AN AGE OF UNCERTAINTY:
BUILDING A POST-COLD WAR U.S.
SECURITY STRATEGY
FOR EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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The contours of the future U.S. security policy in the Asia-Pacific is a vexed question both in research literature and among American elites. There is no conformity either in threat perceptions or concrete methods of security policy. However, the region is recognized by all competitive groups as a critical area for U.S. national interests presently and in the foreseeable future. This article explores the major security challenges that America faces in the region; including China-Taiwan and other local conflicts, conventional arms race and nuclear proliferation, generational transition and nontraditional threats. The article reviews Clinton administration policy in the region and explains the nature of the U.S. domestic debate on the Asia-Pacific.

It is commonplace to argue that the international relations system is at a crossroads. The end of the cold war and the collapse of socialism have initiated profound changes in the world. However, the significant shifts that are now reshaping the world pose new challenges to strategic planners. Bipolar structure was replaced by a less stable multipolar structure with new centers of power (Japan and China in Far East Asia). The emphasis of world politics and of U.S. security strategy has shifted from U.S.-Soviet global competition to regional issues. The Asia-Pacific exemplifies such a region of paramount interest and increasing significance for the United States in the post-cold war era.

This research has four purposes: First, to examine U.S. security interests in Far East Asia; second, to identify present and future challenges to American security in the region; third, to review recent American policy in East and Southeast Asia; and finally, to depict U.S. national debates on regional security issues.

U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE REGION

First of all, Asia and the Pacific hold tremendous economic importance for the United States and its allies. According to Winston Lord, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, "Asia is the key to the eco-
The strategic importance of the region is growing also in connection with threats to American security that are periodically emerging on the horizon—North Korea's potential development of nuclear weapons, tensions on the