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The [previous instalment](#) of this NTS Alert series looked at ASEAN's successes and failures in conflict resolution by focusing on the case of the Thai-Cambodian dispute. The discussion encompassed the obstacles ASEAN has faced in engendering a more proactive role for itself in security governance, notably the constraints presented by powerful domestic actors and interests – state and non-state (Haywood, 2011). Thus, in the Southeast Asian context in particular, relational dynamics must be taken into account when examining the organisation's 'capacity' to address regional security threats (Jones, 2011). However, at the same time, the consolidation of a more effective regional framework for political-security cooperation is made no less critical by the range of factors that for various reasons may constrain ASEAN's official line in a given situation (referring to 'ASEAN' in the sense of a collective of domestic governments, or perhaps in practice, a majority of states pushing for a particular course of action). It does not render redundant the need for the further development of ASEAN's institutional capacity.

Against this backdrop, this NTS Alert will consider recent initiatives ostensibly aimed at enhancing ASEAN's institutional framework for regional security governance, including vis-à-vis more sensitive, traditional security challenges. To be sure, ASEAN often asserts the importance of continually developing its 'regional architecture'. This constitutes one of the most common thematic interests of ASEAN meetings, blueprints and official statements, alongside more specific security concerns such as maritime security, inter-state border disputes, and disaster response and relief. That said, however, there is an apparent absence of consensus on what 'architecture' or 'security architecture' means in the ASEAN context, and by extension, what it precisely dictates of ASEAN, its member states and its dialogue partners.

This NTS Alert will consider whether ASEAN seems to be moving in the direction of a more coherent and functional security architecture as characterised by Tow and Taylor (2010) in their analysis of the concept in the ASEAN context, or indeed, whether such a model can or even should be applied to the Asian – and particularly ASEAN – context. Such examinations are important given the recent establishment of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) as an integral part of the ADMM, as well as the anticipated inaugural participation of the US and Russia in the East Asia Summit (EAS) in November.

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Towards ASEAN-centred 'Security Architecture'?

Tow and Taylor (2010:96) offer a potentially useful reference point for an examination of ASEAN-centred security architecture and efforts aimed at consolidating a security community in the region. They have suggested that 'security architecture' should be understood as constituting 'an overarching, coherent and comprehensive security structure for a geographically-defined area, which facilitates the resolution of that region's policy concerns and achieves its security objectives'.

To give substance to this definition, Tow and Taylor (2010) have developed a set of guidelines comprising seven indicators for identifying whether a security architecture exists. Security architecture should be: (1) conceptually understood to constitute an overarching form, as opposed to the term being used interchangeably with 'institutions' or 'arrangements'; (2) geographically delineated at the regional level of analysis; (3) coherent; (4) the product of intelligent design; (5) functionally oriented; (6) broad enough to accommodate so-called 'comprehensive' understandings of security; and (7) not used as a mere synonym for multilateral security institutions (for instance, in ASEAN's case, formal organisations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ADMM and the EAS). Based on these guidelines, they argue that a genuine security architecture cannot be readily identified in the ASEAN context currently, nor is it inevitable that it materialise in the near future (Tow and Taylor, 2010:113).

The immediate response of many ASEAN commentators may be that the rigidity of the guidelines negates their applicability to the ASEAN context, in which security cooperation (or at least the prevention of conflict) has largely been premised on building trust and habits of cooperation based on interdependence. Tow and Taylor (2010:116) acknowledge – and pre-empt – this charge, however, by arguing that the mere assertion that 'the Asia-Pacific region has too many regional organisations, yet they still cannot do all the things we require of them' demonstrates the need for a 'more disciplined architectural ideal' embodying their guidelines. Furthermore, they argue that, 'unless and until practitioners of Asian security are first able to agree upon what they actually mean by the term "security architecture", the urgent task of devising and implementing an effective region-wide structure to cope with this highly fluid and treacherous strategic environment will remain an elusive one' (Tow and Taylor, 2010:116).

In Southeast Asia, there are potentially as many interpretations and applications of the term 'security architecture' (or 'regional architecture') as there are actors and (divergent) interests. Nonetheless, the goal of a more *coherent* and *functional* framework of security cooperation does seem to be becoming more pronounced within Southeast Asia, at least rhetorically; and this could be seen in the stance taken by the ASEAN Secretariat (expressed through the ASEAN Chair) as well as domestic leaders that are more progressive, track II actors such as the

Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and thought leaders from the region's think tanks. This does, however, also inevitably lead to the question of motivations. The growing emphasis of ASEAN's major dialogue partners (including the US, Japan and Australia, albeit each for varying reasons themselves) on the material outcomes of ASEAN-led multilateral security institutions is no doubt a factor in its emphasising the capacity of its institutions to bring about concrete progress. Indeed, while beyond the scope of this paper, it could be argued elsewhere that ASEAN's attempts to increase its 'multilateral' contribution cannot necessarily be separated from its hedging and balancing motives in the basic sense that it also serves as a means to maintaining the interest and investment of the great powers in ASEAN-led regionalism, and as such, ASEAN centrality.

The ADMM and ADMM-Plus – Components of an Enhanced Framework for Political-Security Cooperation, or More of the Same?

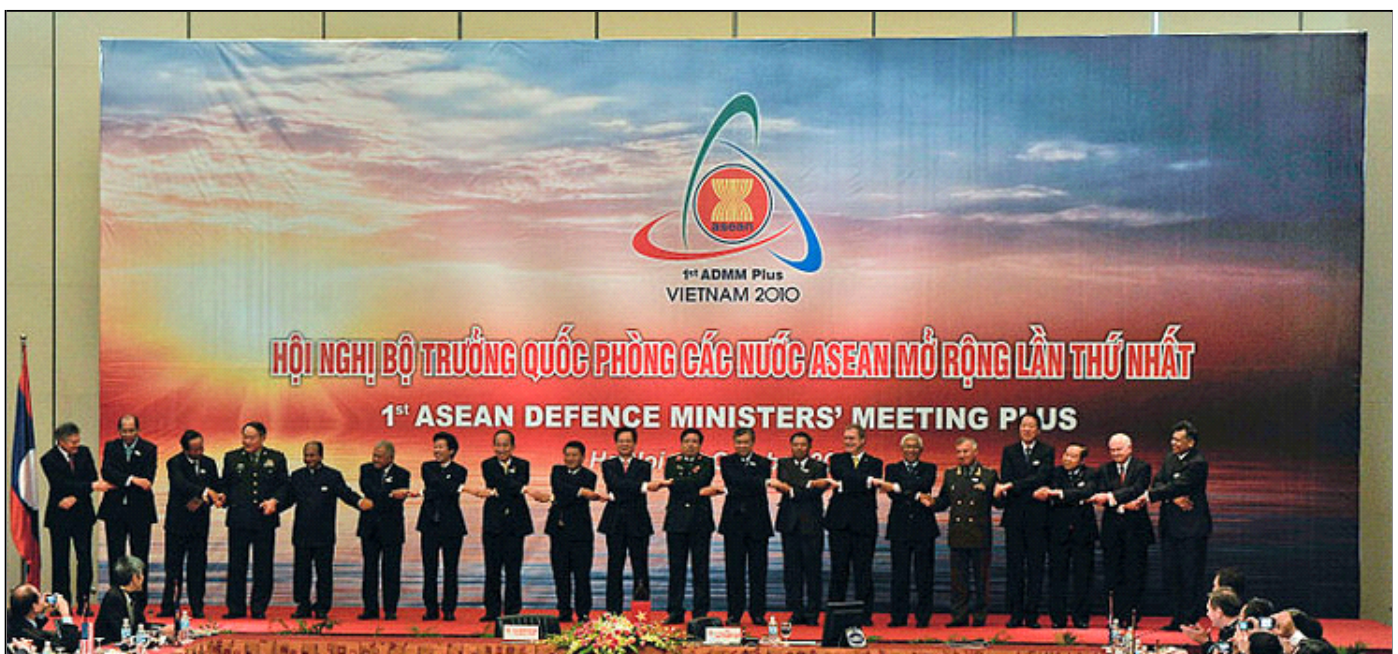
Motivations aside, ASEAN's institutional framework for defence and security cooperation has developed rapidly in recent years. In 2006, the potential for intra-ASEAN defence and security cooperation was elevated with the establishment of the ADMM framework. Moreover, in October 2010, the inaugural ADMM-Plus was held, opening up ASEAN's now-highest-level security and defence mechanism to eight of its dialogue partners – the US, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, India and the Republic of Korea. The ADMM-Plus will serve as an integral part of the ADMM, bringing together ASEAN and its dialogue partners to forge common security outlooks and set in place practical defence cooperation and collaboration.

In May 2011, during the fifth ADMM, a three-year work programme was released with the aim of fostering increased dialogue and cooperation in security and defence. The ADMM-Plus will focus on several issue areas, namely: (1) maritime security; (2) humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR); (3) peacekeeping operations; (4) counter-terrorism; and (5) military medicine (Pohan, 2011:4). To support its objectives, ASEAN defence ministers adopted the concept papers on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network and on ASEAN Defence Industry Collaboration (ARF, 2011c:3).

Along with the 27-member ARF, the importance of the ADMM-Plus in the emerging regional architecture is commonly emphasised (Pohan, 2011:5). However, given that the ADMM-Plus is a new institution, questions are being raised as to its added value, especially in light of ASEAN's reputation as a prolific institution builder and its perceived lack of commensurate concern for functionality or institutional replication. Indeed, despite the recent formation of the ADMM, it is the ARF, established in 1994, that has been and *continues* to be affirmed as the 'central pillar in ASEAN's evolving regional architecture', particularly within the framework of a political-security community (ARF, 2011b:16).

However, despite its relatively long history, the ARF is often criticised for its low impact in forging concrete cooperation or outcomes regarding regional security concerns, beyond its role in building trust and helping to normalise relations among its diverse members. Until now, the ARF has largely stalled at the first stage of its three-stage strategy of evolution – confidence-building measures (CBMs) – with the anticipated stages being preventive diplomacy, and finally, the development of mechanisms for conflict resolution. As a result, the need for the ARF to become more action-oriented in order to effectively resolve challenges is widely acknowledged (Pohan, 2011:2).

Nonetheless, in July 2011, the ARF adopted a Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan, which Indonesia, as the present Chair of both ASEAN and the ARF, has argued constitutes a 'fundamental and meaningful breakthrough' which should help bring the ARF to a 'higher and more essential level of cooperation', consolidating its role as a forum for discussion with a more action-oriented approach (Pohan, 2011:6). This ARF Work Plan points to the strengthening of concrete cooperation in the areas of HADR, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament, and peacekeeping operations (ARF, 2011a).



The ARF and the ADMM – Differentiated and Added Value?

On paper, there is clearly a significant degree of overlap in the agenda and priorities of the ARF and the ADMM and ADMM-Plus. Beyond the overlap in the stated agenda of the ARF and the ADMM, however, there are a number of points that can be made regarding the similarities, differences and possible complementarities of the two institutions.

At the most basic level, the ADMM-Plus arguably has the potential to be a more constructive multilateral security institution than the ARF. While the ADMM (and the ADMM-Plus), like all ASEAN-centred institutions, has adopted the ASEAN way of consultation and consensus with its emphasis on trust and confidence-building, the ADMM is designed to focus solely on defence and security issues and has been created for the purpose of enabling the exclusive participation and cooperation of defence ministers and forces. The ARF, on the other hand, while open to defence establishments, is criticised for being a foreign-ministry dominated forum, with discussions being subsequently relatively broad and strategically focused (and, being a foreign-minister dominated forum, strategically *limited* in many ways). The ADMM-Plus also has a comparatively more compact membership base than the ARF (with its diverse 27 members), making cohesiveness and cooperation more feasible.

In terms of concrete cooperation, it has been noted that the ADMM-Plus is unlikely to go further than the ARF in addressing traditional security challenges, including explicitly addressing major power rivalries, bilateral conflicts and sensitive regional issues including territorial disputes in the South China Sea and the North Korean nuclear disarmament talks. On the other hand, it is expected that it will 'increasingly overshadow' the ARF in defence-related matters, focusing more on operational aspects that require defence facilities, expertise and personnel (Desker, 2010; see also Pohan, 2011:5). In the ASEAN Secretary-General's words, the ADMM-Plus will 'greatly substantiate' what the ARF has already been 'considering and discussing' (ASEAN, 2010).

Another potentially significant advantage of the ADMM-Plus is that it incorporates the same dialogue partners as the EAS. Consonant with the idea of the ASEAN defence sectoral body, an independent track for the ADMM to report to ASEAN heads of state or governments (ASEAN, 2007), the membership overlap between the ADMM-Plus and the EAS should theoretically mean that there will be an easier and potentially more effective (productive) flow of information and recommendations from the ADMM-Plus forum (defence establishments and ministries, in particular) to the annual EAS (heads of state). This would, in theory, help to mitigate the dilemma of foreign ministries committing (or otherwise) to a certain course of cooperation without the agreement of defence and military establishments.

The ADMM and Peacekeeping – A Case of ASEAN's Enhanced Potential for Regional Security Governance?

While the ADMM is expected to initially focus on areas where there is already consensus – for instance, in areas of non-traditional security governance such as HADR – its wider potential is illustrated by recent enhanced cooperation in the area of peacekeeping, specifically in the momentum towards establishing a 'regional' peacekeeping capacity (if only in loose and non-committed terms). Indeed, five countries now have national peacekeeping centres (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia) and Indonesia is presently in the stages of establishing a 'four-in-one project': an integrated training centre for peacekeeping operations, HADR, counter-terrorism, and standby forces for rapid deployment (NADI, 2010:2; Yusgiantoro, 2011).

The ADMM concept paper on a peacekeeping centres network aims to increase regional cooperation in peacekeeping, including in planning, training and the exchange of experiences, with a longer-term view of establishing a regional capacity for the maintenance of peace and security within ASEAN. This corresponds to a reference to a peacekeeping centres network in both the ADMM's work programme as well as the APSC blueprint, and is related to more specific priorities contained within the ADMM's work plan such as taking stock of ASEAN states' peacekeeping capacities (ASEAN, 2011).

Several ASEAN member states are already troop-contributing countries internationally to varying degrees, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore as well as Cambodia, for instance, in an engineering (particularly demining) capacity. Indeed, many states – including new and non-traditional contributors – have identified niche civilian capacities to contribute to international peace operations. Individual member states have contributed to operations in Cambodia, Timor-Leste and Aceh, and some have had a small presence in the International Monitoring Team in the southern Philippines. However, ASEAN states have been uniformly reluctant to become officially involved (collectively) in peace operations, let alone within their own backyard.

Despite this fact, the example of the recent Thai-Cambodian border dispute points to potential developments in this area. The foreign ministries of the two countries were initially receptive to a proposal by Indonesia (as ASEAN Chair) for an unarmed observer team to monitor the ceasefire between their respective militaries – until the Thai military voiced its disapproval over the third-party role to be played by Indonesia. There was also pressure on ASEAN (and thus, its member states individually, and particularly the more democratic and 'progressive' states) to accept ASEAN's 'mediating' (i.e., observing/facilitatory) role in the bilateral dispute (Haywood, 2011). Thus, it is not inconceivable that, with regard to acting as peacekeepers in the traditional sense, i.e., as observers of a ceasefire, ASEAN member state/s

could find an acceptable role to play in the future. In this particular case of inter-state conflict, significant pressure was exerted on ASEAN from the more democratic ASEAN states (out of concern over the organisation's international reputation and legitimacy), as well as from the UN Security Council and the International Court of Justice, both of which endorsed ASEAN's central role in resolving the dispute. More generally, the growing push towards multilevel security governance based on the notion of 'security regions' and an increase in the multilateral utility of regional organisations have heightened expectations of ASEAN's role in conflict management and resolution.

The ADMM serves as a potential entry point, previously limited to ad hoc and informal channels, for forging cooperation in the area of peacekeeping between the respective ministries and militaries; and the establishment of the ADMM-Plus has arguably added momentum to the ADMM's broader objectives. Ultimately though, given that the ADMM is an annual forum, and the ADMM-Plus is currently to be convened every three years, they will, as with other ASEAN mechanisms and forums, take a longer-term and cumulative approach to advancing regional security governance.

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Conclusion: On the Path to a 'Security Architecture'?

Desker (2010) has assessed that the ADMM and ADMM-Plus will 'form part of a lattice framework of complex interdependence involving participating states engaged in cooperative security'. Nonetheless, there will need to be a clear delineation between the roles of the ARF and the ADMM (including the ADMM-Plus), as well as that of other mechanisms that fall under the umbrella of ASEAN-led regionalism. With the ADMM-Plus being a very new creation, this has not yet taken place. However, there does at least seem to be a cognisance of the need to differentiate the two forums and their responsibilities, in order for ASEAN to retain its centrality in regional security efforts, somewhat reaffirming Tow and Taylor's conceptualisation of a security architecture that is *necessarily* coherent, functional, and ultimately, the product of intelligent design.

The ADMM framework has been described as having taken ASEAN 'a step closer to the realisation of the ASEAN Security Community' (Desker, 2010). In this particular instance, however, within the microcosm of the roles and activities being pursued by the ARF and the ADMM, it will be crucial in the longer term and to the bigger picture that the foreign ministries and defence apparatuses of ASEAN member states (and their dialogue partners) forge patterns of cooperation and synergy, lest the new forums and their respective strengths reinforce or embed the often divisive (or self-interested) nature of state and state-society relations in Southeast Asia at the expense of effective inter-state cooperation, or ASEAN's more pronounced multilateral contribution.

Ultimately though, the discourse surrounding the creation of the ADMM-Plus, the role of the ADMM, and the relationships and possible synergies with the ARF, is indicative of the fact that ASEAN (whether it be the ASEAN Chair, progressive domestic governments or even influential regional norm entrepreneurs more broadly) is consciously trying to evolve its web of regional multilateral institutions in the direction of a more coherent and functional framework of cooperation. It certainly suggests that Tow and Taylor's framework of analysis for examining the characteristics of security architecture has relevance in the ASEAN context, in spite of charges that ASEAN's particular preferences and practices regarding regional security governance, and thus the modus operandi of its institutions, are incompatible with or refute the need for a more coherent and clear governance structure (including governing principles). To the contrary, recent institutional developments and the discourse surrounding them portend a continuing evolution or recalibration of existing norms constituted by the 'ASEAN way' (characterised by consultation, consensus, CBMs, and ultimately, a lowest common denominator approach) – or at least the manner in which they are implemented and practised by member states, in their efforts to reassert ASEAN's central role in security governance.

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