

Having launched the "Nakayama initiative"²⁰ at the 1991 ASEAN-PMC, Japan appears to have committed itself to participation in a multilateral dialogue on regional security issues.²¹ It remains to be seen, however, whether Foreign Minister Watanabe will continue to support this approach.

The United States

Once again, the United States finds itself in a situation where action or inaction will have an enormous effect on Asia Pacific security. To date, the United States has been steadfast in its expressed preference for bilateral security arrangements over multilateral discussion and its reluctance to allow the issue of naval arms control to become the subject of multilateral discussion. Suggestions of broadening the concept of security to include non-traditional, non-military threats have fallen on deaf ears. Yet there are indications that a change of policy is slowly taking place and that Washington is in the process of recognizing that cooperative security discussions in Asia Pacific are, in many respects, already occurring.

There are indications that current thinking in some Washington circles is that an institutionalized APEC may, sometime in the future, offer an alternative vehicle for multilateral discussions of a broadened security agenda. The benefits of such an arrangement are that, while China will soon be a member of APEC, the Russian Federation and other regional non-market economies are not; the United States would be in a better position in APEC (rather than in an ASEAN-PMC, CSCA, or NPCSD framework) to influence the security agenda; that participation by the Russian Federation and Indo-China could be timed to coincide with Western interests. The down side of this approach is that ASEAN may well view any such proposal as running directly contrary to ASEAN's stated preferences, which have received public support from both Australia and Japan, and that China (who with Hong Kong and "Chinese Taipei" have recently become members of APEC) may be unwilling to see the three Chinas involved in multilateral security issues. The United States may well determine that its interests would be best served if it was to support, or at least not to criticize, the ASEAN-PMC forum idea.

Conclusions

It appears that Asia Pacific (or at least Southeast Asia and the North Pacific) will soon be engaged in a formal multilateral dialogue which will consider both traditional and non-traditional security issues. No one country can take credit for this. The Soviet Union, by its handling of relations with the United States more than its various Asia Pacific initiatives, contributed most to the relaxation of tensions in the region (and observers hope the Russian Federation continues this trend). The initiatives by Mongolia and Korea show that countries often considered peripheral (the dangers of the DMZ notwithstanding) can