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MILITARY PROPOSALS FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE ASIA
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MILITARY PROPOSALS FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

This paper argues that there are unique opportunities to lay the foundation for future security cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region. Political forums are creating the environment conducive to greater security cooperation. However, lingering cold war attitudes and outdated operational policies place at risk the military's potential to advance regional security through coalition preparedness.

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INTRODUCTION

In the swirl of the wake left behind by the passing of the Cold War there are opportunities for world peace that exceed those of the Wilsonian period at the end of World War One. However, the Asia Pacific region as one of the most dynamic and potentially eruptive regions of the world is in danger of being overlooked as other momentous world developments mask the seemingly subtle almost benign changes taking place. For more than twenty years Europe was the focus of world attention as superpower tensions waxed and waned. Today Europe remains the focus of international attention as world leaders struggle with the future of NATO and the uncertainties posed by the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya while at the same time attempting to respond to the conflicting priorities and clamors of those seeking a greater peace dividend.

Similarly events in the Middle-East serve to distract world attention from the rapidly evolving issues in Asia. The Gulf War, the Turkish pursuit of separatist Kurds, the possible sale of Russian reactors to Iran, and the threat to oil supplies posed by the quizzical actions of fundamentalist Iran in the Straits of Hormuz have relegated other regions further down the list of international priorities.

However, in the shadow of such significant issues the Asia Pacific region has been undergoing a quietly explosive economic miracle that has changed the face of Asia forever. A miracle that has served to demonstrate (yet again) what can be achieved during a period of sustained peace. The miracle manifests itself in the form of high growth rates which are cited by Greg Cashman¹ in his book "What Causes War", as significant ingredients leading to severe wars. Many other causes of war described in Cashman's book are evolving in modern Asia. Arms proliferation, relative power cycles, uneven growth, non democratic countries, competition for resources, and long standing rivalries are a few in point. Could it be that as Europe retreats from war, events in the Asia Pacific Region are creating the environment most suited to the generation of war.

The time is opportune to pursue cooperative security in the Asia Pacific Region. Economic success has created an aura of cooperative good will and unlike at the end of the World Wars, nationalism is not at exceptionally high levels. However this may not last as countries jostle to gain a comfortable strategy disposition as new arrangements emerge. The window of opportunity for the consolidation of regional cooperation in Asia deserves

¹ Cashman, Greg. What Causes War, page 135 Lexington Books.

renewed efforts to ensure that stability, peace and productivity are not disturbed by events that are preventable.

If it was true to say of Europe in 1989 that 'peace was breaking out all over' it would be equally apt to say in 1995 that preventive diplomacy and cooperative security have achieved new heights in the Asia Pacific Region. Action is required to ensure these gains are consolidated and that new initiatives maintain the momentum.

This paper aims to discuss some of the regional security issues that are shaping the future for Asia and to propose that the military services have a unique role to play in assisting the economic and political initiatives that seek to enhance regional stability.

New Economies, New Horizons

In 1993 exports from APEC countries represented 46% of total world exports² with gross national productions accounting for over half the world's GDP. Over the ten years to 1992 total world merchandise trade with ASEAN grew at an astonishing 13% per year³. Today the 18 member states of APEC, comprising about one third of the world's population produce \$14 trillion and export \$1.7 trillion of goods annually, about one half of the worlds totals⁴. Indications are that these rates of progress will be maintained if not improved.

With economic success comes a growing sense of national pride, self reliance and to a certain degree, assertiveness. Although economic cooperation is well institutionalized

² Page 64 The Economist, November 12th 1994.

³ The APEC Trade and Investment, November 1993 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Canberra, Australia.

⁴ A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, The White House, February 1995.

with tangible evidence of success, the overflow to the military and political arenas remains constrained by lingering distrust, the desire for non-alignment and a focus on internal rather than external developments.

Throughout the Cold War regional defense forces were of modest size with aging technology. Military to military contacts were constrained within webs of bilateral agreements. The economic boom and industrialization has resulted in a greater degree of economic well-being which has brought into focus the security needs of individual nations and provided them with the means to do something about them. In the first instance these new ambitions have manifested themselves as programs of modernization and rearmament, commonly referred to as 'proliferation' or the Asian arms race. The inevitable result of an arms race is what is called the security dilemma. One country blessed with new-found wealth modernizes and expands its defense force to improve its security. This causes concern for neighboring countries which similarly modernize and rearm with the result that security actually sinks to lower levels than before the arms race began. Military to military contacts are one way to reduce tensions and increase trust and, as each country has developed its armed forces, greater military contact in the form of exercises, talks and training has followed.

This greater interaction between regional armed forces has served to draw political attention to the inadequacies of current security arrangements and highlighted the potential for greater regional cooperation.

It was not until the end of the Cold War with the attendant possibility of the US returning to some form of isolationism that the region collectively realized it did not have

security arrangements or political mechanisms to manage those issues that had the potential to damage highly productive economies. This realization has resulted in the outbreak of preventive diplomacy in the pursuit of cooperative security arrangements that is being experienced today.

Regional Security Issues - Threats and Opportunities

The Asian region could be considered to be strategically benign from a security point of view. By European and Middle East standards there is an element of truth to this, however, the region has all the ingredients which if not managed correctly, could wreak havoc and shatter stability. Asia is one of the world's fastest growing arms markets, there are unresolved ideological differences, competing territorial claims, distrust of a resurrected Japan, and rising fear of an increasingly powerful China. If that's not enough Korea remains as an unrepentant albeit anachronistic reminder of the Cold War with the ability in a single act of defiance to burst the economic bubble. Cambodia teeters on newly found untested democratic legs and Myanmar's military dictatorship's "charm offensive"⁵ that aims to gain international acceptance for its hard-line domestic policies could fail with dire consequences. The nuclear standoff between India and Pakistan, albeit on the fringes of the region, has the potential to fuel a regional arms race and disrupt trade and oil supplies from the Middle-East, with disastrous effects.

On the positive side of the balance sheet there seems to be a genuine will by governments in the region to resolve issues by peaceful means. For example the states

⁵ Ashton, William. "Beware of SLORC's Charm Offensive in Myanmar". Asia Pacific Defense Reporter September 1994.

that lay claim to the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea have announced that they intend to seek a peaceful settlement to the conflicting claims⁶. Similarly, peaceful solutions to claims covering Sabak and Sarawak are envisaged.

Despite the best intentions, resolution of such issues should not be left to national leaders alone. As Dr Lee Boon Yong, Singapore's Minister for Defense and Minister for Labor, said:

"Peace and Security to all countries can never be taken for granted. There is always a need for countries to be aware that changes can take place in the future. What is today a calm and peaceful environment may change drastically in the future beyond your imagination, beyond your anticipation. But it is necessary for each country to maintain its ability to look to its own security needs and that as part of the process, there is a need to establish relationship arrangements which will contribute to the process of country's security."⁷

Unlike many countries in the Asian Pacific Region, Singapore along with Malaysia and Australia, are comfortable with cooperative security arrangements in an environment that is not defined in terms of a threat. The challenge remains to encourage other countries to contribute to regional security arrangements that are not dependent on an immediate threat, but exist to cater for the unforeseen and unanticipated.

It is not the intention of this paper to identify what is, or is not, in the interests of each country but it would seem fair to assume that countries harvesting the economic

⁶Transcript of Interview of a Joint News Conference given at the end of the second Five Power Defense Arrangement Defense Minister's Conference in Singapore on 20 September 1994.

⁷ Transcript of Interview of a Joint News Conference given at the end of the second Five Power Defense Arrangement Defense Minister's Conference in Singapore on 20 September 1994.

fruits of a peaceful and stable region would wish to see it continue that way. The proposals for security cooperation in the Asia Pacific region will be discussed below but first it is necessary to examine the US strategy for the region.

United States Strategy for the Asia Pacific Region

In the uncertainty of the immediate post Cold War era, even before the dust of Pinatuba had settled, there were concerns throughout the region that the US would return to its isolationist policies leaving a power vacuum to be filled by some, as yet unidentified, regional hegemon of dubious integrity and intent. It seemed as though the isolationists had won the day and that demand for the well earned but overdue peace dividend would result in a contraction of US foreign policy. These fears were unfounded. A prosperous and open Asia Pacific is key to the economic health of the United States⁸. Despite US withdrawal from the Philippines it would appear that integrated pluralist policies are gaining momentum and the US will remain effectively engaged in regional affairs. This is vital for regional security as it provides welcome leadership and US involvement in countering any power imbalance that may arise, as well as reducing the need for proliferation. It will also create an environment in which immature democracies can take root and grow, whilst countering regimes of tyranny that have the potential for significant disruption.

The region provides the US with a smorgasbord of opportunities to promote and reinforce American national interests and values on the world stage. Some examples include promoting a free market and strengthening economic reform by attacking trade

⁸ A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement. The White House, February 1995.

barriers and illegal practices in Japan and China respectively, countering nuclear proliferation in North Korea, countering tendencies towards human rights abuses in China and Myanmar, and securing a favorable world order generally by promoting free market based western democratic values throughout the region.

Of the world's regions, engagement and enlargement have the greatest potential to succeed in the Asia Pacific region. The latest review of the US National Security Strategy gives continued support to developments in the Asia Pacific Region. There is every indication that the US is approaching its superpower responsibilities in the region in a measured and sensitive way. Examples include the decoupling of human rights issues from most favored nation status in China and maintaining a non-intrusive policy over developments in Myanmar. The risk to developments in the region is an overactive or impatient US administration that might upset the steady patient methodologies of the region's cultures. As Singapore's elder statesmen Lee Kuon Yew explains:

"No one expects America to maintain the balance in the Pacific because the peoples of Asia are culturally and politically compatible with America. I hope America will do so because the interests of Japan and the smaller states in East Asia are congruent with America's. But if they are not, then we will have to learn to live with a less benign power balance in the Pacific."⁹

Asia's Interests and Objectives

Peace throughout the region is fundamental to the continued economic well being of each nation. Peace is necessary for prosperity, and both will have a chance of success commensurate with the level of cooperation and understanding achieved across the

⁹ "How to Live with China: Lee Kuan Yew's Prescription". Asia Pacific Defense Reporter August-September 1994.

political, economic and military spectrums. The greater the number of links between countries, and the stronger these links become as national interests converge, the more likely it will be that differences can be settled peacefully. Similarly the region's resilience to disruptive forces will be stronger. As President Suharto, the enduring President of Indonesia once said, "We are neighbors and we must get along together"¹⁰.

Security Cooperation

Cooperative security and preventative diplomacy are the umbrella terms to describe the processes to build trust in the sensitive area of security between governments in the region. The Cold War gave rise to Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) which were aimed at reducing tension between the superpowers that were standing toe to toe across the iron curtain. As there is no similar confrontation in the Asia Pacific region, with the attendant pressing need to negotiate on technical military arms issues, it is more appropriate and more commonly accepted to refer to such initiatives as Trust Building Measures¹¹ (TBMs).

The ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference has been examining ways to promote TBMs principally by increasing political dialogue and information exchange in a measured and incremental way. The development of TBMs relies on a top down political approach to identifying matters of mutual benefit that will increase trust and understanding at a pace which is comfortable for all participants. Initial proposals under examination include:

¹⁰ President Suharto - Meeting with General P C Graton AC OBE, Australian Chief of Defense Force, Jakarta, November 1988.

¹¹ Australian Paper - "Practical Proposals for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region". Developed for the ASEAN PMC, dated April 1994.

- Limited exchange of Military Information
- A Regional Security Studies Center
- A Maritime Information Data Base
- Strategic Planning Exchanges
- Exchange of Military Observers
- Peace Keeping Training

Depending on the success of these proposals the incremental approach to TBMs for the next decade calls up further proposals for consideration, including :

- Enhanced Maritime Cooperation
- A Regional Arms Register
- Notification of Major Military Deployments
- A Multinational Agreement in the Avoidance of Naval Incidents

All these proposals are important and worthwhile and demonstrate that some leaders in the region value greater levels of cooperation across all facets of government. The success of this approach can be enhanced by bottom-up military contributions which are discussed below.

Military Presence

During the Cold War it was expected that armed forces would plan for war. On the scale of conflict the role of the military is to fight and win, and nothing in this paper

suggests any reduction in an armed forces preparedness to succeed in the ultimate test of its war fighting capability. However, with the move back from the brink of superpower war there should be recognition that the role of the defense force needs to expand to address peacetime activities towards the other end of the scale, namely, to consider how Armies, Navies and Air Forces can better contribute to engagement. This paper suggests much more can be done to engage other defense forces whilst at the same time maintaining preparedness to prevent conflict and, if need be, to ultimately win wars.

This challenge brings into question the definition of "presence". Presence is often seen as some form of "Gunboat Diplomacy", namely an armed force able to coerce, intimidate and if necessary, strike in support of national interests. A greater analysis of the US National Security and Military Strategies lends support to the notion that presence is more than the deployment of armed forces and occasional exercises with regional forces. These strategies require the optimization of military to military contacts in support of alliances and coalitions in order to increase regional security and, ultimately, to fight combined if required.

In a separate article by the same author¹² of this paper the evolving demands of military presence in the post cold war era are examined. The article argues that the strategic rhetoric is not being matched at the operational level with initiatives which support engagement and enlargement. It proposes that in the post cold war era of dwindling resources a revolutionary approach to coalition preparedness and operational training is required if regional security is to be optimized.

¹² Robertson, Brian D. Captain RAN. "Combined Operations - Political Game or Serious Business", Naval War College 1995.

MILITARY PROPOSALS

In a similar way to the measured top-down political approach there is potential for the military to pursue a graduated structured bottom-up approach which will complement cooperative economic and political activities. However, the methodologies developed in Europe to enhance Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) cannot be applied in an indiscriminate and open ended manner to the Asia Pacific region.

The security situation is different. It is multi-polar rather than bipolar with many countries at different levels and rates of economic growth seeking to have their unique situation satisfied. The Asian way of problem solving is also different. While equally deterministic there seems to be greater emphasis given to patient incremental progress toward the desired solution, rather than rapid acceptance of the solution as is commonly a trait of western culture. Despite the high levels of economic cooperation there remains in place cultural and ideological barriers to increased military cooperation.

The role of the military in the pluralistic engagement of the Asia Pacific region is changing and has the potential to have a greater proportional impact on relationships than might be expected. This is because the military plays a significant political role in many Asian countries, and as such influences the development of foreign policy and regional strategy to a greater degree than in mature western democracies.

While all arms of the military have unique and important roles to play the Navy is well placed currently to capitalize on areas of common interests. This is primarily because interests and concerns in the region tend to converge on maritime issues. Most of the current issues under consideration have a strong maritime flavor such as: piracy, search

and rescue, marine environmental damage, freedom of the seas in archipelagic waters and undersea resources.

The greater involvement of Navies particularly at the formative stages of international diplomacy should not be surprising. Historically in the Asia Pacific region, first contact between communities was by sea, and even today countries tend to be more comfortable with naval deployments that facilitate exercises outside territorial boundaries and where foreign ship visits are an accepted part of international relationships. This is particularly important in the early uncertain stages of developing relationships. The prospect of a visiting army battalion or squadron of F15s seems to represent a higher degree of sovereignty intimidation which becomes more acceptable only when the relationship has matured to a higher level of trust and cooperation. Nonetheless, as military forces become more joint in nature a greater range of activities become more appropriate such as: war gaming, training and higher level staff education. Although all military forces are able to contribute to cooperative activities in differing degrees which will assist the process of trust building, the remainder of this paper will focus on naval activity.

Naval Proposals

Traditional naval deployments and to a similar extent naval exercises suffer from the tyranny of isolation. They are challenging, busy, often exciting and rewarding but to opinion makers, politicians and the public ashore, out of sight usually means out of mind. As for the participants on the ships there is no interaction at the individual level apart from the voice on the other end of the radio and perhaps brief acquaintances at post-exercise

debriefing sessions. There is little cultural cross-pollination and hence little value added to the process of developing TBMs. There is potential for greater value to be achieved.

Military proposals for cooperative activities need to optimize personal contact and be structured so that non threatening, readily acceptable, inexpensive, useful activities precede more demanding, and complex costly activities. In the first category dialogue, such as discussions on military and strategic issues at all levels of military command, assist to develop habits of cooperation. These are common in today's world at the higher levels but dialogue activities could be extended to become more interactive at the individual and ship level. For example, visiting command teams could undertake tactical floor games and Command Team Training in simulators ashore. Similarly, mutual training activities in facilities ashore and onboard each other's ships, leadership expeditions which take the form of adventure training, combined recreational pursuits and cultural visits could become a greater part of allied exercises. The opportunities to interact at the personal level within the defense environment and local communities are limited only by one's imagination and would serve to greatly improve understanding and increase cooperation.

Although some activities would need to attract official funding to succeed, the astute resource manager will note that the increased value comes at little cost. Most of the activities identified in this paper can be conducted when ships are in harbor with commensurate savings in fuel expenditures.

More complex activities in the second category are conducted at sea and maximize personal exchanges whilst conducting more traditional forms of naval exercises. The

operational benefits of such exercises are normally consolidated by in-harbor post exercise discussion that aim to build on experiences and plan for future activities.

The Move to Multilateralism

The activities discussed above increase the lower level of operational interaction namely sailor to sailor, officer to officer and as such are vitally important to the formative process of developing habits of understanding, mutual respect and cooperation. At senior levels interaction between Staff Colleges, Tactical Schools, Peacekeeping Training Centers, Force Development Agencies and Acquisition Projects add to the fabric of TBMs.

Many regional navies conduct similar activities to those described above, although not always as extensive as described here, on a **bilateral** basis. The majority of military contacts remains on a bilateral basis, except among those nations used to multilateral activities (for example, Five Power Defense Arrangement members - Australia, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand).

The challenge facing political leaders and military commanders is to broaden contact from the current web of bilateral relationships to multilateral arrangements involving military organizations throughout the region. The rationale for and methodology to achieve greater levels of multilateralism are discussed below.

US LEADERSHIP

The passing of the Cold War demands a new approach to regional security. The

US Security and Military Strategies clearly outline the importance of coalitions in support of US interest, regional and global security:

“Our armed forces will most often fight in concert with regional allies and friends as coalitions can decisively increase combat power and lead to a more rapid and favorable outcome to the conflict.”¹³

Yet at the operational level the preparedness of regional navies to undertake coalition warfare is poor. For example, electromagnetic connectivity is at low levels, combined ROEs are seldom practiced and command arrangements are often loosely defined to demonstrate political unity rather than to achieve operational effectiveness.

The Gulf War is often extolled as a successful example of coalition warfare; and it was as far as it went. However, in the maritime environment it was hardly a test of the ability to fight combined. The enemy was not robust. There was no penetrable air threat, no electronic warfare, no submarines and limited surface warfare. Mines posed the greatest threat. Coalition forces were generally allocated geographic areas and tasked to act in support of an overwhelming US effort. Forces were not integrated and Command and Control arrangements were not formalized. This is not to denigrate the efforts of coalition parties which were surely needed and appreciated, but rather to state that the Gulf War from a maritime perspective was not a test of the requirement or expectation to fight combined. Rather it was a highly complex exposition of goodwill, cooperation and logistical achievement.

Admiral Owens describes two models for coalitions, the first essentially demonstrative in nature which is formed to show political support. The second, is a more complex arrangement which aims to achieve greater levels of interoperability in such functions as communications and intelligence. Consequently the second model is designed to be more operationally functional. While recognizing Desert Storm tended towards the

¹³ National Military Strategy of the United States of America, February 1995.

first model he states that the ability of the US to fulfill its role as a dominant member of a coalition or core coordinator will depend greatly on the kind of ground work undertaken before a coalition-forming crisis emerges.

“Peacetime interaction - military to military and political to political - is really the only way to reduce the time it takes to achieve operational coordination in a crisis.”¹⁴

If the Gulf War was an example of the first model then what confidence is there that the second model is achievable within a reasonable time frame and to a level of capability which can achieve success; and how can coalition forces best prepare during peacetime for this capability.

For those who believe that the Gulf War, whilst not a high threat scenario at sea, was sufficiently complex to test the principles of coalition warfare and provide confidence that operations could be quickly geared up, let us compare the priority and importance afforded to combined operations with the current emphasis and rationale for increased joint operations. In recent years the purple wave of jointness has swept through US and other nation's forces. Apart from being touted as the panacea for maintaining operational capability in the face of dwindling budgets, most would recognize that joint operations provide the commander with a more flexible range of capabilities which when bought to bear at the right times and places optimizes the unique and complimentary capabilities of each of the services¹⁵.

It is an easy and logical step to extend the rationale for joint operations to combined operations. Combined operations can do for regional security what jointness does for national security, and combined operations during peacetime is a force multiplier for military presence.

¹⁴ Owens, William A. Admiral USN. “Naval Voyage to an Uncharted World”. The US Naval Institute Proceedings, December 1994.

¹⁵ National Military Strategy of the United States of America, February 1995.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE

As the nature of 'presence' in the post cold war era has changed so too has the nature of warfare. While military presence has shifted its focus from power projection to regional engagement, warfare has shifted its focus from superpower confrontation to littoral warfare. 'From the Sea' and 'Forward from the Sea' have succeeded in influencing the way the US military does business. The mission has shifted from operations in open blue waters to operations in the brown waters of littoral and archipelagic areas. The enemy is no longer the massed might of Soviet air and sea power but the more evasive lurking threat of quiet diesel submarines, or missile armed patrol boats adept at concealing their presence in island waters or short range low flying missile armed aircraft which give little, if any, electronic or radar warning of their approach.

While the majority of US forces are struggling with this change of direction, smaller navies are reveling in the challenges this change of focus brings. In the Asia Pacific region where the priority has always been the regional threat, this kind of warfare is the bread and butter of the area's naval forces. Considerable capability, skill and experience exists, and is ready to be tapped, in the cause of advancing regional security. Examples include modern MCM vessels and diving teams specializing in shallow water MCM, a capability which lapsed in the USN, archipelagic warfare expertise possessed by Malaysian, Indonesian and Singaporean missile patrol boats, and the extensive conventional ASW capability of the Australian, Indonesian and Japanese submarines.

The challenge for US operational planners is how best to tap these resources for the mutual benefit of US and allied navies whilst at the same time achieving strategic military presence and regional operational objectives within available resources.

The traditional method has been to program forces to conduct a series of bilateral exercises. The planner's spread sheet becomes a nightmare of competing requirements and dwindling assets stirred along by political and strategic imperatives. Schemes are devised to retain the veneer of activity at less cost. The US reality of reductions in

personnel, funding and force structure, limits on personnel assigned to forces outside CONUS, and increasing national tasks must be balanced against regional perceptions of disengagement. Sequential bilateral exercises such as UNITAS in South America and Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) in the Asia Pacific region are examples of traditional operational planning which, while maintaining a semblance of presence and exercise activity, fail to achieve quantum increases in the effect of US presence and operational preparedness to undertake coalition warfare. A different approach is warranted.

MULTILATERALISM

Multilateral combined exercises and training deployments possess the potential to raise the profile of regional engagement whilst at the same time adding meat to the skeleton of coalition warfare. RIMPAC is an example of a multilateral combined exercise but it is also an example of how such exercises have failed to capitalize on the changes wrought since the end of the Cold War. RIMPAC takes place either in Hawaii or off the US West Coast and generally simulates the Mahanian clash of fleets in a blue water environment. There is no denying that RIMPAC's asset rich environment provides excellent operator training but consider the missed challenges of operating in the archipelagic waters around Australia or the Philippines where the expertise of regional navies could be brought to bear in a different and demanding environment.

Similarly, multilateral combined training deployments through the region would achieve an order of magnitude increase in local awareness, greatly adding to the value of presence, regional security and coalition preparedness. The political awareness, public interest and media coverage of a multinational combined exercise and port visit involving ships from five, six or seven countries would provide an excellent backdrop to high level visits and regional security talks. Such visits have the potential to optimize the essential ingredients of presence, namely awareness and dialogue.

On a more professional level the problems of interoperability, ranging from procedures and communications through to tactics and Command and Control, would be addressed not on a bilateral basis, which only serves to make the next bilateral exercise more advanced, but on a multilateral basis which serves the greater cause of coalition warfare and preparedness.

CONCLUSION

The Asia Pacific region has achieved spectacular economic success in the past ten years. It is faced now with the unique opportunity to harness the region's dynamic forces to provide the basis for ongoing regional security. Top-down political proposals to increase trust and cooperation are creating the environment in which greater levels of security cooperation can be pursued. Combined military operations that optimize personal contact, cultural cross-pollination and coalition preparedness need to be developed. As a core coordination of future regional coalitions the US has a vital role to play. Progress within the regions and political forums suggest it is now time to develop operational initiatives in support of coalition preparedness and regional security as called for by US Security and Military Strategies.

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