

New questions and answers for Asian-Pacific community: The role of the United States.

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Nowadays, all international community faces a huge variety of threats and challenges able to put in jeopardy all efforts for future sustainable development and fruitful cooperation.

In G8 Declaration on Cooperation and Future Action in Stabilization and Reconstruction the following measures were mentioned: conflict prevention, coordination, strengthening regional organizations, interoperability etc. Also was mentioned that "Regular discussion of capabilities of organizations and governments to help us identify gaps that need to be addressed and identified in advance, of capabilities available to particular governments or organizations and prioritizations for use; putting in place mechanisms to ensure that all relevant actors are engaged in dialogue about a crisis as it evolves and are effectively cooperating in contingency planning" and "Commitment to support development of conflict prevention and conflict response capabilities by regional actors in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. G8 members stress the importance of cooperation in this between regional organizations, and with the UN".

Faced with the new challenges, all the countries should go along with the tide of the times, enhance exchanges and cooperation and strengthen their mutual coordination. They should actively boost world multipolarization and democratization of international relations and strive to establish a new international economic order adapted to the development levels and demands of various countries. They should safeguard the right to equal development of all the countries, particularly the developing countries. The diversity of the development of civilizations of various countries should be

respected. The various civilizations and diverse roads to development should coexist harmoniously, draw on others' strong points to make up one's own weak ones in competition and comparison and make common progress through seeking common ground and shelving differences.

Future sustainable development and prosperity could be based only on mutually beneficial cooperation and common development. Countries particularly developed and developing ones should cooperate with one another on the basis of equality and mutual benefit to realize common development. Safeguarding world peace and promoting common development remain the overriding task for the international community.

Most observers agree that the 21st century will represent the golden era for the Asian-Pacific region (APR). The rapid development of East Asian economies and strengthening political relations between them attract considerable attention from the rest of the world and many foreign investors. There are now all the grounds for believing that East Asia will become the world's major economic and political center in the first half of the 21st century, as indicated by the selection of the site for the first meeting of European and Asian leaders: it was held in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, in March 1996.

An active proponent of further economic integration, the United States is taking steps to promote further integration in the Asian-Pacific region. East Asia has been proclaimed an area of vital importance for the United States. The presence of American troops is regarded as a guarantee of stability.

The United States' strategy in the region is aimed at forming a Pacific economic ring and creating the preconditions for further economic expansion of each of the Asian-Pacific states, provided that the United States retains the role of leader and "arbiter" in the regional integration process.

Growing economic integration in the Asian-Pacific region is reflected in the establishment of the following organizations:

- Pacific Economic Council (PEC), comprising representatives from the 1 000 largest companies operating in the region;
- Council for Pacific Economic Cooperation, comprising national committees from 34 countries of the Asian-Pacific region;
- Pacific conference for trade and development;
- Intergovernmental organization for Asian-Pacific economic cooperation (18 countries);
- economic and social commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a UN agency;
- Forum of the Pacific ring;
- Asian bank for development.

These organizations define the security policy for the region according to the following formula: security through cooperation - interdependence - mutual benefits. The arms market in the region will evolve around these structures.

International economic trends, however, are likely to have the most significant impact on the future of mankind. In the long run, the international economy is likely to expand further in the 21st century, and new, large, continental and intercontinental markets will evolve. New commercial alliances will be formed as a result of these changes.

The dominating trend will be to balance economic interests and potential in major international markets. International relations will be maintained to achieve deeper interstate integration, with the emphasis placed on regional integration based on interstate integration programs.

National security policies and mechanisms will be developed with due consideration of these factors. Economic interests, including intercontinental, continental, regional and national ones, will become major factors defining the political behavior of national ruling elites, military and political alliances. Military and political alliances are likely to be replaced by military and economic alliances, while global and regional security systems will be developed with due regard for the growing interrelation of geopolitics and the global economy, division of security-maintenance responsibilities between economic (military and economic) alliances.

The development of the general strategic situation in the APR differs in many parameters from that of the Euro-Atlantic region. These differences are due to the formation of several regional power centers, the absence of analogous mechanisms of negotiation, a lack of trust, etc. The idea that European experience does not correspond to the realities of modern international relations in Asia and the Pacific not unjustifiably dominates the political thinking in the majority of Asian states. This idea determines the area's careful stance toward the formation of a security system similar to the OSCE and to disarmament as a key factor of trust and military détente. This approach is connected to the absence of a unified understanding of the sources of threats, to the existence of unsolved conflicts and territorial disputes, and with the disparate rates of socio-economic development of the region's states. The treaty on strengthening trust in the military sphere in border areas that was signed in 1996 by the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, China, Russia and Tadjikistan had an important significance for the formation of security in the APR. The policy of the US Administration in the Pacific area ("Strategic Directive for the Nineties") also envisages unilateral reductions in numbers of the armed forces presence. Nevertheless, American military capability remains dominant in the re-

gion.

It is worth noting that the system of international relations in the APR for at least the last two decades has been characterized by more than just the confrontation of two large states. At present, Chinese, Japanese and even Indian factors exert constant and considerable influence over it. The increase of their influence over the last years provides an opportunity for the discussion of an independent Japanese or Chinese geopolitical role in the region.

The maintenance of a weighty military and political presence of the United States of America in the APR evokes mixed reaction from the region's countries. A majority of the states still regard the stabilizing role of the USA as positive, capable of ensuring high rates of economic development and of the formation of a permanent integrative mod-

el. The fear of radical change in the regional situation impels these countries to defend the American presence. The majority of them are new industrial states that have high rates of economic growth.

On the other hand, a number of states, first of all China, see the US's military presence in the Pacific as Washington's desire to maintain and to even strengthen its unquestionable military hegemony. This, in its turn, contradicts the regional pretenses of such states, and decreases the potential for the practical realization of these ambitions.

Achieving a new qualitative level of relations between Beijing and Washington could open new perspectives for the two countries, although it is obvious that both the USA and China have to come to certain concessions in order to be able to achieve the common objective.