



Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies



SPECIAL ASSESSMENT

DECEMBER 2003

Asia's China Debate

H.C. "Hank" Stackpole is President of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. He has extensive military and private sector experience in Asia including as Commander of Marine Forces Pacific and President of Loral Asia-Pacific. He holds degrees from Princeton, The George Washington University, and Stanford and is a graduate of the National War College and Naval Command and Staff College.

Foreword

H . C . S T A C K P O L E

Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired
President, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

China has been a prominent feature of the Asia-Pacific region's security landscape in a variety of forms. Now, however, its rapid economic growth—especially trade—diplomatic activism, and military modernization are developments that have significant implications for the entire region, including the United States. The Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies teaching and research faculty, in an effort to better understand how countries in the region are thinking about and dealing with China, and to share the results of its findings with the wider government and analytic community, has produced this Special Assessment entitled *Asia's China Debate*. This is the second issue of our Special Assessment series.

As might be expected from a range of analyses that address ten country perspectives concerning China and issues such as China's historical relations with the region, its multilateral participation, economic growth and regional integration and its emerging regional road and rail links, Asia's China debate differs in texture and intensity across these topics and countries. Still, some common themes about Asia's China debate do emerge from these analyses. One is that China is a relative newcomer to regional prominence and countries in the region are still working out what China's growing weight means to their economies, societies and security. A corollary is that the United States continues to be regarded as the single most important country to the region's peace and prosperity. These two conclusions are connected. Asia's future China debate will certainly hinge to a great deal on developments in and decisions by China, but the role and relations of the United States in the region will also shape it. Two other major premises of Asia's China debate are that U.S.-China tensions are unwelcome and pressures by either to "choose sides" even worse.

I am pleased to present this publication with the hope that it will advance discussion and inform policy about Asia-Pacific security issues not only among the military and civilian leaders who attend our College of Security Studies executive and senior executive courses, but also among the government and policy analysis communities on both sides of the Pacific. It is by contributing to such discussions that the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies meets its mission to complement Pacific Command's (PACOM's) theater security cooperation strategy of maintaining positive security relationships with nations in the region as well as to enhance cooperation, and build relationships for a secure Asia-Pacific.

