

Preface

The global economy is still reeling from the aftershocks of last year's recession and to say that most economies have recovered even partially would be paltering with the truth. But economics isn't the only thing on the minds of global leaders at the moment. The globe today is crisscrossed by many potentially dangerous security threats in different parts of the globe with no promising signs of resolving most of them.

The situation in Afghanistan seems to be the most dire. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is struggling to maintain even a modicum of stability in a region which has historically been hostile and unrelenting to foreign interference. The Taliban is in a much stronger position now than it was in the years immediately following the American-led assault in 2001. The American and allied troops are embedded in more ways than one with their intention to rid the entire region of any Al-Qaeda elements which might prove dangerous to its own security considering the nuclear weapons possessed by neighbouring Pakistan.

The situation gets murkier if one includes the threat posed by a resurgent Iran. President Ahmadinejad has been his usual vitriolic self over the last few years as he denounces Israel's right to exist while criticizing the Americans and the British. The international community has virtually unanimously agreed on Iran's intention to produce a nuclear weapon but is still undecided on the course of action needed to stop it. Any military action faces numerous challenges such as the Americans being bogged down in Afghanistan and the Israelis' reluctance to take on the might of the Persians on their own. Sanctions are proposed by the US and the EU but are not really an option unless Russia and China acquiesce.

Russia itself has come out of its post-Cold War lethargy and is beginning to flex its muscles on many issues. The August 2008 war against American ally Georgia and the US decision to abandon a plan for placing ballistic missile defence (BMD) installations in Poland and the Czech Republic reflect a growing realisation that Russia is now a resurgent power, acutely aware of its power and sphere of influence. Its central role in Iran and Afghanistan reflect its status adequately.

The considerable military power of Russia also remains as a main challenge of the European Union. Besides that, the EU faces the necessity to engage in global politics even as Europe does not have its own instruments. It still relies on NATO for its own security and engagements in other parts of the world.

Although Europe does have bilateral relations with various countries in Asia and has played a significant role in many crises, it has still not attained a prominent place like the United States in the region.

In this issue of Panorama we bring together experts from Asia and Europe to offer the different dimensions of security politics in these two regions and its intersection with global security. This volume tries to present the various security political issues and factors which confront Asia and Europe.

The journal has been divided into two parts. The first part is preceded by an introduction of EU-Asia security relations. Subsequently, the authors analyse the security politics of Europe. They have assessed the European security policies, the role of NATO as a security institution in Europe, as well as its relation to Asia. In the second part, authors from various parts of Asia explain the different aspects of security politics in the region. They present the various issues which Asia as a region confronts: from the role of US in Asia, the rise of China in security politics, to ASEAN's role in the regional security of Southeast Asia, and security politics in South Asia.



Dr. Wilhelm Hofmeister