

THE TREND OF DÉTENTE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

Keynote Speech by
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The third millennium is just around the corner, as the people desire that peace and stability should prevail in the next century. The Asian people look to the 21st century as the era of the Pacific.

The development of multi-polarization, the emergence of the strategic partnership among the big powers, the solution of the Kosovo crisis, and the ever broadening forum and dialogue seeking peaceful solutions to the disputes - all these play a catalytic role in promoting the global trend of détente.

However, the current movement to détente does not run smoothly on its own course. Now, the following can be called the characteristics of the current trend of détente.

First, the current trend of détente in the post cold war era is still accompanied by the remnants of the cold war era. There still remain unresolved several post- Second World War leftovers such as the Korean Question, the Taiwan Issue, the Spratley Islands in South China Sea and the Russo-Japanese Northern Territory Dispute. They are the major disputes in the Asia-Pacific. Failure to resolve these issues will not put the process of détente on track in the true sense of the word. In reality, such cold war era remnants are responsible for the unabated disputes in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia and for the lingering danger of conflicts in these regions.

Second, the trend of multi-polarization is resisted by the uni-polarization. The international politics during the cold war era was characterized by the bi-polar confrontation between the former Soviet Union and the United States centering in Europe. The end of the cold war era opened the way for the multi-polarization worldwide and this has turned Asia into a new theater of conflict. It is the United States that is trying to gain the upper-hand over others in this area. The importance the United States attaches in the post cold war era to the Asia-Pacific is motivated by its recognition of this region as the central power-house of the global economic development. Out of the eleven strategic imports of the United States, 90 percent of eight imports including titanium, natural rubber, tin, mica and wolfram come from Asia. This fact alone points to the reason why the United States attaches importance to Asia.

The United States wants to establish its military dominance over this region in an effort to secure and maintain its "central role" in the Asia-Pacific. Continued U.S. intention to maintain 100,000-strong military presence in this region and to increase its bilateral and multilateral military cooperation with the regional countries are aimed at protecting and ensuring its economic interests in this region by force of arms and at establishing its military dominance there. However, many countries are likely to challenge the U.S. strategy. This phenomenon would counter-act the movement towards détente.

In the upcoming 21st century, all the elements hampering the trend of détente should be removed. Further encouragement of the multi-polarization trend, prevention of any single country's unbridled and arbitrary actions, strengthening of close friendship and trust among the regional countries and termination of the regional conflicts through dialogue - these measures will facilitate the prosperity and process of détente in the Asia-Pacific.