

the Pacific region. A central point in the paper was the difficulty analysts encountered in assessing the motivations for and the significance of acquisitions. Were they "normal" state behaviour or were they destabilizing acts that threatened to create genuine arms "races" and instability in key parts of the region? It was clear that Asia's share of global defence spending had increased but this was as much a function of other regions' relative decline as it was a product of dramatic changes in Asia. Nevertheless, it was obvious that a number of states were enhancing their military capabilities quite significantly with acquisitions of a wide range of sophisticated weapons systems and capabilities. Particularly troubling was the definite trend in enhanced sea power projection.

Despite these apparent trends, the picture was more complex than simple "racing" behaviour between states. A pervasive sense of uncertainty was one factor that motivated many states to improve their military capabilities, either by buying weapons or by developing licensed or indigenous production capabilities. The end of the Cold War had accelerated this trend because it had further reduced any sense of stability and structure in global security affairs. For many regional states, general economic prosperity made enhancing military capabilities a feasible option, particularly when linked to the desire to develop a domestic arms industry. As well, many states perceived the growth of very real maritime-related threats or potential threats that required (at least in their eyes) the expansion of their own capabilities. Issues of national pride and military reputation compounded these two factors. To some extent, greed and corruption could also be seen as a factor in some acquisition programmes. Senior policy makers saw an opportunity to profit personally from new programmes. An important consideration that often failed to attract analytic attention was the simple need to replace aging equipment which, in many cases, occurred in definite cycles. Replacement and modernization inevitably conferred significantly enhanced military capabilities whether explicitly intended or not. Thus, even the most benign motivation to replace old equipment could acquire a threatening character in the eyes of neighbours. Regardless of the reasons underlying the acquisition of modern military capabilities, however, those enhanced forces could precipitate anxiety on the part of neighbours and make any conflict more intense and destructive.

Ms. Selin's presentation then turned to an assessment of developments in various regions of Asia. There were reasons to be concerned, in particular, about developments in China. There seemed to be an increasingly "muscular" attitude driving the modernization of the Chinese military, particularly its naval capabilities. Nevertheless, the Chinese did not yet possess a truly worrisome military capability due to a variety of limitations in system quality, training, and experience. As well, military expansion did not appear to be a major priority. Instead, managing domestic economic reform was the main concern of the government. This, however, could change and the picture might darken.