military forces

within reach of the sea-borne commerce that travels through the Palawan Strait. About 70 percent of Japan’s and South Korea’s oil resources flow through this key sea lane. The economies of these countries, in turn, support regional commerce that helps sustain U.S. exports to Asia, which support about 4 million jobs in the United States.⁹⁰

But Beijing has legitimate interests that warrant a larger navy: China is second only to America in oil consumption, and its reliance on overseas sources of oil, which must travel by sea, is increasing. China has demonstrated no interest in shutting down shipping in East Asia; Beijing certainly doesn’t have the ability to do so. Both factors could change, of course, but China has so far been only cautiously assertive. In 1999 it improved relations with Vietnam by negotiating border disputes. A year later it signed agreements with the

Philippines on the disputed islands, and it has indicated its openness to ASEAN's participation in settling the South China Sea disputes.

Moreover, China's ability to assert its territorial claims, let alone to impair ocean commerce, will remain sharply limited for years. China is still a poor and underdeveloped nation; faces enormous economic and political challenges; risks being torn apart by ethnic, regional, and social instability; and possesses a military of only modest capability. Beijing is in no position to commit significant mischief, let alone directly threaten the security of the United States.

Indeed, Beijing's military buildup has so far been modest, largely trading quantity for quality.⁹¹ Although China would like to develop a "blue water" naval capacity by 2020, its existing fleet is overwhelmingly devoted to coastal (and thus defensive) tasks. Beijing has focused on expanding the range of smaller craft, and its future construction and purchase plans are heavily dependent on continuing economic success. (Its acquisitions from Russia have been fueled by perceived American heavy-handedness toward the latter.)⁹²

Moreover, observes Bates Gill of the Brookings Institution, "getting the new hardware is one thing. Getting it right—in terms of doctrine, technologies, training, maintenance, logistics and joint operations—is another matter."⁹³ The point is not that the Chinese can't get it right but that they aren't likely to do so any time soon.

Still, in the future, we are warned, Beijing might exercise a will that it doesn't presently have to use a naval capability that it doesn't presently possess to interfere with the commerce of allies that are capable of defending their own interests. Former defense secretary Caspar Weinberger contends that critics of *Pax Americana* "assume that currently friendly countries will always remain friendly."⁹⁴ Similarly, Marvin Ott of the National War College points to the likely bid by China for influence in Southeast Asia, since "from China's perspective, it is attractive, vulnerable and nearby."⁹⁵

It is impossible to predict China's future development or conduct with precision, and Beijing could eventually end up as a serious strategic competitor to the United States. It is, in fact, the nation most likely to be a significant future rival, what Ott calls "the one potential peer competitor to the U.S. in world affairs."⁹⁶ Ott is certainly not alone in his assessment, though many analysts shy away from naming Beijing. One Air Force officer told the *Washington Post*, "What everybody's trying to do is come up with [war] games that are kind of China, but not China by name."⁹⁷

Who Should Worry?

The possibility of a more assertive China obviously warrants concern, but the basic question is, Who should do the worrying? America or states in Southeast Asia?

The daisy chain is long indeed, too long to suggest the presence of a serious American security interest. Washington already protects its vital navigation interests; Beijing is in no position to interdict U.S. shipping, whatever it does in the Spratlys. While trade between, say, Australia and the Philippines might be of some interest to America, it hardly constitutes a vital or even an important interest. Oil shipments from the Middle East to Japan are more important, but they should be so especially to Japan—which is why such populous and prosperous countries as Australia, Japan, South Korea, and members of ASEAN should develop both the regional relationships and the military assets necessary to maintain freedom of navigation.

Even now, with America's dominant presence, Beijing is involved in what Andrew Scobell of the U.S. Army War College calls "slow-intensity conflict."⁹⁸ Today and in the future, more potent local forces acting in cooperation with one another would impress China more than a few more port visits by a few more U.S. ships. Indeed, nearby states are cooperating to combat an upsurge in piracy—ranging from robbery to hijacking in the

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Rather than forever defend allied states, the United States should encourage its friends to both arm and organize in order to provide an effective counterweight to China.

Strait of Malacca.⁹⁹ Such cooperation could and should be expanded. If nations in the region don't wish to make that effort, there are alternative shipping routes, albeit more costly and time-consuming.

Moreover, it is important to distinguish between catastrophe and inconvenience. In any serious contretemps in the South China Sea, parties in the region have the most at stake. America would suffer some indirect economic losses, but they would be nothing compared with the harm done to nations in the region.

China could exert its influence in a more subtle fashion. Ott worries about "a progressive subordination of the region to Beijing's strategic interests," or "a kind of Chinese Monroe Doctrine for Southeast Asia."¹⁰⁰ Similarly, writes James Clad of Georgetown University, "There is, in short, a real prospect that the region could bend yet more in China's direction, doing so in a manner disadvantageous to the U.S. and other outsiders."¹⁰¹ Again, though this is to some degree a worrisome prospect, it is of greater concern to Southeast Asia than to the United States. The basic question is, Does the United States have to exercise predominance in every region while the countries that have interests more directly at stake sit passively on the sidelines?

In any case, maintaining the strategic status quo is not likely to be enough to prevent a gradual shift in regional influence. Already, despite America's continued military presence and extensive bilateral relationship stretching back decades, Thailand appears to be edging closer to China because of perceived slights, including Washington's not backing Thailand's candidate for head of the World Trade Organization.¹⁰² (Bangkok's motto is obviously "What have you done for me lately?")

Similarly, Singapore wants extensive ties with the United States but has recently proposed linking the Hong Kong and Singapore stock markets, thought by some analysts to be a move to strengthen ties with China. Beijing has been improving its relations with

Cambodia and Vietnam; President Jiang Zemin recently visited Laos with the promise of economic aid. China is the primary provider of weapons to Burma. China has proposed discussion of a free-trade regime with the ASEAN states.

China's efforts have had an effect. "China hasn't replaced the U.S. But it's eating away at America's influence," opines Kavi Chongkittavorn, executive editor of Bangkok's *The Nation*.¹⁰³ No doubt Washington faces a challenge, but the United States should relearn the skills of diplomacy to deal with an increase in influence by a competitor, rather than rely on military strength and treat any increased Chinese influence as a threat to vital American interests.

Even if continued U.S. domination were sustainable, the benefits are not obvious absent a hegemonic opponent like the Soviet Union. An attempt to maintain perpetual hegemony might make sense if the United States had vital security interests at stake, but Washington's interests in Southeast Asia are much more modest. The United States fought a war in the region, and another nearby, during the last half century, but both actions reflected the Cold War. Some Southeast Asian countries are valuable trading partners, but growing Chinese influence is unlikely to interfere with commerce with America. The sea lanes primarily benefit friendly states. It is one thing to wish for continued American predominance in the region. It is quite another to believe it to be necessary or worth maintaining.

Rather than forever defend allied states, the United States should encourage its friends to both arm and organize in order to provide an effective counterweight to China. Robyn Lim, a professor at Japan's Nanzan University, contends that "the U.S. can no more afford to allow China a free hand in East Asia now than it could grant Japan a free hand in the region in the 1930s."¹⁰⁴ But China does not have the disproportionate power of imperial Japan. Let the ASEAN states, backed by India and Japan, encourage Beijing to behave responsibly. Undoubtedly,

Washington's "presence has incalculable value to the balance-of-power calculations underpinning ASEAN diplomacy since that minimalist grouping's inception thirty years ago," as James Clad argues.¹⁰⁵ But at that time the Cold War raged, the ASEAN states were poor and weak, communist guerrillas backed by the Soviet Union and China threatened to subvert several ASEAN members, India's reach was quite limited, and Japan was only starting on the path of dramatic economic growth. Thirty years ago American military support for the ASEAN states at least arguably buttressed U.S. security. It does not do so today.

Unreal U.S. Expectations

Defenders of U.S. hegemony make two, essentially contradictory, arguments. The first is that countries in the region would respond to U.S. disengagement by taking on responsibility for their own security. The second is that they wouldn't.

Advancing the first contention are General Scales and Colonel Wortzel, who worry that U.S. withdrawal to a mid-Pacific presence would cause the ASEAN states, along with Japan and South (or eventually a united) Korea to strengthen their militaries. As a result, Scales and Wortzel fear, "The Asia-Pacific region would be a far more dangerous, less stable and secure place."¹⁰⁶

Southeast Asian Military Buildups

An arms buildup is already proceeding, albeit on a modest scale, without a noticeable increase in international tensions. Indeed, the Southeast Asian nations have begun to develop air and naval capabilities as they increasingly question the U.S. commitment—weighting every perceived slight more heavily than Washington's expanded ties. Observed Sheldon Simon of Arizona State University: "This belief in the limited utility of the American presence was reinforced by Washington's policy of impartiality in the dispute over the Spratly Islands. America's

agnosticism on the Spratlys made it all the more essential that the ASEAN claimants—Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Brunei—develop their own capabilities to defend the islets they occupied."¹⁰⁷

During the early and mid-1990s, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand all began acquiring weapons capable of protecting air and naval spaces and undertaking exercises to demonstrate their power projection capabilities. Thailand, which has received \$3.4 billion worth of U.S. weapons since 1987, even planned a two-ocean navy, while Manila forecast a 15-year, \$8.2 billion modernization program.

Then the Asian economic crisis intervened, hitting Southeast Asia the hardest. (The same countries also had a slower recovery.) All but Singapore have had to abandon or delay their modernization programs. Obviously this will slow the development of regional defensive capacities. Simon nevertheless acknowledges, "Even if their current capabilities do not substantially improve, however, the main ASEAN navies are equipped with ship-to-ship missiles (SSMs)—the Harpoon and the Exocet—which provide sea denial capabilities, though not sea control."¹⁰⁸

Indonesia is a particularly critical player. That country has participated in international peacekeeping operations; helped negotiate the resolution of conflicts in Cambodia and the Philippines; promoted discussions about territorial disputes in the South China Sea; and joined the Korean Peninsula Development Organization, which is aiding North Korea in exchange for a halt in Pyongyang's nuclear program. Further, Indonesia has become a critical member of ASEAN and a strong supporter of the ASEAN Regional Forum that discusses security issues.¹⁰⁹

Where President Wahid, assuming he survives as president, will steer Indonesia is not clear, but he seems dedicated to a stronger international role. In his first major address, he promised to "make Indonesia a powerful country which can't be intimidated by others." To do so, he intends to build his nation's

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navy.¹¹⁰ Although the immediate purposes seem to be to combat piracy as well as interdict the flow of weapons and people bent on using them in Indonesia's many internal conflicts, Wahid has indicated his desire to strengthen Indonesia's control over the extra 3 million square kilometers of territorial sea recognized by the UN Law of the Sea Treaty. The defense minister proposed a 63 percent increase in the military budget starting April 2000; over the next five years Jakarta intends to add 14 ships and 18,000 personnel.

With its return to economic growth, Malaysia is developing a military modernization plan through 2005, which includes many purchases postponed because of the Asian economic crisis in 1997. Kuala Lumpur has added corvettes and frigates and is planning to acquire submarines. It plans to rely more on small interdiction vessels, especially those employing missiles, than on large capital ships. Malaysia also intends to increase fivefold its Territorial Army, essentially equivalent to America's National Guard. That will free regular army forces for possible overseas missions. The Philippines, too, finally may be ready to embark on a serious military modernization program, nine years after America's departure from the bases.¹¹¹

Even with less money, member nations are improving their defense capabilities. For instance, Thailand's army commander, Gen. Surayud Chulanont, has taken the lead in professionalizing his nation's force. He has helped move the military out of politics and is transforming the formerly conscript force into a professional volunteer force. Thailand currently intends to purchase 16 used F-16 fighters for \$130 million.

Washington Should Welcome Signs of Initiative

There's no reason to fear the improving weapons capabilities of Southeast Asian nations; weapons per se do not cause war. The problems are the underlying disputes that motivate the use of weapons. Although the region suffers its share of tensions, there is no evidence that major wars are bubbling

beneath the surface, waiting only for a U.S. withdrawal. The local squabbles that predominate are neither likely to spark conflict nor would threaten regional security if they did so. And there is no evidence that it is America's military presence rather than the good sense of the parties that has deterred, say, Burma and Thailand from warring against each other.

The only ways in which a U.S. threat to intervene might be a key factor would be if it were used to deter overt Chinese aggression against neighboring states or to prevent a multilateral naval slugfest over one island chain or another. So long as the parties believe Washington would act, war is less likely.

However, if a region with a rough balance of power is likely to be somewhat less stable than one reflecting *Pax Americana*, it could be equally secure, indeed more so, in the sense that the nations with the most at stake in peace would bear both the benefits and the costs. The potential for expensive mistakes and games of international chicken would be less.

Moreover, such an arrangement would be far less dangerous for America. Then, if Beijing did something "silly," as one Malaysian army officer put it, local actors would have the capability of coalescing to meet the threat, irrespective of their formal organizational ties.¹¹² Even if the risk of conflict rose marginally for them, an environment in which the United States was not expected to impose stability by intervening in every local squabble would be far less risky for America. The question is not just the chance of war but also the likelihood of U.S. involvement in war. Devolving responsibility to America's allies and other countries in the region would significantly cut Washington's risks.

Newly Assertive Aussies

A good model for regional responsibility and stability is the peacekeeping operation in East Timor, in which Australia is playing a leading role. In fact, even before its involvement in East Timor, Canberra began to initiate a more

assertive foreign policy, at least in part out of concern over deteriorating U.S.-Chinese relations. Australia even announced joint naval maneuvers with South Korea in 2000.

But until the East Timor crisis, Canberra officials talked of being good at the tactical rather than the strategic level. They assumed that any intervention would be conducted only under U.S. tutelage. Thus, they pressed Washington to act in East Timor. However, the Clinton administration refused to lead the peacekeeping force, let alone undertake more intrusive military actions. Canberra was naturally distressed. Former defense minister Kim Beazley insisted that "the cost to the United States would be very small indeed from an American point of view."¹¹³ Such lobbying failed to budge Washington.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister John Howard chose to fill the unexpected peacekeeping gap in East Timor, committing his country to be America's "deputy" and opining that Australia has "a particular responsibility to do things above and beyond" in Asia.¹¹⁴ Howard announced plans to build up his nation's military accordingly (Canberra currently devotes just 1.8 percent of GDP to defense, much less than U.S. defense spending). Douglas Paal, head of the Washington-based Asia Pacific Policy Center, lauded Canberra's action: "Unlike the Europeans, who were reluctant to go into Kosovo, the Australians showed themselves to be adults and to take part in adult supervision."¹¹⁵

East Timor may be only the start. "Australia is in the midst of a profound reevaluation of its overall security dynamic," one official told the *Washington Times*.¹¹⁶ Australia has reestablished military ties with India (severed in the aftermath of the latter's 1998 nuclear tests), which is taking a greater interest in Southeast Asia. And Canberra seems increasingly willing to take an active regional role. Defense Force head Chris Barrie argues that Australia is the "force of choice" to lead future UN peacekeeping operations in Southeast Asia.

In November 2000 Defense Minister John Moore released a report advocating greater

military funding and improved military capabilities, to allow his country to undertake "significant" regional operations.¹¹⁷ The government proposed spending an extra \$12.4 billion over the coming decade to finance modest equipment upgrades for the air force and navy and force expansion for the army.

Some analysts have not only backed Howard's program but, reports Joanne Gray of the *Australian Financial Review*, have also advocated building "a regional commitment via ASEAN."¹¹⁸ Adds Gray in assessing America's refusal to act: "If Australia wants to be an enforcer of human rights in the region it is going to have to put more resources into defence and try to build a regional commitment via ASEAN. Because the U.S. ain't gonna be there."¹¹⁹

Former prime minister Malcolm Fraser also believes that Washington is limiting its regional involvement and that greater Australian military spending is thus necessary: "The ANZUS treaty, which many regard as the linchpin of our defence, encourages us to believe we are secure when in fact we are not. This leads to totally inadequate defence expenditures and inadequate understanding that Australia's security derives from our relationship with countries in and of our own region."¹²⁰ Indeed, Fraser would *double* Australian defense outlays. Other analysts are pushing for a spending hike of as much as 40 percent, far more than that proposed by the government.¹²¹ Although Washington isn't willing to admit that it won't be there, former defense secretary William Cohen stated that the United States "will look for some leadership on the part of Australia in terms of formulating our own policies in the region."¹²² Secretary of State Colin Powell has taken a similar position, suggesting that Australia take the lead in Southeast Asia.

In sharp contrast to a more assertive Australia is New Zealand, linked to Australia by history and tradition but smaller and less inclined to help police the neighborhood. One of the first acts of the incoming Labour government was to cancel the lease of 28 F-16s from the United States. Wellington indi-

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cated that it would, however, still be willing to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. New Zealand's new prime minister, Helen Clark, has proposed creation of a "niche" force suited to peacekeeping operations.¹²³ The cancellation of the F-16 lease is disappointing, but Australia's growing sense of regional responsibility outweighs New Zealand's continuing passivity.

Leadership Costs

Canberra has discovered that there is a cost to such leadership. Some analysts doubt that Australia has now, or is willing to buy, the military assets necessary to fulfill what has been called "the Howard Doctrine."¹²⁴ Today its navy comprises a paltry 11 surface ships, 7 amphibious vessels, and 4 submarines. Equally serious is the reaction of Australia's neighbors. Wang Gungwu, director of the East Asian Institute at Singapore's National University, warns that other East Asian states might come to view Canberra as an outside meddler.¹²⁵ Indonesian hostility to Australia was particularly pronounced. Even Malaysian prime minister Mahathir called Australia a "bully" for attempting to impose its will on Indonesia.¹²⁶ Better that such problems be dealt with by Australia than America when Australian interests are at stake.

Moreover, other Asia-Pacific countries are participating in East Timor, in part because of anxiety over Canberra's initial dominant role. Brunei, China, Fiji, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand (along with some non-Asian nations) have all provided contingents of varying sizes; Japan is giving logistical support. The original deputy commander was a Thai. A Philippine officer took over command in 2000, with an Australian deputy. Command then passed to a Thai general. The overwhelming presence of Southeast Asians in the INTERFET force in East Timor may prove to be a milestone in the willingness of ASEAN governments to cooperate militarily.

Curiously, some Americans seem distressed that the United States did not take the lead. Donnelly argues that the Australians don't have a big military and "have other regional responsibilities, notably in Papua New Guinea."¹²⁷ The Aussies are quite willing to say no, as well as yes, however. They turned down the plea of Solomon Islands prime minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu last summer for armed assistance to prevent his ouster by ethnic rivals. Canberra instead indicated its willingness to join in a regional peacekeeping operation.

Of course, until now the Australians haven't had to construct a large force because they thought they could count on Washington to solve any and every regional problem. Complains Donnelly: Stationing troops in East Timor "would place an additional burden on an already stretched U.S. military. So would reestablishing military ties with Indonesia. But these are reasons to have a larger military, not a smaller strategy."¹²⁸

But why shouldn't Australia and its neighbors have bigger militaries and strategies? Their ability to rely on the United States creates a moral hazard. That is, nations are likely to pursue riskier, even irresponsible, policies if they believe they can count on America to bail them out if necessary.

Regional Evolution

Regional mechanisms will never fully evolve as long as the United States is determined to maintain its dominant role. Not only would a consistent U.S. refusal to play cop of first instance force Australia to do more, it would encourage Australia's neighbors, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which most resent Canberra's leading role, to take a more active role as individual powers, part of a UN force, or through ASEAN.

Still, one ad hoc mission in East Timor is not the same as a permanent security arrangement. It has long been noted that East Asia lacks any organization comparable even to the Organization of African Unity, let alone the

European Union or NATO. SEATO has disappeared and ANZUS is moribund, while the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperative handles only economic issues. ASEAN has traditionally focused on economic issues and exercised little practical authority. Until recently the Asian states, luxuriating in steady economic growth and American defense guarantees, had little reason to develop anything more. But the growth engine has sputtered, and the United States has begun to look on solving Asia's problems with a more jaundiced eye. The world is changing, and so should the region's security architecture.¹²⁹

Regional statesmen recognize the need for change. Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore has opined that "in 30 to 50 years, [China] will become a considerable economy, which means a considerable power. It's just a matter of time."¹³⁰ He has reached out to Malaysia, from which Singapore broke away in 1965, and is looking to the Philippines and Thailand to help Southeast Asia gain serious collective clout. Thailand and Malaysia have announced plans to resume joint naval exercises that were halted in the aftermath of the Asian economic crisis.

ASEAN's Potential

The most obvious candidate for promoting stability in Southeast Asia is ASEAN, the first Asian organization to unite states with widely divergent backgrounds, cultures, languages, and traditions. ASEAN is playing an increasingly important role. Although Washington's accolades should be greeted with some skepticism, DOD did argue in November 1998:

ASEAN's patterns of consultation, cooperation and consensus, now being adopted in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), are an important model for regional cooperation. ASEAN nations join with the United States in common purpose to prevent conflict, enhance stability, promote economic

growth, and assure that the interests of all nations are taken into account. ASEAN has distinguished itself by tackling such issues as political instability in Cambodia and territorial disputes in the South China Sea.¹³¹

Nevertheless, ASEAN has a long way to go. Richard Armitage complains, "I wish the region would get much more involved with the US in protecting its own security interests, but the ARF has been so flabby and disparate as to make it unworkable."¹³² Obviously, Asia's economic crisis, and particularly Indonesia's travails, has slowed ASEAN's growth, both reducing its economic progress and distracting it from international issues.¹³³

Forward Movement

In November 1999 ASEAN members advanced their targets for eliminating tariffs—from 2015 to 2010 for the six original members and from 2018 to 2015 for the four newer (and poorer) members. Although Malaysia, in particular, is skeptical of such liberalization, the organization also agreed to expand economic cooperation with China, Japan, and South Korea, which could create a market comparable to that of the United States or the European Union.

Last summer the ASEAN + 3 states agreed to support each other's currencies to forestall a replay of the 1997 regional economic crisis. Malaysia, at least, would go even further, establishing an Asian Monetary Fund and a unified currency for the region. (Prime Minister Mahathir has long pushed for Asian self-sufficiency; he forged an agreement in 1998 with Indonesia for non-dollar-denominated trade.) Proposals have also been advanced to include Australia and New Zealand in the ASEAN Free Trade Area. Moreover, the summer 1999 ASEAN Regional Forum meeting was accounted an unexpected success, considering regional issues such as North Korea's missile tests. The following year North Korea attended forum sessions. Analysts at the consulting

Regional statesmen recognize the need for change.

As the basis for further cooperation is being laid, what is most needed is necessity.

firm Stratfor contend that this move "highlights the region's continuing shift in attention from economic relations to strategic concerns" and "represents Southeast Asian nations' growing awareness of the need to collaborate on regional issues, in the face of competing U.S.-China interests."¹³⁴ Indeed, analysts say that "this forum potentially allows them to engage China on relatively equal terms."¹³⁵

At the November 1999 meeting it was suggested that a troika of countries—probably Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam to start—be empowered to initially deal with economic and security problems. The hope, expressed by ASEAN secretary general Rodolfo Severino, is that "because of its small size and the very flexibility of its composition, [this troika] can deal with rapidly developing situations much more efficiently and quickly than ASEAN acting as a whole."¹³⁶

Also in November 1999, the organization proposed a code of conduct to govern the Spratlys dispute. The ASEAN members themselves are not united on the issue, of course, and China has until now indicated that it will deal only with individual claimants, presumably in an attempt to divide and rule. In December 1999 Premier Zhu Rongji declined to sign the protocol but urged joint exploration of the archipelago and promised that China would "never seek hegemony" over the islands.¹³⁷ That was at least a modest positive step, since China backed a form of regional cooperation despite its contentious security claims.

Nevertheless, further growth in ASEAN's reach is likely to be slow. Observes Simon, ASEAN's expansion "to include two Leninist states (Vietnam and Laos) and a military dictatorship (Burma)" reduces the "proportion of democratic or pluralist governments within ASEAN."¹³⁸

Even ASEAN members acknowledge the international perception of the organization's ineffectiveness. Moreover, ASEAN still maintains its refusal to intervene in the internal affairs of member nations, which handicapped its efforts during the East Timor cri-

sis. The Philippines and Thailand have since pushed to expand ASEAN's discussions to include formerly forbidden topics (with member Burma a particular target); Malaysia leads the resistance.

Still, ASEAN members are meeting more often and with more nations. Increased economic integration will further link the nations and increase their collective strength. Those moves offer no guarantee against war resulting from either aggression or mistake, but they create the opportunity to alert members to potential conflicts, defuse disputes, and help generate a united response.

There is even hope for military cooperation. In November ASEAN organized the first meeting of military officers from member states. Although termed an "informal" shooting tournament, the gathering could presage additional military consultations within an organization formally limited to economic, political, and social issues. Mahathir has suggested creation of a unified security structure to maintain the peace. Former Philippine president Estrada proposed expanding the powers of the ARF to include "the mandate and the capability to undertake preventive diplomacy, conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution initiatives and activities."¹³⁹ Those sorts of proposals at least stimulate thinking about the future. Explains Hadi Soesastro, executive director of Indonesia's Center for Strategic and International Studies, "People will begin to make the many preparations that are needed, including a change in mindset and attitudes."¹⁴⁰ Other analysts are also positive about the future. Barry Wain of the *Asian Wall Street Journal* has written that ASEAN + 3 "is creating a buzz and capturing the imagination of East Asian intellectuals and officials."¹⁴¹

Toward Regional Security Cooperation

As the basis for further cooperation is being laid, what is most needed is necessity. Continued North Korean belligerence has led South Korea and Japan to improve their

cooperative relationship. Gradual American disengagement, combined with growing Chinese activity, would have a powerful catalyzing impact in Southeast Asia.

Perverse Incentives: U.S. Protection Fosters Free Riding

Observers who advocate continued U.S. hegemony are often frank in acknowledging the disincentive for local defense created by the U.S. military presence. For instance, Scales and Wortzel warn that after an American pullback to a mid-Pacific presence, "Southeast Asian countries, wary of a certain military buildup by China or a resurgent Russia and the corresponding response by Japan, would probably build their own military forces, if they could afford to do so."¹⁴² America's refusal to take the lead in East Timor, complained Donnelly, "will be read in the region as an indicator of our reliability and staying power."¹⁴³

The Spratlys are a good example of potential perverse impacts of U.S. intervention. Long-time U.S. defense ties caused Manila to develop a military directed almost solely at domestic duties. In pressing for a modernization program, Philippine defense minister Mercado declared that his nation had "a navy that can't go out to sea and an air force that cannot fly."¹⁴⁴ Sheldon Simon of Arizona State University observes, "Philippine defense capabilities perennially have been a standing joke within ASEAN."¹⁴⁵ Manila's newfound interest in military modernization has resulted from recent Chinese activities in the Spratlys. In fact, Chinese construction on Mischief Reef sparked passage of the original but unfulfilled military modernization program in 1995.¹⁴⁶

Even some advocates of *Pax Americana* want America's clients to do more. Richard Fisher advocates that Washington help the Philippines to enhance its defense "in a way that avoids creating new dependencies" and "stress to the Philippines that it should increase defense spending to support new air and naval forces."¹⁴⁷ But doing much more than selling weapons will inevitably reduce

Manila's incentive to sacrifice to rebuild its military. Unfortunately, the newly approved VFA seems likely to further discourage Philippine defense efforts. Philippine Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, a former defense secretary, argued, "Our defense alliance with the United States is probably the only viable option and umbrella and certainly the only one we can count on today in the event of need."¹⁴⁸ Senator Ople seemed to be thinking of all of the money Manila could now save when observing that, after passage, "we can now focus on the really urgent task of helping the Filipino poor improve their lives."¹⁴⁹ Secretary Mercado was even more explicit, declaring that "if we go it alone without the United States, then we will have to spend money."¹⁵⁰

India's Potential

A more effective ASEAN or something similar is not enough, however. To effectively respond to China if the latter becomes more aggressive, the ASEAN states should cooperate with more substantial friendly states. One is India, which has already become more active in attempting to counteract China's obvious influence in Burma.¹⁵¹ Indian prime minister Atal Vajpayee visited both Australia and Vietnam in January 2001. New Delhi has also begun extending its naval reach eastward, sending vessels on port visits through East Asia, holding exercises with South Korean and Vietnamese naval forces, signing an agreement to help upgrade the latter (as well as train army units), and conducting naval and air exercises in the South China Sea. Moreover, Indonesia's mercurial president Wahid has pointed to India as a potential alliance partner. Although he sees New Delhi as an ally with China to restrain America, he would probably welcome Indian aid should Beijing become troublesome.

New Delhi is formally directing much of its effort against piracy, a serious regional problem that the ill-equipped navies of countries like Indonesia have been unable to stem. New Delhi has also proposed maneuvers with the Chinese navy. India seems intent on

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**A significant
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demonstrating that Asian waters are not a Chinese lake. New Delhi is reorganizing its military: it plans to create a chief of defense staff, for instance. And, unlike the ASEAN countries, India clearly understands that commitments require forces. Its 2000–2001 defense budget rose 28 percent, and a 14 percent increase is planned this year. India plans to add two more aircraft carriers, giving it an air capability comparable to that of Great Britain and exceeded only by the United States, and continues to upgrade its missile capabilities.¹⁵²

Japan's Role and Changing Regional Attitudes

India has been improving relations with Japan, strained since the former's nuclear tests, and indicated plans for joint naval maneuvers. There is even talk of a "strategic partnership."¹⁵³ Japan should also do more to promote regional security. Warns Ted Galen Carpenter of the Cato Institute, "Given the growing signs of turmoil in East Asia, the real danger is that Japan will do too little too late."¹⁵⁴

Hostility toward Tokyo runs deep through much (but not all) of the region.¹⁵⁵ Tokyo's critics had rather score domestic political points than work to heal the wounds of the past. The very sharpness of the debate that occurred in Japan over both the September 1997 revision of the guidelines governing defense cooperation with America and the implementing legislation—which took a year and a half to pass—suggests that Tokyo is not likely to embark upon a new war of conquest.¹⁵⁶

Regional attitudes seem to be changing, albeit slowly. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore recently suggested to Japan that it needed to "entrench" its ties with Southeast Asia to deter Chinese influence.¹⁵⁷ Mahathir proposed that Asian nations "forget the war which was fought 50 years ago" and create a security organization including China and Japan.¹⁵⁸

Those initiatives are modest, but more may be in the offing. Tokyo is doing more

diplomatically; it is playing an active role in Burma, for instance, thereby helping to counter China's influence. Japan has also adopted a sharper tone toward Beijing itself, threatening to cut its \$2 billion in annual aid in light of China's military modernization, missile development, and aggressive naval maneuvers.

Moreover, a significant debate over refashioning Japan's security responsibilities in a changed world has been slowly brewing in Tokyo.¹⁵⁹ This discussion appears to be having an impact on Japanese behavior. In 1999 the Japanese coast guard fired on suspect North Korean spy vessels in territorial waters. Tokyo also proposed participating in multinational anti-piracy patrols in the Strait of Malacca, though Indonesia and Malaysia decided that Japan's assistance wasn't necessary. Observe analysts at Stratfor: "Sending armed Japanese vessels would firmly place this strategic waterway within Japan's areas of operation. Tokyo is taking serious steps to adapt to a new reality. Naval operations once unthinkable are becoming an accepted part of regional and national security."¹⁶⁰

South Korea—or, ultimately, a united Korea—also could help provide regional balance. Already Seoul has been involved in discussions of regional issues with China and Japan. (ASEAN has involved both Japan and South Korea, as well as China—but not yet India—in ASEAN + 3.) Many South Korean officials are already looking past the fading threat from the North to other regional contingencies. Even Russia, which has paid little attention to the Pacific since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, might play a role; its warming relations with Japan include military cooperation.¹⁶¹ Russia's Pacific Fleet has begun to again pay foreign port visits.

Beijing, which has long been uncomfortable about a more assertive Japan, now is also disquieted by the apparent cooperation between India and Japan. A communist newspaper in Hong Kong, *Wen Wei Po*, complained that "it is difficult to judge whether India's extension of feelers to the South China Sea will constitute new security

threats to China, but this will certainly make the security situation in this region more complicated.”¹⁶²

Relinquishing *Pax Americana*

Although American resistance to new security arrangements in Southeast Asia may slow the advance of other states, as the regional balance of power shifts, so too may the correlation of diplomatic, economic, and military forces. The United States can either accommodate the shift, helping to channel it in a benign direction, or resist it, irrespective of the hostility engendered.

While continuing *Pax Americana* would probably be safer (at least in the short term) for Washington’s legion of client states and dependents, it would not be safer for America. Distancing the United States from entanglement in local and regional squabbles would leave this country more secure. More robust democratic powers in the region could deter would-be aggressors, and U.S. military withdrawal would reduce the likelihood that America would be drawn into future crises. Washington’s forced departure from the Philippines led the United States to adopt a program of “places not bases,” focusing on ready access to military facilities rather than on permanent deployments.¹⁶³ A similar approach could replace security guarantees elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Indeed, Southeast Asian nations recognize that their affairs are not on Washington’s front burner. Complains Dov Zakheim, under secretary of defense (and department comptroller), “The United States, having reluctantly committed support forces to underpin Australia’s intervention in East Timor, once again is perceived to be inclined to wait for the next level [of crisis] to pay much attention to the area.”¹⁶⁴ In fact, this is a welcome phenomenon.

Washington should pursue greater economic integration along with military disengagement. America should encourage initia-

tives such as New Zealand’s proposed P5 free trade area (Australia, Chile, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States). The APEC forum should promote even wider, freer trade.

At the same time, the United States should preserve informal security ties—emergency base access, intelligence sharing, overflight rights, force provision agreements—with friendly states. Although Georgetown University’s James Clad has criticized the “provisional air” and “derivative feel” of such agreements, they have the benefit of providing a means of dealing with unexpected contingencies without automatically entangling the United States in potentially costly local squabbles.¹⁶⁵

Most important, Washington should encourage Southeast Asians to cooperate not only among themselves but also with crucial neighboring powers, particularly India and Japan. Although ASEAN has begun to move on its own, Zakheim contends that “Washington will have to undertake a concerted effort to change Southeast Asian patterns of behavior. It must spur ASEAN to plan for joint action in the face of humanitarian strife similar to what was so recently seen in East Timor.”¹⁶⁶

In particular, Washington must begin to say no, as it did in East Timor, when pressured to take care of security problems that the countries in Southeast Asia can and should handle themselves. As a result of that unexpected U.S. restraint, Australia acted. Finally, an Asian nation took responsibility for Asia, and for bearing the cost of doing so. Observes Nancy Dewolf Smith of the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, “Australia is facing all the perverse consequences of leadership that Americans have grown accustomed to, including criticism for a job well done.”¹⁶⁷ The East Timor operation should provide a model for the future.

Defense guarantees, military bases, and U.S. soldiers should not be strewn about with wild abandon. Military action should not be risked when vital American interests are not involved and when friendly states are capable of acting on their own. The world has

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changed; so should America's defense commitments in Southeast Asia. Washington's highest duty should be to U.S. citizens. Responsible representation of the American people requires abandoning expensive and risky commitments that no longer serve U.S. security interests. Southeast Asia would be an excellent place to start.

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28. Edwin Feulner, "Challenges in U.S.-Asia Policy," Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House International Relations Committee, 106th Cong., 1st sess., February 10, 1999, p. 6. Copy in author's files.

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48. *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 40.
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63. Leo Dobbs, "Shots in the Dark," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 7, 2000, p. 21.
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107. Simon, p. 8.

108. Ibid., p. 24.

109. ASEAN is headquartered in Jakarta. Although Indonesia is not the region's dominant economic power—Thailand has a larger and Singapore has a comparable GDP—it has the largest population (roughly 40 percent of the population of all ASEAN members combined). The organization grew out of improving relations between Indonesia and Malaysia following armed conflict between 1963 and 1966.

110. Quoted in "Wahid to Use Navy for Internal Concerns," Stratfor Commentary, October 25, 1999, www.stratfor.com.

111. Tassell, "Spratley Nerves Force Manila Army Rethink." Manila desperately needs to invest in defense. As *The Economist* observes, "The Philippine navy is so ill-equipped that it can hardly put to sea, let alone defend a territorial claim." "The Tigers That Changed Their Stripes."

112. Simon, p. 27.

113. Quoted in Geoffrey Barker, "Real Value of US Alliance under Question," *Australian Financial Review*, September 9, 1999, www.afr.com.

114. Quoted in "Rhetoric and Reality: The Limits of Australia's Ambitions in Asia," Stratfor Special Report, September 26, 1999, www.stratfor.com. In the face of sharp Asian criticism, Howard subsequently denied using the term "deputy."

115. Quoted in Jane Perlez, "Getting Tough Gets Tough for Australia," *New York Times*, September 26, 1999, p. WK-4.

116. Quoted in Bill Gertz, "Australia Stepping on Some Toes," *Washington Times*, September 30, 1999, p. A13.

117. "Australian Military Sees Regional Role," *Washington Times*, November 10, 2000, p. A17. See also "Australia Aims for Active Security Role in Asia Pacific," Stratfor Commentary, December 12, 2000, www.stratfor.com. In 1999 defense outlays as a percentage of GDP were the lowest since 1939.

118. Joanne Gray, "Why the US Said No to Sending Any Ground Troops," *Australian Financial Review*, September 10, 1999, p. 11.

119. Ibid.

120. Malcolm Fraser, "US Relations: The Ties That Bind," *The Australian*, January 19, 2000. See also Malcolm Fraser, "Australia, Asia, and the United States," 2000 Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop Asialink Lecture, Asialink Centre of the University

of Melbourne, Australia, November 24, 2000. Fraser also articulates the general concern over American support for Taiwan, which could trigger a conflict that no U.S. ally desires.

121. See, for example, Peter Hartcher and Geoffrey Barker, "Boost Defence or Risk US Alliance: Report," *Australian Financial Review*, May 24, 2000, pp. 1, 8. There will undoubtedly be opposition to such proposals warns Lim. "Like other democracies, Australia has found it hard to sustain political support for defense in the absence of an obvious security threat." Robyn Lim, "Australia Faces Widening Defense Horizons," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, weekly edition, December 18–24, 2000, p. 17. It is harder to convince Americans that they should shoulder that burden for Australia.

122. Quoted in "U.S. Influence Retreats from Southeast Asia," Stratfor Commentary, July 21, 2000, www.stratfor.com.

123. Not surprisingly, the proposal has sparked disagreement over the ultimate impact on the country's military capabilities. Colin James, "Fight for Reform," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 25, 1999, p. 26. The decision to cancel the lease of 28 F-16s suggests the direction in which the current government plans to move. Indeed, the prime minister later decided that her nation did not require an anti-submarine capability. Helen Clark, "Why We No Longer Need an Anti-Submarine Force," *New Zealand Herald*, March 22, 2001, p. A13. However, New Zealand is unlikely ever to be a major military power, even if it wants to; the new configuration might enable it to participate in cooperative regional operations.

124. See, for example, Michael Richardson, "With Funding Tight, Australian Military Is Feeling the Pinch," *International Herald Tribune*, March 3, 2000, p. 5; "Rhetoric and Reality," p. 2; "There's a New Deputy in Town: Australia's New Strategy," Stratfor Weekly Analysis, September 27, 1999, www.stratfor.com. The Australian treasurer admits the operation, the largest military operation since Vietnam, will have "significant economic costs." Quoted in "Australia's Role in Timor Means More Defense Spending," *Wall Street Journal*, September 17, 1999, p. A13. Estimates have run as high as \$1.9 billion. Peter Montagnon, "Australia Counts Defence Cost of E. Timor," *Financial Times*, October 6, 1999, p. 4.

125. S. Karene Witcher and Jay Solomon, "Australians Fear Timor's Cost May Prove Dear," *Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 1999, p. A19. See also Masako Fukui, "'Howard Doctrine' Unsettles Australia's Asian Neighbors," *Nikkei Weekly*, October 11, 1999, p. 22.

126. "Malaysia Scolds Indonesia for Seeking Western Sponsor," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, May 20, 2000, www.stratfor.com.
127. Donnelly, p. 27.
128. Ibid.
129. "APEC, East Timor and the New Asian Reality," Stratfor, September 13, 1999, www.stratfor.com.
130. Quoted in "Crossing the Water in Southeast Asia," Stratfor Asia Commentary, August 17, 2000, www.stratfor.com.
131. *Security Strategy*, 1998, p. 36. Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum is particularly significant since the ARF holds security discussions reaching outside the narrow confines of Southeast Asia. See, for example, Jeannie Henderson, "Reassessing ASEAN," International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper no. 328, May 1999, pp. 26–29.
132. Quoted in Peter Hartcher, "Who Will Keep the Peace in Asia When the US Leaves?" *Australian Financial Review*, September 11, 1999, p. 26.
133. For a detailed discussion of ASEAN, see Henderson.
134. "Southeast Asian Nations Call the Shots," Stratfor Commentary, October 23, 1999, www.stratfor.com.
135. Ibid.
136. Rodolfo Severino, "The ASEAN Way in Manila," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 23, 1999, p. 27.
137. Quoted in "ASEAN," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 9, 1999, p. 14.
138. Simon, p. 8.
139. Quoted in "Asian Leaders Call for Regional Unity," *Washington Times*, June 4, 1999, p. A14.
140. Quoted in Barry Wain, "Building an East Asian Identity," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, weekly edition, May 29–June 4, 2000, p. 17.
141. Ibid. See also John Barry Kotch, "A Step Forward in Asian Cooperation," *Japan Times*, August 6, 2000, p. 21.
142. Scales and Wortzel, p. 6.
143. Donnelly, p. 27.
144. Quoted in "GIs Come Back?" *The Economist*, April 24, 1999, p. 39.
145. Simon, p. 8.
146. Renato Cruz De Castro, "Adjusting to the Post-U.S. Bases Era: The Ordeal of the Philippine Military's Modernization Program," *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 130. Unfortunately, inadequate funding led to few practical results.
147. Fisher, "Rebuilding the U.S.-Philippine Alliance," pp. 10, 11.
148. Quoted in "Philippine Senate Ratifies Military Accord with US," Agence France-Presse, Hong Kong service, May 27, 1999.
149. Quoted in Gomez.
150. Quoted in James Hookway, "Philippines Agrees to Allow U.S. Military Exercises," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, weekly edition, May 31–June 6, 1999, p. 4. "Are we ready to do that, are we ready to take money away from social services?" he asked, as if it made sense for the U.S. to divert money from social services to defend the Philippines.
151. See, for example, "Myanmar Equalizing Chinese, Indian Relations," Stratfor Commentary, November 21, 2000, www.stratfor.com.
152. See, for example, "India Sends Messages with Missile Test," Stratfor Asia Commentary, January 24, 2001, www.stratfor.com; "India: Outdated Military Machine in for a Makeover," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, November 6, 2000, www.stratfor.com; and "India Challenges China in South China Sea," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, April 26, 2000, www.stratfor.com.
153. Tomoda Seki, "A Japan-India Front," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 25, 2000. www.feer.com.
154. Ted Galen Carpenter, "Japan, However Reluctantly, Reawakens," *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 2000, p. A19.
155. See, for example, Bandow, *Tripwire*, pp. 168–69.
156. A poll by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper found the public opposed to the change by a 43 percent to 37 percent margin. Twice as many opponents as supporters said their views were strongly felt. "Japanese Oppose Revised Japan-US Defence Plan—Poll," Reuters, March 19, 1999. On the limited nature of the new legislation, see Doug Bandow, "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Pentagon's East Asia Security Strategy Report," Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 433, May 18, 1999, pp. 11–12; and Ted Galen Carpenter, "Pacific Fraud: The New U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines," October 16, 1997, www.cato.org.

157. "Singapore: Japan's Role Key to Regional Power Balance," Stratfor Commentary, December 8, 1999, www.stratfor.com.
158. Quoted in "Occasion for Pan-Asian Cooperation," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, December 3, 1999, www.stratfor.com. Mahatir has similarly pressed Japan to take the lead in promoting independent economic institutions in Asia. "Mahatir Seeks Japanese Opposition to United States," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, March 2, 1999, www.stratfor.com.
159. See, for example, Michael Green, "Why Tokyo Will Be a Larger Player in Asia," Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, July 27, 2000, www.fpri.com; Edward Neilan, "Pacifist Constitution Coming under Scrutiny As Tokyo Looks to U.N. Role," *Washington Times*, May 10, 2000, p. A13; Frank Ching, "Time for Japan to Defend Itself," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 16, 2000; p. 40; Geoffrey Smith, "Japan Expanding Defense Role," *Washington Times*, March 7, 2000, p. A11; "Forging a New Japan," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, February 22, 2000, www.stratfor.com; "Japan Rising from Its Pacifism," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, January 25, 2000, www.stratfor.com; "Japan: New Military Role on the Horizon," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, December 10, 1999, www.stratfor.com; and "Japan Considers Revising Constitutional Constraints on Military," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, April 24, 1998, www.stratfor.com. Growing support for a greater Japanese role is also evident in the United States, where a panel cochaired by Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye Jr. recently offered a number of recommendations involving Japanese security cooperation with its neighbors and the United States. See "The United States and Japan: Advancing toward a Mature Partnership," Institute for National Strategic Studies Special Report, National Defense University, October 11, 2000.
160. "Japan Proposes to Patrol the Strait of Malacca," Stratfor Commentary, February 18, 2000, www.stratfor.com.
161. See, for example, "Japan and Russia Seek Closer Military Cooperation," Stratfor Global Intelligence Update, December 9, 1998, www.stratfor.com.
162. Quoted in Frank Ching, "Japan and India Forge New Links," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 7, 2000, p. 32.
163. Larson, p. 4.
164. Dov Zakheim, "The American Strategic Position in East Asia," Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, May 12, 2000, www.fpri.com.
165. Clad, p. 2. Zakheim makes much the same argument. Lim goes even further: "Without bases and allies on or just off the East Asian littoral, [the United States] cannot remain an Asia-Pacific power, even with a 12-aircraft carrier navy." Lim, "Bush Should Place a Firm Hand on the Geostrategic Tiller."
166. Zakheim.
167. Nancy Dewolf Smith, "Australia: Welcome to the Big Leagues," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, weekly edition, October 11-17, 1999, p. 17.

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