Five Greatest Challenges?

The just-concluded 13th annual Asia-Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur began with a session on "Perceptions: The Five Greatest Challenges to Asia-Pacific Security." Six speakers representing a broad range of professional disciplines and geographic regions shared their views on the greatest challenges as we approach the 21st Century.

Many had at or near the top of their list the ability of the states of the region to adjust to post-Cold War strategic realities, and especially the need to balance traditional views regarding protection of state sovereignty with the emerging trend of greater international emphasis on human security and humanitarian intervention. Current events in Kosovo weighed heavily on the discussion.

The emergence of China as a major power and the ability of both the region and China to adjust to this new reality represented another area of concern, as did the ability of both Washington and Beijing to manage this troubled relationship. Others highlighted the need for the U.S., Japan, and China (and perhaps Russia) to reach and sustain a state of relative equilibrium in their overall and respective bilateral relationships.

Lingering concerns about the region's ability to recover from the Asian/global financial crisis were stressed by many speakers, as was the need to strengthen international and regional multilateral regimes in order to more effectively deal with both economic and security challenges. All, in one form or another, saw the proliferation both of weapons of mass destruction and of their delivery systems (especially missiles) as one of the greatest future challenges.

Traditional security concerns -- North/South Korea, China/Taiwan, territorial disputes in the South China Sea and elsewhere, Timor, Kashmir, Myanmar, etc. -- were also mentioned, as were non-traditional security concerns such as dealing with environmental challenges, societal changes, and the downsides of globalization.

The above were some of the speakers' identified concerns. What are yours?

The Pacific Forum would like to conduct a Readers' Survey and see what you think are the greatest challenges to Asia-Pacific security. You should feel free to agree, disagree, or totally ignore the above comments. All we ask is a rank-ordered listing, with perhaps a sentence or two of explanation attached to each of your listed challenges. Please try to limit yourself to five (fewer are fine).

We would also like some demographic data, so we can see if opinions differ significantly from region to region or profession to profession. We will stress that all respondents, including government officials, are answering in their private capacities.

So send us an email and let us know the region you are from (Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Pacific, South Asia, North America, Europe, other), your profession, and the your listing of the five greatest challenges to Asia-Pacific Security.

Please take some time to respond as soon as possible but prior to June 18th. We will share the results with readers in a subsequent *PacNet*.