



Backgrounder



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WHY ASIA IS NOT READY FOR ARMS CONTROL

INTRODUCTION

With Cold War tensions fading, calls are increasing to extend arms control efforts to Asia. Moscow wants a pan-Asian conference on peace and security, while others propose limited nuclear free zones for Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. First Ronald Reagan and now George Bush wisely have viewed such proposals with skepticism. Washington should pursue only those Asian arms control initiatives that can be verified and, most important, impose no limits on America's ability to provide the leadership required for continued peace in Asia.

Iraq's threat to oil supplies essential to Asian economic health demonstrated again the need for United States leadership in Asia. Absent an Asian equivalent of NATO, only America could, and did, convince Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and other Asian countries to support the anti-Iraq coalition. The ability of U.S. military forces to deploy to the Persian Gulf from bases in Japan, the Philippines and Thailand contributed to the American victory.

Asian Threats. Most of the recent proposals for arms control in Asia would diminish Washington's ability to respond to threats in Asia. Typical of this is Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's 1986 proposal to establish zones in Northeast Asia in which anti-submarine warfare would be banned. This proposal obviously is designed to protect the Soviet submarines in that region that launch strategic missiles from interception by U.S. attack submarines. The result would be American and allied vulnerability to attack from Soviet nuclear-tipped missiles.

Also dangerous to U.S. interests are the proposed protocols to the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. The protocols, which Washington refuses to sign, would bar America from testing, using or basing nuclear weapons in the zone. Yet such a zone would not prevent potential adversaries from employing nuclear weapons against U.S. forces within the zone.

Soviet Movement. It is too early, moreover, for the U.S. to commit itself to arms control talks in Asia. Despite Gorbachev's assurances in Tokyo this April 17 that he will be reducing Soviet forces in Asia, Moscow continues to pour new, and more capable ships, submarines and aircraft into its Far Eastern military forces. Recently the Soviets moved about 10,000 tanks out of the U.S.S.R.'s European regions and into Asian areas to avoid having to destroy those tanks as called for by the November 1990 Conventional Forces Europe Treaty (CFE).

The Soviets and other Asian arms control promoters often compare arms control prospects in Asia with those in Europe. The U.S. should avoid such comparisons. In contrast to Europe, where land forces of the opposing sides roughly could be balanced, Asia is predominantly a maritime theater of operations for the U.S. Because the U.S. depends more on sea power than its potential Asian adversaries, any agreements reducing naval forces would reduce U.S. strength in Asia, much more than that of potential U.S. adversaries.

"Honest Broker." Also in contrast with Europe, the U.S. position in Asia depends on access to bases in Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia. Today, most U.S. allies in Asia view America as the only "honest broker" or "balancing power" in a region still divided by historic ethnic antagonism. These divisions are, perhaps, the best argument for continued U.S. leadership in Asia.

Instead of grand Asian arms control schemes, Washington is encouraging a more informal process to reduce military tensions. Thus, while concerned with the continued modernization of Soviet Far East military forces, Washington applauded both Gorbachev's 1988 decision to cut Soviet Far East troops by 200,000, and the commitment he made in 1987 to eliminate about one hundred eighty SS-20 nuclear missiles in Asia.

Withdrawal from Clark. The U.S., for its part, last year began a three-year program to reduce its 135,000 Asian-based military personnel by up to 12 percent. This month combat aircraft will be withdrawn from Clark Air Base in the Philippines. Further U.S. military cuts in Asia are planned if threat reductions make those cuts possible.

The only Asian area where a European-style arms control process may be appropriate is the Korean Peninsula. Washington thus encourages North and South Korea to take measures to reduce tensions. This may lead to eventual arms reduction negotiations.

Apart from the possible arms control in Korea, Washington's priority in Asia should not be arms control but to keep the peace that has enabled Asia to prosper and to move towards democracy; and to create a market for American goods and a source of supply for American business and commerce. As such, the U.S. should:

- ◆ Keep enough American military forces in Asia to fulfill U.S. defense commitments and thus cut American troop levels only in response to real Soviet military reductions.
- ◆ Discourage nuclear free zones and naval arms control proposals in Asia that could weaken the American military deterrent in Asia.
- ◆ Encourage India, Pakistan and North Korea to stop developing nuclear weapons and long range missiles, but if these efforts fail, urge Australia, Japan and South Korea to cooperate with the U.S. to develop missile defenses.
- ◆ Reject participation in vague pan-Asian collective security talks as proposed by Australia, Canada and the Soviet Union.
- ◆ Avoid becoming formally involved in future talks between North and South Korea, unless requested to do so by Seoul.

IS EUROPEAN-STYLE ARMS CONTROL POSSIBLE IN ASIA?

Arms control in Europe has progressed for several reasons. The political confrontation of two major powers and parallel alliances led to a rough standoff that prevented war. Geographic proximity and the basic similarity of opposing military forces also eased the negotiation and verification of arms control agreements. The NATO alliance, the European Community and the Warsaw Pact helped both sides achieve the political consensus necessary for successful arms control agreements. Even so, the negotiations were lengthy. Talks began in 1980 for the 1988 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which eliminated a class of nuclear weapons. The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), signed last November, grew out of the Mutual Balanced Force Reductions talks that began in 1973.

In contrast to Europe, Asia lacks the security or economic organizations to promote the consensus that can produce arms control agreements. Asia, for instance, has no equivalent to NATO, in part because there is no Asian consensus on what constitutes the major threats in Asia. Asia similarly has no equivalent to the European Community though Asians have had some success with regional economic organizations, like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed in 1967. ASEAN, however, has made little progress in promoting economic integration among its member states of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Another Asian economic group is the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group (APEC), formed in 1989 by ten Asian nations plus the U.S. and Canada.¹ APEC deals exclusively with economic issues, such as lowering trade barriers, and avoids all security-related issues. APEC is unlikely soon to achieve significant economic cooperation.

Asian Rivalry. Contrasting with Europe too is the continued rivalry among several Asian states, decreasing the chances for successful arms control agreements. Longstanding Asian conflicts include South Korea versus North Korea, Mainland China versus Taiwan, Vietnam's control over Cambodia, Soviet occupation of Japan's Northern Territories, and rival claims to the Spratly Island by China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Resolution of these disputes depends more on easing ethnic tensions and historic antagonism than on diplomatic procedures.

In the meantime China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are expanding their naval forces. China may soon increase its military reach in the South China Sea when it receives the 1,500 mile-range SU-27 *Flanker* jet fighters, which reportedly it will purchase from the U.S.S.R.²

Aspirations to Power. Several Asian nations aspire to greater power in Asia. Economically-powerful Japan seeks a stronger voice in Asian affairs, but Japan is unlikely to become a significant military power so long as its people clearly remember their disastrous defeat in World War II. China also predictably aspires to greater leadership in Asia. Beijing has about 3 million men under arms and about 300 nuclear weapons.³ China's neighbors, like India, the Republic of China on Taiwan, and Vietnam, all of which have fought against Beijing since World War II, remain apprehensive about Chinese ambitions. India would like to extend its influence beyond the Indian Ocean to counter China.⁴ The Indian Navy plans to deploy three aircraft carrier battle groups by 2010, and now has 17 submarines.⁵

1 APEC includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the U.S.; see also, Thomas J. Timmons, "America's Role In Promoting Pacific Economic Cooperation," Heritage Foundation *Asian Studies Center Backgrounder No. 100*, March 15, 1990.

2 Tai Ming Cheung, "More Punch For Pla," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 11, 1991, p. 18.

3 "Lesser Nuclear Powers: Britain and China," *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, November, 1990, p. 49.

4 Tai Ming Cheung, "Command of the Seas," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 27, 1989, p. 17.

5 Michael Vlahos, "Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, March, 1991, p. 125.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MISSILE PROLIFERATION IN ASIA

The prospects for Asian arms control are lessened considerably by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and long range missiles. U.S. government analysts believe that Beijing is assisting the nuclear weapons programs of Algeria, Iraq and Pakistan.⁶ China has sold weapons-grade uranium to South Africa, Argentina and Brazil. In addition, China has sold heavy water, which can be used to make plutonium for nuclear weapons, to India and Argentina.⁷ China has sold its 1,500 mile-range CSS-2 missile to Saudi Arabia and is believed to be negotiating the sale of its 180 mile-range M-11 missile to Pakistan.⁸ China is also believed to be trying to sell its 375-mile range M-9 missile to Syria.

Indian Missiles. When Pakistan refused in October 1990 to curtail its nuclear weapons program, the U.S. as required by law cut military aid to Pakistan. It seems, however, that Pakistan feels compelled to produce its own nuclear weapons to counter India's nuclear program. India exploded a nuclear device in 1974. Now Indian scientists boast that they can build missiles with a range of about 2,500 miles, bringing Beijing, Karachi and Tel Aviv in range.⁹ China, India and Pakistan have refused to sign the 1973 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

North Korea is expected to be able to produce a nuclear weapon by at least 1995.¹⁰ Pyongyang manufactures a long-range variant of the Soviet SCUD ballistic missile and has exported SCUDs to Egypt, Iran and possibly Iraq.¹¹ Pyongyang signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1985, but has refused to allow inspection of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency, as called for by the NPT.

6 Bill Gertz, "China Helps Algeria Develop Nuclear Weapons," *Washington Times*, April 11, 1991, p. A3.

7 Gary Mihollin and Gerard White, "A New China Syndrome: Beijing's Atomic Bazaar," *Washington Post*, May 14, 1991, p. C1.

8 Barbara Staff, "Ballistic Missile Proliferation; A Basis for Control," *International Defense Review*, March, 1990, p. 266; John J. Fialka, "Pakistan Seeks Chinese Missile, U.S. Believes," *Wall Street Journal*, April 5, 1991, p. A16.

9 Sadananda Mukherjee, "India 'has Icbm Capability'," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, February 3, 1990, p. 191.

10 Edward Neilan, "Nuclear Bomb Plant Expansion Has Neighboring Countries Edgy," *Washington Times*, April 1, 1991, p.1.

11 Bill Gertz, "North Korea's Ballistic Missiles Have U.S. Worried," *Washington Times*, June 4, 1990, p. A3.

DISSIMILAR U.S. AND SOVIET FORCE STRUCTURES IN ASIA

A major obstacle to Asian arms control is the asymmetry between American and Soviet military forces in Asia.¹² The U.S.S.R. is principally a land power, with about 360,000 troops assigned up to 45 Army divisions in Soviet Asia.¹³ Approximately 25 of these divisions are deployed near Japan and Korea.¹⁴ These army forces are supported by over 10,000 tanks, and 2,200 to 2,500 fighter, attack, and bomber aircraft.¹⁵ In addition, the Soviets have 493 land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles in the Asian part of the U.S.S.R..¹⁶

No Great Distances. In contrast to the U.S., the Soviets do not have to project military forces over great distances to defend their territory in Asia or to fulfill defense obligations to Asian allies. Perhaps the farthest Soviet troops might be sent is to attack the Japanese island of Hokkaido, only 20 miles from the U.S.S.R.'s Sakhalin Island. The purpose of such deployment would be to secure the Soya Strait for transit of Soviet naval forces.

The first mission of the Soviet Pacific Fleet is to protect its 25 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines with their 364 missiles.¹⁷ In wartime most Asia-based Soviet nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines would operate in the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk and near the major Soviet naval base of Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula. These submarines would be protected by some of the Soviet Pacific Fleet's 81 attack submarines, two *Kiev*-class anti-submarine aircraft carriers, 67 other major ships, and 71 TU-26 *Backfire* and TU-16 *Badger* strike bombers. A secondary mission for Soviet Pacific attack submarines and strike bombers would be to deny sea-lanes to U.S. and allied shipping.¹⁸

Deterring Soviets. This huge Soviet deployment in Asia means that America's first security goal in Asia is to deter the Soviets. Other U.S. defense responsibilities in Asia stem from military alliances and agreements with the Philippines (1951), Australia (1951), South Korea (1953), Thailand (1956) and Japan (1960).

In Asia the U.S. is a maritime power; military commitments to Asian allies can be met only if the U.S. Navy controls the Pacific Ocean's long sea-lanes. American naval forces in Asia are divided between the Third Fleet, headquartered in Pearl Harbor, and the Seventh Fleet, headquartered in Yokosuka, Japan. Together they amount to a force of 7 aircraft carriers, 42 attack submarines, 95 surface com-

12 Assistant Secretary of State Richard H. Solomon, "Asian Security in the 1990s: Integration in Economics; Diversity in Defense," October 30, 1990, p. 9.

13 The Japan Times, *Defense of Japan, 1990*, p. 39; International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1990-1991*, p. 42.

14 *Defense of Japan, 1990*, p. 51.

15 Ibid.

16 *Military Balance, op cit.*

17 *Military Balance, op cit.*

18 *Military Balance*, p. 42,43; U.S. Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power, 1990*, pp. 85, 88.

batants and 33 amphibious assault ships.¹⁹ In contrast to Soviet naval forces, which are designed primarily for missions near the Soviet Union, the U.S. Navy must be able to control and defend vast ocean areas far from the U.S. to insure the prompt, effective reinforcement of allies.

Unlike the U.S.S.R., which stretches into Asia, the U.S. must have access to bases in Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Singapore to deploy American forces in Asia. There are about 50,000 military personnel stationed in Japan, along with 120 combat aircraft. In South Korea the U.S. deploys about 44,000 military personnel and about 100 combat aircraft. In the Philippines, there are about 17,000 U.S. military personnel to support Navy operations from Subic Bay and Air Force operations from Clark Air Base. Last November 13 the U.S. and Singapore signed an agreement that will increase usage of Singapore bases by the U.S. Navy and Air Force.²⁰ While no U.S. forces will be stationed permanently in Singapore, the U.S. Navy and Air Force will be able to support deployments to other areas, like the Indian Ocean.

ASIAN ARMS CONTROL INITIATIVES

Despite the differences between Europe and Asia that make arms control in Asia more difficult, including the asymmetries in U.S. and Soviet forces, Asian arms control proposals abound. They include: pan-Asian security schemes, nuclear free zones, naval arms control and proposals for negotiations on the Korean Peninsula. On two occasions Soviet leader Gorbachev has pushed arms control initiatives for Asia, first in his July 1986 Vladivostok speech and then in a September 1988 Krasnoyarsk speech.²¹

Pan-Asian Security Talks

While the Soviets were expanding their Asian arsenal during the 1970s and 1980s, they often called for pan-Asian conferences to discuss Asian security.

19 *Military Balance*, p. 26.

20 Steven R. Weisman, "Singapore to Allow Greater U.S. Military Presence," *New York Times*, November 14, 1990, p. A9.

21 Asian arms control has also been promoted by academics and liberal grant-making foundations, for example, see: Paul Kreisberg, "The Prospects for Arms Control in Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 24, 1987, p. 32-35; Andrew Mack and Paul Keal, *Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific*, Sydney: Unwin and Allen, 1988; the extensive work of the Peace Research Center of Australian National University; proceedings of the MacArthur Foundation sponsored "Cooperative Security in the Pacific in the 1990s," November, 1990, Hawaii; and Banning N. Garrett, "Ending the U.S.-Soviet Cold War in East Asia: Prospects for Changing Military Strategies," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring, 1991, pp. 163-177.

Leonid Brezhnev's 1969 call for an Asian system of "collective security" has been the model for all Soviet proposals since. In his 1986 and 1988 speeches, Gorbachev proposed meetings similar to that outlined in December 1990, when he proposed an Asian summit conference and an Asian version of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).²²

Repeated Theme. Gorbachev repeated this theme during his visit to Japan last month. In a speech to the Japanese Diet on April 17, he called for a multinational forum to ease military tensions and promote cooperation in Asia. To create such a forum, he suggested that China, India, Japan, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. hold preparatory talks.²³

Last July, Australia and Canada also proposed a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia (CSCA). This notion, like the Soviet's, is hazy, but works toward a "region wide" system of security.²⁴ U.S. officials privately contend that proposals for such a forum are too vague. In order, they say, for a CSCA-like forum to succeed, it requires an agenda on which all members can agree. This, in turn, demands agreement on what constitutes the threat in Asia. There is little chance of any such agreement soon.

Nuclear Arms Control

Asian nuclear arms control initiatives have had little overall impact. An exception may result from the growing consensus in North Asia that North Korea's nuclear weapons program should be halted. In the past year, the U.S., Japan, South Korea and the Soviet Union have asked North Korea to allow full inspection of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency. On the eve of Gorbachev's visit to Japan, his spokesman threatened to cut diplomatic relations with Pyongyang if it did not permit international inspection of its nuclear facilities.²⁵ It appears, however, that Moscow has reduced this threat to cutting off uranium supplies and cooperation with North Korea's nuclear program if it continues to refuse international inspection.²⁶

One Soviet arms control proposal for Asia proved to be hypocritical. In September 1988 Gorbachev proposed that nuclear weapons states not increase the num-

22 "Gorbachev on Global Security, Soviet Future," *Pravda*, December 30, 1990, p. 1, in *FBIS-Soviet Union*, December 31, 1990, p. 2.

23 Peter Gumbel and Christopher J. Chipello, "Gorbachev Hints at Progress in Island Dispute," *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 1991, p. A13.

24 The Inaugural R.J.L. Hawke Lecture, delivered at the Edward A. Clark Centre for Australian Studies, University of Texas, Austin, by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, on 9 October 1990.

25 Edward Neilan, "Soviets Demand Look at Reactors in North Korea," *Washington Times*, April 16, 1991, p. 1.

26 "USSR Advance Team Member on DPRK Inspections," *Kyodo*, April 15, 1991, in *FBIS East Asia*, April 15, 1991, p. 2.

ber of nuclear weapons in Asia. Yet, four months later the Soviets had added a new nuclear-armed strategic missile submarine to their Pacific Fleet.

Some Asian nations have increased their own insecurity by supporting ill-conceived nuclear arms control proposals. Fifteen South Pacific states signed the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZT), creating the only formally declared nuclear free zone in the Pacific. The treaty forbids members to acquire or to test nuclear weapons. Transit of nuclear weapons is not prohibited by the treaty, though each signer is allowed to determine its own policy regarding visits by ships that may be nuclear armed. Protocols obliging the nuclear powers not to use, test or base nuclear weapons in the zone were signed by the Soviet Union and China.

Reasons for Refusal. The U.S. has declared it will follow the intent of the SPNFZT protocols, but in 1987 declined to sign them.²⁷ There are two good reasons for this refusal. First, signing the protocols would prevent the U.S. from deploying nuclear weapons to the region at a time when it might be necessary to deter a nuclear-armed adversary. Second, the SPNFZT does not provide for verification. Thus this treaty could be violated by countries that do not observe treaties as scrupulously as does the U.S. Signing the protocols also would encourage the creation of other nuclear free zones that would restrict U.S. military deterrent capability in regions more critical to U.S. security like Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia.

Worse than the SPNFZT in Washington's eyes is New Zealand's 1986 law barring nuclear armed and powered ships from its territory and prohibiting military cooperation with nuclear powers. The law followed years of anti-nuclear campaigning in New Zealand, aided by Soviet friends in New Zealand's trade unions. In reaction to the law, the U.S. in June 1986 suspended all military cooperation with New Zealand under the Australia, New Zealand, U.S. (ANZUS) alliance. Washington took this action because New Zealand's restrictions made alliance cooperation impossible. The U.S. also wanted to discourage anti-nuclear political parties in Britain, Canada and Germany from following New Zealand's example. In last October's elections in New Zealand, the National Party defeated the Labor Party and took office. The new Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, stated his desire for New Zealand to resume military cooperation with the U.S. Washington is balking until Labor's anti-nuclear law is repealed.²⁸

27 Statement before the Subcommittee On Asian And Pacific Affairs, Committee On Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, Rear Admiral Edward D. Baker, Jr., Director, East Asian And The Pacific Region, Office Of The Secretary Of Defense, International Security Affairs, June 9, 1987, pp. 4,5.

28 "Bolger Denies Seeking New Deal With U.S.," *Hong Kong AFP*, March 4, 1991, in *FBIS-East Asia*, March 4, 1991, p. 61.

Naval Arms Control

Moscow has long tried to engage the U.S. in naval arms control talks and has called U.S. naval forces in Asia a threat to security.²⁹ In 1986 Gorbachev proposed creating zones in which anti-submarine warfare (ASW) would be prohibited. This proposal is one-sided. Soviet naval doctrine takes advantage of Soviet geography in using nearby enclosed seas, like the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk, as a well-defended bastion for its nuclear missile-armed submarines. Elimination of anti-submarine warfare in these areas would increase the threat to America from Soviet missiles and free up for other missions the Soviet aircraft and submarines responsible for defensive missions in the bastions.

The U.S. opposes naval arms control proposals that would reduce American ability to deter potential enemies. Important differences between the U.S. and Soviet navies, meanwhile, make any naval arms control agreements difficult if not impossible. For example, the Soviet Navy relies on nuclear submarines as its main weapon, while the U.S. Navy relies on aircraft carriers to assure control of sea-lanes and project power ashore. The U.S. is not willing to trade reductions of aircraft carriers for Soviet reductions in submarines, as the Soviets have proposed.

The Special Case of Korea

Nowhere is the chance of a major Asian ground war greater than on the Korean Peninsula. Despite a series of high-level discussions last year and early this year between North and South Korean officials, the Peninsula remains deeply divided and heavily armed. Opposing each other are North Korea's one million-man armed forces, who are armed with SCUD missiles, 700 combat aircraft and 3,500 tanks and South Korea's 750,000 man armed forces who are armed with 1,500 tanks and 460 combat aircraft. Because of a common background, interest in reunification, and the improved climate of East-West relations, European-style arms control may eventually be possible on the Korean Peninsula. Last year, South Korea's Defense Minister suggested arms control talks could begin by the mid-1990s.³⁰

Reuniting Families. Seoul and Pyongyang take divergent approaches to arms control. Seoul insists on the pullback of the Pyongyang's forward deployed forces, reduction of offensive weapons and reuniting family members. These actions are necessary, says Seoul, to build trust that the North will comply with arms control agreements. For its part, Pyongyang wants early deep reductions in forces, an early non-aggression treaty with Seoul, the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from South Korea and a nuclear free zone on the peninsula.

It is unlikely that there will be much progress soon towards arms control talks between North and South Korea. Pyongyang has yet to renounce dictator Kim Il-

²⁹ Roger Foley, "US Presence in Pacific 'Intolerable'," *Jane's Defence Review*, October 28, 1989, 901

³⁰ Park In-chul, "Defense Chief Foresees S-N Arms Control Talks Will Start in Mid-1990s," *Korea Herald*, January 1, 1990.

sung's pledge to reunite Korea under communist rule. As such, the first priority for Seoul and Washington remains deterrence of attack by North Korea.

IS MOSCOW HELPING REDUCE TENSIONS IN ASIA ?

Moscow's arms control record in Asia is mixed. Positive measures include Gorbachev's July 1987 decision to scrap SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles in Asia. Moscow, too, has largely fulfilled a 1989 promise to reduce its Asian military personnel by 200,000. Moscow also eliminated about fifty old ships from the Pacific Fleet, such as "Whiskey" class conventional submarines. In early 1990, the Soviets reduced the number of Soviet ships and aircraft in Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay.

Gorbachev meanwhile has pressed Hanoi to withdraw its troops from Cambodia, and despite sharp criticism from North Korea, has reversed Moscow's previous policy of trying to isolate South Korea.³¹ Moscow and Seoul established diplomatic relations in 1990, and Korean President Roh Tae Woo met Gorbachev three times in the last year.

Yet these Soviet efforts to reduce tensions are offset by Moscow's attempt to avoid complying with the terms of the Conventional Forces Europe agreement Moscow signed in November 1990.³² For example, instead of destroying



31 James Sterngold, "North Korea Faults Roh and Gorbachev," *New York Times*, June 8, 1990, p. A3.

32 TASS, "Military Hardware Withdrawn to Urals, December 20, 1990, in *FBIS-Soviet Union*, December 21, 1990, p. 43; Warren Strobel, "White House not encouraged after futile talks in Moscow," *Washington Times*, March 19, 1991, p. A7.

10,000 tanks in Europe as stipulated by the agreement, Moscow has moved them to Asian areas not covered by CFE. In addition, the Soviets have assigned four Army divisions to the Naval Infantry, a category they claim is not limited by the CFE agreement. One such new "Naval" army division is in the Far East.³³

Moscow continues to modernize its forces in Asia by adding new MiG-29 *Fulcrum* and SU-27 *Flanker* fighter aircraft. Last year for the first time, SU-24 *Fencer* attack aircraft flew near Japan, and the number of *Backfire* bombers has increased from 85 to over 100.³⁴ Last year too, the Soviet Pacific Fleet received its first *Slava*-class cruiser, armed with sixteen SS-N-12 nuclear-capable missiles, its first *Oscar*-class cruise missile attack submarine, armed with twenty-four SS-N-19 nuclear capable cruise missiles, and a *Delta II* strategic missile submarine.³⁵ A conventional aircraft carrier with about forty aircraft may join the Pacific Fleet by the mid-1990s.

A CAUTIOUS U.S. APPROACH TO ASIAN ARMS CONTROL

Gorbachev's arms control proposals of the late 1980s impressed few in the Reagan Administration. Reagan aides were quick to note, correctly, that the Soviet proposals came on the heels of a massive Soviet military build-up in Asia that started in the mid-1970s.³⁶ The Bush Administration has taken a similarly appropriate and cautious approach. Last October, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard H. Solomon stipulated that an acceptable arms control measure: "must be equitable and verifiable [and] it must reduce the risks of war and lower tensions."³⁷

Recent interest in Asian arms control in Washington stems from Congressional interest in saving money by reducing U.S. forces in Asia and from the feeling by some members of Congress that Bush has been slow in responding to Gorbachev's Asian peace overtures. On both scores, the Administration should resist Capitol Hill pressure. It is too early to conclude that Moscow's concept of a stable Asia matches that of Washington and its Asian allies. This should be apparent from Moscow's backsliding on Conventional Forces Europe Treaty and the continuing modernization of its military forces in Asia.

American Resolve. American policy makers should note the one European lesson that does apply to Asia: the Soviets respond positively to real arms control

33 Barbara Star, "More troops join the Soviet Navy," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 30, 1991, p. 467.

34 Defense of Japan 1990, p. 50; "Soviets Deploy More Backfire Bombers in Far East," *Kyodo*, March 23, 1991, in *FBIS, East Asia*, March 25, 1991, p. 3.

35 A.D. Baker III, "Combat Fleets," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 1991, p. 126.

36 Ambassador Edward L. Rowney, Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State on Arms Control Matters, address to Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, Honolulu, Hawaii, December 30, 1986.

37 Solomon, p. 10, 13.

only in the face of American resolve. This resolve, however, may appear to be weakening if Congress forces rapid reductions in U.S. forces in Asia. To deflect Congressional pressure in April 1990 the Bush Administration outlined a plan to reduce gradually U.S. military forces in Asia in a way that will not threaten the U.S. ability to meet its defense commitments. The plan calls for cutting about 15,000 from the 135,000 forward deployed U.S. personnel by 1993. These reductions include 7,000 military personnel from Korea, 6,000 from Japan, and 2,000 from the Philippines.³⁸ This May, a wing of jet fighters (48 aircraft and 1,200 personnel) will be withdrawn from the Philippines.

Beyond Deterrence. The U.S. should not accelerate these reductions. Washington's defense commitments in Asia go beyond the need to deter the Soviet Union. The peace made possible by the U.S. military commitment helps preserve a growing U.S. economic stake in Asia; two-way trans-Pacific trade grew by 60 percent between 1985 and 1989. This trade was about \$303 billion in 1990, outstripping the \$190 billion two-way trade with Western Europe.

There is, moreover, a continued need for American leadership in Asia. Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney correctly has observed that the U.S. remains the only "balancing wheel" accepted by the majority of Asians. This is echoed privately and publicly by Asian leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The need for strong American leadership will continue until Asian countries are more successful at providing for security among themselves. Then the U.S. can step back. Until then, America must ensure that no hostile country dominates Asia. Given Asia's unsettled politics, it is premature for America to engage in an active arms control campaign in Asia. Were such a campaign to lead to rapid U.S. military reductions in Asia, regional rivals might be emboldened to become more aggressive.

There are, however, some steps that Washington can take to reduce tensions in Asia without encouraging regional rivals to act. The U.S. should:

◆ ◆ **Gradually reduce American forces in Asia, but only in response to continued Soviet force reductions.** U.S. forces in Asia not only must deter potential adversaries like the Soviet Union and North Korea, but also must project power rapidly to Southeast Asia and the Middle East. At least one aircraft carrier battle group should continue to be based in Japan; one is based there now. U.S. air and ground forces in Korea should be reduced only as South Korean forces can to take their place. And the U.S. should retain long term access to bases in Korea, Japan, Singapore and Thailand. The U.S. should seek access to Philippine bases only under terms that eventually phase out base-related aid payments.

38 U.S. Department of Defense, "A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward the 21st Century," p.9-11.

◆ ◆ **Refuse to enter into Asian security talks of the type originally suggested by the Soviet Union, and more recently, by Australia and Canada** because the goals and structure of these talks are poorly defined. Asia, for example, is too politically diverse with too many regional disputes for an Asia-wide security conference like the CSCE. Instead of promoting such Asia-wide security conferences, the U.S. should encourage pro-U.S. Asian states to expand military cooperation with one another to lessen the defense burden for the U.S. Some bi-lateral military cooperation already exists between some states in Southeast Asia. The U.S. will have an opportunity to encourage greater levels of military cooperation in Southeast Asia this June, when the Philippines will hold informal discussions with other Asian nations on security in Southeast Asia.

◆ ◆ **Tell its Asian allies that Moscow's recent circumvention of the Conventional Forces Europe treaty contradicts Moscow's professed desire for arms control in Asia.** Washington should insist that Moscow destroy the tanks that it shifted to Soviet Asia as required by the CFE Treaty. At the same time, Washington should encourage Moscow to continue reducing its armament levels in Asia. The U.S. also should urge Gorbachev to continue to press Pyongyang to open its nuclear facilities to international inspection.

◆ ◆ **Urge India, North Korea, and Pakistan to cease trying to develop nuclear weapons.** If they do not, Washington should urge key Asian allies like Australia, Japan and South Korea to cooperate in developing missile defenses. U.S. progress in developing missile defenses under the Strategic Defense Initiative program helped convince the Soviets to negotiate for reductions of nuclear weapons. Similar American and allied Asian resolve to develop, and eventually deploy missile defenses, might prompt would-be Asian nuclear powers to reassess their nuclear weapons and missile programs.

◆ ◆ **Continue to refuse to sign the protocols to the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.** The protocols would bar the U.S. from using nuclear weapons in the zone. This would reduce U.S. ability to deter nuclear-armed enemies who may operate in the zone. For the same reason, the U.S. should discourage its friends in Southeast Asia from declaring their region a nuclear free zone. To respond to future crises in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. may have to rely on bases in Southeast Asia. Use of those bases might be constrained by a Southeast Asian nuclear free zone. And unless requested to do so by Seoul, the U.S. should refuse to consider North Korea's and the Soviet Union's call for the creation of a nuclear free zone on the Korean Peninsula. The threat of nuclear weapons still deters North Korea's large, offensively-deployed forces.

◆ ◆ **Avoid naval arms control proposals that limit the size and scope of U.S. naval forces in Asia.** As such, the U.S. should reject Gorbachev's proposed North Pacific zone in which anti-submarine warfare is prohibited. Such a prohibition would guarantee the vulnerability of Americans to Soviet missiles launched from those zones.

◆ ◆ **Urge Moscow to use its influence with Pyongyang to pull back the North Korean military forces stationed closest to South Korea.** Moscow's willingness to push Pyongyang to reduce its military threat to South Korea should be a major test of its willingness to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, the U.S. should refuse to become involved in arms control talks on the Korean Peninsula unless requested to do so by Seoul.

CONCLUSION

It is too early for America and its allies to commit themselves to an active arms control agenda in Asia. It will be years before Asians settle regional rivalries and create the organizations that can negotiate and enforce arms control accords. Washington's first strategic military priority in Asia must be to deter potential adversaries. This will not be helped by arms control.

The Bush Administration thus should avoid Asian security talks that may limit U.S. military capability in Asia. The U.S. too should reject nuclear free zone agreements and naval arms control agreements that reduce American forces' ability to deter potential adversaries. And while urging states that are now building nuclear weapons and long range missiles to end those programs, the U.S. should expect that some states will not comply. As such, the U.S. should urge Australia, Japan and South Korea to join in developing missile defenses. Finally, the Administration should continue to remind its Asian allies and Congress that Moscow's enthusiasm for arms control in Asia is contradicted by its refusal to honor the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty signed last November, and the unabated modernization of its Asian arsenal.

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