

LOWY INSTITUTE

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

MacArthur Foundation Asia Security Project

*Asian Security Cooperation:
Charting Constraints, Building Confidence*

Presentation to Inaugural Asia Security Initiative Grantees' Meeting,

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Overview

- Three year integrated project, with phased approach.
- Devise and promote a practical agenda for regional security cooperation.
- Multidisciplinary research methodologies.
- Emphasis on realism as the basis for analysis.
- Disseminated through multiple publications, as well as new and different media.

Background

- Asia has enjoyed an era of peace, stability, and prosperity.
- The stable regional order has not been uniformly beneficial and uneven rates of economic growth are changing the balance of power.
- Security and stability are becoming increasingly precarious.
- **Cooperation is becoming more critical, less attainable, as new risks emerge – e.g. energy security, nuclear proliferation.**



3 Phases

Phase 1

Charting the limits of and constraints to regional security cooperation.

Phase 2

Analyzing the ways in which cooperation can be maximised up to the boundaries imposed by those constraints.

Phase 3

Devising the confidence-building measures needed to minimise risks of armed conflict in those areas where cooperation is not a realistic option.

Phase 1

Identifies and analyzes impediments to cooperation and sources of insecurity



- Rising Chinese power
- Relative decline of US primacy
- Japanese normalisation/strategic anxiety
- A rising India
- Strategic flashpoints (North Korea and Taiwan)
- Unresolved historical and territorial issues
- Transnational security challenges
- Competition for energy and resources
- Anaemic multilateral security architecture

Phase 2

Recommend ways to expand cooperation to the realistic limits

- Identify issues most amenable to effective security cooperation.
- Analyse the bilateral, multilateral, and minilateral arrangements in which cooperation may be pursued.
- Examine concessions required of each actor, and the costs relative to benefits that each stands to gain from expanded security cooperation.

Phase 3

- **Formulate an agenda for confidence building in those areas that remain beyond the viable prospect of cooperation.**
- **Translate the judgments of the first two phases into a practical set of recommendations to improve the stability and predictability of major power relations.**



- **Promote overall findings and advocate for recommendations to be incorporated into regional security policies.**

Methodology

Diverse research methodologies, reflecting an emphasis on practical policy options and a breadth of expert views among key strategic actors.

- Close attention given to historical legacies, and territorial issues in the region.
- Convene leading regional thinkers and policy-makers for conferences, roundtables and workshops.
- Collection and analysis of a large and authoritative body of data, including the potential for opinion polling throughout the region and in the United States.

Working Assumptions

- In a self-help world, states will generally attempt to maximise their relative power.
- Where cooperation does occur, it tends to arise as a result of states pursuing their own self-interest.
- National security ranks as the highest priority for states, especially in Asia, where sovereign major powers coexist and multilateral security structures provide no reliable basis for conflict resolution/prevention.
- States will not act against what they perceive to be their own best interests.
- High levels of security cooperation tend to be rare in the absence of a unifying threat.



Central Research Questions

1. Can the US alliance system continue to underpin peace and stability in Asia, despite a more even distribution of power?
2. Could the US reduce its strategic footprint in Asia without unleashing an intense military competition between China and Japan?
3. Does China aspire to its own dominance in Asia, and if so what might be the defining features of Chinese primacy?
4. To what extent must Chinese power grow relative to the US before Japan resumes a path of normalcy in strategic affairs?
5. What role might India play in the balance of power in East Asia?
6. To what extent is a shared aversion to major power war sufficient to underpin cooperative relations among the region's biggest powers?

Dissemination

The project will be disseminated through various traditional and new media, including:

- Monograph length *Lowy Institute Papers*
- A number of shorter Lowy publications – *Policy Briefs, Analyses, and Perspectives*
- Public presentations, round tables, and conferences
- Audio podcasts and television websites
- The Lowy Institute's widely read blog, *The Interpreter*
- Opinion pieces in major regional newspapers



Preview of Opening Publication

ASIAN FUTURES: Strategic pathways to a new security order

A short exposition on the strategic dynamics that might give rise, over the long-term, to:

1. Enduring US primacy
2. Chinese primacy
3. A balance of power
4. An Asian concert of powers

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