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DEFINING SOUTHEAST ASIA'S DEFENSE POSTURE
AMIDST CHALLENGING TIMES

by

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Abstract

This paper explores the Southeast Asian security landscape since the end of the Second World War. It will focus on two collective frameworks that have emerged from the cooperative efforts of the countries in the region to deal with the flux of security issues. These are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). They constitute the central reference mechanisms in defining the region's security posture.

The paper will next examine how the "non-interference" policy has become an inadequate principle for ASEAN and ARF, as the region is confronted by the three "unconventional shocks" of the 1997 financial crisis, the 1999 East Timor hostility, and the 2002 Bali terrorist bombings. It will also examine how the notion of a "pre-emptive" US foreign policy creates an increasing sense of uncertainty on the region's future security relationship with the US.

A new vision for the ARF calls for a bold "three-pronged" transformation to take place at three distinct levels of the ARF: Principle, Process and Perspective. The final part of the paper will examine the details of this transformation roadmap that promises to revamp the region's security posture.

Chapter 1

General Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, countries within the Southeast Asian region of the world have experienced several challenging periods of change in all aspects of their existence. In particular, the security landscape of the region often took the form of rugged and difficult terrain throughout the end of the last century. The region, which had suffered much hardship under the Japanese occupation, struggled hard to regain its footing in the wake of the Japanese surrender. However, before it could barely do so, the global emergence of a great divide of ideologies, between democracy and communism, engulfed the region and ensured that it would continue to limp its way into the political and social complexities of the Cold War era. A streak of economic upturn at the end of the Cold War energized the economic engines of several Southeast Asian countries and spurred unprecedented growth rates. However, just before the end of the century, these economies collapsed as rapidly as they have ballooned, under the weight of weak financial fundamentals.

As this paper explores the Southeast Asian security landscape since the end of the Second World War, it will focus on two collective frameworks that have emerged from the cooperative efforts of the countries in the region to deal with the flux of security issues. These are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Indeed, they constitute the central reference mechanisms as this paper defines the region's

security posture. The successes enjoyed by ASEAN and ARF are largely due to one underlying reason: the adoption of a well received “non-interference policy,” or the Asian Way, when dealing with regional issues. This policy bodes well with the keen sense of nationalistic pride that engulfs the region, particularly when many of the member states have emerged from decades of colonial imperialism prior to the Second World War.

However, as the region progresses into the 21st century, the changing security implications uncover weaknesses within these previously successful frameworks. As the paper sizes up the current security climate in Southeast Asia, it will examine how the non-interference policy has become an inadequate principle for ASEAN and ARF, as the region is confronted by the three “unconventional shocks” of the 1997 financial crisis, the 1999 East Timor hostility, and the 2002 Bali terrorist bombings. It will also examine how the notion of a “pre-emptive” US foreign policy and the recent unfolding of this policy on Iraq create an increasing sense of uncertainty on the region’s future security relationship with the US, especially when Al Qaeda-linked terrorists are attempting to establish their footholds within the region.

Today, as Southeast Asia stands at the threshold of the 21st century, there is an increasing need to transform the ARF fundamentally in order to continue to project a strong security posture amidst such challenging times. A new vision for the ARF is proposed in response to the new challenges. The vision calls for a bold “three-pronged” transformation to take place at three distinct levels of the ARF: Principle, Process and Perspective. The final part of the paper will examine the details of this transformation roadmap that promises to revamp the region’s security posture.

Chapter 2

Overview of Southeast Asia's Security Posture

This chapter provides an overview of past security issues that have confronted the region, and how the region has responded to these issues. In particular, it will examine the key regional framework of ASEAN, which has risen above several other alliances like the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), and successfully guided the region out of the turbulent periods of the Cold War. Finally, this chapter will relate how ASEAN, during the post-Cold War era, builds upon its own successes in uniting the region and later commissioning the ARF as a specific forum to deal with the region's security issues. The twin pillars of ASEAN and ARF will act as focusing lenses as this paper journeys through past security developments in the region.

The Cold War and SEATO

For much of Southeast Asia, the struggle for independence from the European colonial powers held center stage during the period after World War II. Meanwhile, the region was also heavily pre-occupied with post-war reconstruction and economic development. On a broader perspective, the great clash of ideologies between democracy and communism has just begun. This clash, together with the fear of nuclear militancy, manifested itself in the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union, and essentially polarized the world between the two emerging superpowers. Inevitably, Southeast Asia was entangled in this ideological struggle as it became a major Cold War battleground. The region finds itself harassed by waves of

international communism that have thrived on the turmoil and unrest after the war. In Malaya, Chinese terrorists endeavored to spread the scourge of communism through violent insurgencies. In Cambodia, communism posed an imminent threat to the survival of its people and culture. In Vietnam, Viet Minh terrorist activities culminated into full-scale war in an effort to hurl the proximate countries into the communist orbit.¹

Against such an intimidating environment, countries around the world scrambled to organize themselves into protective alliances with either one of the two superpowers. As a consequence, eight pro-democracy governments endorsed the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1955.² It was meant to be a defensive alliance by which Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Britain and the US cooperated to provide security against further armed aggression and subversion in Southeast Asia. However, considering that only Thailand and the Philippines from the region have joined the organization, SEATO could hardly be called a “local grouping.” It was instead seen as part of a world-wide system of anti-communist military alliances under American leadership, instead of a region-centered effort devoted to the overall interests of the regional states.³

Later in mid-1970s, with the fall of South Vietnam to the communists and the withdrawal of US forces from the region, SEATO lost its strategic relevance; and it was quietly dissolved as its members moved on with other emerging strategic challenges.⁴ Subsequent to SEATO, a few other attempts at regional groupings were made in the 1960s, like the “Association for Southeast Asia” (ASA) between Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand, and “MAPHILINDO” (after the acronyms of Malaya, the Philippines, and Indonesia). However, neither of these lasted long, largely because each of them did not represent the common interests of a large enough group of nation states within the region, and therefore failed to attract more widespread support.⁵

ASEAN

During the mid-1960s, the security climate within Southeast Asia quickly deteriorated. Inter-state flashpoints have intensified across the region. Differences in communal and economic policies led to the separation of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation. Friction between Thailand and Malaysia increased due to border disputes and the handling of communist insurgency. The Philippines remained adamant over its claim of Sabah, a Malaysian territory. However, events reached a peak during the “Konfrontasi” crisis. This was a war that erupted between Indonesia and Malaysia in 1963 to achieve President Sukarno’s objective of crushing Malaysia and demonstrating Indonesian primacy.

In this climate of regional unrest, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established in 1967, uniting the five founding member states of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The key objectives of ASEAN were to promote economic, social, and cultural development so as to achieve regional peace and political stability in the face of communist insurgency. ASEAN represented the collective will of the nations to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation and, through joint efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom, and prosperity.⁶ However, it became more effective as a tool for diplomacy and political dialogue among member nations. In no time, more nations joined the alliance; Brunei in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. ASEAN gradually emerged as the single collective voice on Southeast Asian affairs on wide ranging issues from politics and security to economics and the environment, both from within and outside the ASEAN framework.

ASEAN has an enviable vitality because its members draw benefits from all its dimensions of institution, identity, and interaction. It is the regional organization that

institutionalizes the political process, and provides member states with a communal identity. However, the most important factor that attributed to its wide acceptance was its non-interference policy. Members believe the region's turbulent history has shown that "successful association is predicated on the basic principles of restraint, respect, and responsibility. In 1967, this meant that states do not interfere in other states, either by war, aid to insurgents, challenges to legitimacy, and comments about personalities."⁷ ASEAN states keenly welcomed this policy, particularly when several of these states, with their newly gained independence, were still enthralled in a feverish sense of nationalistic pride.

Based on its non-interference and consultative approach, ASEAN rapidly gained ground in achieving regional stability and resilience through the 1970s and 1980s. Tensions from the inter-state disputes in the 1960s began to ease away through peaceful dialogues. ASEAN facilitated the reconciliation of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Indonesia, ending the violent Konfrontasi policy.⁸ Next, ASEAN responded to Vietnam's 1978-1979 hostile occupation of Cambodia, by leading efforts at applying diplomatic pressure against the Vietnamese. These efforts, together with US-led economic sanctions, finally succeeded in persuading Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia.

ASEAN consolidated its strategic position in Southeast Asia through a series of treaties. Its first foreign policy initiative to create a "Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality" (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia was signed in Nov 1971.⁹ This initiative reflected the strategic posturing by ASEAN to remain free from any form or manner of interference by outside Powers.¹⁰ It was ASEAN's first collective response to the changing regional security order at the end of the Vietnam War, to counter any regional instability resulting from the US withdrawal from the

region, the communists' expansion over South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and political uncertainty about China.¹¹

Subsequently, the demise of the communist threat showed the success of ASEAN's cooperative efforts. Latching on to this success, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), and the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ) were signed in 1976 and 1995 respectively.¹² The TAC is based on the principles of good neighborliness, and serves as a useful tool to enhance transparency among member states and the peaceful settlement of disputes in the future. The SEANWFZ treaty is yet another important security instrument designed to complement ZOPFAN's strategic posturing to deter nuclear-armed conflicts from occurring in the region.¹³

As Southeast Asia progressed into the 1980s, ASEAN states began to focus much of their energies on generating economic growth. The concept of "globalization" was sweeping through the region, and ASEAN was poised, as a collective grouping, to exploit the advantages of global markets and open economies. Meanwhile, the security outlook became relatively more benign, as the most critical security threat of communism appeared to have diffused. Security issues were generally confined to the ongoing small bilateral disputes among member states. Existing security contingency arrangements, like the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), were in place and kept relevant through regular dialogue sessions with their members.¹⁴ The increasing presence of the US in the region through global trade further enhanced confidence and stability. In addition, the US also deepened political ties with ASEAN, and gradually re-engaged the region in security matters, through US Pacific Command's (USPACOM) efforts in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, increased port visits and combined exercises with regional militaries.¹⁵

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

The period of relative peace and stability within Southeast Asia extended well into the 1990s. However, a number of concerns were looming on the horizon. First, with the breakup of the Soviet Union that marked the end of the Cold War, closely followed by the corresponding downsizing of US military forces, there was a growing concern about the likelihood of a “thinning” of US security interests in the region.¹⁶ Secondly, China has also been keeping pace with growth economically and militarily during this period. Its often secretive outlook and security intentions have continued to fuel uncertainty about its long-term security interests in the region. Finally, this prolonged period of peace has set the stage for an economic boom. Total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flowing into ASEAN states surged almost seven fold from US\$25 billion in 1980 to US\$170 billion in 1995.¹⁷ The major economies of Southeast Asia are growing at such unbelievable rates that this phenomenon has been dubbed the “Asian Miracle.” The region gained great economic wealth through the Asian Miracle, which became a source of much attention and envy from neighboring major powers.

In light of these concerns, ASEAN realized that it needed to project a broader and more regionally resilient security posture. It also needed to adopt a more multilateral approach to security in order to gain wider security assurance beyond itself at the Asia-Pacific level. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was inaugurated in 1994 as the official security apparatus to oversee ASEAN’s security interests. The ASEAN member states could now participate in constructive security discussions with 13 other “dialogue partners,” which have an impact on or are involved in the security of the Asia-Pacific region. These partners include China, Japan, Russia, India, and the European Union (EU).¹⁸

The ARF is built upon the premise that dialogue and consensus decision-making will improve the quality of political relationships based on the same principles as ASEAN, so that bilateral and multilateral problems may become easier to manage. In other words, the ARF adopts the non-interference approach much like ASEAN, which emphasizes process over action. Nevertheless, members found that the ARF plays a useful role in developing a sense of shared strategic and security interests, and engaging the major powers in dialogue.¹⁹ It aims to achieve peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region through three stages: “the promotion of confidence-building, the development of preventive diplomacy mechanisms, and the development of conflict-resolution mechanisms.”²⁰

The Spratly Islands conflict was the first real test of the functionality of the ARF. In reaction to the discovery of Chinese military construction on Mischief Reef in 1995, the ARF became the vehicle for a serious initial attempt to resolve conflicting interests and claims in the South China Sea. However, the firmness of Chinese political will prevented an expeditious solution to be worked out. Nevertheless, member states within ARF succeeded in establishing a common code of conduct in the South China Sea for all seven claimants, under the Phnom Penh “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea” in Nov 2002, paving the way for a gradual but peaceful resolution to the protracted dispute.²¹

Notes

¹ “*Southeast Asia Treaty Organization*,” First Annual Report of the Council Representatives, Department of State Publication 6305, Far Eastern Series 72, Mar 1956, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ Dreisbach, Kai, “*From SEATO to ASEAN: The United States and the Regional Organization of Southeast Asia*,” available online from <http://fb14.uni-mainz.de/projects/amst/forum/draisb.htm>

⁴ Rubinstein, Alvin Z., “*Alliances and Strategy: Rethinking Security*,” Columbia International Affairs Online, World Affairs, Vol. 3, No. 2, Apr-Jun 1999, available online from http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/wa/wa_99rua01.html.

⁵ “*South East Asia pre-ASEAN*,” ASEANPAGE History, available online from <http://www.geocities.com/aseanpage/preASEAN.html>.

⁶ “*Overview of ASEAN*,” The ASEAN Secretariat, available online from <http://www.aseansec.org>.

⁷ Antolik, Michael, “*ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation*,” M. E. Sharpe, Inc, 1990, p. 18-20.

⁸ Antolik, Michael, p. 155.

⁹ “*Overview of ASEAN*,” from <http://www.aseansec.org>.

¹⁰ Broinowski, Alison, ed., “*Understanding ASEAN*,” Appendix E: Kuala Lumpur Declaration (ZOPFAN Declaration, 1971), St. Martin’s Press, 1982, p. 295.

¹¹ Antolik, p. 142.

¹² Broinowski, Alison, ed., Appendix B: Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (1976), p. 273.

¹³ “*Overview of ASEAN*,” available online from <http://www.aseansec.org/2503.htm>.

¹⁴ “*Five Power Defence Arrangements*,” available online from www.minister.defence.gov.au/Mooretpl.cfm?currentId=192. Created in 1971, the member nations of FPDA: Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Britain and New Zealand, all of which have vested interests in a stable Southeast Asia region, agreed to consult on what steps to take in the event of any external threat to Malaysia or Singapore.

¹⁵ “*PACOM Facts*,” available online from <http://www.pacom.mil/about/pacom.shtml>.

¹⁶ Rubinstein, Alvin Z., available online from http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/wa/wa_99rua01.html.

¹⁷ Source: UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 1996-2000*, United Nations.

¹⁸ As of Apr 2003, the list of non-ASEAN countries as dialogue partners in ARF include Japan, South and North Korea, China, EU, India, US, Russia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea.

¹⁹ “*ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)*,” Foreign Affairs and Trade, Internal Security Division, Australia, 2002, available online from <http://www.dfat.gov.au/globalissues>.

²⁰ “*Preventive Diplomacy: Charting a Course for the ASEAN Regional Forum*,” A Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM) International Working Group Report, July 2002.

²¹ “*Overview of ASEAN*,” from <http://www.aseansec.org>.

Chapter 3

Current State of Security

States within Southeast Asia are confronted by a very different security landscape at the turn of the new millennium. They suddenly found that their well-proven economic and security instruments of ASEAN and ARF have failed to cope with a new threat. This is the threat of an “unconventional shock.” An unconventional shock is characterized by the elements of surprise and irregularity. It describes an event that is not normally expected to happen in a certain way or perspective. Also implicit in the description of this new threat is the tendency for it to catch people unprepared. This chapter will show how two key factors caused the failures of ASEAN and ARF to respond in an unconventional scenario. First, both ASEAN’s and ARF’s resilience and comprehensive security mechanisms were not structured to deal with unconventional issues. Second, the underpinning policy of non-interference has manifested as interference in itself, because the principles of accommodation and consensus that characterized the non-interference policy could not respond well to today’s impatient and fast-paced challenges.¹ This chapter will analyze how these underlying factors caused the failure of ASEAN or ARF in dealing with three unconventional situations that have deeply shaken Southeast Asia during the last half a decade: the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the 1999 East Timor hostility, and the 2002 Bali bombings.

Next, after suffering from several unconventional shocks that dominated the new security environment, the region is on the verge of yet more uncertainty in the near future. In particular,

this uncertainty is a result of the US latest strategy of “pre-emption,” which is just emerging over the horizon, as it is currently being played out on the battlefield in Iraq. The final part of this chapter will make an analysis of how this arguably controversial new world order will impact the security landscape in Southeast Asia.

The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis

Prior to the financial crisis in 1997, Asian economies were the boom machines of the world. As a result, Asian people inculcated a burgeoning sense of progress and self-confidence. ASEAN, being an integral part of the Asian society, was no exception to this phenomenon. On the whole, ASEAN succeeded in achieving both domestic and regional stability by the end of its 30th year of existence. The region became the most economically dynamic and rapidly growing region in the world by the late 1980s until the early 1990s.² And then, the financial crisis ignited, starting with the Thai economy, and then rapidly consuming the rest of the region’s promising economies. It brought Indonesia to its knees and severely disrupted the economies of Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The crisis revealed several vulnerabilities inherent in the ASEAN framework. The meltdown has shown that ASEAN’s intrinsic resilience was not designed to counter an unexpected and extensive economic challenge. One compelling reason offered was the untimely dual enrolment of Laos and Vietnam into ASEAN during the height of the crisis, which could have distracted ASEAN’s full attention in tackling the economic fallout.³ As the former ASEAN Secretary-General Rodolfo Severino pointed out that with its expansion, “there is now greater diversity; it is more difficult to get a consensus.”⁴ Nevertheless, even if ASEAN were given a little more time to react to the crisis, the non-interference policy and the conventional bureaucracy would hamper inter-state assistance and delay recovery efforts. In fact, ASEAN

responses to the crisis were late; it took ASEAN more than a year to produce the “Hanoi Plan of Action” (HPA) as a prescription to resolve the crises and prevent similar crisis from occurring in the future.⁵ Likewise, the ARF grouping, which was nurtured to respond to conventional regional security threats through consensus and confidence-building measures, did not possess the appropriate processes to deal directly with the highly contagious financial crisis.

The 1999 East Timor Crisis

As one event links to another, it is important to note that the financial crisis has generated security threats beyond economic dimensions. The escalation of violence in East Timor becomes one of such fallouts. The Golkar regime of President Suharto was so severely hit by the financial crisis that it caused a complete meltdown of his leadership and governance. The crisis revealed a huge bureaucracy of corruption and nepotism hidden deep underneath a thick external shell of the Suharto regime, which has kept the country stable for almost thirty years. The ensuing widespread violence triggered a chain reaction of ethnic and religious strife involving several communal groups that make up the diverse population of Indonesia. The East Timorese, with a Christian majority, formed one of these groups. Adding to the problem, the East Timorese could not have chosen a better time to intensify their resistance against Indonesian rule to seek self-determination.⁶ The outcome was a bloody rampage between “militias” associated with the Indonesian army against these East Timorese, which left more than a thousand people dead.⁷ Within a few short weeks of the crisis outbreak, it was Australia, a non-ASEAN state, that first dispatched a force of UN peacekeepers to stop the violence.

In a 1999 interview, Japanese ex-Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi accurately captured the essence of the ASEAN involvement in the East Timor crisis when he remarked, “Hundreds or perhaps thousands died. Doesn't this raise questions about the effectiveness of this international

cooperation?”⁸ Indeed, this is another case of a failure of the ASEAN and ARF to respond to an urgent humanitarian atrocity directly occurring within the region’s area of responsibility. Instead, ASEAN has been reduced to playing a secondary, supportive role behind the Australians.⁹ ASEAN has failed to act despite the confident diplomacy of the past decade that convinced the major powers it could manage regional security under the umbrella of the ARF. Again, the reasons were the same as those in the financial crisis: the lack of a compatible conventional process against an unexpected and fast-paced crisis, and the burden of the non-interference principle which resulted in ASEAN/ARF’s prolonged hesitation to act. More importantly, the inaction of ASEAN/ARF in this crisis has weakened the ASEAN composure, and may prompt firmer Western pressures to be exerted over the region in the near future, eliminating earlier efforts to build an effective ZOPFAN.¹⁰

The 2002 Bali Bombings

Jemiah Islamyiah (JI) operatives, backed by Al Qaeda terrorists, detonated three bombs in close succession on the Bali resort island on Oct 12, 2002, killing almost 200 people, and drove home the point that Southeast Asia has become the second front for terrorist activities. Despite the shock effect of Sep 11, and for all the warnings from neighbor states like Malaysia and Singapore, political leaders in Jakarta have refused to take the threat of radical Islam seriously. The reluctance to confront the fanatics appeared to be driven largely by fears of provoking a moderate Muslim population backlash.

This incident unearthed one gaping shortfall in the ASEAN and ARF structures - their mechanisms are not primed to deal with non-state actors like terrorists. The Bali bombing was a tragedy as painful and shocking to Indonesia, and ASEAN as a collective grouping, as the Sep 11 attacks have been to the US. One important point to understand about this tragedy is that the non-

interference policy of ASEAN and ARF has taken an adversely different perspective from the two earlier events. Inherent in the non-interference policy, or the ASEAN Way, is an “avoidance syndrome” of shelving away controversial issues in order to cooperate on less contentious issues.¹¹ In this case, Malaysia and Singapore, which have arrested several JI terrorists, and were acutely aware of a growing pattern of terrorist networks in the region, chose not to firmly contest Indonesia’s denials of having terrorists within its shores long before the attacks.¹² This process is a well-known “confidence-building” practice within ASEAN and ARF circles in order to “project a facade of solidarity rather than deal with contentious issues.”¹³ This process exemplifies the process over action principle inherent in the ASEAN philosophy. This is another typical ASEAN attitude of avoiding contentious issues and hoping that they will resolve by themselves or diminish over time. This practice is akin to “sweeping dirt under the carpet,” and the bombings have ultimately exposed this accumulated dirt from under the carpet.¹⁴

US Strategy of Pre-emption

The Sep 11 attacks have fundamentally changed the world’s perception of radicalism and international terrorism. More specifically, these attacks have prompted the US to re-orient its strategic security perspectives, generating worldwide controversy. Central to the controversy is the concept of pre-emption in President Bush’s 2002 National Security Strategy.¹⁵ Although the general population of Muslims in the ASEAN states is a moderate group, the arrests of several JI members in Malaysia and Singapore, along with the Bali terrorist bombings, showed strong links to the hotly pursued Al Qaeda organization. These arrests and bombings constitute overwhelming evidence that Al Qaeda operatives are shifting into Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, both ASEAN and ARF have traditionally been consultative rather than executive organizations, and therefore were not equipped to physically enforce measures to counter this growing security

threat. The consultative approach does not work with non-state, radical entities such as terrorist networks. In fact, this approach will only work in their favor, whose aims are often center upon intimidation. By piecing together the rise of Al Qaeda networks in ASEAN, the inaptness of the ARF security apparatus in dealing with intra-regional terrorist threats, and a hegemonic US with its strategy of pre-emption, it is clear why ASEAN states are increasingly concerned about their collective incompetence in dealing with the future international security environment.

As the world is still grappling with the longer-term implications of the US concept of pre-emption, the US has unleashed its military power against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in Mar 2003. There has been much debate about the legality of this war, especially when it is launched in the face of strong disagreements by key permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.¹⁶ However, it is the spillover effect of the pre-emptive concept on other nations, like China, India, or even North Korea, which will become a greater cause for concern within ASEAN. In other words, there is a worry that the US pre-emption strategy may “lower the bar” for these nations and encourage them to “feel freer to act militarily.”¹⁷ A case in point is the reaction of Australian Prime Minister John Howard in the wake of the Bali bombings. He reiterated that Australia has “the right to launch preemptive strikes against terrorist groups harbored in foreign countries, should it feel under threat of attack.”¹⁸ Similarly, India has started talking about striking Pakistan first, viewing Pakistan as another Iraq. Asserting the same right of pre-emptive war as the US, Indian officials have accused the US of failing to end Pakistan's support for guerrillas in Indian-controlled areas of Kashmir and warned that India may be forced to take limited military action against its nuclear-armed neighbor.¹⁹

If this escalation continues, and the concept of pre-emption catches on with the major powers in the world, it will heighten anxieties across ASEAN, a region surrounded by several of

these major powers. Without suitable enforcement mechanisms, the ARF is ill-equipped to deal with any such hostility. This seemingly lack of self-protection measures may tempt greater US intervention to take place in the future.

Lastly, rising above all the ongoing legality debates of the war, political leaders in ASEAN are also beginning to feel concerned that the moderate Muslim majority could be radicalized by the war.²⁰ Regardless of what the American or local governments say, the war is being widely seen as an attack on Islam. There is anger at America's unilateral decisions against Iraq. As pointed out by Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, this is because many Muslims interpret the attack on Iraq as being "anti-Muslim rather than being anti-terror."²¹ Syafii Maarif, the head of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization, supports his comment, saying that, "in Indonesia, radicalism will increase because they will see an invasion as another example of America's neo-imperialism."²² Indonesia, in particular, has shown little Islamic fervor in its foreign policy. The Megawati government has tried to craft a cautious, pragmatic policy approach, steering a path between Islamic friends and Western economic interests. Such policy has annoyed Islamic communities in Indonesia, who have wanted to see more passion in policy. Major events in Palestine, Mindanao, and Bosnia-Herzegovina have provoked storms of protests and demonstrations from Islamic leaders and organizations. The government has been able to accommodate them in the past, but this time it may be more difficult. Recent mass demonstrations in Jakarta indicate the depth of hatred feeling within the general community. The biggest worry is that the renewed radicalism will result in a re-enactment of last year's Bali bombings before the regional institutions can find an effective solution to counter global terrorism.

Notes

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Chapter 4

Vision for A New Security Posture

The ASEAN alliance has endorsed a long-term vision for itself. Known as the “ASEAN Vision 2020,” it was officiated in Dec 1997 (See Appendix A).¹ A similar vision for the ARF has not been established. This chapter will start by defining a forward-looking vision for the ARF. Over the past decade, ASEAN has successfully promoted the ARF as an important security apparatus within the region. Through ARF’s dialogue partners, its influence has also spread beyond ASEAN into the East Asian and Asia Pacific arenas. Therefore, efforts at defining an effective security posture for the ASEAN region will start with the transformation of the ARF. Taking into account the current and future security landscapes in Southeast Asia, the second half of this chapter will propose a transformation roadmap based on a “three-pronged approach,” that will transform the Principle, Process, and Perspective of the ARF.

The ASEAN Vision 2020

The ASEAN Vision 2020 was formulated in Dec 1997. The document states that the “vision is of ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.”² Although the vision provides significant guidance in future social and economic development, it does not include a security vision of the future in relation to the ARF security posture. It does, however, provide a short guideline statement, envisioning the

ARF as an “established means for confidence-building and preventive diplomacy and for promoting conflict-resolution.”³ In view that this document was drafted about six years ago, it is reasonable to argue that the multitude of drastic events that have happened after 1997 provide strong impetus for a review of that statement in order for the ARF to remain relevant to the times.

Indeed, according to the previous ASEAN secretary-general Rodolfo Severino, he indicated that despite the transformation plan in Vision 2020, “ASEAN has no clear idea where it is going and is [still] stuck in [a] framework [of] agreements, work programmes and master plans.”⁴ He also noted that a major reason for this is a lack of a clear destination. However, he qualifies that once a clear destination is determined, ASEAN will be able to move faster and more smoothly towards economic integration. Similarly, a vision of the ARF will be needed to identify a clear destination for the rest of the transformation efforts to take place.

The ARF Vision – A Proposal

Based on the security landscapes that will impinge the region in the future, this paper proposes the following vision for the ARF:

The ARF is to become an integrated security institution that directs and coordinates regional security efforts in peace or crisis so as to advance ASEAN’s interests in pursuit of a peaceful, free and neutral ASEAN community.

This proposed vision outlines a clear destination for the ARF. Back in 1994 when the ARF was established, its ASEAN custodians expected it “to become an effective consultative Asia-Pacific Forum for promoting open dialogue on political and security cooperation in the region.”⁵ Therefore, there are indeed a number of profound differences between the proposed future vision and the original expectations of the ARF. First, this vision calls for the ARF to be

an integrated security institution. It needs to integrate the unique capabilities of the security resources coming from all the member states, to achieve synergy and unity of effort to deal effectively with the security environment. The vision also espouses a transformation of the ARF from a “consultative” to an “executive” organization. In doing so, the ARF will become a more proactive institution, which will then be able to direct and coordinate security activities. The vision also requires that the ARF be regionally resilient as an instrument in crises as it is in peacetime. Finally, the vision relates the role of the ARF closely with the interests of ASEAN, particularly in its support for the ZOPFAN treaty in ensuring peace, freedom and neutrality.

To realize this vision, a three-pronged transformation plan is proposed. The plan calls for the transformation to take place at three levels of the ARF: Principle, Process and Perspective. Transforming the principle of non-interference to enhanced interaction will provide the integrative fundamentals needed to build up the vision. Transforming the current confidence-building process to a more simultaneous process that includes confidence building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution will create a highly flexible and responsive security posture in dealing with security issues both in peacetime as well as during crises. Finally, transforming the perspective of the ARF from a consensus-building forum into a full-fledged and engaging security institution, inspired by key imperatives of NATO, will expand its institutional capacity and allow it to collectively direct and coordinate security efforts with greater authority and legitimacy.

Transforming the ARF Principle

Since their inceptions, the key to cooperation within ASEAN and ARF with regard to security has always been based on non-interference. It has been a very successful principle for two main reasons. First, the non-interference approach is very well regarded by regional political

leaders. The extensive colonial periods of the 19th century and the sufferings brought about by the Second World War have provided more than enough experiences of external interference to the region for it to deeply appreciate the values of living amidst a non-interfering environment. The non-interference principle is held with such reverence that sometimes, even a slight public criticism on another state's domestic issues is easily construed as an insensitive act of interference. Second, the booming economic outlook coupled with the benign security climate in the late-20th century has created conditions that are favorable for a non-interference policy to thrive. Senior political leaders, like the former ASEAN secretary-general, Severino, are keenly aware of this providential match of policy and environment that has allowed non-interference to gain its acceptance within the region. Using the root causes of the financial crisis as an example, he pointed out that, "these problems have been around for a long time, [but] in the past, when Asia thrived, it did so despite a lack of transparency, and with cronyism deeply in place."⁶

However, as reflected earlier in chapter three, analysis of the Asian financial crisis, the East Timor crisis, and the Bali bombings has shown that non-interference has become less effective in modern times. It has to transform to remain relevant against highly inter-connected security challenges in the near future. This call for transformation of the non-interference principle is not new. In the 1998 ARF Ministerial Conference at the height of the financial crisis, Surin Pitsuwan, the former Thai foreign minister, spoke of a need for a change of policy. Members later agreed on a more gradual change to "enhanced interaction."⁷ Implicit in the notion of enhanced interaction is that it becomes unrealistic to sustain non-interference if domestic instability in one country spills beyond its borders and undermines the security of its neighbors, possibly creating bigger conflicts. In other words, members should be free to raise issues regarding a country's internal affairs as long as those issues have an impact on other

member countries. It is a positive sign to move in the right direction in keeping the ARF relevant.

The effectiveness of enhanced interaction over non-interference can be seen in several instances in today's security problems. The fight against the spread of global terrorism is one good instance. The ARF would probably have responded more effectively against terrorist activities like the Bali bombings, if there had been greater willingness for cross-border interactions and sharing of intelligence information between ASEAN member states. In addition, the vast intelligence and information superiorities of the more advanced dialogue partners, like the US, the EU or Australia, could be exploited to the region's advantage. These external networks could be tapped to enhance early and accurate identification of an imminent terrorist threat coming into the ASEAN region, and more local intelligence facilities within ASEAN could then be employed to detect and eliminate the threat before it can achieve its objectives.

The current spread of the highly contagious Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) viral infection across Asia and the rest of the world is another modern illustration of the importance of cross-border responses and information sharing among worldwide communities. The policy of non-interference fails miserably to control the rapidly spreading killer disease, particularly when a number of Asian states, including some in ASEAN, have resorted to blocking or censoring the release of key information in order to "save face" or protect their weakening economies.⁸ The inherent characteristics of enhanced interaction, such as cross-border transparency and information sharing, will facilitate forthcoming communications between the affected regions and states to come together as a team to fight and contain the virus in all ways possible. This is significantly more effective than a non-interfering approach in which information, particularly domestic infection rates, is not forthcoming and difficult to be solicited.

Therefore, if the ARF, together with the larger ASEAN grouping, adopts the proactive approach of enhanced interaction, it will be able to meet future security challenges head-on, and emerge to become a stronger and more integrated organization.

Transforming the ARF Process

The next transformation targets the ARF process. As a security forum, it is intended to evolve along three stages: the promotion of confidence building measures, the development of preventive diplomacy mechanisms, and finally, the development of conflict-resolution mechanisms (See Appendix B).⁹ The gradual approach in realizing these processes implies that the three stages are intended to develop along sequentially. Thus far, the ARF has made significant progress in the first stage of promoting confidence-building measures. However, there has not been any clear indication as to when the ARF will embark on the next stage of developing preventive diplomacy, or even on the final stage of dealing with conflict resolution. With the advent of current security issues like global terrorism, the North Korean nuclear stand-off, and East Timor's bloody struggle for independence, some of the measures needed to deal with these issues lie in the latter two stages of the ARF process. Therefore, the ARF process is in danger of falling behind the security curve, and is increasingly being overwhelmed by the rapid pace of events happening around the region. A new approach is needed to sharpen the ARF process so that it can move forward with all its three initiatives and respond promptly to regional security concerns in the future.

Indeed, there has been much pressure from regional policymakers and security analysts urging ASEAN governments to move the ARF towards a preventive diplomacy stage, especially when the forum is already reaching a mature age of ten years since its inception.¹⁰ An array of non-governmental security think tanks, like the Center for Strategic and International Studies

(CSIS) and the Council of Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), have provided numerous recommendations to ASEAN to move the ARF forward in its initiatives. Thus far, only a working definition has been adopted by ASEAN with the assistance of CSCAP, stating that preventive diplomacy is:

“Consensual diplomatic and political action taken by sovereign states with the consent of all directly involved parties: to help prevent disputes and conflicts from arising between states that could potentially pose a threat to regional peace and stability; to help prevent such disputes and conflicts from escalating into armed confrontation; and to help minimize the impact of such disputes and conflicts on the region.”¹¹

Further, ASEAN also identified a number of basic principles for the process. These included the fact that it should be non-coercive, timely, voluntary, and based on trust, confidence, consensus, and non-interference. Apart from a working definition and principles, however, there has not been much real progress. The fact is that there is some resistance against the ARF making the transition. Firstly, there are still some reservations among ASEAN states that preventive diplomacy would pave the way for the ARF members to intervene unnecessarily in their internal affairs. Secondly, because several participant members, like the EU and the US, are considered as “outsiders” vis-à-vis the Asia Pacific region, some states view preventive diplomacy as merely an unfair process of allowing non-regional states to exert an asymmetric influence over the regional states. Thirdly, some member states find fault with some of the working principles, such as the basis of non-interference contradicting with the practice of preventive diplomacy. Finally, some states consider confidence-building measures to be a passive element of preventive diplomacy. As a result, there is an overlap between the first two stages of the ARF, giving rise to the hesitation of defining a clear distinction between them.¹² In

view of the three-pronged approach to transforming the ARF, several of these elements of resistance can easily be resolved once the transformation of non-interference into enhanced interaction begins. The promotion of cross-border transparency and information sharing will be instrumental in shaping some of the key principles of preventive diplomacy, like being timely, and building trust and confidence.

Finally, even if the ARF manages to move forward into preventive diplomacy, there remains the question of when it should move into conflict resolution. The 1995 ARF Concept Paper states “it is not envisaged that the ARF would establish mechanisms in conflict resolution in the immediate future.”¹³ Many states view that it will take a long time for the ARF to be able to handle the resolution of conflicts, due to the fact that the ARF is still in its infancy, and as a relative comparison, it took Europe decades before it developed arms-control and disarmament agreements between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In addition, there is still much deep-seated historical suspicion and many outstanding territorial disputes in the region and hardly any tradition of intra-state military cooperation.¹⁴ The inability of the ARF in reacting promptly to the 1999 East Timor crisis is testimony to the accuracy of this critical view.

Considering all these factors, one of the possible ways to address the impasse of the ARF process is to move forward on all three initiatives simultaneously instead of sequentially. This option eliminates the dilemma of when to stop the building of confidence measures and when to start developing preventive diplomacy, as all the initiatives are being worked on at the same time. Likewise, the same holds true between preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. The three stages may not have to progress evenly; each can progress at a pace appropriate to that stage vis-à-vis the prevailing security climate. For example, if the North Korean nuclear crisis were to blow up in proportion, the ARF can focus more efforts at developing its conflict

resolution mechanisms in response to that threat. While there may still be efforts at building confidence and preventive diplomacy, the ARF has the option to balance the level of efforts used for all three initiatives in response to the criticality of the situation. This option, however, will drive the need to expand the ARF's institutional capacity in order to accommodate the increased demands of simultaneous attention. However, the main advantage of this option is that it will transform the ARF into a robust organization with a highly flexible and responsive security posture, and it will allow the ARF to stay on top of most modern-day security situations.

Transforming the ARF Perspective

This final initiative strives to transform the current perspective of the ARF from a mere consensus-forming forum to a full-fledged engaging and outward-looking security institution. In other words, this step calls for the institutionalization of the ARF. It will involve a bold organizational restructuring of the ARF to expand its institutional capacity to meet future challenges and turn it into an institution with a more pronounced military orientation, characterized by key imperatives of NATO.

The ARF has always been perceived to be a weak regional security forum. Its limiting institutional capacity has resulted in its inability to deal effectively with several security issues within the region. A 2001 conference of Southeast Asian specialists held in Honolulu confirmed this perception, stating that the ARF is beset with severe limitations in its operational capability to lead cooperative actions to address regional security concerns.¹⁵ Former Commander USPACOM, Admiral Dennis Blair, also echoed his concern on the effectiveness of the ARF to counter security risks, saying that “long on talk and short on action, the region's major multilateral bodies must improve their effectiveness to combat regional security threats; it is time to move from summits to secretariats, from talk to permanent and competent staffs.”¹⁶ He urged

that the ARF be developed into a “security community” to encourage countries to talk and train together, so they could work through the challenges before they became problems.

The main argument of the ARF’s apparent lack of operational effectiveness lies in the fact that it is really designed only to be a non-operational confidence-building vehicle. In other words, it is built on the premise that process is more important than action. Another reason for the ARF’s lack of operational initiative is that it does not own any defense or military treaty; the region has very few security alliances with a military orientation. The only strong multilateral security organization in Southeast Asia today is the FPDA formed since 1971 for the specific reason of defending Malaysia and Singapore against an aggressive Sukarno’s regime in Indonesia.¹⁷ Apart from the FPDA, there is only a loose collection of other smaller, mostly bilateral, ad-hoc security arrangements among the members for specific defense or security reasons. Moreover, the two key ASEAN strategic level treaties, the ZOPFAN and the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, do not include enforcement requirements, and are therefore more like tacit memorandums of agreement.

To start the ARF strengthening initiative, NATO will be used as a model for its transformation.¹⁸ In particular, the ARF perspective will reflect upon three key imperatives of NATO that have been instrumental to its success as a credible security alliance that has withstood the test of time, tensions, and conflicts.

Firstly, the ARF needs to enhance its military orientation. NATO consists of both civilian and military branches. The NATO Military Committee, which consists of military chiefs of staff or other representatives of the NATO states, reports to the North Atlantic Council in the civilian branch. It is assigned with standing forces contributed by the various NATO states which are capable of being rapidly deployed to tackle any security issue within Europe’s area of concern.¹⁹

Similarly, the ARF needs to restructure its organization to include a military branch staffed by military personnel from the ASEAN states. The ARF also needs standing forces to be assigned. Military staffs will then be able to plan and coordinate security efforts against unexpected or fast-emerging security crises in the region. The availability of standing forces will shorten the response times required to resolve time-sensitive crises, such as terrorist-related activities. In addition, an integrated military structure in the ARF provides the regional militaries with an invaluable and unprecedented opportunity to interact with each other on a more regular and professional basis. By working and training together, they can better understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, and thereby build greater mutual trust, transparency, as well as interoperability values. Overall, looking from a strategic perspective, a robust ARF with a visibly greater military orientation is important to the region, as it will project a stronger and more deterrent security posture against any would-be adversary or hostile intent.

Secondly, the ARF needs to consolidate all relevant security treaties or alliances within the region into its area of responsibility. In the case of the NATO treaty, it acts as the main alliance that deals with all its member states' security issues, regardless of whether these issues are of external or intra-regional origins. The treaty upholds their individual rights as well as their international obligations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. It commits each member country to sharing the risks and responsibilities as well as the benefits of collective security, and requires of each of them the undertaking not to enter into any other international commitment which might conflict with the treaty. Article Five of the treaty also assures that an armed attack on one or more members of NATO will be deemed an attack against them all.²⁰ The ARF should adopt such an arrangement. This will mean that the ARF will act as the central security agency for ASEAN, and member states will funnel all security issues through their

respective representations into the institution. It will also be responsible for a collective self-defense of any member of ASEAN in trouble. In effect, such an arrangement improves integration and unity of effort of the region in dealing with security issues. More importantly, it confers the ARF with greater authority and legitimacy in confronting security challenges.

Lastly, the ARF needs to broaden its strategic horizons to seek peace and stability beyond the ASEAN borders. This approach is akin to the principles of NATO Enlargement – an open and continuous process towards the alliance’s basic goal of enhancing security and extending stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area, and complementing broader trends towards integration. NATO Enlargement was a consequence of the changed security environment in post-Cold War Europe, and has countries like Poland and Hungary have since joined the alliance. As a result, this enlargement has helped to strengthen and broaden the transatlantic partnership.²¹ The current organizational structure of the ARF, with its peripheral ring of Asia-Pacific dialogue partners like Japan and China, has laid the groundwork for an analogous “ARF Enlargement.” The transition into a broader network of peace and stability partnership must remain an open and continuous process. In particular, this process will allow newly formed countries within the region, like East Timor, to develop at their own paces, and join the alliance at anytime when they are ready to do so. More importantly, as the world becomes increasingly inter-connected, it will also allow existing non-member countries in the Pacific Rim to come into alliance with the ARF. The inclusion of North Korea as an ARF dialogue partner in Jul 2000 has shown the potential of the ARF as a significant arena for addressing extra-regional security concerns. The next step in the process is to gradually institutionalize these crucial dialogue partners into main stream ARF members, in the hope that their security policies will progressively align with the collective interests of the rest of the ARF membership in seeking long term peace and stability.

Notes

¹ Appendix A of this paper provides a copy of the ASEAN Vision 2020 Declaration Paper.

² Ibid., p. 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “*Outgoing sec-gen makes stinging indictment of ASEAN,*” Business Times article, Nov 5, 2002, available online from business-times.asia1.com.sg.

⁵ “*Objectives of the ARF,*” ASEAN Regional Forum, available online from www.aseansec.org.

⁶ Ching, Frank, “*Eye on Asia – ASEAN at a crossroads,*” Far Eastern Economic Review article, Aug 13, 1998, available online from www.feer.com.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Macan-Markar, Marwaan, “*Asian countries save face, battle SARS,*” Asia Times article, Apr 8, 2003, available online from www.atimes.com.

⁹ “*The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper,*” available online from www.aseansec.org/3635. See also Appendix B.

¹⁰ Quilop, Jose G., “*Moving toward Preventive Diplomacy: Challenges and Prospects for the ARF,*” Chapter 2 of Charting a Course for the ASEAN Regional Forum, available online from www.aseansec.org/3571.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “*Stage III – Conflict Resolution,*” The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper, available online from www.aseansec.org/3635.

¹⁴ Dibb, Paul, “*The Prospects for Southeast Asia’s Security,*” Working Paper No. 347, Strategic Defence Studies Centre, Jun 2000, p. 8-9.

¹⁵ Halloran, Richard, “*Power Game,*” Asia 2001 Yearbook, Far Eastern Economic Review, 2001, p. 17.

¹⁶ “*ASEAN moving 'too slowly' to combat Asia's security risks,*” The Straits Times article, Dec 10, 2002, available online from <http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg>.

¹⁷ Dibb, Paul, p. 8-9.

¹⁸ NATO was formed in 1949 to deter an all-out attack by the communist Soviet Union. More history of NATO can be found the World Book Encyclopedia, CD-Rom edition, 1997, and available online from www.nato.int.

¹⁹ Source: World Book Encyclopedia, CD-Rom edition, 1997.

²⁰ “*The Origins of the Alliance,*” NATO Handbook, Chapter One, available online from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/hb0101.htm>.

²¹ “*Enlarging the Alliance – New Members,*” Article in the agenda for the NATO Prague Summit, Nov 21-22, 2002, available online from http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0211-prague/in_focus/enlargement/index.htm.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Southeast Asia has come a long way since the end of World War II. The region has experienced a wide array of security issues, ranging from ideological struggles between democratic freedom and communist oppression to widespread economic collapse. Despite all these unfortunate encounters, the region has proven itself time and again, through its inherent resilience, as it re-adapted in as many ways to respond to these challenges.

One of the most notable responses that have emerged from the region is the creation of the ASEAN alliance. Since its inception, ASEAN has been instrumental as a collective economic and political platform that has held the region together during its most difficult formative years. History shows that ASEAN has not only successfully steered the region away from potentially irreversible destruction on many occasions, but also in later years, contributed directly to the region's harmony and economic progress.

The post-Cold War era brings about changes to the region's security climate, characterized by uncertainties in the abrupt absence of a bipolar alignment of world powers. The ARF becomes ASEAN's attempt to re-establish regional resilience and stability, and it does so by adopting a consensus-forming posture to build confidence and transparency among its several East Asian and EU dialogue partners. Throughout the mid-1990s, the twin pillars of ASEAN and ARF, symbolizing twin pillars of economics and security in Southeast Asia, achieved remarkable

successes in their overall objectives. Indeed, ASEAN and ARF, as a collective pair of economic and security institutions, have enabled smaller and weaker member states to have a big voice and exert greater influences over extra-regional matters, especially when dealing with external major powers, like China, Japan or even the US.

Then, as the new millennium arrived, the region began to encounter a series of unprecedented and non-traditional security issues. These “unconventional shocks,” like the Asian financial crisis, the East Timor hostility, and the Bali terrorist bombings, characterized the security landscape of the new millennium. Cracks are beginning to form in the fundamental structures of ASEAN and ARF, as their effectiveness in dealing with these issues becomes increasingly questionable. In fact, the financial fallout in the region signifies the first security breach of these twin protective pillars, paving the way for more breaches through the East Timor hostility and Bali bombings. Left unchecked, these security breaches, particularly against the structures of the ARF, will only escalate with the onslaught of increasing number of such crises in the future.

Finally, the unfolding of the US strategy of pre-emption in its war against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in 2003 heightened anxieties across ASEAN. ASEAN states are worried about how this more assertive US foreign policy will unfold itself within the region, which is plagued by rising terrorist activities linked to the infamous Al Qaeda organization. More importantly, they are also worried about the increasing tendencies of neighboring major powers in adopting similar pre-emptive measures in dealing with regional security issues, and the possible radicalization of ASEAN’s moderate Muslim population.

Therefore, there is a pressing need to transform the ARF comprehensively and fundamentally in order to continue to project a strong security posture amidst such challenging

times. A new vision for the ARF is proposed as a response to the new challenges. The vision calls for a bold three-pronged transformation to take place at three distinct levels: Principle, Process and Perspective. Transforming the principle of non-interference to enhanced interaction will provide the integrative fundamentals needed in building up the vision. Transforming the current confidence-building process to a more simultaneous process that includes confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution will create a highly flexible and responsive security posture in dealing with security issues both in peacetime as well as during crises. Finally, transforming the perspective of the ARF from a consensus-building forum into a full-fledged and engaging security institution, inspired by key imperatives of NATO, will expand its institutional capacity and allow it to collectively direct and coordinate security efforts with greater authority and legitimacy.

Finally, some of these initiatives are not new. What is new and important to understand, however, is that these three ARF initiatives are deeply inter-connected with one another; they operate together as an integrated package. As a result, they must all be transformed at the same time in order to unleash their combined synergetic effects. Only then can the ARF effectively make the grade to stay on top of the modern security climate of unconventional shocks, and be transformed into a more resilient and engaging security apparatus with a clear destination to ensure future peace and stability of ASEAN, as well as the East Asian and Asia Pacific regions.

Appendix A

ASEAN VISION 2020

Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 1997

We, the Heads of State/Government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, gather today in Kuala Lumpur to reaffirm our commitment to the aims and purposes of the Association as set forth in the Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967, in particular to promote regional cooperation in Southeast Asia in the spirit of equality and partnership and thereby contribute towards peace, progress and prosperity in the region.

We in ASEAN have created a community of Southeast Asian nations at peace with one another and at peace with the world, rapidly achieving prosperity for our peoples and steadily improving their lives. Our rich diversity has provided the strength and inspiration to us to help one another foster a strong sense of community.

We are now a market of around 500 million people with a combined gross domestic product of US\$600 billion. We have achieved considerable results in the economic field, such as high economic growth, stability and significant poverty alleviation over the past few years. Members have enjoyed substantial trade and investment flows from significant liberalization measures.

We resolve to build upon these achievements.

Now, as we approach the 21st century, thirty years after the birth of ASEAN, we gather to chart a vision for ASEAN on the basis of today's realities and prospects in the decades leading to the Year 2020.

That vision is of ASEAN as a concert of Southeast Asian nations, outward looking, living in peace, stability and prosperity, bonded together in partnership in dynamic development and in a community of caring societies.

A Concert of Southeast Asian Nations

We envision the ASEAN region to be, in 2020, in full reality, a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, as envisaged in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 1971.

ASEAN shall have, by the year 2020, established a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia where each nation is at peace with itself and where the causes for conflict have been eliminated, through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law and through the strengthening of national and regional resilience.

We envision a Southeast Asia where territorial and other disputes are resolved by peaceful means.

We envision the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia functioning fully as a binding code of conduct for our governments and peoples, to which other states with interests in the region adhere.

We envision a Southeast Asia free from nuclear weapons, with all the Nuclear Weapon States committed to the purposes of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty through their adherence to its Protocol. We also envision our region free from all other weapons of mass destruction.

We envision our rich human and natural resources contributing to our development and shared prosperity.

We envision the ASEAN Regional Forum as an established means for confidence-building and preventive diplomacy and for promoting conflict-resolution.

We envision a Southeast Asia where our mountains, rivers and seas no longer divide us but link us together in friendship, cooperation and commerce.

We see ASEAN as an effective force for peace, justice and moderation in the Asia-Pacific and in the world.

A Partnership in Dynamic Development

We resolve to chart a new direction towards the year 2020 called, ASEAN 2020: Partnership in Dynamic Development which will forge closer economic integration within ASEAN.

We reiterate our resolve to enhance ASEAN economic cooperation through economic development strategies, which are in line with the aspiration of our respective peoples, which put emphasis on sustainable and equitable growth, and enhance national as well as regional resilience.

We pledge to sustain ASEAN's high economic performance by building upon the foundation of our existing cooperation efforts, consolidating our achievements, expanding our collective efforts and enhancing mutual assistance.

We commit ourselves to moving towards closer cohesion and economic integration, narrowing the gap in the level of development among Member Countries, ensuring that the multilateral trading system remains fair and open, and achieving global competitiveness.

We will create a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN Economic Region in which there is a free flow of goods, services and investments, a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities.

We resolve, inter-alia, to undertake the following:

- Maintain regional macroeconomic and financial stability by promoting closer consultations in macroeconomic and financial policies.
- Advance economic integration and cooperation by undertaking the following general strategies: fully implement the ASEAN Free Trade Area and accelerate liberalization of trade in services, realize the ASEAN Investment Area by 2010 and free flow of investments by 2020; intensify and expand sub-regional cooperation in existing and new sub-regional growth areas; further consolidate and expand extra-ASEAN regional linkages for mutual benefit cooperate to strengthen the multilateral trading system, and reinforce the role of the business sector as the engine of growth.
- Promote a modern and competitive small and medium enterprises (SME) sector in ASEAN which will contribute to the industrial development and efficiency of the region.
- Accelerate the free flow of professional and other services in the region.
- Promote financial sector liberalization and closer cooperation in money and capital market, tax, insurance and customs matters as well as closer consultations in macroeconomic and financial policies.
- Accelerate the development of science and technology including information technology by establishing a regional information technology network and centers of excellence for dissemination of and easy access to data and information.

- Establish interconnecting arrangements in the field of energy and utilities for electricity, natural gas and water within ASEAN through the ASEAN Power Grid and a Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline and Water Pipeline, and promote cooperation in energy efficiency and conservation, as well as the development of new and renewable energy resources.
- Enhance food security and international competitiveness of food, agricultural and forest products, to make ASEAN a leading producer of these products, and promote the forestry sector as a model in forest management, conservation and sustainable development.
- Meet the ever increasing demand for improved infrastructure and communications by developing an integrated and harmonized trans-ASEAN transportation network and harnessing technology advances in telecommunication and information technology, especially in linking the planned information highways/multimedia corridors in ASEAN, promoting open sky policy, developing multi-modal transport, facilitating goods in transit and integrating telecommunications networks through greater interconnectivity, coordination of frequencies and mutual recognition of equipment-type approval procedures.
- Enhance human resource development in all sectors of the economy through quality education, upgrading of skills and capabilities and training.
- Work towards a world class standards and conformance system that will provide a harmonized system to facilitate the free flow of ASEAN trade while meeting health, safety and environmental needs.
- Use the ASEAN Foundation as one of the instruments to address issues of unequal economic development, poverty and socioeconomic disparities.
- Promote an ASEAN customs partnership for world class standards and excellence in efficiency, professionalism and service, and uniformity through harmonised procedures, to

promote trade and investment and to protect the health and well-being of the ASEAN community,

- Enhance intra-ASEAN trade and investment in the mineral sector and to contribute towards a technologically competent ASEAN through closer networking and sharing of information on mineral and geosciences as well as to enhance cooperation and partnership with dialogue partners to facilitate the development and transfer of technology in the mineral sector, particularly in the downstream research and the geosciences and to develop appropriate mechanism for these.

A Community of Caring Societies

We envision the entire Southeast Asia to be, by 2020, an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity.

We see vibrant and open ASEAN societies consistent with their respective national identities, where all people enjoy equitable access to opportunities for total human development regardless of gender, race, religion, language, or social and cultural background.

We envision a socially cohesive and caring ASEAN where hunger, malnutrition, deprivation and poverty are no longer basic problems, where strong families as the basic units of society tend to their members particularly the children, youth, women and elderly; and where the civil society is empowered and gives special attention to the disadvantaged, disabled and marginalized and where social justice and the rule of law reign.

We see well before 2020 a Southeast Asia free of illicit drugs, free of their production, processing, trafficking and use.

We envision a technologically competitive ASEAN competent in strategic and enabling technologies, with an adequate pool of technologically qualified and trained manpower, and strong networks of scientific and technological institutions and centers of excellence.

We envision a clean and green ASEAN with fully established mechanisms for sustainable development to ensure the protection of the region's environment, the sustainability of its natural resources, and the high quality of life of its peoples.

We envision the evolution in Southeast Asia of agreed rules of behavior and cooperative measures to deal with problems that can be met only on a regional scale, including environmental pollution and degradation, drug trafficking, trafficking in women and children, and other transnational crimes.

We envision our nations being governed with the consent and greater participation of the people with its focus on the welfare and dignity of the human person and the good of the community.

We resolve to develop and strengthen ASEAN's institutions and mechanisms to enable ASEAN to realize the vision and respond to the challenges of the coming century. We also see the need for a strengthened ASEAN Secretariat with an enhanced role to support the realization of our vision.

An Outward-Looking ASEAN

We see an outward-looking ASEAN playing a pivotal role in the international fora, and advancing ASEAN's common interests. We envision ASEAN having an intensified relationship with its Dialogue Partners and other regional organizations based on equal partnership and mutual respect.

Conclusion

We pledge to our peoples our determination and commitment to bringing this ASEAN Vision for the Year 2020 into reality.

Kuala Lumpur
15 December 1997

Appendix B

The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper (1995)

Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. For the first time in a century or more, the guns are virtually silent. There is a growing trend among the states in the region to enhance dialogue on political and security cooperation. The Asia-Pacific is also the most dynamic region of the world in terms of economic growth. The center of the world's economic gravity is shifting into the region. The main challenge of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is to sustain and enhance this peace and prosperity.

2. This is not an easy challenge. The region has experienced some of the most disastrous wars of the twentieth century. It is also a remarkably diverse region where big and small countries co-exist. They differ significantly in levels of development. There are cultural, ethnic, religious and historical differences to overcome. Habits of cooperation are not deep-seated in some parts of the region.

3. ASEAN has a pivotal role to play in the ARF. It has a demonstrable record of enhancing regional cooperation in the most diverse sub-region of the Asia-Pacific. It has also fostered habits of cooperation and provided the catalyst for encouraging regional cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific region. The annual ASEAN Ministerial Meetings have contributed significantly to

the positive regional environment today. There would be great hope for the Asia-Pacific if the whole region could emulate ASEAN's record of enhancing the peace and prosperity of its participants.

4. Although ASEAN has undertaken the obligation to be the primary driving force of the ARF, a successful ARF requires the active participation and cooperation of all participants. ASEAN must always be sensitive to and take into account the interests and concerns of all ARF participants.

The Challenges

5. To successfully preserve and enhance the peace and prosperity of the region, the ARF must dispassionately analyze the key challenges facing the region. Firstly, it should acknowledge that periods of rapid economic growth are often accompanied by significant shifts in power relations. This can lead to conflict. The ARF will have to carefully manage these transitions to preserve the peace. Secondly, the region is remarkably diverse. The ARF should recognize and accept the different approaches to peace and security and try to forge a consensual approach to security issues. Thirdly, the region has a residue unresolved territorial and other differences. Any one of these could spark conflagration that could undermine the peace and prosperity of the region. Over time, the ARF will have to gradually defuse these potential problems.

6. It would be unwise for a young and fragile process like the ARF to tackle all these challenges simultaneously. A gradual evolutionary approach is required. This evolution can take place in three stages:

Stage I: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

Stage II: Development of Preventive Diplomacy Mechanisms

Stage III: Development of Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms

7. The participants of the first ARF Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in July 1994 agreed on "the need to develop a more predictable and constructive pattern of relations for the Asia-Pacific region". In its initial phase, the ARF should therefore concentrate on enhancing, the trust and confidence amongst participants and thereby foster a regional environment conducive to maintaining the peace and prosperity of the region.

Stage I: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

8. In promoting confidence-building measures, the ARF may adopt two complementary approaches. The first approach derives from ASEAN's experience, which provides a valuable and proven guide for the ARF. ASEAN has succeeded in reducing, tensions among, its member states, promoting region cooperation and creating a regional climate conducive to peace and prosperity without the implementation of explicit confidence-building measures, achieving conditions approximating those envisaged in the Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The concepts of ZOPFAN and its essential component, the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANFWZ), are significantly contributing to regional peace and stability. ASEAN's well established practices of consultation and consensus (musyawarah and mufakat) have been significantly enhanced by the regular exchanges of high-level visits among ASEAN countries. This pattern of regular visits has effectively developed into a preventive diplomacy channel. In the Asian context, there is some merit to the ASEAN approach. It emphasizes the need to develop trust and confidence among neighboring states.

9. The principles of good neighborliness, which are elaborated in the concept of ZOPFAN, are enshrined in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). One simple concrete way of expanding the ASEAN experience is to encourage the ARF participants to associate themselves with the TAC. It is significant that the first ARF meeting in Bangkok

agreed to "endorse the purposes and principles of ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and political and security cooperation."

10. The second approach is the implementation of concrete confidence-building measures. The first ARF meeting, in Bangkok entrusted the next Chairman of the ARF, Brunei Darussalam, to study all the ideas presented by ARF participants and to also study other relevant internationally recognized norms, principles and practices. After extensive consultations, the ASEAN countries have prepared two lists of confidence-building measures. The first list (Annex A) spells out measures which can be explored and implemented by ARF participants in the immediate future. The second list (Annex B) 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. These lists include possible preventive diplomacy and other measures.

11. Given the delicate nature of many of the subjects being considered by the ARF, there is merit in moving, the ARF process along two tracks. Track One activities will be carried out by governments. Track Two activities will be carried out by strategic institutes and non-government organizations in the region, such as ASEAN-ISIS and CSCAP. To be meaningful and relevant, the Track Two activities may focus, as much as possible, on the current concerns of the ARF. The synergy between the two tracks would contribute greatly to confidence-building measures in the region. Over time, these Track Two activities should result in the creation of a sense of community among participants of those activities.

Moving Beyond Stage 1

12. There remains a residue of unresolved territorial and other disputes that could be sources of tension or conflict. If the ARF is to become, over time, a meaningful vehicle to enhance the peace and prosperity of the region, it will have to demonstrate that it is a relevant instrument to be used in the event that a crisis or problem emerges. The ARF meeting in Bangkok demonstrated this by taking a stand on the Korean issue at the very first meeting. This was a signal that the ARF is ready to address any challenge to the peace and security of the region.

13. Over time, the ARF must develop its own mechanisms to carry preventive diplomacy and conflict-resolution. In doing so, the ARF will meet unique challenges. There are no established roads or procedures for it to follow. Without a high degree of confidence among ARF participants, it is unlikely that they will agree to the establishment of mechanisms which are perceived to be intrusive and/or autonomous. This is a political reality the ARF should recognize. However, it would be useful in the initial phase for the Track Two process to consider and investigate a variety of preventive diplomacy and conflict-resolution mechanisms. A good start was made with the three workshops organized by International Studies Centre (Thailand) and Institute of Policy Studies (Singapore) on ASEAN-UN Cooperation for Peace and Preventive Diplomacy, and the Indonesia-sponsored series off workshops on the South China Sea.

Stage II: Development of Preventive Diplomacy

14. Preventive diplomacy would be a natural follow-up to confidence building measures. Some suggestions for preventive diplomacy measures are spelled out in Annexes [A](#) and [B](#).

Stage III: Conflict Resolution

15. It is not envisaged that the ARF would establish mechanisms conflict resolution in the immediate future. The establishment of such mechanisms is an eventual goal that ARF participants should pursue as they proceed to develop the ARF as a vehicle for promoting regional peace and stability.

Organization of ARF activities

16. There shall be an annual ARF Ministerial Meeting, in an ASEAN capital just after the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. The host country will chair the meeting. The incoming Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee will chair all inter-sessional Track One activities of the ARF.

17. The ARF shall be apprised of all Track Two activities through the current Chairman of the Track One activities, who will be the main link between Track One and Track Two activities.

18. In the initial phase of the ARF no institutionalization is expected. Nor should a Secretariat be established in the near future. ASEAN shall be the repository of all ARF documents and information and provide the necessary support to sustain ARF activities.

19. The participants of the ARF comprise the ASEAN member states, the observers, and consultative and dialogue partners of ASEAN. Applications to participate in the ARF shall be submitted to the Chairman of the ARF who will then consult the other ARF participants.

20. The rules of procedure of ARF meetings shall be based on prevailing, ASEAN norms and practices. Decisions should be made by consensus after careful and extensive consultations. No voting will take place. In accordance with prevailing ASEAN practices, the Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee shall provide the secretarial support and coordinate ARF activities.

21. The ARF should also 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."

Conclusion

22. ARF participants should not assume that the success of the ARF can be taken for granted. ASEAN's experience shows that success is a result of hard work and careful adherence to the rule of consensus. ARF participants will have to work equally hard and be equally sensitive to ensure that the ARF process stays on track.

23. The ARF must be accepted as a "sui generis" Organization. It has no established precedents to follow. A great deal of innovation and ingenuity will be required to keep the ARF moving forward while at the same time ensure that it enjoys the support of its diverse participants. This is a major challenge both for the ASEAN countries and other ARF participants. The UN Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace" has recognized that "just as no two regions or situations are the same, so the design of cooperative work and its division of labor must adjust to the realities of each case with flexibility and creativity."

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