Dynamo *or* Dynamite?

CAMBODIA'S FUTURE IN ASEAN

Edited by
Kao Kim Hourn
& Jeffrey A. Kaplan

ASEAN
ACADEMIC PRESS
London

Chapter 8
THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM: STABILISING ASIA'S BALANCE-OF-POWER SYSTEM

Sorpong Peou

THE Asean Regional Forum (ARF) is an important case study for international relations theory in many respects. First, it is unprecedented that former Asian friends and foes have made collective efforts to build a multilateral security architecture in their own region. Second, Asian and Western states have jointly created this regional security forum, contrary to the "clash of civilizations" thesis advanced by Huntington;[1] third, the diplomatic initiative has been taken by a group of small states (Asean member states) rather than by major powers or a hegemon, yet with the latter participating in the forum as members. What exactly is the ARF? Does it have the potential to achieve its objectives?

These are two basic perspectives on the ARF: neo-liberalism and political realism. Neo-liberal institutionalists have sought to explain why states decide to create international regimes (whether they are economic- or security-related) whereby their behaviour and action can be coordinated and their self-interests realised. A group of states with sufficient complementary or common interests may agree to interna-

[1] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72: 3, 1993. In his seminal essay, Huntington posed the question whether conflicts between civilisations would dominate the future of world politics, while in his book, he gives his answer, showing not only how clashes between civilisations are the greatest threat to world peace, but also how an international order based on civilisations is the best safeguard against war.

tional agreements and may then form regimes to facilitate the making of their agreements. There are many ways of looking at the creation and maintenance of international regimes. Some argue that security regimes like the Concert of Europe were established because the five most powerful states in Europe tried to prevent war by cooperating on major issues. Others put more emphasis on the role of a single hegemon in establishing and maintaining international regimes. Still others confidently assert that, while a hegemon may establish a regime, it may not necessarily be in the position to maintain it forever. That is to say, regimes' principles, norms and rules, once established and habituated, have dynamics of their own.[2]

Political realists, however, do not believe international regimes will endure because of a number of factors. Socialist or authoritarian states like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam would not fit well with the ARF framework since they are unfamiliar with the Asean culture of consolation and consensus. They also see international relations as driven by states' selfish interests and envy. States basically seek to enhance their positions within the 'self-help' international system. Big powers will not follow small powers like those in Asean either. More importantly, the ARF ignores the cardinal rule of balance of power politics: peace, based on mutual accord amongst states alone, is not likely to break out unless there is a stable balance of power, or if there is a balancer capable of restraining revisionist states like China.[3] Those who

[2] Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984 and *International Institutions and State Power*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989; Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions," in Kenneth A. Oye (ed.), *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986. See also Stephen Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983.

[3] See Michael Leifer, "The Asean Regional Forum: Extending Asean's Model of Regional Security," *Adelphi Paper No. 302*, 1996. See also John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," in Michael E. Brown et al. (eds.), *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995: 332-376.

put their faith in voluntary cooperation amongst states are, therefore, viewed as naive or ignorant of power politics.

The ARF has the potential to moderate competition amongst states and to stabilise Asia's balance-of-power system or potential power transition because cooperative security is a learning process, which may have an effect on the very nature of international relations. To develop this argument, cooperative security must be distinguished from national security, collective security and common security. I then argue the fact that the ARF was established, expanded and continues to exist indicates that states (including those presumed unwilling to abide by the Asean rules of the game) are demanding an international security regime within which they can cooperate for mutually satisfactory benefits. Finally, I provide some evidence to show that cooperative security has indeed moderated competition and conflict despite the fact that the ARF member states were unequal in terms of power.

Cooperative Security and its Intellectual Distinction

This section attempts to trace the intellectual history of the ARF. There are two reasons for doing so. The first reason is that it will help us understand the historical uniqueness of the forum in the Asia-Pacific, marking a new era of international relations. The second is that it will enable us to analyse its conceptual uniqueness. The ARF, viewed as an international security regime, is built upon an innovative concept of cooperative security, rather than on the traditional concepts of collective defence or collective security.[4]

[4] There has been some conceptual confusion amongst some writers. Some consider the ARF as based on the concept of collective security. Others view cooperative security as part of political realism. Reinhard Drifte in "Japan and Its Security Environment in Asia," Stockholm: Centre for Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University, *Occasional Paper No. 30*, June 1997, p. 1, for instance, wrote: "Realists (or neo-realists) stress the new risks and recommend maintaining a balance of power and cooperative security measures to counter them, while Liberals focus on multilateral common security approaches." In fact, realists do not subscribe to cooperative security, and the concept of cooperative security is more similar to that of common security. In this study, both common and collective security are conceptually viewed as liberal.

What cooperative security is not. Cooperative security differs from collective defence, which is identified with national interest defined in terms of power, national security and regional military alliance. States deal with their national security problems through shifting alliances and alignments. With a certain politico-military alliance, the member states seek to maximise their own security and to advance their national interests at the expense of others. Collective defence is centred around the idea of power as capability defined in relative terms. States are primarily concerned with their relative positions and gains within the 'self-help' international system prone to competition and conflict. Cooperation is possible when states have similar interests in promoting their national security. Their cooperation will not lead to the establishment of supranational community. Cooperation amongst member states of the same politico-military alliances are antagonistic to others.

Cooperative security is not the same as collective security. The concept of collective security emerged after World War I, which stresses the need for the League of Nations member states' obligation to stand united against any act of foreign aggression and to use force collectively against the aggressor. This is a liberal concept pioneered by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who believed that perpetual peace is made possible by a federation of world's states called a League of Nations. US President (Thomas) Woodrow Wilson proposed that a new concept of security was needed because the maintenance of international peace and security through military alliances is counterproductive. As a result, collective security was written into the Covenant of the League of Nations. After World War II, the concept was readopted and written into the United Nations Charter. Chapter 7 of the Charter permits the United Nations Security Council to endorse the use of force against any aggressor if non-violent means have failed. Thus, collective security rests on two important pillars: universality of participation and collective obligation.[5]

[5] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973: 293-306; 407-418 and Inis Claude, Jr., *Power and International Relations*, New York: Random House, 1966: chaps. 4-5.

Common security. Cooperative security conceptually departs from collective defence and collective security, but owes its intellectual debt to the concept of common security. According to the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues under the chairmanship of Swedish premier Olof Palme, which published a report in 1982 on common security, the concept of security departs conceptually from collective defence in that it places emphasis on "defensiveness" rather than on "offensiveness", and cooperation rather than confrontation. Conceptually, therefore, it stresses minimum nuclear deterrence, cooperation with the adversary, economic and environmental security, disarmament, arms control and confidence-building measures.[6]

Common security, according to Dewitt, contributed to the establishment of a European security regime known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. "The key objective [of common security] was to reduce, if not eliminate, the likelihood of war by securing adherence to a set of norms and rules that constrain the conflictual behaviour of the regional actors in relation to one another." The CSCE recognises these elements: security cooperation amongst its member states in the absence of a common enemy; their national interests "are neither wholly compatible nor wholly competitive"; and possible compliance with "principles, rules and norms that permit nations to be restrained in their behaviour in the belief that others will reciprocate."[7]

After that, new proposals on building a security structure in Asia have been put forward by many states: the Soviet Union's CSCE (1986); South Korea's Consultative Conference for Peace (1988); Mongolia's pro-Soviet forum; Australia's CSCA (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia-Pacific) initiated in 1990; Canada's NPCSD (North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue) introduced in 1990; and Asean's political dialogue (1992). Amongst these proposals, those of the Soviet Union, Australia, Canada and Asean seem to have, in varying degrees, contributed to the emergence of the ARF.

[6] Geoffrey Wiseman, "Common Security in the Asia-Pacific Region," *The Pacific Review* 5: 1 (1992): 42-43.

[7] David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative Security," *The Pacific Review* 7: 1 (1994): 5.

Common security and the experience of the CSCE led the Soviet Union and Australia to make proposals for a new security structure in the Asia-Pacific. In 1986, the then Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, proposed a "Pacific Ocean conference along [the lines of] the Helsinki [CSCE] conference". This proposal included major powers only: the Soviet Union, the United States, China, India and Japan. Then, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans called in July 1990 for "a future Asian security architecture involving a wholly new institutional process that might be capable of evolving in Asia just as in Europe, as a framework for addressing and resolving security problems."[8] This came to be known as a European-style Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia-Pacific or "CSCA". But the approach proved to be inappropriate in the Asian context; it was rejected. As a result, the Canadian concept of cooperative security emerged with a principal focus on the need "to establish habits of dialogue" and to encourage participation of states based on the ideas of inclusivity and informal dialogue.

Cooperative security and cognitive liberalism. Cognitive liberalism recognises the importance of learning or acquiring new knowledge that would help state leaders to identify their common problems and find new possibilities for collaborative solutions. Cooperative security rests on the assumption that states can learn to cooperate in new ways.

In September 1990, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark offered some new thoughts on the possibility of building a North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue (NPCSD). The new security concept was narrowly North Asia-oriented, focusing on a limited number of states like Canada, the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan and perhaps the two Koreas. The idea was based upon the principles of common interests and common values rather than exclusive national ones, a common pursuit—as opposed to traditional—pursuit of peace and prosperity through cooperation rather than confrontation. The concept of cooperative security rests on the liberal assumption that states in the Pacific have diverse cultural identities and interests, but that they have the potential to cooperate on the basis of self-interest. In

[8] Cited in David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative Security," p. 5.

a world of economic interdependence, national policies could no longer be adopted and implemented independently. In 1990, Clark argued that "[there] is no such thing anymore as 'national' economic policy. Interdependence cannot be managed through good luck or *adhocery*."[9] Although military security remains important, it can no longer retain the exclusive place in the concept of cooperative security. Other non-military issues—sustainable development, persistent poverty, human rights, democracy, and so on—are as important to peace and security as defence concerns.

Despite its innovative thinking, the multidimensional concept of cooperative security dialogue advocated by Canada was not one based on hegemonic stability. The emphasis on multilateral consultation and cooperation rather than hegemonic imposition allowed room for flexibility and compromise. In other words, the concept stressed the importance of developing the "habit of dialogue" to reach agreement or consensus amongst member states. Canada did not seek to establish new institutions, nor did it advocate the idea of transplanting Western mechanisms into the North Pacific. A security dialogue was viewed as a regional or subregional multilateral exercise that would engage a relatively small number of states in a "consultative, exploratory and informal" process.[10]

The Canadian approach to cooperative security did not succeed in the sense that it was not accepted by all states concerned. The NPCSD initiative received support from both the Soviet Union and Mongolia, claiming inaccurately that it was an extension of their own regional security proposals. Australia and New Zealand lent support to the idea, but viewed it as geographically too narrow because it did not include South Pacific states. Both the United States and Japan did not see

[9] Notes for a speech at a luncheon meeting hosted by the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan on July 24, 1990. In Cancaps Papers, *Canada on Asia-Pacific Security in the 1990s*, No. 1, March 1994, p. 6.

[10] Notes for a speech by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Colloquium on North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue in Victory, British Columbia, April 6, 1991. In Cancaps Papers, *Canada on Asia-Pacific Security in the 1990s*, No. 1, March 1994, pp. 23-29.

much utility in the Canadian concept. Asean did not initially welcome it because the NPCSD was an out-of-region initiative.[11]

Asean preferred its own initiative which focused on Southeast Asia, particularly Indochina, and which addressed its regional concerns. Asean then took some bold initiatives to upgrade its regional profile. Malaysia invited the Soviet Union and China to observe the Asean Foreign Ministerial Meeting in 1991 and to attend the Asean Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC). Asean was recognised as an "appropriate base" for discussion of regional security issues.[12] Asean then began to consider using itself as a forum for dialogue on Asia-Pacific security matters. Its determination to be in the driver's seat on political and security issues came clearly during the Singapore Summit in January 1992. The Singapore Declaration states specifically the need for a security forum: "Asean could use established forums to promote external dialogues on enhancing security in the region as well as intra-Asean dialogues on Asean security cooperation (such as the regional security seminars held in Bangkok in 1991, and the workshops on the South China Sea held in Bali in 1990 and Bandung in 1991), taking full cognisance of the Declaration of Asean Concord. To enhance this effort, Asean should intensify its external dialogues in political and security matters by using the Asean Post-Ministerial Conferences (PMC)."[13]

At this point, while addressing the need for political and security cooperation, the Declaration only states that "Asean welcomes accession by all states in Southeast Asia to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which will provide a common framework for wider regional cooperation embracing the whole of Southeast Asia."[14] In other words, a regional security forum could be established to meet

11 Stewart Henderson, "Canada and Asia-Pacific Security. The North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue: Recent Trends," in Cancaps Papers, *Canada on Asia-Pacific Security in the 1990s*, No. 1, March 1994, p. 48.

12 Joint Communiqué, "24th Asean Post-Ministerial Meeting," Kuala Lumpur, July 19-20, 1991.

13 Asean Secretariat, *Asean: An Overview*, Jakarta, Indonesia: Asean Secretariat, 1995, p. 69.

14 Ibid., p. 68.

new security challenges within the region only. A Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on regional security met in June 1992 for the first time. At the following Asean Ministerial Meeting in July, Asean was ready to tackle political and security issues. Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas also confirmed this initiative: "Security and political issues are now going to be increasingly discussed. Such dialogue will contribute to better understanding and enhanced security."[15]

By the early 1990s, the concept of cooperative security had been defined, redefined and widely accepted; the states involved agreed on a broad conceptual framework based on a set of norms, principles and decision-making procedures, with the aim of reducing regional tensions, and ultimately resolving them. Thus collective defence is oriented towards defending national security through military alliances which are usually regional but not universal. The balance-of-power strategy is aimed at achieving a power equilibrium to maintain regional peace and security. Collective security is universal and is based on the idea of collective punishment of aggression committed by a member within the community of states. Cooperative security is regional, multidimensional and functional; it rejects military blocs, but supports of the principle of inclusivity and multilateral cooperation; it is based on dialogue and compromise rather than on the use of force to punish any particular state's aggression; it rejects stale rhetoric and sterile ideology; and it addresses security issues related to justice.

The ARF as an International Cooperative Security Regime

After the PMC in July 1993, the ARF was officially announced and had its first meeting in Bangkok in July 1994, its second meeting in Brunei in August 1995, and its third meeting in Jakarta in July 1996. A look at the 4-year-old ARF reveals that it has expanded with surprising speed. Originally, it had 18 members: the six Asean states (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines), seven Asean dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, the European Community, Japan,

15 Cited in Michael Antolik, "The Asean Regional Forum: The Spirit of Constructive Engagement," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16: 2 (September 1994), p. 120.

South Korea, New Zealand and the United States), three observers (Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea), and two "consultative partners" (China and Russia), with Cambodia becoming the 19th member in 1995 and India and Myanmar being admitted into the forum in July 1996. The ARF has grown to become a cooperative security regime.

The first ARF Meeting. During their first ever meeting in July 1994, 18 member states had their high-ranking representatives discuss issues pertaining to political and security cooperation. Although they met for only three hours, the participants agreed to convene the ARF on an annual basis and hold the meeting in Brunei in 1995 and accept the purposes and principles of Asean's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) as a code of conduct governing their mutual relations and as a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and political and security cooperation.

The Treaty's "code of conduct" contains the following purpose: "to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation amongst their peoples which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship" and is based on the following norms, principles and rules, as stated in article 2: "(1) Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nationals; (2) The right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion; (3) Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another; (4) Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means; (5) Renunciation of threat or use of force; and (6) Effective cooperation amongst themselves."[16]

The TAC is thus built largely upon the ordering principle that states are equally sovereign, with their own territorial integrity and national identities (or self-determination) to be respected. These principles are not new. Mutual respect for national independence, state sovereignty, equality, territorial and national identity are not post-Cold War phenomena. Sovereignty touches on three elements: exclusive authority over a particular territory; juridical equality (states are juridically equal and have equal rights); and political independence (states are not subject to any higher authority in international polities).

[16] Asean Secretariat, *Asean: An Overview*, p. 56.

The most important norm in the Asean context is self-restraint based on political sensitivity and the reality of mutual vulnerability.[17] How and when did the states of Southeast Asia come to accept this norm? A closer look at Asean's declarations since 1967 shows that the norm "self-restraint" did not appear until 1976. The Bangkok Declaration of 1967 contains no such statements. Not a word of "self-restraint" is mentioned in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of 1971 either. Nonetheless, the principle of self-restraint was implicitly recognised by Asean and formally endorsed at the 1992 Asean Ministerial Meeting. The Asean Declaration on the South China Sea stated that the Asean foreign ministers "urge all parties concerned to exercise restraint with a view to creating a positive climate for the eventual resolution of all disputes."[18]

Beside the ordering principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the TAC also recognises certain rules for governing the member states' international behaviour. Non-interference in the member states' domestic affairs is another principle that establishes the rules of the game within the ARF framework. Asean's concern with foreign interference is well-known. The Bangkok Declaration affirms "security from external interference in any form". The Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration of 1971 gives attention to this particular principle, recognising "the right of every state, large or small, to lead its national existence free from outside interference in its internal affairs as this interference will adversely affect its freedom, independence and integrity."[19]

Non-use of force. This is another rule accepted by the ARF members. In the context of the TAC, the rule of the political game governing state behaviour is that not only do states not have the right to interfere in the domestic affairs of other states, but that they must settle their

[17] According to an Asian scholar, Asean states always operate on the basis of mutual political sensitivity. Their policy decisions and actions are often made and taken with "other members' sensitivity" in mind. *Interview*, January 3, 1997.

[18] "Asean Declaration on the South China Sea," Manila, the Philippines, July 22, 1992, p. 1.

[19] Asean Secretariat, *Asean: An Overview*, p. 45.

differences by peaceful means. The main emphasis on the code of conduct for the ARF is peaceful negotiations or dialogues.

In terms of decision-making procedures, the Treaty's Chapter IV provides some vague avenue for dealing with conflict such as conflict prevention (to prevent conflict from arising), dispute settlement through "friendly negotiations", or through a High Council. Disputes can be settled by the parties involved through direct negotiation. But if they cannot reach any solution, "the High Council shall take cognizance of the dispute or the situation and shall recommend to the parties in dispute appropriate means of settlement such as good offices, mediation, inquiry or conciliation", as stipulated in article 15. According to the TAC's article 14, the High Council comprises a Representative at ministerial level from each of the High Contracting Parties; its role is "to settle disputes through regional processes".

Thus, the acceptance of, and commitment to, Asean TAC's norms, principles, rules and dispute settlement mechanisms imply that the ARF also operates on the basis of partnership rather than on the premise that cooperation is to be achieved through hegemonic control. This code of conduct is fundamentally based on members' consent. This tendency is supposed to facilitate communication and coordination amongst the member states through consensus.

The second ARF Meeting and some progress. At the second ARF meeting held in Brunei on August 1, 1995, the Ministers agreed that Asean should take the obligation to be the primary driving force, that the process should move at a pace comfortable to all participants, and that it should be evolutionary (going through three stages: the promotion of confidence building, development of preventive diplomacy and elaboration of approaches to conflicts), with conflict management and resolution as the forum's ultimate goal. In the first phase, no institutionalisation for the ARF should be expected. There should be no ARF Secretariat. According to a Concept Paper prepared by the ARF, "Asean shall be the repository of all ARF documents and information and provide necessary support to sustain ARF activities."[20] Asean has recently been accepted as the official coordination centre for the ARF.

[20] "The Asean Regional Forum: A Concept Paper," January 30, 1997, p. 4.

In the case of confidence-building measures (CBMs), the ARF principle of transparency was concerned with dialogue on security matters at bilateral, subregional and regional levels, involving high-level contacts and exchanges between military academies and staff colleges, voluntary submission to the ARF of an annual statement of defence policies (or *Defence White Paper*) and encouragement of participation in the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms. This represents further progress in the so-called "habit of dialogue", at least in terms of policy attitudes towards the ARF, in security regime building because the meeting precipitated dialogue aimed at reducing uncertainty and risk within the Asia-Pacific region by encouraging the ARF member states to exchange information and to improve the quantity and quality of information, and to be open to one another to avoid any suspicion of deception.

Moreover, the ARF meeting led to an agreement to promote intra-group communication to alleviate the information problems believed to create uncertainty and risk in the first place. As a result, the member states agreed to establish three intersessional working groups, each chaired by an Asean and a non-Asean state. One of them is the International Support Group (ISG) on CBMs to be chaired by Indonesia and co-chaired by Japan. The other two are the Intersessional Meetings on Cooperative Activities (ISMs) to be chaired and co-chaired respectively by Malaysia and Canada (Peacekeeping Operations), and by Singapore and the United States (Search and Rescue Coordination).

Underlying the process of confidence building through exchanges of information, openness and communication are procedural issues. The second ARF meeting made some progress on how the member states should approach the various security issues. Gradualism and voluntary acceptance of, and compliance with, the ARF norms and rules seem to have been agreed upon. A Concept Paper drafted by Singapore in 1995 gives this impression as it stated that "it would be unwise for a young and fragile process like the ARF to tackle all challenges simultaneously. A gradual evolutionary approach is required."[21] The Ministers then agreed with the Concept Paper that "decisions should be made by

[21] Ibid., p. 1.

consensus after careful and extensive consultations. No voting will take place."[22]

By August 1995, 16 of the 19 ARF members had taken part in the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms established by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1992. (The Register requires that all member states provide information on their exports and imports of seven categories of conventional arms during the previous calendar year.) According to Chalmers, this agreement represents "the highest rate of participation of any region outside Europe."[23]

The third and fourth ARF Meeting and more progress. While the first ARF meeting focused its attention on principles, norms and rules (as seen in the acceptance of Asean's TAC) followed by the second giving particular attention to goal-setting and procedural matters, the third meeting went on to establish membership rules. Members of the ARF must be sovereign states. Despite the emphasis on inclusivity, the meeting also resulted in an agreement that there must be a freeze on membership after both India and Myanmar became members in July 1996. The following membership criteria have been agreed on:

1. All new participants, who will all be sovereign states, must subscribe to and work cooperatively to help achieve the ARF's key goals. Prior to their admission, all new participants should agree to abide by and respect fully the decisions and statements already made by the ARF.
2. A new participant should be admitted only if it can be demonstrated that it has an impact on the peace and security of the 'geographical footprint' of key ARF activities.
3. Efforts must be made to control the number of participants to manageable level to ensure the effectiveness of the ARF.
4. All applications for participation should be submitted to the Chairman of the ARF, who will consult all the other ARF participants at the SOM to ascertain whether a consensus exists

[22] Ibid., p. 4.

[23] Malcolm Chalmers, "Openness and Security Policy in Southeast Asia," *Survival* 38: 3 (Autumn 1996), p. 89.

for the admission of the new participant. Actual decisions on participation will be approved by the Ministers.[24]

Thus, the ARF is an intergovernmental security regime based on the principle of national sovereignty, norms, rules and informal decision-making procedures. The Ministers also endorsed the various proposals related to CBMs, Research and Rescue, and Peacekeeping Operations, and encouraged various joint ARF activities. Communication and coordination are the pillars of the forum.

Although the fourth ARF meeting in July 1997 did not result in any major breakthroughs, the member states continued to develop their "habit of dialogue". The participants played a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding and promoting greater transparency. They reiterated the importance of the ARF's evolutionary approach and its consensus-building model.

The ARF is thus not a military alliance based on the concept of collective defence. Nor is it a United Nations-like international organisation based on collective security. It is not a managerial or control-oriented security regime (which stresses orderliness through explicit obligations and compliance to a specific set of established rules) either. The ARF is largely based on the Canadian concept of cooperative security which recognises the uniqueness of Asian history, cultural values and political experiences. Seen in this light, the concept of cooperative security has been considerably influenced by the so-called Asean "culture of consultation" and informal cooperation on the basis of partnership, consensus and mutual assurance. Antolik considers the forum as a "consultative process".[25] The most appropriate term that can be used to characterise the ARF in a *cooperative security regime*, based upon a certain set of explicit principles (state sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination), norms (self-restraint), and rules (non-interference in states' domestic affairs, non-use of force, and so on) without at the

[24] "Chairman's Statement: The Third Meeting of the Asean Regional Forum," Jakarta, July 23, 1996, p. 8.

[25] M. Antolik, "The Asean Regional Forum: The Spirit of Constructive Engagement," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16: 2 (September 1994), p. 120.

moment institutionalising decision-making procedures. The ARF operates on the principle of *goodwill* which requires the member states to cooperate through *mutual reassurance* in the midst of uncertainty and risk and to act as if they will benefit from their ongoing and future multilateral cooperation. The ARF's ultimate objective is conflict resolution. As shall be discussed, the aim to achieve conflict resolution is too ambitious and is unattainable, and the ARF may only be useful as a stabilising mechanism.

In Defence of the ARF's Theoretical Foundation

The realist critique of the ARF will now be examined. Although political realism is not a single theory but rather a general approach to international polities, I will examine its basic assumption about state behaviour and its prediction about constraints on inter-state cooperation and some neo-liberal responses to realist assumptions and predictions.

The ARF and its realist critics. Political realists do not argue that states will never enter into multilateral arrangements, but only question whether such cooperative efforts will endure. While some states may agree to cooperate, others will decline to join. Those who have agreed to join will one day leave or simply limit their commitment to a cooperative arrangement. Grieco has written a critique of the newest liberal institutionalism (developed by scholars like Axelrod, Keohane, Charles Lipson and Arthur Stein) and argues that neo-liberal institutionalism misconstrued the realist analysis of international anarchy and misunderstood the realist analysis of the impact of anarchy on states' preferences and actions.[26] Realists view states as not simply concerned with absolute gains (as held by neo-liberal institutionalists), but more importantly with relative gains. The liberal belief that states only care about their own gains and are indifferent to others' achievements overlooks the fact that they are enviously concerned about the possibility that their partners might gain more from cooperation than they do.

[26] Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," in Charles W. Kegley (ed.), *Controversies in International Relations Theory*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Driven by an interest in survival within the 'self-help' international system, states extremely worry about any erosion of their relative capabilities. According to Grieco, "[the] fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances in their relative capabilities."[27] Because sovereign states are primarily concerned about their position within the system, worry about their relative decline, and unhappy with their partners' relatively greater gains, they will either defect or simply decline to further their cooperation.

Realists who have written on Asia also question the ARF's durability. According to Dibb: "... statesmen and decision-makers—not least in Asia—are still inclined to a realist, national interest and state influence. Changes in relative power continue to be important because a state's international role is by definition relative to that of other states in the regional system."[28] While Dibb recognises the emerging concert of "Asian cultural values" and increasing economic interdependence, none of these factors has a mitigating effect on the pursuit of national interest and relative gain: "... in Asia growing economic interdependence and the promise of mutual gain have not eliminated the efforts of nations to advance their own interests at the expense of others."[29] Economic interdependence does not create the potential for perpetual peace. The Asian way of settling conflicts has not been effectively applied. The South China Sea disputes illustrate the point: while no settlement has been reached, military build-ups continue. Geo-economics has not yet prevailed upon traditional geopolitics. Present regional order results from the continuing balance of power amongst the great powers and from the stabilising role of the US. Thus, "it is not possible to envisage a multilateral cooperative security order in Asia soon."[30]

Leifer's recent impressive analysis of the forum considers the new security framework as "a highly imperfect instrument" which "has not reduced military competition in the form of regional arms procure-

[27] Ibid., p. 161.

[28] Paul Dibb, "Toward a New Balance of Power in Asia," *Adelphi Paper No. 295*, 1995, p. 7.

[29] Ibid., p. 21. See p. 23.

[30] Ibid., p. 54.

ments."[31] The forum does not address many important issues: the Chinese intimidation of Taiwan, the contentious Korean peninsula, China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and its unwillingness to compromise on matters related to national sovereignty, Japan-South Korea diplomatic row over the sovereignty of the Dakto or Takeshima islets, unresolved disputes between Malaysia and Indonesia over the question of jurisdiction of the islands of Sipadan and Litigan, long-standing border differences between Cambodia and Vietnam, and so on. Leifer's work is based on the assumption that the Asean process of expanding (trying to bring Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam in) would complicate the process of deepening because it opened up the new possibility of the new member unable to identify with Asean's quasi-familial spirit.

The ARF in a world without common government "suffers inevitably from intrinsic defects". At the heart of the ARF is its failure to address the problem of power, and thus, it is like making "bricks without straw". Seen in this light, "the prerequisite for a successful ARF may well be the prior existence of a stable balance of power".[32] Cooperative security being dependent on the balance of power "in the Asia-Pacific which has been left primarily to the United States to uphold", the ARF is an instrument upon which no state would be willing to rely.[33] Transparency as promoted by the ARF is a double-edged sword: while it encourages member states to be more open with one another, thus mutually reassuring that they have no aggressive ambitions, transparency can also alarm the other states.[34]

Huxley, a scholar of Southeast Asian security, only recognises the ARF as a diplomacy driven byprocess rather than outcome. He points out that "the greatest challenge to the ARF's viability as a pan-East Asian regional security regime comes from China's growing regional role ... . There is no evidence that ARF membership has in any way

[31] Michael Leifer, "The Asean Regional Forum," *Adelphi Paper No. 302*, 1996, p. 53.

[32] Ibid., p. 57.

[33] Ibid., p. 58.

[34] Discussion with Dr Michael Leifer.

constrained its international behaviour."[35] Asean's failure to "domesticate" China through multilateral diplomacy suggests that only the Americans could have deterred the Chinese adventure in the Spratlys.

Political realists thus do not place any great hope on cooperative security arrangements like the ARF. Their basic assumption is that revisionist states like China are bound to disrupt the *status quo*. Promoting a "habit of dialogue" without creating a stable balance of power is at best futile and at worst dangerous.

A response to realist critics. Is there a logical or empirical foundation for the belief that balance-of-power system is easy to attain and, when attained, more stable than one without it?

First, Leifer's concept of power contains an unwarranted bias towards states' exercise of power. According to him, Western states like the United States are "responsible", while others like China are irresponsible. Evans provides some insight into this bias when noting at the CBMs in Beijing in March 1997 that "China is ... trying to put a hand on the rudder to steer discussions rather than stop them. For the moment, it is the Americans who need to be helped in playing catch up."[36] What then is power, and why is there a difference in states' power exercise? Leifer's concept of power needs to be applied more consistently.

Second, balance-of-power systems, as we know them, have a poor record of maintaining international peace and security; these systems are not necessarily peaceful. Yuen offers a useful theoretical challenge to Leifer's criticism of the ARF. Based on a number of work by critics of realism, he argues that the balance-of-power system is "theoretically imprecise" and that "power balancing is strongly correlated with conflict."[37] Even leading neo-realists like Waltz are not convinced by the neo-realist argument that the conventional (without nuclear weapons)

[35] T. Huxley, "Asean's Role in the Emerging East Asian Regional Security Architecture," in Ian G. Cook et al. (eds.), *Fragmented Asia: Regional Integration and National Disintegration in Pacific Asia*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1996, p. 46.

[36] Paul M. Evans, "Assessing the ARF and CSCAP," unpublished paper, August 27, 1997.

[37] Yuen Foong Khong, "Making Bricks without Straw in the Asia-Pacific?," *The Pacific Review* 10: 2 (1997), p. 298.

balance-of-power system does prevent war. If equality of power amongst major powers can minimise the likelihood of war, World War I should not have broken out, because the opposing alliances understood that they were equal in military strength.[38]

Third, if realist critics of the ARF based their arguments on the hegemonic stability theory, they have difficulty defending the idea that the hegemonic power's attempt to play the balancing role will forever create peace and stability. Power transition theory, however, argues that revisionist states try to climb the ladder of power within the anarchic international system and the hegemonic state will try to prevent others from challenging them.[39] In their case, war—launched either by a revisionist state or by the hegemon—may break out. Political realist Layne also argues persuasively that the strategy of preponderance to build and maintain a unipolar world is an illusion because it wrongly assumes that other rising great powers will always bandwagon with the hegemonic power. By providing historical evidence to prove how new great powers emerged and balanced against hegemons by building up their own power and forming politico-military alliances with others, Layne concludes that any US strategy to perpetuate unipolarity may not succeed and predicts that the current unipolar world under its hegemony will give way to multipolarity between 2000 and 2010 because other rising states will balance against the United States.[40]

[38] Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," in *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, Michael E. Brown et al. (eds.), Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995, p. 75.

[39] On the theory of hegemonic preventive war, see Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, Chap. 3. For a theory on war started by rising powers, see A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

[40] Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," in Michael E. Brown et al. (eds.), *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 130-176. Paul also explains why weak states sometimes launch war against stronger states even when the former are fully aware of the latter's economic and military superiority. See T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Fourth, another interesting phenomenon that defies the logic of political realism is that the Soviet Union did not attempt to use force to prevent the decline of its superpower status. According to Wohlforth, scholars need to look beyond quantitative indicators like growth in national product, population, military power and defence spending and start tracing how leaders' perception of relative power shapes their choices about foreign policy.[41] What is most interesting about the Soviet Union's peaceful decline is the fact that Wohlforth places emphasis on Gorbachev's perception based on "costs" that drive his intellectual change and the "expected benefits to be derived from such change."

According to this realist theory, while some declining empires often take the violent path to arrest decline, others often are very reluctant to use force to do so. What explains these different reactions to decline has to be explained by domestic considerations: decision-makers' assessments of power and interests. Based on this insight, we may argue that the perception of state leaders is a crucial independent variable that helps explain their policy decisions and actions, but perception itself may also be shaped by other factors like the need to deal with domestic problems, the growing awareness of unacceptable costs associated with modern war, and the expected benefits from security interdependency.

The possibility of absolute gains from cooperative security efforts. Realists have had trouble agreeing on what states' ultimate objective is. Do they see power as an end in itself or as a means to security? Classical realists such as Morgenthau would argue that since power is rooted in human nature, the struggle for power is thus an end in itself while neo-realists like Mearsheimer contend that states are driven by the need to

[41] William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," in Michael E. Brown et al. (eds.), *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 3-41. Wohlforth argues that the peaceful Soviet collapse was determined by the communist empire being a declining challenger to the United States rather than a declining hegemon.

achieve relative power.[42] Neo-realists like Waltz, however, view power as a means. As Waltz put it: "the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security."[43]

If achieving security (not advantages in relative power) is states' ultimate concern, the relative-gains problem is more or less resolved. This point was raised by Glaser, who views realists as optimists. Relative security gains may hinder cooperation if placed in the context of military capability. But if states' goals are to increase their security, they would not care much about increases in others' security because more secure adversaries will have smaller incentives for pursuing an expansionist foreign policy and will pose a lesser threat. According to this logic, "if cooperation increases a country's security, then increases in the adversary's security are usually desirable, whether or not they exceed increases in the defender's security." Thus, "[in] the security realm, instead of a relative-gains problem, we often have a mutual-gain benefit."[44]

Concern about differential economic growth having an effect on relative power (a state's growing wealth will make it militarily mightier) is also flawed. As Glaser points out, relative gains in economic growth should not be a major barrier to security cooperation. One reason is that a state's increased relative economic strength is less threatening. Another reason is "[small] relative economic gains, compared to GNP, would rarely pose a major threat." A third reason is that when defence has larger advantage over offense, relative gains matter less. States should, therefore, focus on the absolute security gains from their security cooperation because "these gains would rarely be jeopardised by relative economic gains" unless the gains are significant in terms of overall national wealth and unless offense has a larger advantage than defence.[45]

Glaser's "contingent realism", however, challenges neo-liberal institutionalism by asserting that international cooperation can take place without institutions. He does not see a serious contradiction between structural realism and neo-liberal institutionalism partly in the sense that both recognise states as the key actors in world politics operating under anarchy. Structural realists would not dispute that states would create institutions, but would argue that institutions themselves have a modest role to play in forging interstate cooperation. Glaser sees "institutions as the product of the same factors—states' interests and the constraints imposed by the system—that influence whether states cooperate."[46]

Contingent realism is still problematic: if uncertainty about states' motives can create reasons for interstate cooperation, what would prevent such uncertainty from driving states into competing against each other? Interest in security alone does not provide sufficient ground for the kind of cooperation states such as those in the Asia-Pacific desire. There must be a process that enables states to make their motives more transparent by way of exchange of ideas amongst state leaders. Scientific knowledge and technical expertise may enable state leaders to understand the complex and interdependent nature of the human conditions and to recognise the desirability of collaborative solutions or the need to promote cooperative outcomes within the anarchic condition. Contingent realism may, therefore, not necessarily contradict cognitive liberalism advanced by neo-functionalists like Ernst Haas who believe states' interests are changeable.[47]

---

42 Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," in Michael E. Brown et al. (eds.), *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995, pp. 78-129.

43 Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neo-realist Theory," in Charles W. Kegley (ed.), *Controversies in International Relations Theory*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 80.

44 Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists," in Charles W. Kegley (ed.), *Controversies in International Relations Theory*, p. 403.

45 Ibid., pp. 405-406.

46 Ibid., p. 412.

47 Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford (eds.), *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Some Evidence of Learning and Conflict Reduction in Asia

For a security regime to be created and maintained, the member states must not only by willing to agree on sets of principles, norms, rules, and procedural matters, but they must also be able to behave as if they are committed to them and they must also believe that they will receive a mutual-gain benefit. A realist challenge to proponents of the ARF would be to prove it empirically! While Yuen acknowledges that "most of the Asean states have not been shy about participating in the power balancing game", he suggests that "[more] research needs to be done to show the precise paths by which these cooperative security variables moderate competition and/or foster a sense of community."[48]

Peace amongst old Asean members. One place to test the ARF's TAC-type "codes of conduct" is to look at how the Asean members have cooperated with one another and at how other states in the region have come to terms with Asean. Before the group was established in 1967, states within the region had not been on good terms with one another. Attempts at creating regional organisations failed because of their hostilities. The well-known bloody Confrontation (1963-1965), known as *Konfrontasi*, between Indonesia and Malaysia broke out as the former waged a guerrilla war against the latter and resulted in the collapse of Maphilindo, an infant association of Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia. Territorial disputes between the two were attributed as the principal reason for this confrontation. From the inception of Asean until 1976 when the TAC was signed, however, the Asean members had learnt to adjust to one another. Until 1976, Asean had no "codes of conduct", whether implicit or explicit, established for governing their behaviours and actions.

It is debatable whether the TAC's norms, principles, rules and decision-making procedures have had any positive impact on the region in the areas of peace and stability. One thing is clear: although Southeast Asia has had two major wars (the Second and Third Indochina Wars) from the mid-1960s to the end of the 1980s, the Asean member states have in the same period managed to avoid any military confron-

[48] Yuen Foong Khong, "Making Bricks without Straw in the Asia-Pacific?," *The Pacific Review* 10: 2 (1997), p. 298.

tation with one another, even in the midst of tensions. A prominent expert on Southeast Asian security wrote: "A dramatic indication of the remarkable degree of harmony within Asean at the turn of the decade [1970s] is that the Sabah-Moro Rebellion dispute is the only significant potentially disruptive conflict within Asean." He goes on to assert that, "[compared] with the mid-1960s when every member had at least one outstanding dispute with another, many of which had led to armed confrontation, the increase in amity and reduction in tension is more prominent than in any other world region."[49] According to Scalapino, "Asean has reduced bilateral tensions within the six-nation group. State-to-state war risk in this region is lower than ever before."[50] Even Huxley also recognises that Asean "is by far the most successful Third World regional organisation." He then adds: "Its [Asean] diplomatic cohesion and apparent intra-mural harmony, together with the increasing economic prosperity of most of its members relative to the rest of the world, have led to it becoming something of a model for other regions aspiring to similar success."[51]

Although scholars have explained Asean's "success" in different ways, many have recognised the importance of process in the grouping's gradual evolution. Organisation theorists found the virtue of "opportunistic behaviour" amongst the member states. The political leaders of this association have developed the capacity to learn from their past hostilities and failures.[52] Antolik also argues that Asean is a "reactive" organisation whose members have learnt from their past tragedies and realised that "competition is futile, foolish and costly."[53] Defining

[49] Sheldon W. Simon, *The Asean States and Regional Security*, Stanford, California: Hoover Institute Press, Stanford University, 1982, p. 39.

[50] Robert Scalapino, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 20, 1991, p. 23.

[51] Tim Huxley, "Asean's Role in the Emerging East Asian Regional Security Architecture," p. 29.

[52] Reuben Modejar, *Explaining the Asean Organisation Phenomenon, 1967-1987: Two Decades of Situational Opportunism*, PhD dissertation, Universidad de Navarra, Spain, June 1989.

[53] Michael Antolik (1990), *Asean and the Diplomacy of Accommodation*, New York: M.E. Sharp, p. 156.

Asean simply as a "consultative process", he discovered the grouping's strength based on three operating principles: *restraint* (members' adherence to the organisation's procedures and machinery based on non-interference in others' domestic affairs); *mutual respect* (gained through informal meetings, communications and consolations); *responsibility* (growing out of mutual sensitivities to one another's interests in the interdependence context).[54] These values do not exist in a vacuum. It is generally agreed that domestic security problems have bound the Asean political regimes together.[55]

The new Asean members: learning peace the new way. Vietnam seems to have learnt from Asean. The state finally acceded to TAC in July 1992 and received observer status at Asean meetings. Vietnamese leaders attended Asean Ministerial Meetings in 1993 and 1994. In July 1994, Vietnam expressed real interest in joining Asean. It became a full-fledged member a year later. This clearly signalled that Vietnam in principle was willing to abide by the TAC principles and rules. This contrasts with Vietnam's earlier attitudes towards other states in the region. After the takeover of South Vietnam in 1975, Hanoi resented the Asean governments by not regarding the latter as "legitimate".[56] The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 and the occupation of the latter until 1989 divided Southeast Asia into two competing blocs: Indochina and Asean. One of the indicators signalling the beginning of Vietnam pursuing the path prescribed by the ARF, however, is the Hanoi agreement to withdraw its troops from Cambodia in 1989 and its willingness to sign the Cambodian peace agreement in 1991. This change of policy indicates the Vietnamese recognition of Cambodia as a sovereign state and the regional *status quo*. When acceding to the

54 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

55 Michael Leifer, *Asean and the Security of Southeast Asia*, New York: Routledge, 1989; Amitav Acharya, "Regionalism and Regime Security in the Third World: Comparing Origins of the Asean and the GCC," in Brian Job (ed.), *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992, pp. 143-164.

56 Michael Leifer, "Indochina and Asean: Seeking a New Balance," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 15, 3 (December 1993), p. 272.

TAC, Vietnam came to Asean as a supplicant "without seeking to negotiate special term of entry have been received on that basis."[57]

Since becoming an ARF member, Vietnam has continued to show its commitment to exercising self-restraint. This has been made clear in dealing with other states. With the Philippines over the Spratly islands dispute, Vietnam's policy is based on the need to restrain itself. During the visit to Vietnam by Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Domingo Siazon in January 1997, Hanoi reiterated its adherence to this norm. The Vietnamese membership in Asean and the ARF has weakened a classical practice of the balance of power within the region and has made the application of cooperative security possible and more attractive. Leifer's prediction that Vietnam and Laos would not conform to Asean's "quasi-familial culture of consultation and cooperation" can be proven false. One may need to ask where this culture came from in the first place. None of the founding Asean members seems to have inherited this culture. As pointed out earlier, the Asean leaders had the capacity to learn from past errors. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that Vietnam has obstructed the Asean way. Regarding the Cambodian fighting in July 1997, Vietnam did show support for Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, but it fell short of sending its troops into Cambodia to back the Cambodian leader the way it did in the 1980s. The fact that the Asean foreign ministers met on July 10 to postpone Cambodia's entry into the fold until a "later date" further indicates that Vietnam's interests and actions have been constrained by the Asean principle of consensus, if not totally ignored or transformed.

Cooperative security seems to have had some concrete impact on Cambodia's domestic politics. The intervention of the United Nations from November 1991 to September 1993 resulted from collaboration amongst former enemies from within and without Southeast Asia. The Permanent Members of the UN Security Council worked together to make the holding of the national elections possible.[58] Although UN intervention did not bring an end to Cambodia's domestic war, it man-

57 Ibid., p. 177.

58 Sorpong Peou, *Conflict Neutralisation in the Cambodia War: From Battlefield to Ballot-box*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997.

aged to disengage the various regional and global powers from this state. By the end of 1996, because of the Khmer Rouge split, the war was waning rapidly. In early 1996, the leadership in Phnom Penh also indicated its determination to join Asean. This marks a change of policy towards Asean: from confrontation to cooperation. Whether they will stay committed to peaceful settlement of differences remain to be seen, but there is evidence to suggest that border clashes between Cambodia and its neighbours are kept to a minimum. When Cambodia becomes part of Asean, it may become even more conscious of the ARF principles, norms, rules and informal decision-making procedures. There is also evidence to suggest that the ARF can play an important role in preventing externalisation of domestic conflict. The ARF, for instance, contained Cambodia's renewed conflict after the July 1997 fighting between First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Second Prime Minister Hun Sen. Imagine what might have happened if Thailand and Vietnam had exploited Cambodia's internal crisis in an attempt to balance against each other as they had done in the past!

Myanmar's ARF membership may already have had some impact on Yangon's political behaviour. Domestically, the use of force against opposition challenges has become less intense. One could argue that the leadership has not changed its vicious tactics against dissidents. According to a Myanmar expert, the more leaders in Yangon feel confident in getting the support from Asean in joining the organisation, the more repressive they become. More and more people have been arrested. The *de facto* in-house arrest of the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi bears out the point.[59] While this may be true, it would be inappropriate to conclude Asean's "constructive engagement" with regard to Myanmar has borne little fruit. One reason is that this is an internal matter. The ARF rule of non-interference in any of the member states' domestic affairs does not make Myanmar a breaker of the ARF's code of conduct. Another reason is that violence against the opponents has become less obvious. The leadership has made efforts to make its crackdowns look more "humane". During the unrest in late 1996, the riot police used water cannon rather

[59] *Interview*, January 31, 1997.

than guns to break up the protesters. Many were arrested but later released. Thus, the crackdowns since late 1996 were generally less violent than those in 1989.[60]

This is not to say that the ARF has the ability to resolve all domestic problems. It may be worth bearing in mind that the forum is of an international nature; its members are sovereign states, which agree to abide by the principle of non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. Domestic problems in the Philippines and Cambodia, for instance, remain unresolved. What the above discussion suggests, however, is that the ARF has the potential to contain domestic conflict from spilling over into neighbouring member states.

The ARF and East Asia. States in East Asia have made some adjustments towards one another, and their policy actions and expectations have slowly begun to converge. It is argued here that although the forum has failed to settle or resolve many security disputes, it has directly or indirectly managed to reduce their intensity.

The fact that Japan came to accept the ARF is in itself an achievement. Earlier, political leaders in Tokyo either showed lukewarm support for proposals on regional security (those by Mongolia and Korea) or dismissed others (those of the Soviets, Australians and Canadians) as inappropriate or irrelevant in the Asian context. It was not until Asean took the lead that Japan seems to have changed its attitudes. Since becoming an ARF member, Japan has been seeking to deepen its political and security dialogue with Asean and others. Japan in the late 20th century is not the same as the one during the 1930s and early 1940s when it sought its place in the sun. Its potential militarism has been kept at bay not only by the post-World War II and renewed US-Japan security pact, but also by its pacific constitution, anti-war public sentiment and by its role in the international economy.

The Japanese Defence Agency has also embraced security dialogue and proposed the agreements with other Asian states on the prevention of sea and air accidents to be concluded. According to Drifte, "[this] is the first time that the Agency officially supports Confidence-Building Measures ... although the word itself is not used." He further

[60] *Interview*, January 31, 1997.

wrote: "Japan is becoming more involved in arms control and security dialogue in order to improve its security environment, reduce suspicion concerning its military power and intentions, and lessen its security reliance on the security treaty and the SDF [Self-Defence Forces]."[61]

China is another interesting case in the study of international security. As a rising power, political realists expect China to climb the ladder in global politics. Thus, it could be argued that the ARF has no effect on China's strategic interests and that this giant state will not be convertible with multilateral political and security dialogue that will constrain its foreign policy behaviour. While this point still holds true, the Chinese threat to use force against Taiwan and its intimidating gesture towards this 'rebel province' cannot be applied, however. It should be noted, however, that the ARF is an international regime whose members are sovereign states. There is also evidence that China's role within the ARF was made possible by the logic that the question of national sovereignty can be put aside in favour of peaceful negotiation. It may be worth noting that China used force twice in the South China Sea (once in 1974, the other in 1988). At the Asean Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in July 1994, after the establishment of the ARF, China pledged "to settle the matter [of the Spratlys' dispute with Vietnam] on the principle of peaceful negotiation."[62] China further promised to rule out "the use of force or threat to settle the dispute."[63] In 1995, China agreed for the first time to talk to the Asean member states as a group over the Spratly disputes. In 1996, China agreed to co-host the ISG on CBMs in Beijing, which took place on March 6-8, 1997. Indeed, this was a new learning experience for China. According to Evans, "the Chinese approach to multilateral dialogues turned a corner, moving from reluctant and defensive to constructive and sophisticated."[64]

61 Reinhard Drifte, "Japan and Its Security Environment in Asia," *Occasional Paper No. 30*, Stockholm, Sweden: Centre for Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University, June 1997, pp. 18-19.

62 *Straits Times*, July 23, 1994.

63 *Business Times*, July 22, 1994.

64 Paul M. Evans, "Assessing the ARF and CSCAP," unpublished paper, August 27, 1997.

While Leifer is correct in saying that the United States as the balancer has kept the peace and maintained stability in East Asia, this balance of power alone may not have had "some moderating influence on China's assertiveness" because this system of checks and balances may in fact encourage hostilities between the two states and their dangerous arms race. Leifer also recognises this: today's China is not like the Japan before and during World War II; China is not excluded from the international economy the way Japan was. Nor does China now have a major ally like the way Japan did with revisionist Nazi Germany. One of the major aims of the ARF should not be forgotten: to engage China and to keep the United States engaged in multilateral economic, political and security matters. By engaging China, the ARF hopes to deny its access to any alliance formation. By keeping the United States engaged, the ARF hopes to reduce its fear of other powers jumping on the China bandwagon. To this effect, China as a rising power and the United States as a declining superpower may have a chance to avoid the dangerous and war-prone power-transition scenarios.

Another major factor that may make cooperative security a workable framework lies in China's conservative policy and its preoccupation with its own domestic problems. American policymakers and sinologists are convinced that China will become more and more pragmatic, progressively freer, and able to work with the United States. Ross asserts that China is a "conservative power" and poses no threat to others. Although a revisionist, China seeks to maintain the *status quo* and does not want to risk a US-Japan military build-up that would weaken China's power projection.[65] If the Asean experience tells anything it is the fact that domestic insecurity induces regional cooperation.

Other observers foresee the coming collapse of China because of its internal problems.[66] The possibility of domestic crisis becoming exter-

65 Robert Ross, "Beijing as a Conservative Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 1997: 33-45; see also Karl Eikenberry, "Does China Threaten Asia-Pacific Regional Stability?," Parameters (Spring 1995): 82-103. For the opposite view, see Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, "The Coming Conflict With America," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 1997: 18-32.

66 Jack Goldstone, "The Coming Chinese Collapse," *Foreign Policy*, March-April 1997.

nalised exists when there is no mechanism to ensure that foreign powers will not attempt to break up China. The ARF may play a key role to allay China's fear and induce its cooperation.

The Korean peninsula is another "hot spot" in Northeast Asia. The outbreak of war between North and South Korea is unlikely because neither of them seems to see the benefit of going to war outweigh the *status quo*. North Korea is in a state of turmoil domestically and may soon implode because its economy continues to deteriorate. As a confidence-building process, the ARF may facilitate this most desirable end. As mentioned earlier, the balance-of-power system is by itself unstable and does not prevent weaker states from launching offensive war against stronger powers. If not pushed too hard against the wall, Pyongyang may come around, making it possible for a peaceful reunification with Seoul.

Conclusion

The ARF process of mutual reassurance may be too slow to justify anyone congratulating this collective security arrangement prematurely. The fact that states do not seem to be as reluctant to enter this cooperative agreement as realists would have us believe, however, suggests that states are not overly obsessed with who will gain more than whom from the multilateral framework. The fact that ARF membership has expanded indicates that states have come to recognise the utility of this forum and demand an international security regime. Even Liefer admits that "the embryonic multilateral structure is unique to the Asia-Pacific and is also remarkable in how much it has accomplished institutionally in such a short space of time."[67]

Seen in this light, ARF members have had the unique opportunity to develop a "habit of dialogue" based on such norms as self-restraint and rules like renunciation of force, and decision-making in accordance with the procedural principle of voluntary acceptance or consent and consensus. These matter. There is still no evidence to suggest that the Asia-Pacific region has now become an uncontrollable arms race

[67] Michael Leifer, *The Asean Regional Forum*, p. 57.

arena.[68] This record is especially impressive for a region which has long been considered less economically developed and more culturally and politically diverse than the European region, which has a history of numerous wars, including the two world wars in the first half of this century alone.

This is not to reject the realist claim that the balance-of-power system maintains peace, but to point out that regimes like the ARF help to stabilise it. A defence analyst attributes Asean's collective success to the management of a balance-of-power system in the region: "The great achievement of Asean was to ensure that the balance of power has been accepted and managed in such a way that malign effects (like arms racing, shifting tactical alliances and dangerous incentives for military preemption) have, on the whole, not been evident."[69] Perhaps the coexistence of realism and neo-liberalism, as recognised by Simon,[70] helps to make security regimes like the ARF efficacious in terms of *stabilising* the potentially *unstable* balance-of-power system. The real challenge for the ARF members, therefore, is for them to convince one another that they are primarily interested in security and self-defence, that their policies are not driven by greed in revisionist terms, and that unscrupulous greed will not pay.[71]

[68] Desmond Ball, "Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region," *International Security* 18: 3 (Winter 1993/94), pp. 78-112. See his analysis in *Strategic Survey, 1993-1994*, pp. 41-50.

[69] Malcolm Chalmers, *Confidence-Building in Southeast Asia*, Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Redwood Books, 1996, p. 26.

[70] Sheldon W. Simon, "Realism and Neo-liberalism: International Relations Theory and Southeast Asian Security," *The Pacific Review* 8: 1 (1995): 5-24.

[71] Realists still claim that conquest does pay in the modern world and that only defensive alliances can thwart imperial adventure. See Peter Liberman, "The Spoils of Conquest," in Michael E. Brown et al. (eds.), *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, pp. 179-207. To counter this realist claim, more research is needed.