1 Introduction: Old and New Agendas
Denny Roy

Traditionally, the field of strategic studies has been dominated by influential Western military thinkers who focused on the causes of war and the uses of military power. The Cold War, which made the US–Soviet confrontation the central feature of strategic studies, reinforced these tendencies within the field. A few years on, we can now characterise the 'old' security agenda of the Cold War era. The primary foci of study were Europe, the great powers, and major war. In most analyses, the term 'security' was narrowly understood as protection of territory and population from military attack by foreign governments. Most discussion of conflict in the mainstream security literature assumed the prevention of war lay in some form of military deterrence.

But with the end of the Cold War, this well-worn approach appears inadequate, perhaps even obsolete, as a framework for analysing the security challenges of the present and future Asia-Pacific region. The inability of the Cold War approach to deal with the security challenges of the post-Cold War era is clear if we consider some of the most prominent events of the last few years, including the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the war between the rebels in Chechnya and the Russian central government, the tensions in the Spratly Islands and across the Taiwan Strait, and the tribal violence in Rwanda.

Previously fundamental (and, for many people, comfortable) conceptual premises are now being rethought. In the new security agenda, attention has shifted to regional conflicts, especially in the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East, and to the dangers of medium-sized regional wars. The concept of security is open to broader interpretation, and a variety of unconventional threats to security is recognised. Even mainstream strategic fora are examining the possibility of a 'zone of peace', 'security communities', or other alternatives to what Thomas Hobbes described as the 'war of all against all'. Instruments of state power other than military force demand consideration as means of obtaining the state's goals. The value of traditional military alliances and of the United Nations as vehicles for preventing conflict are being reassessed. States are hard-pressed to design a long-term national strategy with no identifiable 'enemy' even in the short term, especially when the increasing costs of first-rate weapons systems combined with competing demands for public funds severely limit defence budgets for most countries.

Policies grow out of basic assumptions, and flawed assumptions have all too often spawned poor policies. Clearly, the tools and models of the past must give way to more innovative and creative expertise in the field of...
security studies. The changing strategic landscape of the post-Cold War era demands that the Asia-Pacific region’s important bilateral and multilateral relationships be re-evaluated, important new non-military threats be identified, and the new demands on strategists be understood. Otherwise, policy-makers and analysts may find themselves caught in the old trap of preparing to fight the previous war. Accordingly, this book is designed to provide an overview of likely security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region during the near to medium term and to suggest effective strategies for meeting these challenges.

This book has two central themes. The first is the important question of which parts of the ‘old’ agenda should be retained, and what new elements should be added. These few years of post-Cold War readjustment present a valuable opportunity to strategic reassessment and conceptual retooling. The immediate prospect for major war is minimal and the foreign policies of all the major powers suggest a desire for reconciliation and a recognition of the benefits of peaceful cooperation. Yet the squalls that may develop into tomorrow’s conflicts are already visible on the horizon. To make best use of this transitional period, strategic thinkers must determine which principles and lessons from the past have enduring validity, and to understand the significance of new security developments. While many aspects of the new security environment in the Asia-Pacific region have changed, some fundamental tenets of international politics persist. It is crucial that the next generation of security analysts and planners is wise enough to discern what to keep, what to throw away, and what to add.

Several of the chapters emphasise the necessity of conceptual change, introducing along the way some of the most important aspects of the New Security Agenda. Both Paul Dibb and Robert O’Neill assert that the prospect of global nuclear war has become unlikely, but that the future holds potential new security threats (albeit on a smaller scale) that may prove as vexing as the Cold War nuclear threat and require the same amount of attention from strategists. These new threats include what O’Neill terms the problems of ‘unintended chaos’: conflicts that are not the direct result of conscious policies by national governments. Alan Dupont surveys some of these ‘unconventional’ security threats, which include environmental degradation, transnational organised crime, uncontrolled migration, infectious disease, and the potential damage of international market forces upon domestic economies. Philip Howard highlights the issue of ‘ecological security’, increasing conflict resulting from competition over increasingly scarce natural resources such as water, timber and arable land. Howard notes that the potential for violence is greater within politically unstable states – including newly democratising countries. Stuart Harris discusses the close connection between international security and economic issues, which has never been greater than in the post-