

# CONFERENCE REPORT

RSIS Roundtable on "Strategic Engagement in the Asia Pacific: **The Future of the ADMM-Plus**"

24 July 2013, Singapore



**S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL  
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University



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# Opening Session

## Ralf Emmers

RSIS



**Ralf Emmers** noted the evolving security architecture in the Asia Pacific and the importance of such a roundtable to provide insights into the function and relevance of the ADMM-Plus. On strategic engagement in the context of the U.S. pivot or rebalance to the Asia Pacific, Emmers observed that most East Asian states are keen to engage both the U.S. and China and have used bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to do so.

Emmers also noted the relevance of non-traditional security (NTS) issues such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in sustaining cooperation but questioned

the effectiveness and long term feasibility of doing so especially if the focus was exclusively on NTS while hard security concerns continued to be set aside.

Emmers noted that as the ADMM-Plus involved 18 participating countries with varying interests, strategic engagement in the region was thus being shaped by how bilateral and multilateral mechanisms are conceptualised and implemented by the different regional actors. These strategies, according to Emmers, can be both competing and complementary.

# Session I

## Tan See Seng

RSIS



In his speech, **Tan See Seng** provided an overview of the regional strategic environment in the Asia Pacific. Tan touched on the current security challenges in the region, the growing defence engagement and regionalisation in the Asia Pacific, the formation of ADMM-Plus and emerging patterns of defence engagement of the region.

According to Tan, the Asia Pacific presently faces a number of security challenges, including concerns that rising defence expenditure would result in an arms race, ongoing territorial disputes and growing nationalisms as well as regular occurrences of natural and humanitarian disasters. This was against a backdrop of growing defence engagement and regionalisation in the Asia Pacific and evidenced by the increase in cooperation of regional militaries in bilateral and multilateral military exercises such as the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) and Cobra Gold.

Tan gave an overview of the aims, purposes and prospects of the ADMM-Plus, which was established in 2010 as an expression of open and inclusive defence regionalism and a platform for ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation by building trust and confidence among the participants. At the heart of ADMM-Plus was the specific objective of capacity-building. In this regard, Tan noted that the goals

of ADMM-Plus were not particularly ambitious and were more functional than strategic. To date, it had a long list of activities lined up for 2013 alone but it was unclear what these would ultimately result in.

As the regional security architecture continued to evolve, Tan shared his observations on emerging patterns of defence engagement in the Asia Pacific. The first trend suggested a shift from the San Francisco system of alliance (wheels and wisps) to growing bilateralisation and multilateralisation of defence ties (webs). The second involved a move towards more practical security cooperation, which implied the acknowledgement that current processes had not been very successful and goals should go beyond confidence-building. Third, military-to-military ties were not necessarily a reflection of the state of government-to-government relations and thus should not be held hostage to any unresolved tensions between states. Fourth, the statesman/diplomat usually dominated regional security cooperation rather than the soldier/defence practitioner. Nevertheless, multilateral defence cooperation in the region continued to persist. Finally, Tan debunked the long-held view that the Asia Pacific is not ready for a defence ministerial as the success of the Shangri-La Dialogue proved otherwise.

### Discussion

It was mentioned that the participation of non-ASEAN countries in ADMM-Plus was due to the growing importance of the region's stability to their own interests. There was also a growing consensus that transnational activities had spill over effects (both positive and negative). Also, economic difficulties in the United States and moderating growth in China would not necessarily translate to decreased defence cooperation. Initiatives under ADMM-Plus and the ASEAN Regional Forum did not require a huge amount of funds and U.S. officials had constantly reassured the region that commitments to allies would not be affected. Finally the limitations of a purely functional relationship in security cooperation were raised; greater political support was still needed to drive strategic engagement.

## Session II

### Brad Glosserman

Centre for Strategic and International Studies



In his presentation, **Brad Glosserman** commented that the U.S. rebalancing strategy was not well understood – both by Americans and foreigners. At the core of this strategy was to ensure that U.S. global interests were preserved and that it was not an attempt to contain China. Glosserman added that this rebalancing strategy was not new and that the U.S. had focused on East Asia for some twenty years already. Furthermore, the U.S. also had no intention of forcing countries to take sides (between itself and China). On China, Glosserman expressed the view that the U.S. views it as a partner rather than an obstacle and that it (the U.S.) did not worry about how other nations thought of it. He noted however that in the event China wished to rewrite the rules of the international order to serve its interests, the U.S. would not allow for it. Such an instance would lead the U.S. to possibly consider a strategy of “containment.” Glosserman expressed U.S. support for multilateral institutions like the ADMM-Plus, but noted that ASEAN’s preference for “messy” multilateralism limited the effectiveness of these foras.

### Evan Resnick

RSIS



On the ADMM-Plus, **Dr Evan Resnick** opined that it was unlikely to go beyond low level cooperation in areas such as humanitarian and disaster relief (HADR), non-traditional security (NTS) issues while core security issues remain untouched. Dr Resnick noted that the interests of the U.S. and China in East Asia considerably diverged from each other and that Beijing would necessarily want to challenge the current international status quo. Dr Resnick also expressed the view that the U.S. pivot strategy represented a “nascent effort” to thwart China’s geopolitical expansion and that such a strategy had succeeded during the Cold War with the Soviet Union. However this strategy was not likely to succeed with China as Beijing is determined to protect its territorial interests from being compromised by U.S. presence in East Asia. Instead what the U.S. should do is to “ease” China’s rise and to demonstrate it was not trying to contain China by (i) placing a moratorium on arms sales to Taiwan; and (ii) reduce the number of military exercises it conducts in the region.

## Teng Jianqun

China Institute of International Studies



On China's strategic engagement in the Asia Pacific, **Teng Jianqun** highlighted the shift from an ideology-oriented engagement (between 1949 and 1978) to a trade-oriented engagement (1979 to 2012) to a more "balanced" engagement in recent times. Noting that the situation in the Asia Pacific region was rapidly changing, Teng shared the Chinese government's approach was to emphasise a "new type of engagement with big powers" which included not just U.S. and China, but also other countries like Russia, Japan, India, the European Union and the ASEAN Community. On the ADMM-Plus, Teng commented that it represented an important platform with which for ASEAN and China to cooperate and expressed that China would use this platform to further its multilateral engagement with the region.

## Pang Zhongying

Renmin University of China



**Pang Zhongying**, likewise also reiterated China's "new type of great power relations" as a response to the U.S.' rebalancing strategy. According to Pang, this new approach to China's foreign policy was not new but instead was a continuity of existing Chinese foreign policy developed by Deng Xiaoping. Nevertheless such a strategy also represents China's desire to be respected as a "great power" nation in an international system that is different from the past. He noted that the U.S. and its allies, in particular Japan, would be unable to accept Chinese-American partnership based on a new model. Pang added that the U.S. could send more "positive signals" to the Chinese that it was not containing China's rise. Furthermore, as a result of the U.S. pivot strategy, China was also revising its Asia policy and some "profound changes" in China's relations with Asia could be seen in the next few years.

## **Discussion**

It was highlighted that the U.S. pivot to Asia strategy had been interpreted by many as a means of containing China. These included the American military which have been involved in planning for conflict with China. On China's "new type of great power relations," it suggested that China sees itself as number two in the international system and that it would want to surpass the United States as number one. Also China's military forces were now better prepared to be deployed outside China as opposed to previously when it was focused mostly on the mainland. On the ADMM-Plus, it was mentioned that while the U.S. viewed such an ASEAN-led institution favourably, it would not put all its eggs in a single basket. On ASEAN's role, there

was recognition that ASEAN centrality was a key factor towards regional security; nevertheless, it was mentioned that cooperation among ASEAN countries was largely limited to non-sensitive, low-level exchanges thus limiting the extent of ASEAN's integration and unity. It was also noted that the bilateral and multilateral engagements that ASEAN countries participate in present several tensions that may not be easily resolved. Also, there was a need for ASEAN to be more up-front in its dealings with each other and with the major powers. On existing territorial disputes, it was commented that a bilateral approach between China and the respective claimant states would be the most appropriate means of resolving the issues.

## Session III

### Brendan Taylor

Australia National University



Having noted that international defence engagement received renewed prominence in Australia's 2013 Defence White Paper, **Brendan Taylor** offered three reasons as to why this represented the culmination of decades of initiatives aimed renewing Australian leadership in the regional order. Firstly, this policy needs to be understood in light of the broader effort to prevent Australia's "marginalisation" in regional security, particularly when previous efforts, like the Asia Pacific community proposal, backfired. Secondly, it could also be interpreted as a "hedging strategy" to mitigate strategic uncertainties with the rise of China, while at the same time leveraging its ties to Southeast Asia against China's rising influence further North. Finally, the Paper reflected an aspiration to increase the defence expenditure to two per cent of GDP. However, Taylor emphasised that when situated in the context of several recent Australian initiatives, there was the problem of apparent incoherency in its foreign policy. Nonetheless, it was clear that Australia would be looking towards a leading role with ADMM-Plus, and viewed both bilateral and multilateral forms of diplomacy as important.

### Anit Mukherjee

RSIS



**Anit Mukherjee** highlighted India's strong support of the ADMM-Plus. On U.S. rebalancing to Asia, Mukherjee noted that Indian strategists had made a break with the historical policy of maintaining a distant gap between great powers and regional states. However, India's was concerned of being forced into pre-existing notions of how a U.S. ally should be. This stemmed from the wariness towards any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the regional order and as such, India was keen to pursue multi-lateral, consensus-based approaches to dealing with regional issues. Also, India's interest in ADMM-Plus rested upon its ability to achieve some degree of "prominence" in the region, which was dependent upon whether traditional security issues would be addressed. Concluding his presentation, Mukherjee emphasised that the ADMM-Plus should pursue a narrow and focused agenda, to reduce strain on the resources of various state domestic ministries.

## Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto

RSIS



**Ristian Supriyanto** explained the geopolitical significance of the U.S. pivot given Indonesia's central location in Southeast Asia. With U.S. military resources shifting to Asia, the Indo-Pacific trading lanes have gained crucial importance as U.S. interests. As such, Indonesia's role as a regional leader—due to its involvement in the ARF, EAS, and ADMM-Plus—will represent an obvious outlet through which the U.S. can springboard from. However, Indonesia's actual response to the U.S. pivot had been mixed, due to concern towards unintended negative consequences that might provoke a cycle of mistrust. This was largely due to the historical memory of U.S.-supported secessionist rebellions in the 1950s; today, Indonesia has similar concerns that the same scenario would play out with the separatist movement in Papua, given the island's close proximity to U.S. Marine Corps in Darwin. Supriyanto added that Indonesia would benefit from the rebalancing as it would be able to leverage its strategic relationship with the U.S. in engaging with other states. Supriyanto highlighted Indonesia's interest to pursuing "dynamic equilibrium" for the region and inviting all major powers to participate in ASEAN-centred initiatives, thus its advocacy of NTS issues at ADMM-Plus.

## Bhubhindar Singh

RSIS



**Bhubhindar Singh** noted that Japan had adopted one of the more proactive responses to U.S. rebalancing towards Asia and had worked towards increased strategic engagement through ADMM-Plus. Outlining Japan's relationship with ADMM-Plus, based on a study conducted on interviews with Japanese governmental officials and academics, he found that Japan expressed strong support for the ADMM-Plus, as it perceived the ADMM-Plus as an important source of regional stability due to its defence-oriented focus. Through the organisation, Japan was able to strengthen its bilateral ties, promote information sharing, and engage with the U.S. and China on topics from the military to maritime security. ADMM-Plus was also another way for Japan to share its expertise towards NTS issues like humanitarian crisis and military medicine. Interviewees' expectations regarding the ADMM-Plus process were much lower, and expressed caution over high expectations of such a new venture. There were also questions as to whether it would be able to integrate well within the many other regional institutions. Most importantly, however, Japan's interest in ADMM-Plus lies where the institution is able to sustain China's interest in a regional dialogue.

## **Q&A**

Regarding the reality of each states' constrained resources, an important question was raised on how efficacy can be measured in order to help evaluate which regional architectures are worth investing in. "National interest" was seen to be a general principle that participants agreed upon, but there were competing views of whether "efficacy" was a useful conceptual tool in tackling the uncertain nature of diplomacy, where initiatives can either backfire or achieve positive results, contrary to initial expectations. There were also discussions over whether ADMM-Plus could achieve greater regional trust without

tackling the harder questions concerning traditional security issues. Including only NTS issues may be necessary, as they tend to be less divisive and sensitive, possibly laying the groundwork for a more substantive dialogue on difficult problems. Participants then concluded by considering ASEAN's own interests in ADMM-Plus. There was an agreement that it should work to preserve ASEAN's central role in the region, and it can do so by actively engaging key actors even through regular dialogues. Crucial to ensuring its relevance is by working towards internal unity within the Association.

# Programme

## Strategic Engagement in the Asia Pacific:

The Future of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus)

Marina Mandarin Singapore

24 July 2013

### Abstract

This roundtable will examine regional security cooperation, at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. As the region gears up for the second ADMM-Plus in August 2013, this roundtable will discuss timely and important questions about the defence engagement strategies of the Asia-Pacific countries. It aims to bring together experts from around the region to present country perspectives on the topic. The main questions that will be addressed at this roundtable are: (1) How do regional countries implement

strategic engagement – bilaterally and multilaterally – in the context of the U.S. rebalance towards Asia?; (2) Can non-traditional security issues sustain cooperation in the long-term? How long can traditional security issues be put aside in this dialogue?; (3) To what extent are bilateral and multilateral engagement strategies complementary?; and (4) What role does the ADMM-Plus play in a country's strategic engagement policy?

23 July (Tuesday)

Dress code: Smart casual/batik

19:00–21:00

### Welcome Dinner

AquaMarine, Marina Mandarin Singapore, Level 4 (By invitation only)

24 July (Wednesday)

Dress code: Office attire

08:30–09:00

### Registration

Vanda Ballroom, Marina Mandarin Singapore, Level 5

09:00–09:15

### Opening Remarks

*Ralf Emmers*

*Coordinator*

*Multilateralism and Regionalism Programme*

*S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)*

09:15–10:00

### Session 1:

#### Overview of Regional Strategic Engagement

*Chair:*

*Ralf Emmers*

*S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)*

#### Defence Engagement as Diplomacy: The Case of Asia

*Tan See Seng*

*S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)*

### Q&A

10:00–10:30

### Coffee Break

10:30–12:30	<p><b>Session 2:</b></p> <p><b>Perspectives from the United States and China</b>  <i>Ralf Emmers</i>  Coordinator  Multilateralism and Regionalism Programme  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p> <p><b>The U.S. Rebalance, Multilateralism and the Dilemmas of Asia-Pacific Security</b>  <i>Brad Glosserman</i>  Pacific Forum  Center for Strategic and International Studies</p> <p><b>The Perils of Containing China</b>  <i>Evan Resnick</i>  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p> <p><b>China’s Strategic Engagement in Asia-Pacific</b>  <i>Teng Jianqun</i>  China Institute of International Studies</p> <p><b>China Explores Its New Foreign Policy Under the U.S.’s “Rebalance” to Asia</b>  <i>Pang Zhongying</i>  Renmin University of China</p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>
12:30–14:00	<p><b>Lunch</b>  Vanda Ballroom Foyer,  Marina Mandarin Singapore, Level 5</p>
14:00–15:00	<p><b>Session 3:</b></p> <p><b>Perspectives from Other Regional Powers</b>  Chair:  <i>Tan See Seng</i>  Deputy Director  Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies; and Head  Centre for Multilateralism Studies  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p> <p><b>Australia’s Defence Diplomacy: Presumptive Engagement Revisited?</b>  <i>Brendan Taylor, Australian National University</i></p> <p><b>India and the ADMM-Plus:  An Evolving Strategy</b>  <i>Anit Mukerjee</i>  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p> <p><b>The U.S. Rebalancing and Indonesia’s Strategic Engagement</b>  <i>Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto</i>  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p> <p><b>ADMM-Plus: A View from Japan</b>  <i>Bhubhindar Singh</i>  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p>
15:00–15:15	<b>Coffee Break</b>
15:15–15:50	<p><b>Session 3:</b></p> <p><b>Perspectives from Other Regional Powers</b></p> <p><b>Q&amp;A</b></p>
15:50–16:00	<p><b>Closing Remarks</b>  <i>Ralf Emmers</i>  <i>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)</i></p>

# Conference Participants

## Speakers and Moderators

Assoc Prof Tan See Seng  
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Regionalism Programme,  
RSIS

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Coordinator, U.S. Programme  
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Asst Prof Anit Mukerjee  
South Asia Programme  
RSIS

Asst Prof Bhubhindar Singh  
Multilateralism and Regionalism  
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International Political Economy  
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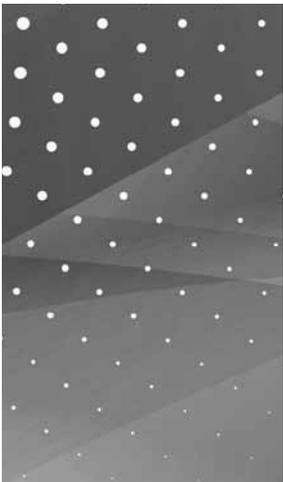
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## **About the Multilateralism and Regionalism Programme**

The RSIS Multilateralism and Regionalism Programme conducts advanced, cutting-edge research, networking and teaching/training in and on cooperative multilateralism and regionalism in the Asia Pacific. Since its inception in 2002, the Programme's output has contributed to the systematic accumulation of scholarly and policy-based knowledge on multilateralism and regionalism. Its agenda covers trans-regional, regional and sub-regional arrangements such as APEC, ASEAN, ASEAN+3, ASEAN Regional Forum, ADMM, ADMM-Plus, East Asia Summit, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Six Party Talks, as well as non-official networks such as the Shangri-La Dialogue and Track 2 processes. The Programme has been funded by international foundations such as the Sasakawa Peace Foundations of Japan and the United States, the MacArthur Foundation of the United States, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany, and Singapore's Ministry of Defence.

## **About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies**

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a professional graduate School of International affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. RSIS' mission is to develop a community of scholars and policy analysts at the forefront of security studies and international affairs. Its core functions are research, graduate teaching and networking. It produces cutting-edge research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-Traditional Security, International Political Economy, and Country and Area Studies. RSIS' activities are aimed at assisting policymakers to develop comprehensive approaches to strategic thinking on issues related to security and stability in the Asia Pacific.

For more information about RSIS, please visit [www.rsis.edu.sg](http://www.rsis.edu.sg).





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