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**Multilateral Security Cooperation in  
the Asia-Pacific Region:  
Prospects and Possibilities**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to (i) describe the achievements with respect to the institutionalisation of multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific since 1992; (ii) provide a critical assessment of this progress; (iii) consider some of the principal problems affecting the process; (iv) provide some net assessment of the achievements to date and what this suggests for the future; and (v) outline an agenda for action. It acknowledges the extraordinary progress of the institutionalisation of multilateral security cooperation between 1992-97 but it also sees this process as losing momentum by 1997. Establishing mechanisms for dialogue and institutionalising a region-wide confidence-building process were fundamentally important achievements of the first five-year period, but they were relatively easy undertakings when compared to more substantive activities such as preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution or arms control.

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Multilateral security cooperation is an integral aspect of the evolving security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region<sup>1</sup>. Mechanisms for region-wide security dialogue have now been firmly established, of which the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has emerged as the centrepiece. Numerous confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) have been instituted or are in the process of implementation, many of which have been designed to enhance *transparency* throughout the region. Considerable progress is being made with the development and institutionalisation of maritime CSBMs and other maritime cooperative measures. Cooperation among regional defence forces, involving reciprocal visits of senior officers, joint exercises and joint training programs, has burgeoned. Concepts and mechanisms for conflict prevention and arms control are now receiving more serious official consideration, with a view towards the institutionalisation of arrangements for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution within the next 5-10 years. There is also considerable interest in the institutionalisation of mechanisms for the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The progress with the institutionalisation of security cooperation in the region over the half decade from about 1992 to about 1997 was extraordinary. But how should it be assessed? What has really been achieved? Against which expectations, strategic contingencies or other criteria should the progress be measured? How does it compare to the more disturbing developments in the regional security environment?<sup>2</sup>

These are critically important questions. However, they have been joined over the past couple of years by another, more fundamental one: Is

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<sup>1</sup> See Desmond Ball, 'Introduction', in Desmond Ball (ed.), *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1996), pp.1-14.

<sup>2</sup> For a much fuller discussion of these questions, see Desmond Ball, 'A Critical Review of Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region', (paper prepared for the inaugural conference of the Asia-Pacific Security Forum on *The Impetus of Change in the Asia-Pacific Security Environment*, Taipei, 1-3 September 1997).

there any real prospect of multilateral processes proceeding in the foreseeable future (i.e., the next 10-15 years), beyond fairly constrained dialogue arrangements and transparency-type CSBMs, to instituting mechanisms for seriously addressing the most important security matters - such as potential conflict areas, conflict resolution mechanisms, and arms control agreements, as well as economic and environmental security issues?

None of the regional multilateral institutions have contributed much to the identification of solutions to the regional economic crisis which began in 1997 or to any comprehension of its strategic and security implications - neither economic institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process, nor important political organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), nor security forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), nor so-called 'second track' organisations such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). Why has this been so?

But the multilateral security process was losing momentum by 1997 anyway. The extraordinary growth in cooperative activities during the previous five years could not have been sustained.<sup>3</sup> Establishing mechanisms for dialogue and institutionalising a region-wide confidence-building process were fundamentally important achievements of the first five-year period, but they were relatively easy undertakings when compared to more substantive activities such as preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution or arms control.

The incorporation of China and the United States into the regional multilateral security cooperation process was also a major achievement, but

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<sup>3</sup> See Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement: Australia's Asia-Pacific Security Policy in the 1990s*, (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996), pp.71-72, 101.

it was not without costs. China has been very cautious about multilateralism, and in return for its participation has imposed constraints on both the pace and the scope of the process. Until 1992, the US was steadfastly opposed to multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific region, and the US Navy remains wary of any multilateral mechanisms which might impinge upon its operational freedom in the Pacific. Other US agencies (such as the State Department), on the other hand, have become frustrated with the slow progress and hence less interested in the process.

If, indeed, the multilateralist momentum is waning, what might be done to re-invigorate the process?

I have canvassed many questions, some of which are very complex and involve both conceptual and policy issues of great difficulty. They cannot all be answered in this paper. I intend here to briefly describe the achievements with respect to the institutionalisation of multilateralism which have occurred since around 1992; to provide some critical assessment of this progress; to consider some of the principal problems affecting the process, to provide some net assessment of the achievements to date and what this suggests for the future; and to outline an agenda for action.

## **THE ACHIEVEMENTS**

The areas in which most progress has occurred involve the institutionalisation of regional security dialogue; the adoption of numerous CSBMs, particularly with respect to transparency measures; various aspects of maritime cooperation; and a wide range of defence cooperation activities (such as joint exercises and training programs).

### **(i) Institutionalised Regional Security Dialogue**

The ARF is the centrepiece of the institutionalisation of multilateral security dialogue and confidence-building. It held its first meeting in July 1994, and its progress, especially since its adoption of a *Concept Paper* and appended agenda at its second meeting in Brunei in August 1995, has been quite remarkable.<sup>4</sup>

The *Concept Paper* outlined ‘a gradual evolutionary approach to security cooperation’, which is supposed to take place in three stages:

Stage 1: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

Stage 2: Development of Preventive Diplomacy Mechanisms

Stage 3: Development of Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms

The *Concept Paper* included two lists of confidence building measures and other cooperative activities: the first ‘spells out measures which can be explored and implemented by ARF participants in the immediate future’, i.e., over the next couple of years, such as publications of statements of defence policy, participation in the UN Conventional Arms Register, reciprocal high-level personnel exchanges, etc.; the second is ‘an indicative list of other proposals which can be explored over the medium and long-term by ARF participants and also considered in the immediate future by the Track Two process’, such as cooperative approaches to SLOCs, the establishment of zones of cooperation in areas such as the South China Sea, maritime information data bases, etc. (see Appendix)

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<sup>4</sup> ASEAN Senior Officials, ‘The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper’, May 1995, reprinted in Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement*, Appendix 2, pp.111-119. See also Desmond Ball, ‘A Critical Review of Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region’.

## **(ii) Transparency**

Most of the CSBMs which have been endorsed by the ARF for immediate implementation involve the enhancement of transparency. These include arrangements for dialogue on security perceptions and selected international security issues; the publication of 'voluntary statements of defence policy positions' and Defence White Papers; participation in the UN Conventional Arms Register; and increased contacts and exchanges between regional defence establishments.

## **(iii) Maritime Cooperation**

Maritime issues are at the forefront of current regional security concerns. It is therefore necessary that the regional CSBM process be heavily weighted towards maritime mechanisms of various sorts. In fact, the salience of maritime concerns is well-reflected in current regional CSBM proposals - as evident in the ASEAN Concept Paper, where some half dozen measures are intended to directly address maritime matters, while others have a significant maritime dimension. For example, maritime strike capabilities not only comprise a large proportion of the new acquisitions in the region, but these capabilities are also the ones that are more likely to generate offsetting acquisitions elsewhere in the region and hence to trigger unanticipated and undesired arms races; it is therefore particularly necessary that these acquisitions be accompanied by transparency and dialogue. Many of the new maritime weapons systems, such as submarine warfare systems and long-range anti-ship missiles requiring over-the-horizon targeting, happen to be more prone to accidents and miscalculations; hence the desirability of instituting some avoidance of incidents at sea regime in the region. Other concerns, such as piracy and illegal activities throughout many of the EEZs

in the region, can best be addressed through cooperative surveillance and/or information-sharing efforts and arrangements.

Some of the foundations for building confidence and security in the maritime dimension have already been instituted in the region. The most significant of these involve the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and the CSCAP Working Group on Maritime Cooperation, but many other organisations are also involved in cooperative maritime activities with important security dimensions.

#### **(iv) Defence Cooperation**

Defence cooperation has burgeoned since the late 1980s, particularly among the ASEAN countries and Australia. In this region, cooperative defence activities - such as reciprocal visits by senior defence officers, joint exercises, training programs and personnel exchanges - now account for the great weight of cooperative activities concerning regional security. Australia is at the centre of cooperative defence activities in Southeast Asia. Most of the ASEAN countries, and especially Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, are now more engaged with Australia with respect to cooperative defence activities than with any other country, including their own ASEAN neighbours.<sup>5</sup>

Reciprocal visits by senior officers provide a mechanism for increasing 'openness', closer personal relationships, and enhancing mutual understanding and trust. Training programs provide a very useful means of imparting much-appreciated staff and technical skills, sharing operational concepts and doctrines, creating networks of personal friendships and professional contacts, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and

<sup>5</sup> See Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement*, pp.58-72.



misinterpretations, and building trust. Joint military exercises can be extremely productive in terms of building closer defence relations.

## FORMING A CRITIQUE

Assessment of these achievements is extremely difficult. To begin with, many of the conceptual variables are quite intangible, such as ‘confidence’, ‘trust’, ‘transparency’, and even some of the more elastic concepts of ‘security’ itself. Then, the standards of measurement are problematic: they are conceptually undeveloped, inconstant, and, indeed, are at least in part a function of the variable being measured (i.e., the cooperative achievements).

The simplest yardstick is the schedule set out in the *Concept Paper* adopted by the ARF on 1 August 1995. Although inherently subjective, and reflecting the drafters’ views of the acceptability of particular measures as much as the significance of the measures in terms of security enhancement, it does provide a guide to the expectations current at the time of the ARF’s foundation.

A much more demanding standard would be the structure and systemic tendencies of the regional security architecture: i.e., to what extent are the cooperative ventures keeping abreast of the changing components and configurations of security relations and of the systemic propensities for conflict or peace in the region?

In general, the cooperative security measures which have been officially accepted and institutionalised over the past half decade satisfy one or more of the following:

First, they address the real concerns which regional security policy-makers and analysts have about certain aspects of the emerging regional

security environment - i.e., the uncertainty pervading the region, the high levels of economic inter-dependence and concomitant levels of vulnerability to potentially destabilising economic forces and economically-inspired political conflict, the challenge of the major Asian powers, the vigorous arms acquisition programs underway in the region, the prospect of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a variety of important maritime issues, the existence of numerous territorial and sovereignty disputes, and the possibility that one or more of these could erupt into war.<sup>6</sup>

Second, they do not impinge on core national interests - i.e., territorial claims and other sovereignty issues, defence capabilities and operations, or internal political processes (which might be affected by more transparent policy-making).

Third, their design and development has been in accord with 'the Asian way' - i.e., they have involved evolutionary developments from extant regional structures rather than the importation of Western modalities or the creation of new structures; decisions are made 'by consensus after careful and extensive consultations' rather than by voting; and the implementation of particular measures eschews legalisms and is left to voluntary compliance.<sup>7</sup> According to the *Concept Paper*:

The ARF should ... progress at a pace comfortable to all participants. The ARF should not move 'too fast for those who want to go slow and not too slow for those who want to go fast'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Desmond Ball, 'The Agenda for Cooperation', in Ray Funnell (ed.), *Asia-Pacific Security: The Challenges*

*Ahead*, (Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra, 1996), pp.50-77.

<sup>7</sup> ASEAN Senior Officials, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper', pp.3-4. See also Desmond Ball, 'A New Era in Confidence Building: The Second-track Process in the Asia/Pacific Region', *Security Dialogue*, (Vol.25, No.2), June 1994, pp.157-176.

<sup>8</sup> ASEAN Senior Officials, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper', p.4.

Clearly, there are strong tensions between aspects of these criteria. Measures which address important security issues are likely to affect national interests to some degree. And measures which are relatively easy to implement because they reflect ‘the Asian way’ are less likely to substantively address important issues. In practice, the scope for significant manoeuvre is fairly limited.

## **THE ARF AGENDA**

The *Concept Paper* covers some three dozen proposals for CSBMs, preventive diplomacy, maritime cooperation and other cooperative measures. As noted above (and depicted in Table 1), these are divided into two lists: the first (Annex A) containing ‘measures which can be explored and implemented by ARF participants in the immediate future’; and the second (Annex B) being ‘an indicative list of other proposals which can be explored over the medium and long-term by ARF participants and also considered in the immediate future by the Track Two process’.<sup>9</sup>

The terms ‘immediate future’ and ‘medium and long-term’ are not defined, but it was generally reckoned by the ARF Senior Officials in mid-1995 that Annex A should be achieved within 1-2 years, while some of the measures in Annex B could take 3-5 years and others perhaps a decade or so. In terms of the progression from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, dialogue and consultations about the latter were to begin immediately, with the expectation that some preventive diplomacy mechanisms would be devised and emplaced within about five years and some conflict resolution mechanisms in about 10 years.

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<sup>9</sup> ASEAN Senior Officials, ‘The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper’, pp.3-4, 7-10.

According to this schedule, Annex A should have been substantially implemented by now. In fact, there has been considerable progress with most of the 16 measures contained in it. Many of them were fairly simple, such as the organisation of ‘seminars/workshops on peacekeeping issues’, ‘exchanges between military academies [and] staff colleges’, and ‘enhanced contacts, including high level visits and recreational activities’. Some required novel activity on the part of many of the members, such as the preparation and publication of Defence White Papers or ‘equivalent documents’, although some of the products have involved little transparency. An important achievement has been the South East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty, which entered into force on 27 March 1997. Some of the measures in Annex A are still some years away, however, such as the development of ‘a set of guidelines for the peaceful settlement of disputes’, or the adoption by all ARF members of the principle of ‘comprehensive approaches to security’.

It is fair to say that a good start has already been made with some of the 19 measures in Annex B. This is especially the case with regard to maritime CSBMs, where there has been considerable progress with the development of maritime information data bases, such as the Australian-developed Strategic Maritime Information System (SMIS); ‘a multilateral agreement on the avoidance of naval incidents’, drafted by the CSCAP Working Group on Maritime Cooperation as ‘Guidelines for Maritime Cooperation’, for submission to the ARF earlier this year; and exploration of ‘the idea of joint marine scientific research’ and other aspects of ocean management, which are currently also being explored by the CSCAP Working Group on Maritime Cooperation. It is quite likely that other measures will be implemented over the next few years, such as the development of a ‘mechanism to mobilise relief assistance in the event of

natural disasters’, and exploration of ‘the possibility of establishing a [regional] peacekeeping centre’, as well as more maritime cooperation measures.

On the other hand, it is clear that some proposals have already stagnated, such as the notion of a Regional Arms Register. Others are unlikely to be implemented during the next decade, such as the ‘establishment of zones of cooperation in areas such as the South China Sea’.

More generally, there is unlikely to be much progress with the institutionalisation of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, or arms control during the next decade.

The *Concept Paper* described preventive diplomacy (Stage II of the ARF agenda) as ‘a natural follow-up to confidence-building measures’, and Annex B contains three specific proposals: to ‘explore and devise ways and means to prevent conflict’; to explore the idea of appointing Special Representatives to undertake ‘fact-finding missions’ and to ‘offer their good services’; and to explore the idea of establishing a Regional Risk Reduction Centre.

The ARF has sponsored three seminars on preventive diplomacy, the first in Seoul in May 1995, the second in Paris in November 1996, and the third in Singapore in September 1997. However, little that was concrete emerged from these seminars; indeed, there was probably less consensus in 1998 about the conceptual basis of preventive diplomacy and about possible constructs than there was in the mid-1990s, although a recent CSCAP effort (discussed later) may have rectified this situation.

With regard to Stage III of the ARF agenda (i.e., conflict resolution), the *Concept Paper* stated that:

It is not envisaged that the ARF would establish mechanisms for conflict resolution in the immediate future. The establishment of such mechanisms is *an eventual goal* that ARF participants should pursue.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of non-proliferation and arms control, the ARF agenda promises little. Even transparency measures concerning arms acquisitions are unacceptable to most ARF members, let alone constraints on the acquisition and employment of weapons systems.

The Concept Paper's Annexes include two non-proliferation and arms control measures: the SEANWFZ (in Annex A) and 'a regional or sub-regional arrangement agreeing not to acquire or deploy ballistic missiles' (Annex B). The entry into force of the SEANWFZ in March 1997 was a major achievement, but it is essentially symbolic - none of the ASEAN countries is a prospective proliferant, and the current nuclear weapons states will accede to the Protocol only because it does not interfere with their nuclear-related operations in peacetime (e.g., passage of nuclear-armed vessels through the Zone) or their use of nuclear weapons in case of war in the region.

An agreement by all ARF members prohibiting the acquisition or deployment of ballistic missiles is really not a possibility in the foreseeable future. The US intends to retain some 450-500 inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and 14 Trident submarines equipped with submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). China has produced a full suite of ICBMs, SLBMs, intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs), and short-range, tactical ballistic missiles. China has also exported some short-range ballistic missiles elsewhere in the region (e.g., M-11 missiles, with a range of some 300 km, to Pakistan).

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<sup>10</sup> ASEAN Senior Officials, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper', p.5 (italics added).

North Korea has some 136 *Scud* B/C missiles in service, and is developing the longer-range *Nodong-1* (1,500 km) and *Taepo Dong* (2000 km) ballistic missiles. South Korea has some 12 NHK (250 km) ballistic missiles. Taiwan is developing the 950 km-range *Tien Ma* ballistic missile.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, there is little likelihood of any acquisitions or deployments of ballistic missiles in Southeast Asia.

There is no mention of other categories of weapons systems or of other possible arms control arrangements. Some of the disturbing aspects of the current arms acquisition programs in the region which remain unaddressed are the 'offensive' character of some of the new weapons systems, particularly new strike capabilities such as cruise missiles, and the implications of these acquisitions for arms racing and crisis stability.<sup>12</sup>

I believe that the danger of cruise missile proliferation is more serious than that of ballistic missiles in this region. They are technically easier to produce and cheaper to acquire than ballistic missiles. Enabling technologies such as anti-ship cruise missiles (e.g., *Exocets* and *Harpoons*), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), GPS satellite navigation systems and small turbojet engines are now widely available. However, the development and deployment of cruise missiles are also more difficult to monitor.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Mack, *Proliferation in Northeast Asia*, (Occasional Paper No.28, The Henry Stimson Center, Washington, D.C., July 1996), pp.4-38; Barbara Opall, 'Study: North Korea Can Win By Waging Bio-Chem War', *Defense News*, 4-10 November 1996, p.3; Wyn Bowen, Tim McCarthy and Holly Porteous, 'Ballistic Missile Shadow Lengthens', *International Defense Review*, (Vol.2, No.2), February 1977, Supplement, pp.1-3; Eugene Moosa, 'Missile Could Strike Japan, Minister Warns', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 April 1997, p.12; and "One Arrow, Three Stars": China's MIRV Programme - Part One', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, (Vol.9, No.5), May 1997, pp.216-218.

<sup>12</sup> See Desmond Ball, 'Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region', *International Security*, (Vol.18, No.3), Winter 1993/1994, pp.104-105; and Desmond Ball 'Arms Acquisitions in the Asia Pacific: Scale, Positive and Negative Impacts on Security and Managing the Problem', in Thangam Ramnath (ed.), *The Emerging Regional Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region*, (Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1996), pp.217-219.

<sup>13</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Strategic Survey 1996/97*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, April 1997), pp.16-31.

Several countries in East Asia have either begun to indigenously design and develop long-range, land-attack cruise missiles (e.g., China), or to seriously consider the acquisition of such missiles (e.g., Australia).

## **IMBALANCES IN THE EMERGING REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE**

### **Self-reliance, Bilateralism and Multilateralism**

It is sometimes asserted that the development of cooperative security activities represents a transformation of the regional security architecture in which national interests, power politics and military force are being replaced by common security interests and the peaceful resolution of differences.

In fact, the emerging regional security architecture will be firmly grounded in national self-reliance, with strong and important bilateral connections, and a gradually thickening but still very thin veneer of multilateralism.

### **The Relative Weight of Emergent Concerns and Cooperative Developments**

I noted earlier that the new activity concerning security dialogue and cooperation in the region was a response to concerns which regional security policy-makers and analysts have about certain aspects of the emerging regional security environment - such as the pervasive uncertainty, the vigorous arms acquisition programs, the prospect of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the maritime issues, and the numerous territorial and sovereignty disputes which cause tensions and could cause war. I also noted that the most important but also most demanding standard for



measuring the recent cooperative achievements was comparison with these concerns. Has cooperation kept abreast of the more disturbing developments in the regional security environment?

Two of the important concerns amenable to this sort of comparison are the propensity for conflict and the danger of an arms race in the region.

First, the propensity for conflict can be compared to the developments in preventive diplomacy and other conflict prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms. As discussed above, the ARF has been sponsoring substantial dialogue about preventive diplomacy, but no conflict prevention mechanisms are likely to be established in the foreseeable future, and the establishment of mechanisms for conflict resolution remains 'an eventual goal'.

On the other hand, there is much fertile ground for conflict in East Asia, and a finite and perhaps increasing likelihood of significant war in the region over the next decade or so. The geostrategic shifts, involving immense changes in the economic strength and military capabilities of countries in the region, will be extremely difficult to peacefully accommodate. More specifically, there are more than 30 issues of simmering and potential conflict involving competing sovereignty claims, challenges to government legitimacy, and territorial disputes in East Asia.

Most of the issues are unlikely to lead to inter-state conflict. Some could well be resolved through negotiation, possibly involving the institution of joint surveillance and development zones encompassing the areas of dispute; others are quiescent; and others will remain essentially internal matters, such as the insurgency movements in Indonesia and the Philippines. Nevertheless, the high proportion of inter-State issues suggests

that inter-State conflict is more likely in the Asia-Pacific region than elsewhere.

I believe that, over the decade or so between now and 2010, the likelihood that at least one or more of these or some other issues will erupt into a major war is higher than that substantial conflict prevention mechanisms will be established in the region.

The second area of concern is the regional arms build-up and the relative development of arms control arrangements. It is clear that, at least over the next decade or so, there is very little possibility of countries in East Asia engaging in arms control or even in multilateral security dialogues which will constrain their force development plans and programs. Most countries in the region are committed to robust acquisition programs and can provide both the funds and the strategic justifications for them.<sup>14</sup>

It is wrong to characterise the current arms acquisition programs in East Asia as an 'arms race'. In most countries in the Asia/Pacific region, the proportions of GNP committed to defence spending were much lower in the mid-1990s than they had been in the early 1980s - typically 30 or 40 per cent lower. China, where the proportion has remained fairly constant, is the only exception to this. In both East Asia and Asia as a whole, the total value of arms imports (in constant prices) was much lower in 1993 than it was in the late 1980s - for East Asia, it was \$4.6b in 1993 as compared to \$6.9b in 1988, and in Asia as a whole it was \$7.3b in 1993 as compared to \$14.4b in 1989. Further, there has to date been little evidence of the action-reaction dynamics that are an essential feature of arms races. Rather, the

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<sup>14</sup> Desmond Ball, 'Arms Acquisitions in the Asia Pacific: Scale, Positive and Negative Impacts on Security and Managing the Problem', in Thangam Ramnath (ed.), *The Emerging Regional Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region*, (Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1996), pp.210-214, 217-219.

current regional acquisition programs can best be explained in terms of the requirements for enhanced self-reliance in the context of a rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain regional security environment.

On the other hand, the possibility of some regional arms race developing around the turn of the century must remain a serious concern. Since the requirements for defence self-reliance cannot be defined without some consideration of the capabilities possessed by neighbours and potential adversaries further afield, there must come a point where further acquisitions begin to stimulate reciprocal or interactive dynamics. By the turn of the century, most countries in the region will face the demands not only of continued force modernisation but also of replacement of the weapons systems acquired in such large volumes in the late 1980s. Defence budgets and acquisition programs may enter another cycle of substantial increase - but this time from a base of higher numbers and more sophisticated capabilities than obtained during the round of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The 'offensive' character of some of the new weapons systems being acquired is also cause for concern. Many of the new acquisitions (such as the maritime attack aircraft, modern surface combatants, and submarines, all equipped with anti-ship missiles) involve strike capabilities with offensive connotations. Unfortunately, for many countries, they provide the most cost-effective basis for self-reliance; in some cases, such as that of Australia, a viable posture of self-reliance would not be possible without some minimal strike capabilities. Yet these capabilities are the most likely to generate counter-acquisitions.

I now believe that, over the next decade and a half, it is more likely that there will be serious manifestations of these disturbing possibilities -

more reciprocal acquisitions and action-reaction dynamics, and more likelihood of inadvertent escalation in crisis - than that arms control mechanisms will be instituted with any capacity to assuage them.

### **Geostrategic Discordance**

There is a clear sub-regional discordance between these recent developments with regard to regional security cooperation and the regional security developments which have conducted them. Whereas the great weight of the emergent regional security concerns is coming from Northeast Asia, the impetus and modalities for cooperation are coming mainly from Southeast Asia.<sup>15</sup> The ARF evolved from the ASEAN PMC process, and although its membership and agenda have become region-wide, it remains very much an ASEAN creature in both substantive and procedural terms. Most of the current defence cooperation activities involve the ASEAN countries.

These cooperative mechanisms are on the whole not well suited for serious dialogue about, let alone resolution of, Northeast Asian issues. With respect to the ARF, for example, the Northeast Asian countries cannot be expected to pay much heed to a body in which two-thirds of the members are extra-(sub-) regional, at least when issues affecting their important security interests are involved. The ARF, and CSCAP, can promote cooperation in Northeast Asia by highlighting its critical importance to regional security, suggesting and analysing relevant cooperative avenues and mechanisms, and providing political encouragement.

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<sup>15</sup> See Desmond Ball, 'Northeast Asia and Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region', in R.K. Thomas (ed.), *Asia-Pacific Security: Challenges and Prospects for North East Asia*, (The Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra, 1997), p.54-76.

However, where matters affecting the important security interests of the Northeast Asian countries themselves are directly involved, the dialogue arrangements and conflict resolution mechanisms must be exclusive. These arrangements and mechanisms must be composed of and constructed by the countries in Northeast Asia itself. However, the record for multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia remains very poor.

### **Engaging China**

The regional concerns about China have become manifest in several ways - whether it be Japan's declaration that the Self Defense Force (SDF) was upgrading its 'watch' on China,<sup>16</sup> or Taiwan's acquisition of an anti-theatre ballistic missile (ATBM) system, or the Philippines' decision in February 1995 to fund extensive defence modernisation, or the conduct of Indonesia's largest-ever military exercise (involving 20,000 troops, 40 aircraft and 50 ships) around the Natuna Islands in the southwestern part of the South China Sea in September 1996.<sup>17</sup> However, it is imperative that China not be portrayed as a threat to the region. It could become, in the worst case, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Rather, it is essential that China be engaged in multilateral dialogues, confidence building arrangements, preventive diplomacy and other forms of security cooperation in the region. This will not be an easy exercise.<sup>18</sup> Many Chinese security analysts and policy-makers still regard multilateralism as either largely irrelevant or, at worst, potentially damaging

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<sup>16</sup> 'Japan White Paper Upgrades China Watch', *Washington Times*, 20 July 1996, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Richardson, 'Indonesia Plans War Games to Caution China', *International Herald Tribune*, 16 August 1996, p.4; and Ruriko Hatano, 'Indonesia to Stage Massive Military Drill', *Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), 24 August 1996.

<sup>18</sup> David Shambaugh, 'Pacific Security in the Pacific Century', *Current History*, December 1994, p.428.

to efforts aimed at resolving regional security issues - and probably also damaging to China's national interests. China is unwilling to discuss substantive issues concerning the South China Sea or Taiwan, which it regards as 'internal affairs', and refuses to allow Taiwanese participation in multilateral security fora or to itself participate in those in which Taiwan might be involved. Substantial military transparency is unacceptable. China's leaders and security planners need to be persuaded that the alleviation of regional apprehensions about its defence policies and acquisition programs, through multilateral dialogue, transparency and cooperative activity, is more likely to enhance its security interests over the long term than is abstention from these activities.<sup>19</sup>

### **Involving Taiwan**

The involvement of Taiwan in regional security cooperation is an intractable problem. It is essential to both inclusive regional dialogue and the resolution of some of the most critical regional security issues, but there is little prospect of Taiwan's direct involvement in these processes and activities through the foreseeable future.

### **Frameworking the Korean Peninsula**

The Korean Peninsula is the most volatile and most serious flashpoint in the Asia-Pacific region. Across the Demilitarized Zone

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<sup>19</sup> See Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, 'Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific Region and its Impact on Chinese Interests: Views from Beijing', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, (Vol.16, No.1), June 1994, pp.14-34.

(DMZ) separating North and South Korea, only 40 km north of Seoul, South Korea faces a virtually fully mobilised, obdurate communist regime, with active armed forces of more than a million personnel, and a resolute nuclear development program. The threats to regional security posed by North Korea are manifold. They include military threats generated by its military capabilities, aggressive espionage activities, nuclear weapons program and ballistic missile development and test program, with periodic crises involving the real possibility of war on the peninsula (as in mid-1994). But they also increasingly include concerns about potential instability arising from North Korea's economic decline, food and energy crises, and political uncertainties.<sup>20</sup>

However, there are neither well-established mechanisms for dealing with issues of economic crisis or political instability on the peninsula, nor any mechanism for addressing their implications for regional security. Indeed, in the absence of any confidence-building process which addresses the fundamental sources of tension on the peninsula, such mechanisms would be of limited ineffectiveness anyway.

## **AN AGENDA FOR PROGRESS**

The rectification of these imbalances in the emerging regional security architecture - such as the need for more progress towards the institutionalisation of dialogue and other CSBMs in Northeast Asia, and the need to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery - must form part of any action agenda for

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Scott Snyder, 'A Coming Crisis on the Korean Peninsula?: The Food Crisis, Economic Decline, and Political Considerations', (United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., 1996).

multilateralism in the region. Other subjects should also have become evident from the previous sections - such as the need to stimulate the Preventive Diplomacy effort, and the need to address economic security matters in the context of the current regional economic crisis. Any serious agenda must be framed in an appreciation of the obstacles imposed by regional diversity, strict adherence to sovereignty, and lack of substantial trust throughout the region.

### **Economics and Security**

The economic crisis which befell large and important parts of the region in the third quarter of 1997, and then spread and worsened over the next six months, has been a shattering event. It has affected all dimensions of regional security, including the basic security architecture and relative standing of the major powers, levels of defence expenditures and capital acquisition programs, and bilateral and multilateral co-operative security activities.

Multilateralism has suffered because of the cuts in regional defence budgets - within which training and exercise activities have been hit particularly hard. But it has also suffered because of the perceived impotency of the major regional institutions (including APEC, ASEAN, ARF and CSCAP).

The relationship between economics and security is pervasive, profound and extremely complex. Economic factors have the determinate role in shaping the structure of security in the Asia-Pacific region over the longer-term (i.e., the structural dimension of the relationship); the prevailing patterns of economic development significantly affect the systemic



tendencies toward conflict or peace (the behavioural or functionalist dimension); the mechanisms and processes established to promote regional economic cooperation can be utilised for the discussion, negotiation and resolution of some common security issues (the utilitarian dimension); and lessons learned in the establishment of the cooperative economic institutions should be distilled to inform the multilateral security process.<sup>21</sup> Somebody must soon take the initiative to establish a study group on economics and security.

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<sup>21</sup>See Desmond Ball, 'The Benefits of APEC for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region', in Susan L. Shirk and Christopher P. Twomey (eds.), *Power and Prosperity: Economics and Security Linkages in Asia-Pacific*, (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1996), pp.35-56.

## **Northeast Asia**

The sub-regional discordance caused by the virtual lack of security cooperation in Northeast Asia is fundamental to the dynamics of the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. Given the overwhelming magnitude of the security concerns in Northeast Asia (amounting in terms of defence expenditure to more than 80 per cent), the impressive progress made with security cooperation elsewhere (e.g., among ASEAN and Australia) still counts for little.

In other words, the enhancement of security cooperation in Northeast Asia is the most important consideration in determining the structure and operational modalities of the emerging security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region. Without enhanced cooperation in Northeast Asia, balance of power strategies based upon narrow conceptions of national interests will inevitably prevail.

The institutionalisation of security cooperation in Northeast Asia must proceed on many fronts - bilateral and multilateral, formal and informal, direct and indirect. It must include mechanisms and processes designed to build trust in Northeast Asia; bilateral arrangements for dealing with particular conflict issues (e.g., cross-Strait relations; North Korea-South Korea relations; and various territorial disputes); multilateral mechanisms for addressing energy and other economic problems, and political instabilities, and their regional security implications; mechanisms for sub-regional dialogue on security issues; arms control and disarmament agreements (with respect to both conventional armaments and weapons of mass destruction); and mechanisms designed to engage the Northeast Asian countries in the broader web of regional cooperative security activities.

## Revisiting the ARF Concept Paper

The ARF, through its Senior Officials' Meetings (SOMs), should review the *Concept Paper* and its role in the Forum's agenda. Since its endorsement by the ARF Foreign Ministers at the ARF-2 meeting in Brunei in August 1995, the *Concept Paper* has become a principal yardstick for measuring and assessing the progress of the ARF - and hence of the multilateral security process in the Asia-Pacific region more generally.

The *Concept Paper* was put together by the ASEAN Senior Officials in early 1995, and reflected the sorts of strategic concerns, types of confidence-building measures and levels of expectations that had emerged around 1993-94. Since it was formally adopted by the ARF in August 1995, the measures contained in its Annex A should by now have been 'explored and implemented'. It is a reasonable time for an interim stocktake. Such a review should include the development of a new Annex for the 'immediate future' (i.e., 2000), the addition of measures reflecting imminent concerns (e.g., the proliferation of long-range, land-attack cruise missiles), and the explication of the ARF's expectations in terms of key milestones. Many countries will resist more specific schedules. Many reckon that the process is more important than particular products. However, without an ability to measure progress, to take stock and to develop new initiatives, the process will succumb to inefficiency and irrelevance.

## Preventive Diplomacy

Although the concept of Preventive Diplomacy figures centrally in the ARF agenda, there has been no progress with its development, in terms of either conceptual refinement or practical proposals which might be implemented by ARF countries. How might the Preventive Diplomacy endeavour be revitalised, in terms of both conceptual coherence and practical measures?

On the conceptual side, there should be produced a brief paper on the basic concepts and guiding principles for Preventive Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific context. This should not get bogged down in definitional morass (as have several such exercises).

It is important to have a consensus on what is excluded as well as included in Preventive Diplomacy. It is about *diplomacy*. It is not about preventive military deployments, or interference in the internal affairs of any country. The conduct of preventive diplomacy should fully respect the principles of sovereign equality, political independence of States, territorial integrity and non-interference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State.

A significant step was taken at a meeting of the CSCAP Working Group on CSBMs in Bangkok on 28 February-2 March 1999, which agreed on the following 'working definition' of Preventive Diplomacy:

As a general rule, Preventive Diplomacy is consensual diplomatic and political action with the aim of:

- preventing severe disputes and conflicts from arising between States which pose a serious threat to regional peace and stability;

- preventing such disputes and conflicts from escalating into armed confrontation; and
- limiting the intensity of violence and humanitarian problems resulting from such conflicts and preventing them from spreading geographically.<sup>22</sup>

The CSCAP workshop also agreed on a set of key principles of Preventive Diplomacy.<sup>23</sup> The need is now for ARF officials to accept this definition and these principles as a basis for further progress with the concept.

At the practical level, there is a need for the development and explication of realistic proposals. They must be acceptable to all countries in the region. They should be pragmatic and informal, as well as based on the principle of consensus. And they should make a substantial, if evolutionary contribution to the exercise of Preventive Diplomacy. Some possible means are:

- confidence building measures, such as dialogue, exchanges of information, and avoidance of incidents at sea.
- fact-finding missions.
- the use of ARF meetings of various sorts for the exchange of information.
- enhancing the ‘good offices’ role of the ARF chair.
- establishing a register of experts or eminent persons.
- providing early warning of developments likely to endanger the maintenance of regional peace and security.
- intensifying the consultative process at the officials’ level.
- encouraging the use of arbitration or judicial settlement by other bodies.
- providing a Preventive Diplomacy training capability in the region.
- cooperating preventively on trans-national issues such as drug trafficking, disposal of nuclear waste, major movements of

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<sup>22</sup>‘Co-chairmen’s Summary’, CSCAP Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy, Bangkok, 28 February-2 March 1999.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

- population, etc.
- production of an annual Regional Security Outlook.

### **CSCAP and the ARF**

The ARF can make better use of CSCAP and its Working Groups, although CSCAP must also reform its policy-making and management arrangements to become more decisive, responsive, and directed.

CSCAP has enormous potential. Its membership now includes more than 20 countries, and its member committees involve more than 1000 individuals concerned with the promotion of regional security cooperation - academics and private analysts, as well as Defence and Foreign Affairs officials (in their private capacities). It should provide a means for relatively free discussion of diplomatically sensitive issues that cannot be brought up in official forums. Its Working Groups, which are the primary means of activity, should be capable of producing the most informative, insightful and useful studies for the ARF.<sup>24</sup>

Some tasks were referred to CSCAP by the ARF Track Two Conference on Preventive Diplomacy in Singapore in September 1997. According to the *Co-chairman's Report*:

The meeting was briefed on the nature of Map Exercises. They were defined as simulation exercises designed to enhance multilateral understanding and co-operation in crises. As such, they were deemed to be good examples of co-operative measures to foster comprehensive security. ....

The meeting discussed the terms "Freedom of Navigation" and "Navigational Rights", and the possibility of an ARF declaration on the latter as a CBM. Given the diversity of views, it was recommended

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<sup>24</sup>Desmond Ball, 'CSCAP: Its Future Place in the Regional Security Architecture', in Bunn Nagara and Cheah Siew Ean (eds), *Managing Security and Peace in the Asia-Pacific*, (Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1996), pp. 289-325.

that the issues raised be discussed in the CSCAP Working Group on Maritime Security. ....

The Co-chairs agreed to forward the following proposals to the current Co-chairs of CSCAP (Malaysia and Japan) with the suggestion that CSCAP explore further:

- a. The utility and feasibility of Map (Simulation) Exercises.
- b. The issues raised in the paper on Freedom of Navigation.

The meeting endorsed the view that close co-operation be enhanced between CSCAP and ARF.

Mechanisms should be developed for institutionalising the relationship between the ARF and CSCAP - to allow the ARF to exploit the potential of CSCAP, and to better inform the latter about regional security developments. For example, arrangements might be instituted for the co-chairs of CSCAP to attend certain ARF SOMs as observers, and the co-chairs of the Working Groups similarly with respect to some of the Inter-sessional Group (ISG) activities.

### **Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**

The Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in May 1998 reinforce the need to develop much more robust mechanisms for the prevention of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

Greater attention must also be accorded to the proliferation of long-range delivery systems - including cruise missiles as well as ballistic missiles.

### **Refocused Defence Cooperation**

The regional economic crisis has severely damaged regional defence cooperation. Joint training and exercise activities have suffered disproportionately from the cuts in defence expenditures. For example, the Thai Air Force reckoned in early 1998 that its joint exercises with Malaysia and Singapore might have to be cut by as much as half or even two-thirds.<sup>25</sup> In June 1998, Thailand and Malaysia cancelled their annual *Thamal* joint exercise because of lack of money.<sup>26</sup> It is important that the confidence-building process not be a casualty of these cuts.

At the same time, consideration should be given to more effective participation of defence personnel (both civilian and uniformed) at ARF meetings. One possibility is to conduct a half-day Map Exercise involving an accident by or hijacking of a vessel in some part of the region (such as the Malacca Straits) to demonstrate the cooperative aspects of the search and rescue practices involved.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Stage III of the ARF agenda concerns *conflict resolution*, but it is described in the *Concept Paper* as ‘an eventual goal that ARF participants should pursue’, and has received no attention to date. This is probably wise, for any official consideration is likely to generate suspicion and apprehension by some members, and impact negatively on the current Preventive Diplomacy endeavour.

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<sup>25</sup> Joint Exercises and Training Cut Back’, *ADJ [Asian Defence Journal] News Roundup*, (Vol.2, No.2), February 1998, p.2.

<sup>26</sup> ‘In Brief: Economy Halts Joint Exercise’, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 24 June 1998, p.15.



On the other hand, *thinking* about conflict resolution should not be inhibited. This thinking should extend to consideration of possible institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution.

### **A Recommitment to Multilateralism**

There is something of an impression abroad that the momentum of the multilateral security cooperation process in the Asia-Pacific region has begun to wane. The financial and economic depression has both cut resources and dampened enthusiasms. Whomsoever is committed to the multilateral process must proclaim his renewed dedication.

# **APPENDIX**

## **THE ARF AGENDA**

### **ANNEX A: IMMEDIATE (1995-96)**

#### **I CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES**

##### Principles

1. The development of a set of basic principles to ensure a common understanding and approach to interstate relations in the region; and
2. Adoption of comprehensive approaches to security.

##### Transparency

3. Dialogue on security perceptions, including voluntary statements of defence policy positions;
4. Defence Publications such as Defence White Papers or equivalent documents as considered necessary by respective governments;
5. Participation in UN Conventional Arms Register;
6. Enhanced contacts, including high level visits and recreational activities;
7. Exchanges between military academies, staff colleges and training;
8. Observers at military exercises, on a voluntary basis; and
9. Annual seminar for defence officials and military officers on selected international security issues.

#### **II PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**

1. Develop a set of guidelines for the peaceful settlement of disputes, taking into account the principles in the UN Charter and the TAC;

2. Promote the recognition and acceptance of the purposes and principles of the TAC and its provisions for the pacific settlement of disputes, as endorsed by the UNGA in Resolution 47/53 (B) on 9 December 1992; and
3. Seek the endorsement of other countries for the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea in order to strengthen its political and moral effect (as endorsed by the Programme of Action for ZOPFAN).

### **III NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL**

1. Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

### **IV PEACEKEEPING**

1. Seminars/Workshops on peacekeeping issues; and
2. Exchange of information and experience relating to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

### **V MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION**

Disaster Prevention

## **ANNEX B: MEDIUM AND LONG TERM**

### **I CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES**

1. Further exploration of a Regional Arms Register;
2. Regional security studies centre/ coordination of existing security studies activities;
3. Maritime information data bases;
4. Cooperative approaches to sea lines of communication beginning with exchanges of information and training in such areas as search and rescue, piracy and drug control;

5. Mechanisms to mobilise relief assistance in the event of natural disasters;
6. Establishment of zones of cooperation in areas such as the South China Sea;
7. Systems of prior notification of major military deployments that have region-wide application; and
8. Encourage arms manufacturers and suppliers to disclose the destination of their arms exports.

## **II PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**

1. Explore and devise ways and means to prevent conflict;
2. Explore the idea of appointing Special Representatives, in consultation with ARF members, to undertake fact-finding missions, at the request of the parties involved to an issue, and to offer their good offices as necessary; and
3. Explore the idea of establishing a Regional Risk Reduction Centre as suggested by the UN Secretary-General in his Agenda For Peace and as commended by UNGA Resolution 47/120 (see section IV, operative para 4). Such a centre could serve as a data base for the exchange of information.

## **III NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL**

1. A regional or sub-regional arrangement agreeing not to acquire or deploy ballistic missiles.

## **IV PEACEKEEPING**

2. Explore the possibility of establishing a peacekeeping centre.

## **V MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION**

1. A multilateral agreement on the avoidance of naval incidents that apply to both local and external navies;

2. Sea Level/Climate Monitoring System;
3. Establishment of an ASEAN Relief and Assistance Force and a Maritime Safety (or Surveillance) Unit to look after the safety of the waters in the region;
4. Conventions on the Marine Environment
  - Dumping of Toxic Wastes
  - Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution;
5. Maritime surveillance; and
6. Explore the idea of joint marine scientific research.