

“The ASEAN Regional Forum and Security Governance in Asia-Pacific”

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ABSTRACT

This paper sketches security provisions in Asia-Pacific following World War II and takes a look at ASEAN to set the stage for a closer examination of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Having discussed the rationale for the creation of the ARF, its institutional framework, fundamental principles, and decision-making, the paper then examines the organization’s main developments with respect to four security functions (prevention, assurance, protection and compellence) developed by Kirchner and Sperling (2007), and assesses the ARF’s effectiveness and future prospects.

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In the aftermath of WWII, and once again at the end of the Cold War, Europeans created order and thereby assured their stability. As previously shown (Weber and Huang 2008), they did so by transcending historical legacies, but also by including former enemies into security structures, tying the US to the European continent and thus, over time, promoting principles, norms and rules that built trust and redefined identities. Or, put differently, Europeans promoted peace and stability by giving rise to what Webber et. al. (2004), Kirchner (2006), and Kirchner and Sperling (2007) characterize as “security governance.”

Security provisions in the Asia-Pacific region look very different. History there is still divisive, and a “hub and spokes network” consisting of five bilateral alliances (between the US and Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand), along with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and, more recently, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), were created to stabilize the region.

Making use of the concept of security governance and the four security functions (prevention, assurance, protection and compellence) developed by Kirchner and Sperling (2007), this paper shows that the ARF, for the most part, has worked to bring about Confidence Building Mechanisms (CBM)s. Although it recently has begun to transition to Preventive Diplomacy (PD), has attempted to give some assurance via the dissemination of ASEAN norms, and made some progress in the area of protection (especially with respect to counter-terrorism measures), the ARF lacks any means for compellence and thus has to make important changes to move beyond the image of a “talk-shop” or “paper tiger.”

In the following, I first sketch security provisions in Asia-Pacific following World War II and take a look at ASEAN to set the stage for a closer examination of the ASEAN Regional Forum. I then discuss the rationale for the creation of the ARF, its institutional framework, fundamental principles, and decision-making, and examine the organization's main developments with respect to the four security functions (prevention, assurance, protection and compellence) developed by Kirchner and Sperling (2007). In the concluding section, I assess the ARF's effectiveness and discuss its future prospects.

Security Provisions in the Asia-Pacific Region in the Aftermath of World War II

When the US defeated Japan in 1945, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia were liberated from Japanese rule. Whereas the Europeans relied on multiple institutional arrangements with varying degrees of commitment to assure their security, in Asia-Pacific bilateralism (Cha 2003: 108) trumped all other security provisions. Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand all relied predominately on the American "hub and spokes network" to deal with external threats.¹

Yet, since the Southeast Asian countries, following World War II, quickly became part of the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, and "a battleground in the conflict between China and the Soviet Union" (Narine 2002: 10), the Southeast Asian countries sought further security guarantees. The perception of external threat, therefore, was an essential component in the promotion of regionalism in Southeast Asia, along-side concerns regarding intra-regional predators and internal communist insurgencies.

Given the great uncertainty surrounding the behavior of the USSR and China in the aftermath of the Second World War, the US took a first step to promote regionalism

in Southeast Asia. In 1954, together with France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, the US founded the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to prevent communism from gaining ground in the region. However since, “[u]nlike NATO, SEATO had no independent mechanism for obtaining intelligence or deploying military forces, [its] ... potential for collective action was necessarily limited.”² SEATO held annual joint military exercises and engaged in consultation, but suffered from a lack of “credibility” and therefore was disbanded in 1977. Another attempt at promoting regional order was made by the South Korean president Park Chung-hee with the creation of the Asian Pacific Council (ASPAC) in 1966, but this grouping of anti-communist states disintegrated in 1972.

The next two efforts to establish order were made exclusively by Southeast Asian countries without any outside help. In 1961 Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand gave rise to the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA). Whereas Malaya and the Philippines preferred an arrangement with significant institutional structures, Thailand favored a much less binding commitment and eventually got its way. The ASA ran into trouble when the Philippines decided to lay claim on Sabah (territory which the British had intended to include in the proposed Federation of Malaysia). This dispute between the Philippines and what then became known as Malaysia (an amalgamation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak) rendered the ASA ineffective for the following years.

MAPHILINDO (a grouping of Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia) was founded in 1963, but was weakened significantly shortly after it had come about, due to the creation of the Federation of Malaysia which neither Indonesia nor the Philippines recognized (Narine 2002: 10-12). Between 1963 and 1966, President Sukarno of

Indonesia then pursued *konfrontasi*--a policy of confrontation and regional disruption--with Malaysia and Singapore, once the latter had been expelled from Malaysia in 1965. The idea was to destabilize Malaysia through limited military action, economic sanctions and propaganda. *Konfrontasi* finally ended when Sukarno was deposed by the military in 1966.

Even though both the ASA and MAPHILINDO collapsed, due to the above described internal hostilities, they were important precursors of ASEAN (Frost 1990: 4). The disputes between these countries made the need for regional cooperation abundantly clear and, ultimately, led to new discussions which on August 8, 1967, gave rise to ASEAN.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

By founding ASEAN, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines hoped to accomplish three main objectives. First, they sought to reduce tensions and competition among themselves, i.e., Southeast Asia's non-communist states. Second, they hoped that by promoting domestic socio-economic development, it would be easier for them to tackle internal communist challenges and/or deal with externally sponsored communist insurgencies. Third, they sought to reduce the regional military influence of external actors by expressly stating that foreign military bases in the region should be temporary (Narine 2002: 13). Since most of the ASEAN states are still "deeply engaged in the process of state-building,...their most important concern is to maintain and promote their rights and security as sovereign states" (ibid. p. 3). Or, put differently, when it comes to ranking norms, sovereignty wins out over all others.

Mindful not to provoke other countries in the region, like Vietnam, but also unable to see eye-to-eye on security matters, and lacking the military means to bring about a credible security apparatus, the ASEAN members carefully spelled out in the Bangkok Declaration that their main goals shall be: “to accelerate the economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership...[and] to promote regional peace and stability.”³ But, much like in the case of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), “security concerns and political purposes were never far from the ASEAN founders’ intentions.”⁴

As the Corregidor Affair in 1968 proves, ASEAN was off to a rough start. Allegations that the Philippines were using the island to train Muslim insurgents to infiltrate Sabah led to a diplomatic row between Malaysia and the Philippines and, eventually, to the cancellation of ASEAN meetings. Only when changes in their external environment (Britain’s announcement that it would accelerate its withdrawal from Southeast Asia; Nixon’s claim that the US would limit its involvement in Southeast Asia; the intensification of the Sino-Soviet conflict; the spread of war from Vietnam to Laos and Cambodia) drove home the need for renewed cooperation, did Malaysia and the Philippines resume normal relations in December 1969 (Narine 2002: 19).

Recognizing that it would be difficult to attain domestic stability and socio-economic development as long as external powers would be able to intervene in their affairs, on November 26-27, 1971, the foreign ministers of ASEAN met in Kuala Lumpur and signed a Declaration of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia. The purpose of this political statement of intent was to neutralize Southeast Asia and the signatories envisioned a two-pronged strategy to get there. First,

the Southeast Asian states should support non-aggression principles and respect each others' sovereignty and territorial integrity. And, secondly, the major powers (the US, the USSR, and China) should guarantee Southeast Asia's neutrality and assure that the region would not become an area of conflict between them.

The collapse of anticommunist regimes in South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975 hit home the need for economic development to counter the internal appeal of communism in ASEAN countries. To improve ASEAN's internal stability, the ASEAN heads of state met in Bali in February 1976 and reached two crucial agreements, the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). Whereas the former, largely, defined areas of economic cooperation (with respect to basic commodities; large-scale industrial projects; intraregional trade liberalization; joint approaches to world economic problems) and suggested annual summits of ASEAN's economic ministers, the latter focused on security issues obliging the member states to settle their disputes peacefully through consultation. TAC, as Narine (2002: 23) explains, served as ASEAN's "code of conduct," spelling out its fundamental principles which will be examined in more detail below, and as a non-aggression pact.

To mention but one further security provision, at the Bangkok Summit in December 1995 the leaders of the ASEAN countries signed the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ). With this treaty, which came into force on 27 March 1997, the signatories declared their determination to "take concrete action which will contribute to the progress towards general and complete disarmament of nuclear weapons, and to the promotion of international peace and security."⁵

A series of basic documents, thus, make up ASEAN's legal framework. Whereas the Bangkok Declaration (1967) spells out the organization's aims, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration (1971) prescribes non-interference by outside powers via ZOPFAN. The Bali Declaration (1976) then stipulates further cooperation in the economic, social, cultural and political fields, but, most importantly, codifies ASEAN's fundamental principles in Chapter I, Article 2 of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as:

“mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner; renunciation of the threat or use of force; and effective cooperation among themselves.”⁶

Among legal commitments sovereign equality is paramount and therefore members' rights as sovereign states need to be respected at all times. In the event that conflict should occur, TAC stresses in Chapter IV, it needs to be resolved in a non-confrontational way.

Other legally-binding basic documents deal with economic cooperation (Agreement on the Common Effective Preferential Tariff [CEPT] Scheme for the ASEAN Free Trade Area, Singapore, 28 January 1992; Protocol to Amend the Framework Agreement on Enhancing ASEAN Economic Cooperation, Bangkok, 15 December 1995), security issues (Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, Bangkok, 15 December 1995; Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea 2002), and the future of regional cooperation (ASEAN Vision 2020 [1997]).⁷

What sets the organization apart from many other regional institutions is its own process of decision-making, typically referred to as the “ASEAN Way.” Based on the

Malay cultural practices of *musjawarah* and *mufukat*, the idea is to reach agreement via consultation and consensus, respectively (Narine 2002: 31). Should there be obstacles in the way that may prevent cooperation in a particular issue area, ASEAN members should be willing to move issues aside and proceed with consultation in another area. By holding its members to a specific code of conduct, the organization seeks to contain problems and, over time, build a regional consciousness, if not regional identity.

Due to its unwillingness to sacrifice sovereignty, ASEAN has retained a clear preference for informal mechanisms over legalistic institutions. In fact, it outright rejects any form of supra-national decision-making and, if need be, is prepared to settle for lowest common denominator decisions.

Security Provisions in the Asia-Pacific Region Following the End of the Cold War

As discussed above, ASEAN started out with five founding members: Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Brunei was added in 1984. For political, economic and security reasons ASEAN then brought the mainland Southeast Asian states on board (Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995; Myanmar and Laos in 1997; and Cambodia in 1999), thinking that it should seize the window of opportunity which the end of the Cold War had opened. The members hoped that an ASEAN of ten countries would have a more substantial voice in international economic and security discussions, that the organization would be in a better position to compete with great powers in the region like China, Japan, and India, that it would have greater economic appeal, and be in a better position to promote peace and stability (Narine 2002: 113).

Although security considerations played a crucial role in the founding of ASEAN it refused to present itself as security bloc. Instead, via ZOPFAN, ASEAN pursued an

isolationist foreign policy and the Philippines and Thailand relied predominately on their bilateral alliances with the US to protect themselves against external threats. In the late 1980s and 1990s, numerous bilateral military arrangements between ASEAN members also began to flourish and they engaged in joint military exercises (Narine 2002: 71). At the same time, an arms buildup took place to be able to deal with unresolved disputes. For instance, during the 1990s, disputes occurred over fishing and illegal Thai immigrants to Malaysia. Moreover, Indonesia and Malaysia engaged in a dispute over the islands of Ligitan and Sipidan, and there were ethnic tensions between Singapore and Malaysia (Narine 2002: 73).

In addition to facing intra-regional challenges, in the post-Cold War era, ASEAN countries are confronted with new transnational challenges (terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, energy security, maritime security, etc.), greater uncertainty regarding the behavior of the Great Powers in the region, and the fear of US isolationism. These changed circumstances necessitated a reassessment of existing security provisions and made clear that ASEAN needed to be adapted. Since, in this post-Cold War environment in which shifts in the regional balance of power are externally driven, ASEAN can no longer insulate the region from outside influence, it needs to find new ways to constrain others through dialogue and consultation (Acharya, 2003: 149). And that is precisely what ASEAN did with the issuance of the Manila Declaration. Fearing conflict with China over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea (which are of both strategic and economic value), in 1992, the organization sought to diffuse a volatile situation by calling for a peaceful settlement of disputes in the region. As point 5 of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea states: “The Parties

undertake to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability including, among others, refraining from action of inhabiting the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features and to handle their differences in a constructive manner.”⁸

As will be seen below, ASEAN also decided to expand its focus by giving rise to a new multilateral arrangement--the ASEAN Regional Forum--to deal with external as well as internal threats. But it is important to understand that, as long as the close military dependence on the Western powers remains, ”no ASEAN country sees regional military cooperation as a substitute for security links with external powers” (Acharya 2003: 119), merely as an additional safety device meant to reduce the region’s dependence on the West over time.

A regional security conference was first mentioned by Gorbachev in 1986. The idea was then picked up by Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans, who proposed a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia (CSCA) modeled after the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). ASEAN members initially rejected this idea but were open to using ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences for further security discussions (Narine 2002: 103).

Rationale for the Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Main Objectives and Goals

It was clear from the outset that ASEAN sought to complement the hub-and-spokes networks by using its own model of cooperative security as a framework for promoting peace. “Its underlying goal,” as Leifner (1996:19) put it, “was to create the conditions for a stable ...distribution of power among the three major Asia-Pacific states-

-China, Japan and the United States--that would benefit regional order.” After careful deliberations the Twenty-Sixth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and Post Ministerial Conference, in July 1993, agreed to create the ASEAN Regional Forum.

The inaugural meeting of the ARF was held one year later in Bangkok on 25 July 1994. From its outset its founders conceptualized the organization as the principal forum for security cooperation in the region. Comprised of 27 countries,⁹ the ARF is based on ASEAN-style diplomacy (non-interference in the internal affairs of states, non-use of force, pacific settlement of disputes, consensus decision making, a preference for non-binding and non-legalistic approaches) and displays minimal institutionalization, thus setting it apart from European security structures.

As Katsumata (2006: 194) explains, the “ARF is not designed to ‘resolve’... disputes--i.e., to reach a formal agreement, or to create a formal mechanism to regulate concerned states’ actions.” It therefore could not prevent a number of conflicts between its members such as disputes between India and Pakistan, the diplomatic row between South Korea and Japan over Dokdo/Takeshima, China’s military intimidation in the Taiwan Strait, territorial disputes regarding the Spratlys or the South China Sea, to name but a few.

Rather than to settle disputes, the ARF seeks to promote lasting peace by utilizing CBMs that are to create trust among its members. Or, in other words, the ARF is about “identity-building” and its members hope that...”dialogue should lead to socialization which, in turn, will lead to the dissipation of conflicts of interests” (Garofano 1999: 78). Comprehensive engagement and political dialogue, from the ARF’s perspective, are the correct way to foster peace, not the dispatch of troops and carrier battle groups (Leifner

1996: 46). Thus for the first ten years of its existence the ARF largely held workshops with the main purpose of disseminating the “ASEAN way” (non-use of force, non-interference in domestic affairs, etc.), thereby earning the label of a “norm brewery” (Katsumata 2006: 195).

The ARF’s Institutional Framework, Principles, and Decision-Making

The “ARF’s highest level [of interaction] is the annual foreign minister’s meeting, always chaired by the ASEAN country occupying the rotating chairmanship” (Simon 2008: 279). This meeting is supported by an annual Senior Officers Meeting (SOM). Members of the ARF, additionally, have agreed to set up two structures to help the ARF-SOM Chairman: an Inter-Sessional Support Group (ISG) on Confidence Building “to address...a dialogue on security perceptions and defence policy papers,” and Inter-Sessional Meetings (ISMs) “to deal with cooperative activities, including peacekeeping and search-and-rescue coordination” (Leifner 1996: 42). These groups are supplemented by specialists who meet in Track II meetings like the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) founded in 1993 or the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) founded in 1994.¹⁰ Or, put differently, the ASEAN Regional Forum engages in both “first track” (official) and “second track” (unofficial) diplomacy. The former typically entails discussions by Foreign Ministers, whereas scholars, members of Think Tanks, government representatives not acting in their official capacity, as well as other individuals and organizations attend “second track” meetings on regional security issues.

In their efforts to promote peace, the ASEAN members of the ARF seek to retain control over the organization. They do this by making sure that ASEAN states provide the venue for the ARF's annual meetings. Moreover, they insist that intersession study groups, which are composed of two states, always include an ASEAN member. And, they mandate that the ASEAN consensus principle always prevails (Simon 2007: 22).

Very much like in the case of ASEAN, the bottom line for the ARF is to protect the sovereignty of its members and to uphold the fundamental principles outlined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. What needs to be understood about the ARF, however, is that it is split between activist (Australia, Canada, US, Japan) and reluctant (China and most of ASEAN) countries. ASEAN countries reject a more formal ARF because they want to avoid taking any steps that would undermine the ASEAN way. China, similarly, rejects greater formality because it opposes interference in its domestic affairs (particularly when it comes to Taiwan and the South China Sea). Hence a "pace comfortable to all participants" needs to be found, which, as will be seen below, often undermines the effectiveness of the ARF as a regional security actor by leading to lowest common denominator decisions.

Main Developments and Institutional Innovation

In their 1995 Concept Paper the ARF members envisioned a "three-stage, evolutionary approach" ... "moving from confidence building to preventive diplomacy and, in the long term, towards a conflict resolution capability."¹¹ Thus far, the ARF has largely made progress in the area of confidence building. Since it took the organization until 2005 to declare that it was time to move into the preventive diplomacy stage, efforts

to develop PD mechanisms (which according to the ARF Concept Paper would be “a natural follow-up” to CBMs) and protection, not to speak of conflict management measures (such as assurance and compellence), are still at an embryonic stage.

As expressly stated in the Co-Chair’s Summary Report of the ARF Workshop on “Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Asia and Europe” (Berlin, 12-14 March 2008), the ARF is “currently in the transition phase from confidence building to preventive diplomacy.”¹² The document explains that “[a]s mutual trust amongst ASEAN countries...and ARF participants had increased, the ARF was in a good position to advance into preventive diplomacy.”¹³ Since the time has come to translate commitment into action, Mr. Wong Chow Ming, Deputy-Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, proposed to...”enhance concrete practical cooperation; streamline decision-making; strengthen [the] ARF Chair...maintain [a] ‘flexible moratorium’ on membership and enhance cooperation with Track II and external organizations.”¹⁴ Other steps to enhance CBMs and PD might include the improvement of communication between ARF participants, information exchange mechanisms, and the creation of a crisis room or some other form of early warning mechanism.¹⁵

Before taking a closer look at the ARF’s preventive diplomacy measures, it needs to be stressed that preventive diplomacy is not synonymous with preventive action. Whereas the former assumes that diplomatic measures will suffice to prevent conflict, the latter may entail military deployment, peace-making and/or peace-keeping, that is, efforts to cure a problem after conflict has already erupted (Tay with Talib 1997: 254). Put differently, preventive diplomacy consists of three main goals: (1) to prevent disputes from arising between parties; (2) to prevent existing disputes from escalating into

conflicts; and (3) to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur (ibid.). PD makes use of persuasion rather than coercion and includes such tools as negotiation, mediation and conciliation. Given the non-coercive nature of PD--“consensual, diplomatic and political action taken by sovereign states with the consent of all directly involved parties”--¹⁶ sanctions, military deployment, the use of force, or the threat of the use of any of these measures are excluded.

Preventive diplomacy measures, as envisioned by the ARF, can be taken before a crisis and/or during its onset. Pre-crisis measures include information exchanges on military exercises and weapons purchases; greater transparency via Defense White Papers; institution-building for consultation and exchange of personnel; norm-building; early warning systems to detect the build-up of military forces, natural disasters, refugee movements, famine, etc.¹⁷ PD measures at the onset of a crisis, on the other hand, consist of fact finding; goodwill missions by envoys to express concern about a particular situation; mediation or the good offices of a third party to restore order (ibid).

From September 4-7 2007, for instance, an ARF Disaster Relief Desk-top Exercise was held in Darwin to develop an initial structure for ARF Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance. This was followed one month later by an ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief in Helsinki where recommendations were made regarding the development of strategies and a procedure for enhanced inter-governmental cooperation in this area. Specifically, ARF members discussed the improvement of military-to-military and civilian-military coordination, including joint training and better information sharing in the pre-deployment and actual

response phases.¹⁸ The meeting also stressed that the ARF data base should complement existing UN mechanisms.

The ARF conducted a further Desktop Exercise on Disaster Relief in Jakarta, 1-2 May 2008, and pronounced it an important milestone in the organization's move from confidence building mechanisms to preventive diplomacy. At the same time, however, the Co-Chair's Summary Report of the ARF Desktop Exercise emphasized that the ARF Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Standard Operating Procedures (HADR SOP) must acknowledge the primacy of sovereignty and therefore are non-binding, that is, external assistance shall only be provided with the consent of the affected country.¹⁹

In the area of energy security the ARF has also taken steps recently to promote greater cooperation and prevent conflict. During their 2nd Seminar on Energy Security 15-17 April 2008 in Singapore ARF members, first of all, defined what security in this area means to them. In their summary statement they made clear that they prefer a broad view that "includes not only energy diversification..., but also energy diplomacy, energy conservation, infrastructural challenges, environmental protection, and the development of alternative and renewable sources of energy."²⁰ Moreover, they noted that greater regional cooperation would be essential to assure the security of transit routes, and recommended several concrete steps to enhance energy security such as "information exchange and assistance on best practices; scenario planning exercises; and enhanced cooperation regarding the development and investment in new infrastructure" (ibid.).

This past year there have also been signs that the ARF may soon be ready to set itself more ambitious goals and consider undertaking preventive actions in addition to preventive diplomacy. During its 2nd Peacekeeping Experts' Meeting in Singapore 4-6

March 2008, the organization discussed the possibility of future participation in peacekeeping operations and called for “enhanced quality in training, the right equipment and the necessary political will.”²¹ The Japanese government, moreover, offered cooperation with peacekeeping training centers in the Asian region. Those countries not ready to contribute forces, it was noted, could aid in other ways by providing health and medical services, military advisers and combat service support forces (ibid.). Additionally, it was suggested that “future meetings could look at an integrated or comprehensive mission concept”...and consider “holding a peacekeeping planning exercise/activity in the future” (ibid. p.8).

When it comes to assurance, both ASEAN and the ARF seek to disseminate the norms associated with the ASEAN way, but there is no evidence of post-conflict reconstruction or peace-building found in the European theater. As can be seen in the Co-Chair’s Report of the Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Ottawa, Canada, 3-4 April 2008, a number of participants expressed their deep concern about the situation in Myanmar and called for the release of all political prisoners.²² They also urged Myanmar to make “meaningful and expeditious progress towards democratic reform and national reconciliation.”²³ But the ARF goes no further than that and stays clear of policing missions, dispatching humanitarian assistance, etc.

In the area of protection, only modest progress has been made so far, due to the norm of non-interference and ARF members’ hesitancy to curtail their autonomy. The ARF recognizes the need to protect society from threats caused by organized crime,

terrorism, the spread of infectious diseases, environmental degradation etc., but to date, has not moved much beyond the discussion stage.

During a Roundtable on Maritime Security held in August 2007, for instance, ARF members declared that maritime security must be strengthened particularly with respect to surveillance and the sharing of best practices. They were also in agreement regarding the main threats in this area: piracy, armed robberies, over-lapping claims and territorial disputes, terrorism, environmental degradation, and the smuggling of goods and persons.²⁴ To improve maritime security, Roundtable participants concluded, the ARF should move from discussion to the implementation of concrete measures, but without losing sight of the ARF principles.

Similar hesitancy can be observed in the area of defense cooperation. Even though, as the Report of the ASEAN Regional Forum Defense Dialogue 7 May 2008 in Singapore makes clear, interactions and engagements in this area have allowed the ARF to “move towards greater practical cooperation,...the need for capacity building through joint training and information sharing” still exists.²⁵ The Chairman’s Summary Report of the 5th ARF Security Policy Conference the following day, therefore, highlighted the “importance to move beyond dialogues to forge practical cooperation in areas of common interest” and gave particular mention to “disaster preparedness and emergency response” (ibid. p.3).

In recent years, the ARF has made some progress regarding counter-terrorism. The organization recognizes that terrorism “constitutes a grave threat to stability, peace and security in the Asia-Pacific and beyond” and thus, repeatedly, has called upon its members to become parties to int’l conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.²⁶

During the Sixth ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime in Semarang, Indonesia, 21-22 February 2008, for example, the need for cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism among regional organizations like ASEAN, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the ARF was stressed to ensure maximum synergies and avoid duplication.

Participants also “supported in principle” the proposal by the Republic of Korea to “explore practical and concrete ways” to implement previous ARF recommendations in “fighting cyber attack and terrorist misuse of cyber space.”²⁷ The meeting, moreover, discussed strategies to counter transnational crime, improve boundary control, and better deal with cross border crime through close cooperation between the authorities and the public. Finally, the meeting addressed measures like bilateral agreements, intelligence exchanges, information sharing, law enforcement cooperation, and mutual legal assistance to fight transnational crime more effectively.²⁸ As has been seen in the area of prevention and assurance, however, the bottom line for ARF members in the area of protection largely is that proposals need further reflection, since they would lead to the creation of permanent mechanisms that could undermine the “ASEAN way.” This explains why, at the moment, no institutional structure exists in the region that would come anywhere near an Asian version of Europol.

Since the “prime model for the ARF is ASEAN’s own distinctive, political approach to regional security problems,” as Leifer (1996: 3) aptly put it, “conspicuously absent from the ARF is any robust provision for addressing the use of force in conflict and conflict resolution.” Hence with respect to compellence, no action presently exists.

Military intervention, peace-making, peace-enforcement or any other military instruments are clearly outside the purview of the ARF which consciously elects to rely exclusively on political and economic means. This lack of “teeth,” according to Leifner (1996: 53), renders the ARF an “imperfect diplomatic instrument for achieving regional security goals.”

The Effectiveness of the ARF as a Security Actor and Future Prospects

The lack of measures to compel others to engage in certain types of behavior may make the ARF imperfect, but does it also make it ineffective? “Despite being labeled a ‘talk shop,’” Acharya (2003: 332) points out that the ARF “fulfills the expected function of institutions in lowering transaction costs, providing information and preventing cheating.” The ARF clearly has promoted regional stability via the creation of CBMs and numerous venues for the exchange of ideas and building of trust. Japan, for instance, views the organization as a “vehicle for enhancing [the] overall diplomatic climate between regional countries and as an important element of its policy of engagement with China and North Korea” (Yuzawa 2007: 177). The Japanese know that many of their neighbors are still distrustful and the ARF provides a welcome setting for reassurances. Similarly, as China’s military and economic power grows, it increasingly has an interest in signaling its peaceful intentions and interacting with its neighbors in a multilateral institutional setting. And even though China, when it first joined the ARF, was concerned that the US and Japan might gang up on it, it quickly concluded that staying out was too risky and therefore not an option (ibid. 32).

Much like Acharya (2003: 170) has found in the case of ASEAN, it can be argued that “persisting bilateral tensions, territorial disputes, [and] militarization” also undermine the ARF’s effectiveness as a viable regional security provider. What one continues to see is a gradual, piecemeal approach to cooperation where the norm of non-interference, the consensus principle, the lack of institutionalization, and the absence of interoperability constrain policy options, and where undesirable behavior by a member, for the most part, still goes unpunished.

To enhance security in the region, and assure that countries like Japan and the US will not lose interest in the ARF, “tangible progress” has to be made, particularly with respect to the non-interference principle (Yusawa 2007: 170, and 2006: 804). So long as states have either asked for or consented to intervention by the ARF, Japan for instance thinks, the organization should be allowed to play a role in intrastate conflict. In such cases, as long as preventive diplomacy measures were to be authorized by the states involved, their use would neither violate state sovereignty nor the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of others (Yuzawa 2006: 790). Put differently, activist ARF members like Australia, the US, Canada, and Japan think it is important to depart from the rules that characterize the “ASEAN Way” in order for the organization to develop more meaningful PD mechanisms. Even at that, in the eyes of Yuzawa (2006: 786), such a departure “would only be a prerequisite, not a solution.”

The ARF also needs to rethink the consensus principle which often gets in the way of joint agreements. This obstacle, according to Simon (2007: 25), could be dealt with if ARF members were willing to adopt an ASEAN procedure known as the “ASEAN Minus X” understanding. The latter essentially allows for a “coalition of the

willing,” and thus, much like in the European theater, makes it possible to progress in situations where not everyone is able/willing to move at the same speed. Since inclusivity can hinder progress, it sometimes may be better to seek cooperation among a smaller number of players to reach agreement rather than trying to get everyone on board (Garofano 1999: 84). Such a move, however, can be expected to be rejected by more reluctant ARF members like China and most of ASEAN.

Additionally, there is a need for greater institutionalization. Since an early warning system, for example, requires a mechanism to collect data, either a permanent secretariat or something like a Regional Risk Reduction Center will have to be put in place to make concrete progress in this area (Yuzawa 2006: 801). At the same time, even though some ASEAN members and China have been hesitant to give greater powers to the ARF Chair, it seems to make sense to create a triumvirate--comprised of present, immediate past and prospective chairmen (Tay with Talib 1997: 264)--as found in the EU Commission to assure some continuity and promote institutional learning.

Further undermining the ARF’s effectiveness is the absence of interoperability and, to date, pretty much an unwillingness or inability to set up effective arrangements to cope with transnational challenges (Simon 2007: 30). As discussed above, there has been significant progress with respect to confidence-building measures, but much fewer tangible results can be seen in the area of PD, assurance and protection.

But, as alluded to above, the real Achilles heel of the ARF is its lack of enforcement mechanisms or sanctions. As is, the organization has no way to punish members who choose not to comply with its norms and rules. In the case of North Korea, for instance, ARF members so far have done no more than express their concern over the

DPRK's failure to meet the requirements for a declaration of its nuclear programs and repeatedly called for progress in the Six-Party talks. Similarly, during the recent unrest in Myanmar, ARF members essentially did no more than voice their concern and urge the government to promote peaceful change and reconciliation. To become more effective in situations like the ones described above, the organization would have to develop contingency-planning against any members within the grouping, come up with formal and/or informal dispute settlement mechanisms, or try to resolve conflicts via compromise (Garofano 1999: 84-89).

Prospects

Given the history of the region, countries in Asia-Pacific are sensitive to infringements on their sovereignty and, rather than to curtail their freedom of action, prefer to begin by building mutual trust, respect, and tolerance through regular talks and then graduate to more ambitious goals. “[C]onfidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution,” according to Lee (1997: 262), are the bottom line, and multilateral institutions, by “redefin[ing] identities and acceptable standards of behavior” (Katzenstein and Okawara 2004: 120), and promoting greater transparency, are a good way of getting there.

Institutions like ASEAN, the ARF and CSCAP, clearly, are vital when it comes to community building and their members hope that by engaging each other they can promote understanding, avoid problems from spiraling out of control, and over time create more sophisticated security structures that can cope with bigger problems. The idea is to acquire information and then, gradually, change interests and preferences. Or,

as Johnston and Evans (1999: 264) put it, “the most important function of dialogue fora is not the rules they create but the suspicions they allay and the norms they reinforce.”

Strategic instability does exist in Asia-Pacific and, as the Six Party talks most recently have shown, the countries in the region, much like the Europeans in the aftermath of World War II, slowly seem to understand that it is in their interest to include their most likely adversaries in cooperative security structures, rather than to ally against them. What specific form cooperative security arrangements in the region will take in the not too distant future is still to be determined.

The ARF, as Buzan and Weaver (2003: 158) correctly point out, “binds both Japan and China into a regional institutional framework, allowing Japan to address its historical problem, China to address fears of its neighbors, and both to avoid conspicuous balancing behavior towards each other.” By virtue of its highly specific nature, however, the ASEAN Way may not be the best solution for the wider Asia-Pacific region (Acharya 2003: 12; and Bisley 2007/08: 352).

Table 1. Rationale for Collective Action

	<i>Assurance</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Compellence</i>
<i>Rationale for collective action</i>	Disseminate norms & rules to promote peace	Complement “hub & spokes” network Emergence of regional identity	Confront new transnational challenges (terrorism, proliferation of WMD, energy security, maritime security)	

Table 2. Principles of action

	<i>Assurance</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Compellence</i>
<i>Principles of action</i>	Non-interference in internal affairs Consensus	Dissemination of norms & rules Consensus	Sovereignty Consensus	

Table 3. Policy challenges and goals

	<i>Assurance</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Compellence</i>
<i>Principal policy challenges</i>	Intra-state conflict resolution	State- & nation-building	Create conditions for stable distribution of power among China, Japan, & US Institution-building within ASEAN	
<i>Principal policy goals</i>	Supporting regional stability via support for “ASEAN way”	Address root causes of instability via CMBs and PD Regional integration	Increased police & judicial cooperation Border security Health security	Conflict resolution

Table 4: Institutional evolution of the ARF as a security actor

	<i>Assurance</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Compellence</i>
<i>Major institutional innovations</i>		ISG on Confidence Building ISM on Peacekeeping	Maritime Security Roundtable	

Table 5: The ARF’s Performance as a Security Actor

	<i>Assurance</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Compellence</i>
<i>Major policy initiatives</i>	Expressed concern regarding Myanmar; urged reforms & release of political prisoners	ARF Disaster Relief Desktop Exercise Peacekeeping Expert Meeting Regional Risk Reduction Center (proposed)	Maritime Security Roundtable in agreement on main threats “Support in principle” recommendations to fight cyber attack & terrorist misuse of cyber space	

Table 6. Assessment of the ARF as a security actor

	<i>Assurance</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Compellence</i>
<i>Degree of Policy effectiveness</i>	Myanmar: no evidence of post-conflict reconstruction or peacekeeping No policing missions	Discussion regarding possibility of future peacekeeping missions Japanese government offered cooperation with peacekeeping training centers Disaster relief: Discussion of improved military-to-military & civilian-military	Need to move beyond dialogue Norm of non-interference is obstacle when it comes to implementation of measures Counter-terrorism: still in phase of exploring ways to implement recommendations No actual	

		<p>coordination, joint training & info sharing</p> <p>But, SOPs must acknowledge primacy of sovereignty</p> <p>Assistance only with consent of affected country</p> <p>Need for greater institutionalization; example: Regional Risk Reduction Center to collect data for early warning system</p>	<p>implementation</p> <p>Hesitant to bring about permanent mechanisms like “Asiapol” for fear they could undermine “ASEAN way”</p>	
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Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASPAC	Asian Pacific Council
CBM	Confidence Building Mechanism
CEPT	Common Effective Preferential Tariff
CSCA	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
HADR SOP	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Standard Operating Procedure
ISG	Inter-Sessional Support Group
ISM	Inter-Sessional Meeting
MAPHILINDO	Grouping of Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEACD	Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue
PD	Preventive Diplomacy
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SEANWFZ	Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone
SOM	Senior Officers Meeting
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

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¹ For a more recent discussion of the U.S. alliances—collectively referred to as the “San Francisco System”—see Tow and Acharya 2007.

² <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/88315.htm>

³ <http://www.aseansec.org/1212.htm>, p.1

⁴ <http://www.aseansec.org/328.htm>, p.1

⁵ <http://www.aseansec.org/2082.htm>

⁶ <http://www.aseansec.org/147.htm>, pp.1-2

⁷ For a complete listing of ASEAN Basic Documents with treaty texts, see <http://www.aseansec.org/145.htm>

⁸ <http://www.aseansec.org/13165.htm>, p.1

⁹ Members of the ARF are the ten ASEAN member states, ten ASEAN Dialogue Partners (Australia, Canada, China, the EU, India, Japan, New Zealand, ROK, Russia and the US), one ASEAN observer (Papua New Guinea), as well as the DPRK, Mongolia, Pakistan, East Timor, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government (<http://www.dfat.gov.au/arf/>), p.1)

¹⁰ For a discussion of three further venues for multilateral security dialogue—ASEAN +3, the Shangri La Dialogue, and the East Asia Summit—see Bisley 2007/08: 355-57.

¹¹ (<http://www.dfat.gov.au/arf/>, p.1)

¹² (<http://www.dfat.gov.au/arf/>, p.1)

¹³ ⁹ *ibid*, p.1

¹⁴ ⁹ *ibid*, p.1

¹⁵ ⁹ *ibid*, p.1

¹⁶ see ARF: Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/gjs/gjzzyhy/2612/t15316.htm>

¹⁷ *ibid.*; and Tay with Talib 1997: 254.

¹⁸ see the Co-Chair’s Summary Report of the Seventh ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting of Disaster Relief Helsinki, 11-12 October 2007, p.1
<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

¹⁹ Co-Chair’s Summary Report of the ARF Desktop Exercise on Disaster Relief Jakarta, 1-2 May 2008, p.1;
<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²⁰ 2nd ARF Seminar on Energy Security 15-17 April 2008 in Singapore;
http://www.41amm.sg/amm/index.php/web/info_for_delegates/statements/chairman_s_statement_15th_asean_regional_forum_24_july_2008_singapore, p.6.

²¹ Co-Chair’s Summary Report of the 2nd ARF Peacekeeping Experts’ Meeting in Singapore 4-6 March 2008, p. 4;
<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²² Co-Chair’s Report of the Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum Intersessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy in Ottawa, Canada, 3-4 April 2008;
<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²³ *ibid.*, p.2. Also see the Chairman's Statement of the 15th ASEAN Regional Forum 24 July 2008 in Singapore which reiterates these points.

<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²⁴ ARF Roundtable on Maritime Security Issues, Bali, Indonesia, 24-25 August 2007;

<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²⁵ Report of the ASEAN Regional Forum Defense Dialogue 7 May 2008 in Singapore, pp.1-2;

<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²⁶ <http://www.aseansec.org/14835.htm>

²⁷ Co-Chair's Summary Report on the Sixth ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime in Semarang, Indonesia, 21-22 February 2008;

<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/ARFChairmansStatementsandReports/tabid/66/Default.aspx>

²⁸ *ibid.* Also see Yuzawa 2006: 800; and Simon 2007: ix.