

IV Recent Trends in Asia Pacific Security

The end of the Cold War and the more recent dissolution of the Soviet Union has transformed the strategic architecture in Asia Pacific. The disappearance of a near to mid-term strategic threat has brought with it both opportunities and challenges for regional actors, and has obliged governments to rethink the means and ends of regional security arrangements. Among the results of this rethinking have been a series of proposals designed to address regional security issues, including a restructuring of Asia Pacific institutions to take into account the changed strategic environment.

The Soviet Union and the Russian Federation

The first glimmering of what would lead to a fundamental shift in strategic thinking in the Asia Pacific was Gorbachev's July 28, 1986 Vladivostok speech.⁴ This was the first of a series of speeches, interviews and initiatives by Union officials and academicians which came to be known as the "Vladivostok-Krasnoyarsk track",⁵ elements of which included the creation of a pan-Asian forum to be developed through:

- a series of meetings of foreign ministers from countries in the region with "major military capabilities";
- a pan-Asian foreign ministers' meeting, to be held in Vladivostok in 1993 and followed by a pan-Asian summit;
- regional consultations to be held on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly;
- the establishment of an international centre for ocean communications;
- the establishment of a regional environmental cooperation mechanism;
- the establishment of an international tropical cyclone early detection and early warning centre for the Pacific;
- agreement on a multilateral convention on the conservation of biological resources, leading to a convention on environmental protection in the Pacific;

From 1986 until mid-1991, Soviet Asia Pacific regional security proposals were at best challenged and at worst dismissed by Western and most Asian governments, among the most resistant being the Japanese. The long-expected visit to Japan by Gorbachev in