



The War on Terror in East Asia: From Cooperative Security to Preemptive Defense

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ABSTRACT. This article traces the evolution of the American-led global campaign against international terrorism with a specific focus on East Asia. It notes that at the initial stage of the campaign, the United States has been very pragmatic and circumspect when it cooperated with its Asian allies in neutralizing terrorist groups and other transnational criminals. The campaign generated a positive trend towards cooperative security as Washington provided military and intelligence assistance to several countries threatened by local and international terrorist movements. The initial phase of the war on terror in East Asia had also produced a rapprochement between the US and China whose relations were strained during the early part of 2001. However, Washington's release of a new national security strategy in September 2002 has radically transformed the war on terror in East Asia and might create some problems in America's efforts to foster cooperative security as states in the region are responding adversely to the strategy of preemptive defense. It is only natural for the East Asian states to react negatively to this development and that the US will do well to take into account these reactions in justifying and making the new defense posture acceptable to the member-states of the international community.

KEYWORDS. preemptive defense • security • war on terror

INTRODUCTION

The destruction of the World Trade Center twin towers in New York and the attack on Pentagon on September 11, 2001 resurrected America's penchant for international crusade and massive global activism. Shortly after, the United States called for a worldwide coalition to combat terrorism. US policy toward East Asia has undergone a radical transformation as earlier post-Cold War priorities, such as economic diplomacy, democratization, and human rights, have become secondary to the overriding factor of countering terrorist groups and organizations wherever they might be. Washington began

seeking levels of military and diplomatic cooperation with East Asian states not seen since the end of the Cold War by dangling financial, diplomatic and military assistance to attract allies and supporters to its global counter-terrorism campaign. Consequently, America's security ties with a number of East Asian countries improved dramatically as the Bush administration provided military training, intelligence support and other resources to states fighting terrorist groups in their territories. The US has also forged a new spirit of friendship and cooperation with the People's Republic of China (PRC) which would have been unthinkable in the light of the Hainan crisis in April 2001 and the Bush administration's early efforts to treat China as a strategic competitor prior to 9/11.

A year after 9/11, however, a number of East Asian states began to cast a wary eye on America's global campaign against terrorism. Washington's release of the September 2002 National Security Strategy created an impression among the Asian states that America's global campaign against terrorism relies primarily on military means and does not address the conditions that nurture this threat. Some East Asians are also apprehensive that Washington's implementation of this new national security strategy will legitimize external intervention in the internal affairs of states deemed harboring or supporting terrorist groups. It is also feared that America's assumption of this largely offensive security strategy will render East Asian security arrangements useless if regional priorities run counter to vital US interests. Others note that some of the world's problems are too complex and deeply rooted for a superpower to resolve unilaterally. Finally, some East Asian states think that Washington's pursuit of the objectives of preemptive defense will further US military preponderance in the region and will cause more insecurity and anxiety to the region's largest and most powerful state—China.

This article examines how America's war on global terrorism has been waged in East Asia and how it has affected the region's security landscape. Specifically, it focuses on a subregion and a country that have been mostly affected by America's war on terror—the Southeast Asian region and China. The article raises the following questions: How is the US conducting its anti-terror war in East Asia? How are the East Asian states responding to America's counter-terrorism campaign? How does the campaign affect the regional security equation? How is Washington's promulgation of a new national security affecting its war on terror in the region and its relations with the major states in East

Asia like China? What will be the long-term effect of America's war on terror on the regional security environment in light of Washington's security doctrine of preemptive defense?

TERRORISM AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

The destruction of the twin towers in New York and the attack on the Pentagon on 9/11 highlighted the qualitative transformation of terrorism as a security challenge in international affairs. As a form of asymmetric conflict, terrorism refers to the use of force for political purposes such as to create fear, draw widespread attention to a political grievance and/or provoke draconian or sustainable response from the targeted state (Kiras 2002, 221). Made possible by a vast array of communication and transport networks, transnational terrorism is also sustained by societal reactions to the seemingly unjust and overwhelming economic globalization and spread of a universal culture deemed threatening to local cultures. The shrinking of distance between states and the disappearance of national borders through the information highway and the availability of global media, have enabled the poor to compare their status with those of the affluent. This phenomenon has also threatened those who value their unique ethnic heritage and traditional religious beliefs. As globalization creates alienation and relative deprivation, those who are alienated and marginalized may act out their discontent and grievances through terrorism.

This non-traditional security challenge calls for a different approach from those that are used to counteract threats from state actors. This is because neutralizing terrorism compared to traditional security menace from other states will neither be so cheap nor so unifying as addressing threats emanating from state actors and requires cooperation from other governments. Combating terrorism is time-consuming. A militarized resource-intensive response does not usually guarantee success. As a case of asymmetric conflict, it will take decades to measure or gauge success in counter-terrorist warfare. It is conducted to gain political advantage over the terrorist in terms of time, space, legitimacy and political support (Kiras 2002, 212). Explaining the nature of counter-terrorist campaigns, military historian Michael Howard (2002, 8) notes:

[that] they [states] never called them wars [counter-terrorism campaigns]; they are called "emergencies." This terminology means that the police and intelligence services are provided exceptional powers and are reinforced

where necessary by the armed forces, but they continue to operate within a peacetime framework of civilian authority. If force has to be used, it is at a minimal level and so far as possible does not interrupt the normal tenor of civil life.

Based on the experiences of a number of countries threatened by terrorism, it is not advisable to overreact to this threat by resorting to a sledgehammer method. It must be dealt with as a low-intensity form of political violence (Wilkinson 1986, 53). Disproportionate/militarized state response can only strengthen terrorist movements as it may cause political damage as weakening a friendly regime, causing collateral/civilian damage, and threatening a potentially cooperative state. Terrorism is better dealt with through a cool appraisal of the longer-term threat posed by terrorism in an open and liberal democratic society. Police/military actions should aim at isolating the terrorists from the rest of the community and external source of support. States must utilize a cooperative security approach in addressing this concern. This requires fostering a sense of common purpose among like-minded states to strengthen their ties against any form of extremism and to isolate countries and societies which are havens of terrorist groups. International cooperation should strengthen the machinery for multilateral police and intelligence cooperation. They must also work together in areas of shared interests such as peaceful development, diplomacy promotion, the use of negotiation to resolve intrastate disputes, and coordination of national policies to deal with transnational threats like terrorism (Blair and Hanley 2001, 8-9).

In forming a security community, states must be convinced that they have a lot to gain from cooperation in countering global terrorism, transnational crimes, and other forms of transnational disorders. These states must be aware of a common security interest (counter-terrorism) and must have the willingness to work together to address this security issue. This will involve a more powerful state offering diplomatic and financial incentives to other states, and developing multilateral approaches to address a common security challenge like terrorism. The most immediate task for these states is to develop policy coordination, including combined counter-terrorist cooperation, on a particular regional security issue or a series of related security issues. Finally, given the systemic roots of international terrorism, states must accept the grim reality that terrorism in an open and globalized society can never be totally eliminated. This is because global terrorism is a case of a "threat without threateners," a threat

resulting from the cumulative effects of actions taken for other reasons or causes, not from a purposive action of a hostile political entity or community (Treverton 2001, 43). At most, these states can minimize terrorism at a level that does not threaten international order and stability.

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration indicated its willingness and determination to wage a low-intensity conflict and to rely on cooperative security to deal with global terrorism. Administration officials declared their commitment to a lengthy struggle against terrorism based on limited military response and active cooperation with allies in demolishing terrorists' training facilities, financial assets, and political sponsorship, as well as in the training of counter-terrorist units. However, as the war on terror progressed, the Bush administration pondered on a tough new policy based on military retaliation and preemption of terrorism. The new doctrine looked at the prospect of preemptive attacks against rogue and hostile states that have chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. This quickly triggered an intense debate inside Pentagon and among military strategists on the feasibility and wisdom of preemptive military strikes against shadowy terrorist networks and potentially hostile states that might use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against the US. Eventually, in September 2002, the Bush administration released the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. The new security doctrine specifically declares America's intention to use every tool in the country's arsenal—including military power—to create a balance of power against suspicious networks of individuals that can wreak havoc and chaos on American society.

This new security strategy marks the radical militarization of the war on terror and conveys the Bush administration's intention to wage a total and disproportionate war against asymmetrical opponents—terrorist organizations and rogue states. More significantly, this new national security strategy announces to the world the application of a unique "American approach" in addressing international terrorism. That is, America's means and instruments of wielding its power and organizing a new global order through its unrivaled military capability (Ikenberry 2002, 49). This article traces Washington's war on terrorism in East Asia particularly the low-intensity counter-terrorism campaign launched in Southeast Asia, and the common cause developed with China. It also examines the features of the Bush administration's new security strategy against terrorist organizations and how this new strategy can create some instability in East Asia.

THE WAR ON TERROR: THE COOPERATIVE SECURITY PHASE

Washington's anti-terrorist campaign in Southeast Asia began in a low-key conference between senior officials from Washington and the 10 member-states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in November 2001. During the conference, the American officials informed their ASEAN counterparts that Southeast Asia has reemerged as an important strategic area for Washington, and has been identified as a major front of the US-led campaign against global terrorism (Richardson 2001a). They explained that the US counter-terrorism campaign in the region has been directed against what it considered as a "seam of lawlessness." This is the area between Afghanistan and Indonesia where terrorist groups, drug runners, people traffickers, money launderers and other transnational criminals interact with one another. Obviously, Washington's primary objective is to impress on the Southeast Asian states that they all have similar aspirations, common problems, and destinies. Thus, they must all work together in countering terrorism and criminal elements that support the former (Blair 2001a). America's priority is to help regional allies untangle the murky links between terrorist groups and other lawless elements such as transnational criminals (Hiebert and Lawrence 2002, 20-21).

American defense and military officials, however, downplayed the possibility that US military forces would be engaged in combat with regional terrorist groups. Instead, the U.S. offered logistical and other forms of support to states asking for American military assistance against local terrorist groups. In return, Washington requested the Southeast Asian states for closer cooperation in intelligence-sharing to help eradicate terrorism (Richardson 2001b). Washington also asked these countries to mount an "across-the-board-attack" against terrorist recruits, falsification or forging of official documents for terrorists' use, and movements of terrorists from one country to another. Finally, Washington appealed to moderate Muslims in the region to counteract efforts of small but vocal groups of domestic extremists threatening to take violent actions against US interests and citizens (Richardson 2001b).

The US campaign against international terrorism in Southeast Asia has been conducted in a very pragmatic and practical manner. It underscores the continuing nature of its global operation against transnational terrorist organizations even as the pace of American military operation decelerates in Afghanistan. However, unlike its earlier campaign against the Taliban regime and the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan, US counter-terrorism effort in Southeast Asia appears

benefit of actual and unilateral American military involvement and crusading rhetoric as Washington has taken into account the complexity of neutralizing Islamic militants in a region largely populated by Muslims.

In Southeast Asia, US intelligence officers have begun assisting local police and intelligence agencies in chasing leads on individuals or organizations believed to have links with the al-Qaeda like Jemaah Islamiyah. The US has provided Southeast Asian states with information on radical Islamic groups in their territories that have sent their members to train in Afghanistan, have received funds from al-Qaeda, and have established contacts with one another (Bonner 2002). For example, Washington corroborated from their intelligence sources in Afghanistan that the Jemaah Islamiyah, an Islamic group planning to conduct terrorist bombings in Singapore, has connections with al-Qaeda (Wain 2002, 18). American intelligence also revealed al-Qaeda's links with the Philippine-based Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which assisted the former when it opened its camps in Afghanistan to more than 1,500 Islamic militants all over Southeast Asia. The US provided intelligence that ended with the arrest of individuals connected to the al-Qaeda network in Malaysia and Singapore (Lopez 2002). Likewise, Washington helped Singapore uncover an al-Qaeda-linked organization when 13 men who allegedly plotted for years to blow up targets in the island state were apprehended. The Malaysian government cooperated with Washington in international law-enforcement and intelligence efforts, made strides in implementing financial counter-terrorism measures and aggressively pursued domestic counter-terrorism campaign against Islamic extremist groups allegedly with al-Qaeda links. The US has also done a lot to step up Thailand's efforts against illegal drug through which a model for combating terrorism can be developed. Bangkok, on the other hand, began investigating financial transactions of al-Qaeda operatives, offered to dispatch one construction battalion and five medical teams to Afghanistan and pledged to foster cooperation between US-Thai law-enforcement and intelligence agencies on counter-terrorism.

Finally, the US has encouraged the ASEAN member states to improve cooperation among themselves and with America in the campaign against terrorism (Lopez 2002). Washington has successfully persuaded the 10 ASEAN member-states to sign a counter-terrorism pact that obligates each member-state to monitor and freeze terrorists'

assets, strengthen intelligence sharing, and improve border patrols (Wain 2002, 15).

ASEAN member states since 9/11, on the other hand, have made several ad hoc arrangements to develop a regional approach against international terrorism. Upon Manila's initiative, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia formed a troika to discuss a common policy in the face of terrorist movements in these countries. They signed a three-power agreement that binds the three states to carry out joint exercises to counter terrorism and other crimes, sharing airline passenger list, setting up telephone hot-lines and tightening control of their borders. There is also an understanding among the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand that any warrant issued for any cross-border criminal activity would be honored by each country. There are also informal talks between Indonesia and Malaysia on border cooperation and the first ever meeting of ASEAN military heads had been held. Intelligence exchanges have also taken place, leading to the surveillance of terrorist groups in the region. ASEAN member states' coast guards have also increased their protective watch over freighters and have accompanied US warships passing through strategic waterways in Southeast Asia. Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand all have arrangements with the US Navy to provide American warships with ports or hubs for these ships' maintenance and logistic requirements. A number of these ASEAN cooperative activities are generally bilateral in nature, with agreements to strengthen intelligence-sharing occurring when heads of states visit one another (Simon 2002, 7). In May 2002, the ASEAN member states began to formalize their ad hoc arrangements against international terrorism. These measures could be interpreted as the ASEAN's state level response to threats of a transnational character linked to militants determined to set up a single Islamic state comprising the three states (Sebastian 2003, 5). The other ASEAN member states have acceded to the agreement.

American officials have expressed concern that parts of Southeast Asia could become the new breeding ground for terrorist cells expelled from Afghanistan or Pakistan. Washington, however, has discounted the possibility of direct confrontation with terrorist groups, or of any American unilateral move in the region. Moreover, it has denied any plan to establish any permanent base in the Philippines or elsewhere in Southeast Asia. US military officials have stressed that Washington's priority is to work with its regional allies in neutralizing terrorist groups

and other transnational criminals. Washington has also adopted a less controversial military posture in Southeast Asia by making access arrangements for American warships and planes in bases owned and operated by countries in the region (Richardson 2002b). Hence, the American goal in its counter-terror effort in Southeast Asia is extremely restricted and modest—to assist regional states in neutralizing their local terrorist cells through the provision of intelligence data and military aid.

The most visible American counter-terror effort in the region has been Washington's support to its old-time ally, the Philippines. Washington provided Manila almost US \$100 million in military assistance and deployed military advisers to train Filipino troops in counter-terrorism. American involvement in the Philippines, however, was limited to the provision of counter-terrorist training, secure radios, and other military equipment to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) (Fitchett 2001). Washington agreed to the terms of reference (TOR) that allow American troops to accompany, train and assist Filipino units in combat zones as military advisers. In effect, the AFP was in charge of the overall military campaign against the Abu Sayaff—a local Islamic extremist group allegedly linked to the al-Qaeda—while the U.S. military remained in the sidelines (Perlez 2002). The US also conducted reconnaissance flights over Southern Philippines to help the AFP in its counter-terrorist operations against this band of Muslim extremists. The Philippine government is very precise about its needs—the allocation of specific US military assistance to develop the AFP's counter-terrorist capability in terms of lift capacity, firepower, target acquisition, and surveillance—but without US involvement in any military operation against the Abu Sayaff.

The joint RP-US military exercise named *Balikatan* (shoulder to shoulder) 02-01 officially ended on July 31, 2002 when the bulk of the 1,200 US troops (all the engineers and their marine contingent) were shipped out of Basilan. The US military, however left behind a small number of Special Forces officers. They were tasked to drill additional light reaction companies and conduct counter-terrorism seminar-workshops both in the AFP's Southern Command and in other training camps in Luzon and other parts of Mindanao. During this period, Washington made it clear that American troops would not participate in any military campaign against local insurgents or lawless elements but it would actively prepare other states for the battles ahead (Richardson 2002a). Washington's plan is to help a number of

countries develop competent and professional armed forces that can provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, support United Nations peace-keeping operations, and counter terrorism and other international illegal activities (Blair 2001b). In conducting this type of military operation in the Philippines, the Bush administration has set an important precedent for possible future US military assistance programs in Southeast Asia and other developing regions in the world.

THE DRAGON AND EAGLE IN THE WAR ON TERROR

In the early part of 2000, US officials were apprehensive because of China's growing military capabilities and the mainland's intention to use coercion against Taiwan. The aftermath of the 9/11 changed the Bush administration's policy toward China. Ties between Washington and Beijing improved as the US requested China to share intelligence information on terrorist networks and to join the international coalition against terrorism. Beijing seized the opportunity to enhance its political relations with Washington. It gave its unconditional support behind the US anti-terrorism campaign and exhibited an unusual degree of political cooperation. This is because the war on terror provided Beijing a welcome change from Washington's focus on the China threat to the need to address a new common enemy. This requires Sino-US cooperation more than a decade after the termination of the US-Sino entente vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Many Chinese analysts and decision-makers saw that Beijing should take advantage of the United States' need and eagerness to form an international cooperation against terrorism. Such move could hopefully soothe China's often troubled post-Soviet Union relationship with the United States. It would also enable Beijing to conduct its own version of constructive engagement with Washington aimed at containing American military power in East Asia (Malik 2002, 264).

Beijing's support of Washington's war on terrorism also stems from its expectation that the US will be more sympathetic to its own campaign to control Muslim extremists and separatist movements in China. Its support for the global anti-terrorism campaign was based on the assumption that its success would help Beijing address one of the oldest problems faced by the Chinese empires: how to pacify, control, and Sinicize Xinjian and Tibet. Thus, barely a few weeks after 9/11, China sought to link its military/diplomatic efforts against separatism in Xinjian, Tibet, and even Taiwan with the US-led campaign against

terrorism. In the light of the US war on terror, Beijing took the opportunity to redouble its efforts to suppress various opposition and separatist groups, curtail religious freedom, the voice of a restive ethnic minority without worrying too much about US accusations of human right violations (Malik 2002, 268). Furthermore, Beijing's cooperation with Washington facilitates China's program of economic development and its diplomatic ambition to project its great power in East Asia. A supportive stance to the US may also induce the Bush administration to ignore contentious issues in their bilateral relations like Taiwan, and Beijing's human rights violations.

Current US-China cooperation became apparent when Beijing began sharing intelligence data on terrorists' networks and their activities with Washington (Asia-Pacific Defense Forum 2002). Beijing sent a team of counter-terrorism experts to Washington to explore how both countries can cooperate against the Al-Qaeda network. Beijing also agreed to allow Washington to station Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents in the Chinese capital. This paved way for the establishment of cooperative mechanisms for the two countries' sharing of intelligence, financial transactions and law enforcement against terrorist cells in the region (Malik 2002, 260). At Washington's request, Beijing conducted a search within Chinese banks for evidence to neutralize terrorist financing mechanisms, and agreed with the US to create US-China working groups on financing and law enforcement. This prompted one US senior administration official to comment: "The Chinese have been very helpful on the intelligence and information front. In some ways, we believe that [it is the] most useful thing China could do (Vatikiotis et al. 2001).

In the wake of 9/11 and US military operations against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Beijing also bolstered Chinese regular army units near the borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan to block terrorists fleeing from Afghanistan and strengthening overall domestic preparedness. Beijing's most visible expression of support to the US war on global terrorism, however, has been its silence over America's growing military foothold in Central Asia. On the heels of the US military campaign against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Washington has been building bases, runways, and communications/lighting facilities in Kirgystan and Uzbekistan. Normally, this move would have alarmed China, as it is indicative of a long-term American military presence in Central Asia. Beijing's reaction, however, has been surprisingly muted. Apparently, China recognizes that the US has

legitimate interest in this part of Asia that warrants its presence. In another perspective, this development is a bright prospect in the US-China bilateral relations as both sides are cooperating to deal with a single yet very important issue of global terrorism. Thus, President Jiang Zemin was delighted that President George W. Bush came to Shanghai in October 2001 despite his preoccupation with the war on terrorism and was even more pleased when he agreed to pursue a “cooperative, constructive relationship with China (Cossa 2002).” Indeed, Beijing was very much relieved that the old Bush slogan of strategic competition had been replaced with a more positive mantra.

THE PERILS OF PREEMPTIVE DEFENSE

The September 11 terrorist attacks and the consequent American war on international terrorism transformed US relations with a number of Southeast Asian states and China. Washington’s chilly relations with Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta have thawed considerably as Prime Minister Mahathir won praises from Washington for supporting the US war on terror, while US Congress’ condemnation of the dismal record of human rights violation by Indonesia’s military has stopped (Gershman 2002, 60). Philippine-US security relations have been improving and Manila now figures prominently in the post-Cold War US foreign policy agenda. Washington helped ASEAN member-states disrupt the activities of al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiya. It has been successful in persuading the 10-member ASEAN to establish a counter-terrorism regime in the region. But the most dramatic manifestation of the general improvement in US-East Asian relations is the renewed Sino-US security cooperation. The two countries’ efforts to counter global terrorism recreated a cooperative and strategic partnership between the two powers after more than 10 years of drift, mutual suspicion and periodic animosity after the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, this newfound cooperative security relationship between the US and some East Asian states might be threatened by the political and strategic implications of Washington’s new national security strategy.

Eight months after 9/11, the Bush administration announced that it was formulating a new national security doctrine that would move away from the Cold War doctrine of containment and deterrence and toward a policy supporting preemptive attacks against terrorist and hostile states. Washington’s September 2002 *National Security Strategy* clearly states that the thrust of the current administration is to rely on

the option of preemptive action to counter a sufficient threat to American national security (White House 2002, 15). In military parlance, preemption means attacking a threat before it materializes. The new security doctrine specifically stipulates that the US will identify and thwart any emerging threats. The doctrine declares:

The United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessarily, act preemptively. (White House 2002, 15)

To achieve this objective, the new national security doctrine admonishes the US government to frustrate any potential threats before they are fully operational and before they reach America's borders. It also behooves the US government to develop better and more effective intelligence capabilities, to transform the American military and to strengthen coordination with American allies in assessing the most dangerous threats to their common interests. The doctrine specifically states:

...To support preemptive options, we will: a) build better, more integrated intelligence capabilities to provide timely, accurate information on threats, wherever they may emerge; b) coordinate closely with allies to form a common assessment of the most dangerous threats; and continue to transform our military forces to ensure our ability to conduct rapid and precise operations to achieve decisive results (White House 2002, 16).

The release of the new security doctrine reflected a change in the Bush administration's campaign against global terrorism. It showed a shift of preference from a low-intensity conflict approach to one subscribing to the conventional military means as the apt solution to a security challenge. The strategy of preemption veers away from the Cold War doctrine of deterrence and containment to one that favors launching military strikes against hostile states before they can attack the United States. The possibility of another surprise terrorist attack using WMD against the US and the existence of some hostile states capable of developing biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons made the Bush administration think that a preemptive strategy might be the only viable means to address the threat of international terrorism.

The adoption of this strategy, in a way, marked the ascendancy of the neo-conservatives within the Bush administration. Clustered within the Defense Department and the conservative press, the neo-conservatives propagate the view that in the light of 9/11, the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs of “rogue states” must be confronted by the US with preemptive action (Weisman 2003). As an influential group within the current administration, the neo-conservatives also believe that the optimal world for the US is one in which the America can assert its might and promulgates its ideas, embracing its “unipolar” status, whether or not other states agree (Parry 2003,144). The neo-conservatives, through this new strategy, presented a counter-terrorist campaign founded on a policy of military predominance emphasizing preemptive strikes, offensive military intervention and proactive proliferation measures against rogue states and terrorist networks. The strategy’s emphasis on the military means is based on the political assumption that terrorist networks have to be destroyed as quickly as possible before they can inflict more damage to the United States. It further assumes that terrorism is masterminded by identifiable, visible and hostile political actors, whose annihilation would demoralize terrorist networks if not destroy them. Finally, it presupposes that states harboring or supporting terrorist organizations can be compelled to change their policies. And the best way to change their policies is through military means.

Considered as a form of grand strategy, the new security doctrine conveys Washington’s intention to use hard power and the nation’s overall economic resources to address the threats of terrorism and rogue states. As a concept in Strategic Studies, national or grand strategy pertains to the doctrine that guides states in the utilization of their national economic resources and manpower in order to sustain their military capabilities vis-à-vis other states. It also relates the strategy of controlling and utilizing the resources of a state—or a coalition of states—including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interest shall be effectively promoted and secured against opponent, often or not, also state actors. The new security strategy pits a highly realist/militarized doctrine against systemic and nonstate threats.

International terrorism is a product of a historical/global process not by a purposive, hostile, and identifiable state. Addressing this type of a threat is not a simple extension of war among state actors to non-state actors. In the past, the US has demonstrated its military prowess against states with defined territories and with conventional and

concentrated military forces. Terrorism, however, presents the US without a clear, identifiable, and tangible threat. Terrorist groups will not likely initiate a challenge against US forces if the risk entails confronting American firepower, mobility, and overall technological superiority. More likely, they will employ cheap counter-strategies to neutralize US military superiority or to create explicit or tacit threats directed against the American homeland and other soft targets (Byman and Waxman 2002, 194). Lacking the overall ability to challenge the US and its allies militarily, terrorist groups will concentrate their efforts on breaking the American will to continue the campaign, disrupting its alliances, and shattering the domestic political support behind the war on terror. These efforts might simply involve surviving in a way that is highly visible and disruptive to the stronger state's capabilities and prestige. These will also include occasional use of violence, which can cast doubts on whether military and political efforts are succeeding, which in turn, can erode popular support for the counter-terror campaign (Byman and Waxman 2002, 194). Furthermore, despite its military prowess and overall technological superiority, the US cannot fully anticipate or respond to any future plot by numerous, amorphous and diverse terrorist cells worldwide. Nor will it have the capacity to intervene in all the states that have or harbor several terrorist organizations within their territories. It is doubtful whether a new national security doctrine based on a highly realist/militarized approach could provide relevant precepts of statecraft in an emerging post-Westphalian system characterized by the emergence of non-state actors that are determined and capable in challenging governments through non-military and non-conventional means.

The 9/11 events, the consequent war on terror and the new national security strategy based on preemption gave Washington a fresh and potent purpose for renewed American global activism. However, because terrorist organizations cannot be deterred, the US must be prepared and willing to intervene anywhere and anytime to preemptively destroy this threat. Furthermore, since the US is the only state that has the force-projection capability to respond to terrorist and rogue states around the world, it will need to play a direct, unilateral, and sometimes, unconstrained role in responding to this threat.

Whatever its scope and duration, the preemptive war against international terrorism will divert America's attention and resources from its other concerns such as international peace, democracy, free markets, and other concerns involving the international political

economy. To declare war and allocate huge resources and too much effort on this threat may also be counterproductive for Washington. It might arouse an immediate expectation, and demand for a spectacular military action or victory against an easily identifiable adversary and hostile political entity, which is not the case in this current international campaign. In the long-term, the campaign against international terrorism can also emasculate America's long-term capability for international engagement. A long-protracted conflict against these systemic and amorphous threats may undermine US economic growth, divide American society, and strain the country's relations with its allies and friends. It may also destabilize America's liberal democratic institutions and in the long run, trigger a neo-isolationist backlash in the country. The pursuit of this strategy might create the classic situation of an imperial overstretch. The economic and political cost of international activism might become too high for the US to pay and the American military and economic resources might be spread too thinly across the world. The new security doctrine maybe a formula that may transform the US into a *fortress Americana*. Thus, it might create the more dangerous situation than that of a unilateralist America leaning on preemption—a world without a United States committed to ensure global stability, order and liberty.

THE WAR ON TERROR: THE PREEMPTIVE DEFENSE STAGE

The Bush administration's release and adoption of the *National Security Strategy* will produce a number of effects on American policy toward East Asia in general, and in Washington's relations with a number of East Asian states (most especially China) in particular. The doctrine, however, does not actually provide new or drastic changes in US policy toward East Asia since the end of the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, US post-Cold War foreign policy toward East Asia has been directed at promoting a stable, secure, prosperous and peaceful Asia-Pacific community in which the United States is an active player, partner, and beneficiary (Office of International Security Affairs 1998, 8). This entails the US accessing into the regional political economy, controlling critical seas lanes of communication in the region, stemming nuclear proliferation and regional arms race, cultivating regional confidence-building measures, and precluding a hostile hegemon from dominating East Asia (Tow 2001, 173). Washington can pursue these goals through its forward

military presence that serves to shape the regional security environment, mitigates historical tension among states, manage potential threats and prevents any state from challenging American strategic preponderance (Office of International Security Affairs 1998, 10).

The new security strategy highlights emerging trends and patterns in the American defense needs. These include the crucial and quick response to future military challenge from a major state in East Asia, the imperative to harness the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) to qualitatively transform America's forward-deployed forces, and the strengthening of US bilateral alliances to enhance American forward deployment strategy and to dramatically improve US operational capabilities in case of a security crisis in the region. It also echoes Washington's increasing concern on the emergence of states and non-state actors that can threaten US regional interests. Specifically, it mentions China's improving military capability and its potential to renew old patterns of great power competition. As the new national security strategy calls for the US to shift from passive and explicit deterrence to actual preemption, Washington needs to formulate decisions that can channel threats toward certain directions, and muddle the military planning of potential American adversaries. The primary goals of the US government are to dissuade potential military rivals from initiating future competition, and to maintain and enhance American advantages in key military capabilities. Faced with China's emergence as a regional power, a number of American officials now see the need to use US strategic power to balance growing Chinese tendencies to be more assertive on irredentist issues (Taiwan and the South China Sea) and to acquire more sophisticated military capabilities (Tow 2001, 177).

Another important point raised by the new national security doctrine is America's effort to exploit the RMA to transform and upgrade the US armed forces' capacity to conduct war-fighting missions, and meet future and unknown challenges. This will entail harnessing key technologies for sensors, information processing and precision guidance. Immediately after 9/11, the primary roles of these technologies have been directed to developing new methods of collecting information, and devising a new intelligence warning system that can provide seamless and integrated warning across a broad spectrum. Another major function of modern technology is to ensure US access to distant theaters of operations, and develop and protect critical American infrastructure and assets in outer space. In the post-9/11 world, the

Pentagon envisions a radical restructuring of overseas US military assets that will enable American forces to be moved closer to where threats are likely to emerge. This will involve diversifying access points to potential crisis areas and stationing American troops in states that are more likely to agree with US policies in the war on terror (Campbell and War 2003, 95-103). Finally, the new national security doctrine reaffirms the importance of America's Asian alliances and the need for bases and stations, as well as temporary access arrangements for the long-distance deployment of US forces.

More significantly, the new strategy accentuates a long-term pattern in US defense policy in East Asia since 1991—the full development of US military capabilities to shape the regional environment, respond to an eventual military confrontation, and prepare for any eventuality in the region. It informs the East Asian states that the US will continue to maintain regional stability through outright “shaping activities” aimed at providing inducements for its allies and applying preemptive sanctions against countries planning to use force to attain certain political goals. However, this policy leaves the US to decide solely which states can threaten the region's stability and how best to deal with them. The new security doctrine gives a sort of American anti-terrorism ultimatum, which is high handed, permits arbitrary application of American power in East Asia and amounts to an unprecedented assertion of US freedom of action and a definitive statement of new American unilateralism in the region (Krauthammer 2003, 5). This might lead to the undermining of the nascent regime of cooperative security in East Asia. In the fight against global terrorism, Washington needs cooperation from East Asian countries in intelligence, law enforcement, and logistics. It might be very difficult to expect East Asian partners and would-be partners to accept America's unilateral military posture and to cooperate in its campaign against global terrorism. No state in the region has the leverage to directly restrain the US, but collectively, these states can make the US pay a high price by refusing to cooperate in the regional campaign against terrorism. A number of states in the region have already expressed certain reservations regarding the strategy of preemptive defense and are having second thoughts on their participation in the campaign against global terrorism.

The strategy of preemptive defense authorizes the United States to determine what state can be considered as a target of American power. This has an implication for state sovereignty. The new security doctrine

recognizes that governments should be responsible for what goes inside their borders. However, it also assumes that once they fail to act like respectable, strong and law-abiding states, they will lose their sovereignty (Ikenberry 2002, 53). To most Asian states, this strategy of preemption creates the specter of a unilateral America bent on intervening in the internal affairs of states plagued by terrorist groups. Extremely protective of their independence and sovereignty, East Asians in general fear that America's pursuit of its strategy of preemptive defense might legitimize outside intervention in their domestic affairs. Hence, in December 2002, a number of Southeast Asian states reacted negatively to the United States and its ally, Australia especially when the latter declared that it might use preemptive attack to stem terrorist threats in the region. Since 9/11 Australia has actively supported the US war on terror as it contributed \$ 11. 5 million to the Afghan relief effort and has deployed troops and equipment to fight in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) against the Taliban. Strongly supported by the Bush administration for his claim that his country has the right to launch preemptive strikes, Prime Minister John Howard in December 2002 asserted that Australia has the right to take preemptive military action abroad if it believes it is threatened by an imminent terrorist attack (Bransten 2002). Howard's announcement triggered a regional uproar, with Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines all denouncing Australia's echo of America's preemptive defense doctrine as a threat to their sovereignty (Murphy 2002, 1). Malaysian Defense Minister Rajib Razak declared, "We don't require the assistance or the intervention of foreign troops, whether from Australia or from any other country, in our fight against terrorists in Malaysia (Murphy 2002, 1)." This led observers to note that these states' adverse reaction to Australia's statement harm Washington's efforts to deepen its military relationships and intelligence sharing with Southeast Asian states, and hinder the global campaign against terrorism (Murphy 2002, 1).

Some Southeast Asian states are also afraid that the US, in pursuit of its war on terror, might ignore the root causes of terrorism in the region and conduct a purely military response to the threat. They are concerned that Washington, in its attempt to preempt terrorist operations in the region, might fail to recognize that the emergence of terrorist groups in a certain number of Southeast Asian countries was caused by weak states, inadequate cooperation between countries in the region and a number of socio-political problems, including anemic economies, unequal patterns of development, and fragile democratic

institutions (Gershman 2002, 63). To them, the adoption of this national strategy based on preemptive defense shows America's determination to rely primarily on military means to fight terrorism, and not to address the conditions that nurture it (Wain 2002, 15). They are worried that an over-militarized response to terrorist groups might be counterproductive since this ignores the conditions that have facilitated and have hastened the emergence of these groups. In the face of Washington's release of the new security doctrine, Southeast Asian states felt that the US counter-terrorism campaign in the region should be broadened and decisive coercion must include understanding and addressing the root causes of terrorism. For them, an effective counter-terrorism campaign should not be limited to the neutralization of al-Qaeda operatives in the region, but comprehending the characteristics of extremist groups and the secret of their obsessive and ideological appeal.

A number of Southeast Asian states showed their opposition to American unilateralism as the Bush administration began to prepare a preemptive military attack against Iraq. Wary that American military action against Iraq would legitimize outside intervention in the internal affairs of authoritarian or Muslim states, Prime Minister Mahatir accused the United States of being a "cowardly and imperialist bully" that will return the international system to the "stone age where might determines justice (Rashid 2003, 13)." Indonesia strongly criticized the US-led military action against Iraq as a violation of international law. However, key American allies in the region, like the Philippines, declared their support for the US despite significant domestic indignation at what was seen as the Bush administration's arrogance and determination to pursue a preemptive defense policy against Iraq (Rashid 2003). Although supportive of the US campaign against international terrorism, the Philippines found itself in a quandary when the prospect of a unilateral US military operation against the Abu Sayyaf became apparent in early 2003.

The specter of an American unilateral military action in Southeast Asia became conspicuous in early 2003 when the Pentagon announced that US and Philippine forces would conduct a combined operation against the Abu Sayyaf group in the southern Philippine island of Sulu (Garamone 2003). In this joint operation, the Pentagon planned to deploy 350 Special Forces troops backed up by 1,400 Marines on board the *USS Essex* and fighter-bombers. The 350 Special Forces personnel would work with Philippine troops in the Sulu Archipelago,

while the Marines would provide quick reaction teams, command and control assets, aviation support and medical assistance. The planned deployment would have significantly surpassed the previous *Balikatan* exercises, and by opening a possible new front, would represent a major escalation in America's war against international terrorism (Hookway 2002). The Pentagon's announcement of joint combat operation in the southern Philippines triggered a political controversy. The US Defense Department's use of the term "joint operation" suggested that American troops would be allowed to play a combat role, and thus violate a provision in the Philippine Constitution that prohibits foreign troops from conducting combat operations in the country.

Rattled by the political uproar created by the announcement, President Arroyo decided to back out from the joint combat operation by declaring that American troops that would be deployed in Sulu would only be engaged in training their Filipino counterparts, as well as in conducting humanitarian and civic action operations. Washington then decided to postpone the *Balikatan* exercise in Sulu and announced that the composition of US deployment for the operation would also be changed. Eventually, both countries decided not to hold the exercise in 2003. The failed *Balikatan* exercise led to a popular speculation that the operation was actually aimed at allowing American troops to be engaged in direct combat with Muslim insurgent groups (Garrido 2003). This seems to have bolstered an earlier observation that the US war on terror in Southeast Asia is not only unilateral but primarily "a military operation, which is simply not sufficient to neutralize the terror threat (Kamarkrishana 2002)." This also created the apprehension, that in the long run, US involvement or strong actions taken in the pursuit of its war on terror in Southeast Asia will undermine the major principles and norms the ASEAN states have valued, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, regional autonomy and self-reliance (Huang 2003, 8).

PREEMPTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST THE DRAGON?

The release of the new security doctrine also caused concerns to the region's biggest state—China. In the short run, Washington's release and adoption of the doctrine has given credence to China's security concerns, (e.g., the Bush administration's application of the RMA in transforming the US armed forces, its efforts at strengthening its military relations with Taiwan, its encouragement of Japan to take an

active regional security role and the transformation of the war on terror into a preemptive campaign to preclude the China challenge from even taking off the ground). It has exacerbated Beijing's fear of strategic containment and sense of helplessness. At the same time, it has impressed upon leaders in Beijing that it would be difficult for China to act independently from the US and dominate East Asia. Beijing would eventually realize that the war on terrorism has unleashed a number of potentially threatening developments that can checkmate China's strategic moves and raise doubts about predictions on its inevitable rise as the next superpower. Consequently, Beijing has accused Washington of being ungrateful for not acknowledging the moral and material support China has extended to America's campaign against global terrorism.

China is also aware, that compared to Russia, Japan, and India, it could be the biggest loser in America's war on global terrorism because of its competitive relationship with Washington. Beijing views this national security strategy as the written presentation of Bush's "cowboy foreign policy" and the transformation of US foreign policy into "unilateralism." It sees the national security strategy as a manifestation of a new distinctly American internationalism, which will never again allow its military to be challenged the way it was during the Cold War and will serve the purposes of only one nation (Office of Research 2002, 9). Beijing has criticized Washington for its unilateralism and has asked the US to seek common ground with China while retaining their differences and promoting respect, trust, and understanding. And in the face of what it perceived as an assertive American unilateralism, China has also reminded the Bush administration that its current policy of unilateralism defies the idealism or liberalism that past American presidents had pursued.

In the face of Washington's preemptive defense, China will possibly press its advocacy of a regional security regime founded on common or comprehensive security. In the short run, Beijing would probably counter the Bush administration's highly realist foreign policy approach by espousing a common security approach based on the general improvements of political relation, enhancement of economic interactions, and pursuit of security cooperation through greater transparency, confidence-building measures and military-to-military relations among East Asian states. The adoption of this foreign policy approach emanates from China's recognition of its relative weakness vis-à-vis the US and the importance of multilateralism as a

practical tactic in international relations rather than an enduring principle and commitment. China knows that it will never generate the economic resources necessary to build the military capability that can challenge the US. If China will attempt to do so, Washington will implement a number of policies that will deter the former. But this does not mean that Beijing will always remain subservient to Washington. From Beijing's point of view, the Bush administration's adoption of this national security strategy shows the American intention of consolidating a unipolar world by maintaining its military superiority (Office of Research 2002, 8). Already, China has demonstrated in the United Nations Security Council that it would stand for a multipolar world and would oppose the US attempt for unilateralism in a number of international issues such as Iraq. A recent article in the *Beijing Review* provides a glimpse of China's simmering distrust and aversion over what it perceives as the US quest for absolute security through preemptive defense and unilateral policy:

No other country can match the strength of the United States...To talk about an "American Empire" and "New Imperialism" is entirely reasonable. But the world is colorful and with great diversity, which will resist moves to impose a monochromatic system...though it appears aggressive and impossible to defeat, U.S. hegemony has its weaknesses and is [or could be] contained by various forces. (Wang 2003, 15)

The aftermath of 9/11 and the consequent war on terror have bolstered American security ties with a number of East Asian states. Determined to prevent al-Qaeda from developing its roots in East Asia, Washington has developed a level of defense cooperation with a number of East Asian states that has not been seen since the end of the Cold War. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Washington's main effort was directed to fostering a cooperative security regime wherein states coordinate their security policies and develop habits of cooperation to address the security challenge of the twenty-first century—global terrorism. However, Washington's release of a new national security strategy based on preemption could undermine this nascent security regime. The new national security strategy creates an image of a powerful superpower bent on unilateralism and on applying its military prowess against terrorist organizations and states harboring terrorists. This approach frightens a number of Southeast Asian states as it ignores the fundamental causes of terrorism. Moreover, it gives the impression that the United States has arrogated to itself the right to

intervene in the internal affairs of states plagued by terrorists. The new national security strategy also provides for the qualitative transformation of US forward deployed forces and alliances in East Asia, which in turn, has caused some concerns to the region's largest state—China. While most East Asian governments are still willing to cooperate in the counter-terror campaign, there has also been a growing resentment at the perceived US unilateralism and resort to military preemption as a means of dealing with global terrorism.

CONCLUSION

The early post-9/11 period has renewed US interest in East Asia and has witnessed, as well, Washington's increased assistance to several countries threatened by local and international terrorist movements. In turn, these countries are taking advantage of America's anti-terrorism campaign for their own purpose of maintaining domestic order and strengthening their control mechanism over their respective societies. The campaign has likewise produced a new area for cooperation between the US and East Asian states. The war on terror has created new opportunities for international cooperation and for East Asian states to define and implement multilateral arrangements that can usher in a new and viable security regime in the region. This was evident when the 21 states of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) adopted new measures to heighten security of airlines and ships, and to monitor charities and financial transactions of Islamic organizations suspected of financing terrorist organizations in Asia (Weiner 2002). The US has greatly improved its security ties with a number of East Asian states and has forged a new partnership with Beijing, which would have been unthinkable before 9/11.

Washington's release of the 2002 *National Security Strategy* that calls for preemptive military strikes against state and non-state developing weapons of mass destruction, and the policy's perceived unilateralism in a number of international issues, however, have alarmed a number of East Asian states. They are concerned that the war on terror will become extremely militarized and will discount the underlying causes of international terrorism. They are also concerned that the doctrine of preemptive defense will legitimize external intervention in their domestic affairs. China, the region's biggest state, alleges that the United States is merely using the banner of anti-terrorism as a pretext to expand its sphere of influence and to create a world order favorable

to its interests. Beijing still views its relations with Washington as more important than its relations with any other country and will not challenge the US in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, Beijing is gradually becoming apprehensive that the Bush administration's quest for absolute security is aggressively pursued at the expense of the security and stability of some East Asian states, especially China's.

It is incumbent on the US to take into account the region's concerns regarding the new American national security doctrine. The security strategy, specifically the stance of preemptive strikes, marks a radical shift from the half-century old American policies of deterrence and containment. This will transform the US military and intelligence communities to enable them to conduct preemptive and defensive intervention against terrorists and hostile states armed or developing chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. With the drastic transformation of US intention and capabilities, it is only natural that states in the region will respond negatively to radical changes, which they cannot understand and whose effects are still to be seen. It is too early to determine how the preemptive defense strategy of the US will affect the international order and whether the global community will accept this strategy as legitimate. As the global hegemon and the world's only superpower, only time will tell if America's exercise of preponderant power "will create the morality convenient to itself," and if American use of preemptive coercion "will be a fruitful source of international consent (Carr 1942:302)." ❁

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