

**Security
in the post–Cold War
Asia–Pacific**

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ABSTRACT

The monograph examines ASEAN from its formation to the diverse ten-nation Association that exists today. Particular attention is paid to the fundamental nature of ASEAN and the development of its unique behavioural norms of informality, decision making by consensus and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states that govern its interaction and guide its operation as the pre-eminent multilateral organisation in Southeast Asia. These norms—the ‘ASEAN Way’—built and practiced in ASEAN, were transferred to the ARF—the regional multilateral organisation that specifically addresses security issues in the Asia–Pacific. The added complexity and diversity that is embodied in the ARF, coupled with decision making by consensus and the requirement to not interfere in the affairs of participant states makes for slow progress and less than robust interaction.

Despite the constraints of the ‘ASEAN Way’, this monograph argues that the Association has made a valuable contribution to security and stability in the Asia–Pacific through providing a key forum for discussion. Its strength lies in not being prescriptive, nor trying to enforce a particular course of action, but in the subtle diplomatic socialisation of participant states to accept the ASEAN norms of behaviour and resolve differences peacefully. As a result of a developing confidence through regular interaction, security dialogue amongst the ARF participants has both broadened and deepened. Despite continuing challenges, there is every prospect that in time, both ASEAN members and ARF participants, will develop sufficient confidence to allow them to evolve into more robust organisations prepared to move beyond dialogue.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) have been the subject of considerable academic study. While opinions differ regarding their roles and effectiveness, ASEAN has endured for more than thirty years and has expanded from its founding five nations to now include all ten Southeast Asian countries. In addition the ARF—formed in 1994—remains the only self-professed multilateral organisation in the Asia–Pacific region that deals with security matters. Some, however, believe that ‘the ARF is a security organisation only in the sense that it is concerned with developing understanding and substituting dialogue for conflict.’¹ Informality and the lack of institutionalisation are cited as weaknesses. The adherence to principles of sovereignty and non-interference, and decision making by consensus are also considered impediments to the development of both ASEAN and the ARF.

The criticism directed at these multilateral groups has largely referred to their perceived inability to deal effectively with crises that should be regarded as their core business. As a consequence they have been characterised as being little more than ‘talk shops’. Many western observers and leaders expect greater ‘progress’ from ASEAN and more specifically from the ARF. Their definition of ‘progress’ is based on both the pace at which these organisations are approaching the agenda set by and for them, and the development of formal processes. Clearly, western aspirations are for the swift evolution of more formal processes to move beyond their current status to become more structured institutions like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), that resolve conflicts rather than build mutual trust with a view to conflict avoidance.

This monograph will examine whether western expectations, based largely on concepts such as of balance of power between nation states, are appropriate when considering the interaction of the Asia–Pacific countries. This construct may be inappropriate and inadequate in dealing with organisations composed

¹ David Denoon and Evelyn Colbert, ‘Challenges for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)’, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1998–99, p. 514.

of exclusively or predominantly Asian, and more particularly Southeast Asian nations. Perhaps too much is expected from countries, that have in the main, only recently emerged from colonialism in the last half century.

A key to understanding the development of ASEAN and the ARF in this post–Cold War period is that ASEAN is made up of states that are more concerned with internal security, national cohesion and nation building than external threats.² The geographic region of Southeast Asia is perhaps developing into a pluralistic security community where members are not inclined to use violence against one another and therefore require no collective capability for it.³ They are beset with internal problems from poverty to ethnic violence and have recently, to greater or lesser degrees, suffered economically as a result of the Asian financial crisis in 1997. This diversity and historical symmetry makes the region and its institutions worthy of examination from the perspective of the development of a ‘strategic culture’ that focuses on the notion of shared experience, identity and the importance of ideas and beliefs held by state leaders and elites.⁴

There is enormous diversity in the ASEAN states in terms of population, geographic and economic size, political systems and culture. While military power and the ability to project it are important considerations, ASEAN’s approach to security has been one of cooperation, confidence building and developing transparency in the region. ASEAN has developed a uniquely Asian security interaction based not on conflict resolution but conflict avoidance—acknowledging the sovereignty of individual states. Because of this and the broadening of the term ‘security’ from the traditional military focus to include issues from international crime to health and environment, perhaps ASEAN and the ARF are best viewed from a cooperative security perspective. In looking at the Asia–Pacific region it seems that the Northeast Asian and western states that have engaged in major conflicts, tend to be more concerned with maintaining a balance of power through competition in contrast with the more cooperative Southeast Asia.⁵

² Joon Num Mak, ‘The Asia–Pacific security order’, in Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook (eds), *Asia–Pacific in the New World Order*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 113.

³ Patrick Morgan, ‘Regional Security Complexes and Regional Orders’, in David Lake and Patrick Morgan, (eds), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 1997, p. 36.

⁴ Mak, ‘The Asia–Pacific security order’, p. 91.

⁵ Mak, ‘The Asia–Pacific security order’, p. 88.

This monograph will address these competing perspectives and the changing nature of the security environment in the post–Cold War period. It will examine also the effects of globalisation on the Asia–Pacific region and the prospect of a normative shift away from national sovereignty to encompass national and international concerns for individuals and their human rights.

Chapter 2 looks at the formation, composition and history of ASEAN to provide an insight into the enduring features of this multilateral organisation—features that continue to influence its decision making ability and the pace of its development. A thorough understanding of ASEAN and its evolution is essential to any examination of the ARF. Indeed, the creation of the ARF in the post–Cold War environment, and ASEAN’s central role in it illuminate the competing expectations of the various participants and their consequent views on the performance of both organisations. This examination of ASEAN will address the concept of the ‘ASEAN Way’. Notions of sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other states are central to this understanding as these essential elements constrain the actions of ASEAN. It is ASEAN’s informal processes and agreement by consensus that help to preserve the sovereignty of participant states that at the same time both hold the Association together but constrain its development. This chapter examines the move towards more flexible engagement and enhanced interaction within ASEAN as it seeks to outgrow its historical limitations. It is also important in understanding ASEAN to consider its intrinsic diversity and the role and influence of respective nations and that of their leaders.

Chapter 3 will turn to an examination of the ARF, its formation, composition and history. It will study the strategic considerations that applied at the end of the Cold War and their influence on the formation of the ARF. This will include the role of the major powers particularly the increasing influence of China and the disposition of the world’s remaining superpower—the United States. The nature of the ARF, its two-track process and the role ASEAN plays within the Forum will also be discussed to determine their influence on its development. The evolutionary development path ARF has set for itself from

confidence building through preventative diplomacy to conflict resolution will also be examined in this chapter. The implications of the breadth and diversity of ARF membership is studied to provide an understanding of the complex nature of the Forum.

Following this examination of ASEAN and the ARF, Chapter 4 will look at the performance of these unique multilateral organisations. This section will analyse their respective contributions to regional security and examine the competing views on their performance. This process will provide some basis for understanding the complexities of their concurrent and overlaid interactions. It will address, in part, why ASEAN and the ARF have acted in the ways that they have and their limitations. Central to this is an effort to understand the implications and impact of the 'ASEAN Way' and views on sovereignty and non-interference. This includes an examination of the relationship between the principle of consensus and the preservation of sovereignty.

The final chapter draws some conclusions regarding the contribution of the ARF and ASEAN. The dichotomy that exists in the interaction between the ASEAN states and the other Asia–Pacific participants of the ARF, and the impact of this on both organisations' future development. This section will provide an assessment of their future roles in the security milieu of the Asia–Pacific region and the challenges they will face.

Firstly, however, in order to better understand the topic it is important in this introductory chapter to define the region under examination and the period in which it is to be considered. It is also necessary to outline what is meant by the term 'security' and look at the influence of globalisation on the concept of sovereignty.

The Asia–Pacific Region

The Asia–Pacific region does not have the same strong claims to regional status that can be said of Europe and its institutions—the European Union (EU) and NATO. The Asia–Pacific lacks the geographic cohesiveness and shared land borders of Europe. It does not enjoy a commonality of religion, culture, or uniform political and economic systems. It is therefore, difficult to accord the Asia–Pacific regional status on the basis of shared characteristics but definitely a significant pattern of interactions, both politically and economically, and a sense of shared perceptions exist sufficient to allow it to be thought of as a region.⁶ The members of Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN and the ARF certainly perceive that Asia–Pacific exists as a defined region.

Southeast Asia as a sub-region

The Asia–Pacific region comprises three elements: a) Southeast Asia comprising the ASEAN nations; b) Northeast Asia comprising China (Taiwan); Japan; North and South Korea; Russia; and c) the Pacific comprising the largely western nations of North America, Australia and New Zealand. The smaller South Pacific nations are represented at the ARF by Papua New Guinea. Whether sufficient security interdependence exists in the Asia–Pacific to conceive of the existence of a regional security complex is a matter of conjecture. Barry Buzan would allow that a ‘security regime (where states have made reassurance arrangements to moderate the threats they pose to each other) ...’ exists in Southeast Asia in the form of ASEAN.⁷ Indeed it could be argued that ASEAN should be recognised as a ‘pluralistic security community’ where all states agree that conflicts are to be resolved by peaceful means.⁸ While ARF participants have similarly agreed, this definition cannot be extrapolated to the whole Asia–Pacific region where the prospect of conflict occurring on the Korean peninsular or between China and Taiwan remains a distinct possibility.

⁶ Barry Buzan, ‘The Asia–Pacific: what sort of region in what sort of world?’, in Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook, (eds), *Asia–Pacific in the New World Order*, Routledge, New York, 1998, p. 71.

⁷ Buzan, ‘The Asia–Pacific: what sort of region in what sort of world?’, p. 71.

⁸ Buzan, ‘The Asia–Pacific: what sort of region in what sort of world?’, p. 71.

While recent developments on the Korean peninsula may see this potential conflict moving towards a more positive 'security regime'. The relationship between China and Taiwan, and their regular sabre rattling makes this prospect unlikely. Add to this the likelihood of the US becoming involved in any settlement of dispute, and the inclusion of Northeast Asia and the US in an Asia-Pacific 'security regime' becomes problematic. This is particularly so in that light of the April 2001 mid-air collision between a US and Chinese military aircraft, and President G.W. Bush's subsequent announcement of significant arms sales to Taiwan. The moderating influence of the ASEAN partners in seeking security cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific region holds some hope for the future.

Security in Post-Cold War Asia-Pacific

The post-Cold War environment

The Cold War has been characterised as a period of bipolarity with the Soviet Union and the United States as the two major nuclear superpowers providing a balance or at least a framework within which international and regional affairs were conducted. The Cold War period has been referred to as one of stability. This is attributed to the balance of power, nuclear deterrence and the alignment of other nations with one or other of the major powers.⁹ During this period the major powers waged ideological war against each other with direct conflict taking place by proxy in small wars. Two of these wars were fought in the region; in Korea in the early 1950s, and in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s. In addition, war was also waged in Malaysia (then Malaya) against an internal threat from communist insurgents. In the 1960s, Indonesia also fought an internal battle against communism. It was this sense of external security threats to the region from Chinese backed communism and as a result of the Vietnam War, that combined to bring about the formation of ASEAN in 1967.¹⁰

⁹ John Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 15, No.1, 1990, p. 14.

¹⁰ Aderemi Isola Ajibew, 'Regional Security in an Expanded ASEAN: A New Framework', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, June 1998, p. 129.

The end of the Cold War was heralded in Southeast Asia by the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia in late 1989. This paved the way for great power military disengagement from Southeast Asia.¹¹ The Soviets withdrew their forces from Camran Bay in Vietnam and the US subsequently closed its base at Subic Bay in the Philippines and reduced its overall troop numbers in Asia. This brought about a more peaceful regional security environment and ASEAN emerged as the region's pre-eminent institution.¹² The threat of conflict had passed and the possibility of major war or nuclear conflict diminished. In this post-Cold War environment, pre-existing, internal and unresolved, ethnic and religious tensions remained. As Nikki Baker puts it: 'Change', 'complexity' and 'uncertainty', and all their contributory factors, have been conflated into strategic uncertainty.'¹³ This setting enabled the expansion of ASEAN to include all Southeast Asian nations and the extension of its Asia-Pacific role through the creation of the ARF.¹⁴

The changing nature of security

The end of the Cold War saw the reduction of one dimension of the security threat but generated a refocus from perceptions of external threats to a focus on internal security. In this new strategic environment it was the presence of lingering ethnic conflicts, religious and economic challenges, that threatened the foundations of civil and political life.¹⁵ Transnational issues of organised criminal activity such as drug trafficking, illegal border crossing and migration, and health issues associated with AIDS also required attention. The narrow, traditional definition of security, that relies on power relationships and perceives security in terms of military balances and threat perceptions, is not helpful in addressing this change of focus. While this monograph will address the military dimension, it will look more broadly at the comprehensive definition that also encompasses the political, economic, environmental and societal aspects of security.¹⁶

¹¹ Denoon and Colbert, 'Challenges for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)', p. 508.

¹² Jeannie Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 328, Oxford University Press, London, 1999, p. 9.

¹³ Nikki Baker, 'Restructuring Foreign and Defence Policy: strategic uncertainty and the Asia-Pacific Middle powers', in Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook (eds), *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, Routledge, New York, 1998, p. 189.

¹⁴ Denoon and Colbert, 'Challenges for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)', p. 508.

¹⁵ Ajibew, 'Regional Security in an Expanded ASEAN: A New Framework', p. 129.

¹⁶ Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup, et al., *The European Security Order Recast: Scenarios for the Post Cold War Era*, Pinter, London, 1990, p. 4.

Comprehensive security

Relations between nation states are more than military. The interactions and interdependencies they develop, particularly in the economic area cannot be ignored. The flow on effect of the financial problems of Thailand quickly spread to the economies and financial institutions of its neighbours in the region. The internal stability of neighbouring states has a direct bearing on regional security. Political instability, social and/or ethnic violence or economic problems in one country can create an outflow of refugees to neighbours, that in turn places pressure on their domestic stability and economic well-being. Thailand has experienced this with refugees crossing its borders from both Cambodia and Burma.

As witnessed by the Indonesian forest fires in 1997, the resultant atmospheric pollution had a dramatic effect on neighbouring Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. Leaving aside the environmental impact of these fires, the affect of the smoke haze was a major regional health issue, the long term effects of which we have yet to appreciate fully. The haze also influenced adversely their economies through lost production and reduced revenue from tourism. Already suffering as a result of the economic crisis, this assault on their economic security caused considerable tension amongst Southeast Asian states.¹⁷

The smoke haze of 1997–98 provides an example of the complexity of this transnational issue and its security implications. It not only affected the region's physical health, but also its economic and environmental health.¹⁸ The Indonesian government seemed unwilling or unable to address this problem, that was adversely affecting its neighbours. This problem challenged the sovereignty of Indonesia with the involvement of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and transnational opinion groups playing a positive role.¹⁹ Singapore's decision to publish satellite imagery of the extent

¹⁷ James Cotton, 'The "haze" over Southeast Asia: Challenging the ASEAN Mode of Regional Engagement', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1999, p. 348.

¹⁸ Cotton, 'The "haze" over Southeast Asia: Challenging the ASEAN Mode of Regional Engagement', p. 333. Cited here are details of cost estimates; US\$4.5bn, 5 million hectares burned, bio diversity loss, destruction of unique environment, long-term health costs and the loss of 234 passengers and crew on an Indonesian aircraft, which crashed as a result of poor visibility caused by the haze.

¹⁹ Cotton, 'The "haze" over Southeast Asia: Challenging the ASEAN Mode of Regional Engagement', p. 331.

of the fires in Indonesia on the internet was clearly intended to influence public opinion in Indonesia and as such directly interfere in the internal affairs of another member state.²⁰ National security is thus challenged by this broader approach and understanding of security.

It is for these reasons and the shift towards individual security as well as national security that this monograph will address security using the broader concept of 'comprehensive security, understood as "sustained security in all fields (personal, political, economic, social, cultural, military and environmental) in both domestic and external spheres".²¹

Effects of globalisation

In the consideration of regional interaction it is important to acknowledge the increasing contact, if not interdependence, that is occurring through the process of globalisation. This phenomenon is not new as international trade, that to some extent drove European global exploration, has been around for centuries. Globalisation has been described as a process whereby social relations acquire relative 'distanceless' and borderless qualities so that human lives are increasingly played out in the world as a single place.²² This is particularly relevant when considering trade, economic links and international financial transactions and movements. The rapid transfer of short-term investment or speculative funds that occurred throughout Asia in 1997—that precipitated a financial crisis—is indicative of the global reach of international investment agencies and the speed with which the information age has endowed global economics. The global market has increased the interaction and dependence of countries on each other. The US is one of China's largest markets and as a consequence, China's future growth and prosperity are linked to the US in a manner that did not exist in the Cold War period and before China embarked on a policy of openness and modernisation.²³

²⁰ Cotton, 'The "haze" over Southeast Asia: Challenging the ASEAN Mode of Regional Engagement', p. 349.

²¹ Mohamad Jawhar bin Hassan, cited by Joseph Camilleri, in 'The Multilateral Dimensions of Australia's Security', Des Ball (ed.), *Maintaining the Strategic Edge: the Defence of Australia in 2015*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, 1999, p. 309.

²² Jan Aart Scholte, 'The Globalisation of World Politics', in Steve Smith and John Baylis (eds), *The Globalisation of World Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 14.

²³ 'China and the WTO: The Real Leap Forward', *The Economist*, November 1999, p. 27. China's exports to the US from the end of the Cold War have gone from around US\$15bn to more than US\$70bn.

Increasingly, sovereign control over economies is being eroded by the strategic business plans of multinational corporations. These multinationals have agendas not tied to any national aspiration and beyond the control of nation states, that can only seek to influence their behaviour. As Kenneth Waltz puts it: 'Globalisation is shaped by markets, not by governments'.²⁴ Issues of sovereignty are seen by these corporations as impediments to profit making and growth to be worked around or overcome. States are also ceding more authority to 'outside' organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The acceptance by Thailand and Indonesia of IMF imposed strategies in the wake of the financial crises exemplify this trend.²⁵ States are increasingly joining collective and cooperative groups to deal with issues that effect more than one nation and which cannot be dealt with in isolation. The United Nations at the global level, and at the regional level, a plethora of organisations have formed to deal with matters from economics, to the environment and security. ASEAN and the ARF are manifestations of this process in the Asia-Pacific region.

Literature Review

In order to better understand or identify the material published on ASEAN and the ARF it is perhaps best to categorise the literature as being either critical or supportive. As the following review will reflect, the literature falls broadly into these two camps and is divided roughly along theoretical lines with realist observers critical of these institutions, and liberals generally supportive. The realist perspective of international relations is based on the understanding that the international system is anarchical and that states act in competition to maximise their interests. This realist view eschews cooperation in favour of the exercise of power in the pursuit of national interest. Neorealists go beyond this position acknowledging that international relations are now conducted in a system that is becoming increasing interdependent.

²⁴ Kenneth Waltz, 'Globalisation and Governance', James Madison Lecture, 1999, <http://www.apsanet.org/PS/dec99/waltz.cfm>, p. 2.

²⁵ Amitav Acharya, 'Regionalism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No.1, April 1999, p. 7.

In comparison, the liberal perspective of international relations recognises that states pursue not only relative gains but also absolute gains whereby all benefit equally from taking a particular course of action. While it is axiomatic to claim that all nations act in their own self interest, in joining multilateral institutions such as ASEAN and the ARF, despite the constraints imposed where interests conflict, liberals believe that greater international security can be obtained through this form of cooperative action.²⁶ Liberal constructivist theorists go further, arguing that identities are not separate from interests and indeed form the basis for interests. They hold hope for the socialisation of states that have acquired selfish identities or negative historical relations with other states to overcome this behaviour through alternative forms of learning and interaction.²⁷ The process of institutionalisation involves the emergence of 'collective identities' through which states recognise an indivisibility between their own security and that of others.²⁸ This perspective is also about building and establishing protocols, codes of conduct or behavioural norms between states and accords with ASEAN (and the ARF) norms—respect for sovereignty, non-interference, consensus building and peaceful dispute resolution—that constitute ASEAN as a cooperative security community.²⁹ This more open focus on cooperative security also broadens the scope of interaction further than that allowed by traditional realist theory.

Critical literature

The critical literature is in the main realist in perspective, accentuating power and competition in the relations between states. Their view seeks strength in regional institutions and looks at the ability of ASEAN and the ARF to solve problems. These critics believe that non-traditional approaches to the resolution of regional security issues through dialogue, consensus and non-interference in the affairs of member states are inadequate.

²⁶ John Baylis, 'International Security in the Post Cold War Era', in John Baylis & Steve Smith (eds), *The Globalisation of World Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 201.

²⁷ Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organisation*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992.

²⁸ Alexander Wendt, 'Collective identity formation and the international state', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 1994, pp. 384–396.

²⁹ Cameron Hill and William Tow, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum: Material and Ideational Dynamics' paper presented at *Forum on Reconfiguring East Asia: Regional Institutions and Organisations After the Crisis*, Griffith University Centre for the Study of Australia–Asia Relations, Brisbane, 28–29 August 2000, p. 10.

In his 1989 book *ASEAN and The Security of South–East Asia*, Michael Leifer states, ‘regional order in a full sense has always been beyond the corporate capacity of ASEAN’.³⁰ He laments the lack of formal defence cooperation and considers the achievements of ASEAN as ‘somewhat mundane and even politically uninspiring’ believing that the Association needs to invest its ‘commonplace but fruitful habit of consultation and mutual consideration with critical significance.’³¹ Michael Leifer believes that in its present form its achievements will always be limited as ‘ASEAN has the natural defects of its inherent qualities, which cannot be overcome by any indulgence in symbolic forms of achievement’.³²

Another significant paper critical of ASEAN is the 1999 *Adelphi Paper*, ‘Reassessing ASEAN’ by Jeannie Henderson. In this document, while accepting the development and modest achievements of ASEAN in the years of prosperity, she states that, ‘much of its record was obfuscated by diplomatic smoke and mirrors.’³³ She argues that even before ASEAN’s expansion, the unexpected events in Cambodia and the financial crisis of 1997, ‘ASEAN had overreached itself.’³⁴ The institutions of ASEAN and the ARF are seen as limited in scope and the ‘ASEAN Way’ is considered a fundamental contradiction in being appropriate to both managing the affairs of the region without interfering in the affairs of states. Others such as Shaun Narine, argue that the political, economic and strategic considerations that made ASEAN a success are not necessarily transferable to the broader context and more powerful states that participate in the ARF.³⁵ The limits of the ASEAN Way are noted by many including Desmond Ball, who refer to the marginal impact of the dialogue process.³⁶

The critical literature on the ARF focuses primarily on the limitations of the ASEAN Way and its process of confidence building through dialogue. The role of ASEAN ‘in the driver’s seat’ is also a common source of complaint. The limitations of ASEAN mean that it only received its leading role in the ARF by default. And, that the balance of power in the region is exercised through the

³⁰ Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South–East Asia*, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 143.

³¹ Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South–East Asia*, p. 148.

³² Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South–East Asia*, p. 158.

³³ Henderson, ‘Reassessing ASEAN’, p. 11.

³⁴ Henderson, ‘Reassessing ASEAN’, p. 11.

³⁵ Shaun Narine, ‘ASEAN and the ARF, The Limits of the “ASEAN Way”’, *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 10, October 1997, p. 962.

³⁶ Desmond Ball, ‘The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region’, Working Paper No. 340, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, 1999.

major powers and their bilateral relations. In his 1982 book, *The Asian States and Regional Security*, Sheldon Simon illustrates this point with regard to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. He states that it was only with the protection of the United States and the balance of other powers such as China to hold Vietnam in check that ASEAN was able to berate Vietnam at international meetings without political cost.³⁷ These sceptics of multilateralism believe that the ASEAN model and by extension the ARF are not up to the task of addressing regional security in the Asia–Pacific.

Another leading voice against the ARF is Michael Leifer who to some extent captured the views of other critics in his 1996 *Adelphi Paper*, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum—Extending ASEAN's model of regional security'. Leifer considers that, 'the ASEAN model conspicuously avoided the problem of power by addressing regional security on a cooperative basis'.³⁸ Michael Leifer like other neorealists considers the ARF 'an imperfect diplomatic instrument for achieving regional security goals in that it seeks to address the problem of power which arises from the anarchical nature of international society without provision for either collective defence or conventional collective security'.³⁹ He asserts that multilateral mechanisms like the ARF may work well in the presence of a balance of power, 'but are not inherently capable of creating one ...'.⁴⁰ He claims that, 'a stable balance of power is the prerequisite for a successful ARF'.⁴¹ Critics such as Leifer, grudgingly acknowledge that the ARF may contribute to a viable balance or distribution of power within the Asia–Pacific but 'by other than traditional means'.⁴² However, they do not place great store in these non-traditional means, which they consider inadequate in the context of building regional security architecture, characterising them as akin to 'making bricks without straw'.⁴³

³⁷ Sheldon Simon, *The ASEAN States and Regional Security*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, California, 1982, p. 135.

³⁸ Michael Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 302, Oxford University Press, London, 1996, p. 52.

³⁹ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 53.

⁴⁰ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 57.

⁴¹ Yuen Foong Khong, 'Making bricks without straw in Asia–Pacific', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1997, p. 295.

⁴² Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 59.

⁴³ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 59.

Leifer's view is based on the understanding that the international system is essentially anarchical and accordingly, states act to maximise their interests in competition with other states. This view of international relations is about competition not cooperation and is therefore, about power and its exercise in the pursuit of national not collective interests. In this paradigm, security and stability are viewed in the context of power relationships and attempts to balance them. The realist perspective does not preclude the possibility of cooperation among states but believes that cooperation is limited to situations where only relative gains may be obtained, namely gains that are at least as great as those obtained by other states.⁴⁴ This literature places greater emphasis on distrust and self interest as the underlying motives for action rather than cooperation and consensus.

Supportive literature

Despite criticism from the realist perspective many academics and writers see merit in the ASEAN Way of approaching the 'security dilemma'.⁴⁵ It is the emphasis on consultation, consensual decision making, accommodation amongst members, and informal diplomacy that define the ASEAN Way.⁴⁶ Allan Collins in his article, 'Mitigating the Security Dilemma the ASEAN Way', as the title suggests, claims that the norms of behaviour evolved over 30 years of ASEAN's existence and interaction 'have created a security complex that dampens the intensity of the security dilemma'.⁴⁷ It is the weight given to the development and operation of these norms of behaviour and the differentiation of a distinctly Asian conceptual framework that marks the liberal institutionalist view of ASEAN and the ARF.⁴⁸ The key features of this 'soft regionalism' are 'consensus-building, an emphasis on process, and the

⁴⁴ Barry Hughes, 'Realist, Liberal and Constructivist Views', in his *Continuity and Change in World Politics*, 4th edn, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, p. 47.

⁴⁵ This dilemma occurs when the attempts of one state to protect itself give rise to feelings of insecurity in its neighbours. 'Realist, Liberal, and Constructivist Views', *The World of Politics*, p. 43.

⁴⁶ Etel Solingen, 'ASEAN, *Quo Vadis?* Domestic Coalitions and Regional Cooperation', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 1999, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Alan Collins, 'Mitigating the Security Dilemma the ASEAN Way', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 1999, p. 109.

⁴⁸ Nicola Baker and Leonard Sebastian, 'The Problem with Parachuting: Strategic Studies and Security in the Asia-Pacific Region', Desmond Ball (ed.), *The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, pp. 15-31.

avoidance of legalistic procedures and bureaucratic apparatuses'.⁴⁹ It is a focus on cooperation rather than competition that defines this literature. As noted by Yuen Foong Khong, the post–Cold War period witnessed 'the transformation of intra-ASEAN security relations from enmity, fear and rivalry to amity, trust, and cooperation.'⁵⁰

The financial crisis of 1997 has been characterised by some critics as a failure of ASEAN. Despite this, supporters such as John Funston and Amitav Acharya, believe *inter alia*, 'that the answer to recent shortcomings in ASEAN performance is not to abandon ASEAN, but to work at strengthening it.'⁵¹ They argue that the realist approach offers no guarantees and note that US military dominance did not secure economic prosperity in any case. Amitav Acharya argues that, 'because balance of power alternatives are themselves flawed, Institutionalism will remain relevant to Asia–Pacific security despite its demonstrated weaknesses in responding to the crisis'.⁵²

The supportive literature sees relevance in multilateralism not just as an adjunct to balance of power but as a valuable mechanism in itself. In a review of Michael Leifer's *Adelphi Paper*, Yuen Foong Khong criticises the perception of the ARF as being supplementary to the balance of power exercised by major powers, instead viewing it 'not as "a valuable adjunct to the workings of the balance of power" but as a mechanism for defusing the conflictual by-products of power balancing practices'.⁵³ This article and other supportive literature puts great store on the importance and efficacy of 'cooperative security discourse'. This includes 'emphasising political dialogue at both the governmental and non-governmental levels, a non-confrontational approach to dispute settlement, establishing comfort levels, frequent consultation and consensual decision making'.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Acharya, 'Regionalism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis', p. 17.

⁵⁰ Yuen Foong Khong, 'Asean and the Southeast Asian Security Complex', in David Lake & Patrick Morgan (eds), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 1997, p. 320.

⁵¹ John Funston, 'Challenges Facing ASEAN in a More Complex Age', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 2, August 1999, p. 218.

⁵² Acharya, 'Regionalism, Institutionalism, and the Asian Economic Crisis', p. 23.

⁵³ Khong, 'Making bricks without straw in Asia–Pacific', p. 296.

⁵⁴ Khong, 'Making bricks without straw in Asia–Pacific', p. 298.

The supportive literature acknowledges the breadth and depth of the dialogue process, and in particular the ‘second-track diplomacy process’ expressed through the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia–Pacific (CSCAP).⁵⁵ The ability of non-government actors, academics, business persons, journalists, ex-politicians and elder statesmen to contribute to the policy debate and inform their respective governments on key issue areas, builds confidence among the participants.⁵⁶ Supporters such as Paul Evans and John Dorsch, believe that, ‘the presently existing dialogue mechanisms are improving and widening channels of information gathering and sharing, policy consultation and coordination. ... The emergence of NGO’s working separately from, but in cooperation with, governments is certainly one of the most valuable developments in the Asia–Pacific since the end of the Cold War’.⁵⁷

The literature also discusses and supports the pre-eminent position of ASEAN in the ARF. In his paper, ‘ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should “The Driver” be replaced’, Rizal Sukman supports the case for ASEAN’s continued leadership of the ARF. He argues that ASEAN’s leadership role was vital to the founding of the ARF, made possible by it being perceived as an acceptable interlocutor.⁵⁸ As do other supporters, he argues that regardless of the slow progress of the ARF under ASEAN leadership it is still progress. He argues it is ‘important to recognise a major accomplishment of the ASEAN lead process in injecting the habit of security dialogue into the wider Asia–Pacific region’.⁵⁹ Rizal calls for maintenance of the existing incrementalism and gradual approach adopted by ASEAN and the ARF in building trust and transparency.

⁵⁵ Jorn Dosch, ‘PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific?’ Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 307, ANU, Canberra, 1997, p. 11.

⁵⁶ See also Paul Evans, ‘The Prospects of Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region’, in Desmond Ball (ed.), *The Transformation of Security in the Asia–Pacific Region*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, pp. 201–217. This paper argues the benefits of the Track II process and the role of non-government actors.

⁵⁷ Dosch, ‘PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific?’, p. 13.

⁵⁸ Rizal Sukma, ‘ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should “The Driver” be Replaced?’, *Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, 1999, pp. 238–9.

⁵⁹ Sukma, ‘ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should “The Driver” be Replaced?’, p. 244.

The basic position put by supporters is that until a viable alternative to the ARF is found, the existing arrangement and process with some modifications should be maintained.⁶⁰ The supportive literature, regard the processes of dialogue as valid mechanisms for defusing the problems and security dilemmas associated with power balancing practices. Dialogue and consultation are recognised as ends in themselves not merely adjuncts to a higher process. The supportive literature finds success where the critics see failure and generally believe that for a nascent multilateral security organisation the ARF has achieved a great deal.⁶¹ In contrast the critical literature focuses on 'realistic' perspectives of the importance of power and confrontation. They see security in a more defined and narrow paradigm than the comprehensive approach adopted by ASEAN and ARF supporters. Broadly the literature considers that ASEAN and the ARF cannot operate without the moderating influence of the power balancing dynamics of major powers within the region. The critics do not consider a cooperative approach to security sufficient to ameliorate the competing perspectives and security aspirations of individual states.

⁶⁰ Sukma, 'ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should "The Driver" be Replaced?', p. 253.

⁶¹ Alan Dupont, 'The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View', Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No.321, ANU, Canberra, May 1998, p. 1.

CHAPTER 2 THE ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a unique multilateral group formed by five Southeast Asian states in 1967. The previous chapter outlined the environment in which it was formed and defined its region of operation and the factors that influenced its development in the Cold War and post–Cold War security environments. This section provides analysis of the Association from its beginnings through its evolution to its current structure and agenda. Importantly, this chapter will look at the behavioural norms that guide and to some degree regulate the interaction of the member states. These norms are wrapped up in a term referred to generically as the ‘ASEAN Way’. This term embodies notions of sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other states, that are central to understanding the Association. The informal nature of the interactions between the participants operating without formal agendas and a decision making process that operate by consensus need to be considered for these are the qualities that make ASEAN unique. The evolution of the Association, its inherent diversity and the role and influence of key founding nations and their leaders is important to understanding the move towards flexible engagement and enhanced interaction within ASEAN.

Historical Background: Formation to ASEAN 10

ASEAN during the Cold War period

ASEAN was founded by: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand in August 1967. The ASEAN Declaration—also known as the Bangkok Declaration—referred to ASEAN as ‘an Association for regional cooperation among the countries of Southeast Asia ...’ The Declaration listed seven aims and purposes that were to be achieved ‘through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership ... and ... active collaboration and mutual assistance...’¹

¹ The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration), <http://www.asean.or.id/history/leader67.htm>, Thailand, 8 August 1967.

ASEAN was a response to the destabilising period between Indonesia and the new state of Malaysia (1963–66) during which Indonesia sought the incorporation of the east Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. The New Order Government of President Suharto in Indonesia eventually abandoned its confrontationalist approach in favour of a policy of national resilience through economic development.² Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore were new nation states that shared a common goal of development. In addition there was a growing recognition and understanding that development would be difficult to achieve without political stability. The ASEAN founding document refers to a desire to ‘strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian nations’.³ It was this underlying objective of economic growth and prosperity that was the primary driver for ASEAN’s formation and the recognition that stability was required for that goal to be achieved.

While ASEAN was founded at the height of the war in Vietnam, it was not this confrontation that was the driving force behind its formation. Each of the founding members of ASEAN were concerned about domestic communist-led movements and felt a sense of vulnerability in relation to powers such as the Soviet Union and China. However, while the conflict in Vietnam divided the nations of Southeast Asia into two distinct camps, it was a proxy conflict between the competing ideologies of the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. The formation of ASEAN was not however, ideologically driven. Despite the fact that all founding member states were non-communist, the ASEAN Declaration made no reference to communism or for that matter to democracy or democratic principles. ASEAN was not an ideological construct imposed on the region by the superpowers as part of a bi-polar power balancing mechanism in Southeast Asia. ASEAN’s immediate concerns were regional.

² N. Ganesan, ‘ASEAN’s Relations with Major External Powers’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 2, August 2000, p. 262.

³ The ASEAN Declaration.

ASEAN's founders argued that it was not formed as a result of major external power balancing dynamics but the desire for 'peace and stability' in the region. Viewed through the realist lens, ASEAN is nevertheless, seen as a power balancing mechanism, albeit an internal one. The external balance in Southeast Asia was expressed as part of the Cold War dynamic between the pro-western ASEAN nations and the predominantly former French Indochina countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos backed by communist regimes.

But ASEAN was not formed as a sub-regional 'security organisation' to address security issues exclusively within Southeast Asia. Despite its reference to the promotion of 'regional peace', ASEAN was formed without a declared security mandate. While the inarticulate premise on which it was founded was driven by security concerns, 'security' was not 'explicitly' placed on the ASEAN agenda until 1992.⁴ ASEAN was formed ostensibly to promote regional economic cooperation and prosperity. ASEAN was concerned with building new states in Southeast Asia—a process that required a stable environment.

The founding states of ASEAN—with the exception of Thailand—were former colonies and new nations (Singapore had only separated from the Malaysian Federation two years earlier in 1965) trying to consolidate both politically and economically. Brunei, which joined ASEAN in 1985, after achieving independence from the United Kingdom in 1984, was in a similar position. Although oil rich and ruled by the Sultan of Brunei, it sought to consolidate itself as a new nation state. Given this history, it is no surprise that the Association was focused on regional political stabilisation not regional security. If security is defined in terms of military relationships and threat perceptions there was no regional defence cooperation, with the possible exception of Malaysia and Singapore under the umbrella of the United Kingdom—the former colonial power. Security from external threats was largely provided through bilateral arrangements with major powers outside the region.

⁴ David Dickens, 'Lessening the Desire for War: The ASEAN Regional Forum and the Making of Asia Pacific Security', CSS Working Paper, 11/98, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, 1998, p. 4.

In this sense, Cold War considerations and ideological parameters placed external limits on ASEAN's potential to act as a regional forum. With the exception of pro-western Brunei, ASEAN expansion was not possible. It was not able to act externally without the intrusion of Cold War ideology and even if it had wanted to the Association could not have adopted a regional security focus. But in one sense this cap or ceiling to its scope provided a liberating freedom to pursue, without external interference, the development goals of its member states.

ASEAN after the Cold War

The end of the Cold War witnessed the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Camran Bay in Vietnam. This changing balance combined with a resurgence of Philippines nationalism, culminated in the withdrawal of US forces from their bases in that country. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bi-polar structure had a ripple effect within the sub-structure of Southeast Asia. Thailand downgraded its perception of Vietnam as a threat and the withdrawal of Vietnam's occupation forces from Cambodia, effectively removed the major impediment to Vietnam's entry into ASEAN.⁵

The post-Cold War period can be characterised as a period of expansion and consolidation for ASEAN. Vietnam joined the Association in 1995. Its entry cleared the way for the other former Indochina countries and Myanmar to join. Laos and Myanmar joined in 1997 and in April 1999 respectively. The Association's ambition to incorporate all ten Southeast Asian countries became a reality with the admission of Cambodia.

The fourth protocol of the ASEAN Declaration indicated that participation in the Association was open to all states in the Southeast Asian region provided they subscribed to its aims, principles and purposes.⁶ Following the formation of a permanent ASEAN Secretariat in 1976, the ASEAN philosophy was effectively extended to include the peaceful resolution of differences between participating, member countries. This was embodied in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation—signed by the original five members, then Brunei,

⁵ Ganesan, 'ASEAN's Relations with Major External Powers', p. 265.

⁶ The ASEAN Declaration.

Vietnam and all new members on joining the Association. As Alan Collins states, 'the region was well placed to avoid the detrimental effects of the security dilemma and much of this was due to the constraints or norms of behaviour that reduce uncertainty among the ASEAN membership—the ASEAN Way.'⁷

The Nature of ASEAN

In order to understand ASEAN and make judgements about its achievements, it is important to consider its evolution. ASEAN began life as a regional grouping awkwardly coming to grips with cooperative dialogue at the same time as member states were trying to consolidate as new national identities. ASEAN's founders did not create the Association as a mechanism for resolving disputes between countries nor was it created because of a particular crisis in Southeast Asia. All the original ASEAN nations had their differences and even disputes, indeed some continue to differ over territorial issues. But there was a recognition that none could prosper without the agreement of all to put aside their differences and cooperate. As witnessed in the first year of ASEAN's existence by the Philippine's claim to the Malaysian state of Sabah, there was very little trust or confidence among Southeast Asian countries in the late 1960s. Accordingly, they adopted a model of regional cooperation that its very diverse members could live with and that maximised the member's diplomatic and political strengths.⁸

The 'ASEAN Way'

ASEAN developed into a cooperative regional regime on the basis of three principles: respect for state sovereignty, non-intervention, and rejection of the threat of use of force in resolving disputes.⁹ These principles are important as they were carried by ASEAN into the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

⁷ Allan Collins, 'Mitigating the Security Dilemma the ASEAN Way', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 1999, p. 106.

⁸ Frank Frost, 'ASEAN at 30: Enlargement, Consolidation and Problems of Cambodia', Current Issues Brief No 2 1997–98, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 1997, p. 2.

⁹ Etel Solingen, 'ASEAN, *Quo Vadis?* Domestic Coalitions and Regional Cooperation', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 1999, p. 45.

In order to safeguard the hard won sovereignty of its member nations, the Association operated on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. For the same reason ASEAN's decision making was based on a process of consultation and consensus.¹⁰ In 1967, this 'code of conduct' was formalized and subsequently included in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.¹¹ ASEAN adopted several informal mechanisms emphasising consultation, consensual decision making, accommodation among members, and informal diplomacy.¹² The 'ASEAN Way', as it became known, is an important, central and fundamental philosophical approach that defines ASEAN and accordingly, the ARF. This central tenet has remained a feature of ASEAN through its expansion to include all 10 Southeast Asian countries.

Asian values

The ASEAN Way has been equated with a particular set of values that the countries of Southeast Asia define as being unique to Asian cultures and way of life. The ASEAN Declaration acknowledged this cultural identity and noted that the countries of the region were 'already bound together by ties of history and culture.'¹³ What became known as 'Asian values' were based loosely on Confucian notions of behaviour to be adopted at the individual level and by families. These values were said to encompass ideas of respect for elders and the collective good of the family. They embodied the idea that the family and by extension, society, has a value greater than that of the individual. Asian values is about people and relationships whereby subjects show respect to their leaders and in turn leaders rule in a just manner.¹⁴ The notion of respect is to some extent evident in the ASEAN approach to sovereignty issues and the policy of non-interference in the affairs of member states. Asian values can be seen in the informal manner with which the ASEAN leaders interact without a formal agenda and the assumed values and principles that underpin their relationships and the operation of the Association.

¹⁰ Jeannie Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 328, Oxford University Press, London, 1999, p. 17.

¹¹ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 16.

¹² Solingen, 'ASEAN, *Quo Vadis?* Domestic Coalitions and Regional Cooperation', p. 45.

¹³ The ASEAN Declaration.

¹⁴ Michael Barr, 'Lee Kuan Yew and the "Asian Value" debate', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 24, No. 3, September 2000, p. 311.

Former Singapore Prime Minister (now Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew), was one of the main architects of the Asian values argument.¹⁵ These 'Asian values' were seen as setting Asia, and by definition ASEAN, apart philosophically from the western focus on the individual. In some respects this exclusiveness and separateness assumed an air of superiority of eastern over western values. Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad is currently the main proponent of these 'values' that are claimed as reasons why international human rights norms should not be applied in the same manner to developing Asian countries as a superior, more culturally appropriate set of values are in place in Asia. This proposition has been made at various times by China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore. This notion of 'communitarianism' was prominent in the rhetoric with which Lee Kuan Yew justified 'the subjugation of the unions and most of the civil society to the will of the government ...'¹⁶ in the 1960s. This sense of separateness was also evident in a speech on East Timor by Prime Minister Mahathir in 1999 when he stated *inter alia*, that 'Asian problems ... should be resolved by Asians in the Asian way.'¹⁷

This response can also be seen as a backlash against largely western, multinational corporations, that through their advertising, promote western consumerism and individual freedoms. Asian values and the ASEAN Way are manifestations of a regional backlash against western influence and great power dominance over regional affairs. This sentiment can also be seen in the reluctance of states, Malaysia in particular, to accept fully IMF remedies following the 1997 financial crisis. The dislike of western influence was central for the search for an Asian solution to the financial crisis and the proposal to create an Asian monetary fund.

¹⁵ Barr, 'Lee Kuan Yew and the "Asian Values" debate', p. 309.

¹⁶ Barr, 'Lee Kuan Yew and the "Asian Values" debate', p. 316.

¹⁷ Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, 'My Thoughts on East Timor', speech of 11 October 1999, <http://www.smpke.jpm.my/pm/Oct11th99-pm.html>.

The concept of sovereignty and non-interference

At the time ASEAN was created, the founding nations were largely nascent. These were states in the process of creating national identities and establishing themselves both in the region and internationally. Consolidating national identity was a significant issue for the five founding nations of ASEAN. Stability, both internal and external was something all, not only desired but required in order to consolidate themselves. Sovereignty and the integrity of the state, was therefore an important consideration. The ability of each country to determine its own path of development also meant that non-interference and respect for the rights of other nations was a key to continuing cooperation. All ASEAN nations subscribe to the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other member states. Indeed it could be argued that without this accord, ASEAN would not have been formed. Countries such as Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar would not have considered joining the Association had non-interference not been a defining feature of ASEAN. The same can also be said of all ASEAN nations membership of the ARF.

Flexible engagement and enhanced interaction

The issues of sovereignty and non-interference were initially interpreted to include refraining from public comment on the internal affairs of fellow ASEAN nations. This founding principal has, however, been eroded over time with comments made by leaders about events in other member states. Former Philippines President Estrada¹⁸ and former President Habibie¹⁹ of Indonesia both commented publicly on the jailing and perceived ill treatment of Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar. During the financial crisis Prime Minister Mahathir commented on the state of Indonesia's financial problems in an effort to separate Malaysia from its neighbour.²⁰ While no longer the Singapore leader, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs made disparaging comments about neighbouring Malaysia.

¹⁸ Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Baladas Ghoshal, 'The political future of ASEAN after the Asian crisis', *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 4, October 1999, p. 769.

¹⁹ Jurgen Haacke, 'The concept of flexible engagement and the practice of enhanced interaction: intermural challenges to the "ASEAN way"', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999, pp. 600–01.

²⁰ John Funston, 'Challenges Facing ASEAN in a More Complex Age', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 2, August 1999, p. 209

A more pertinent issue revolves around the expectations of the international community of ASEAN. In order to be acknowledged as a credible regional actor, ASEAN must be seen to be cohesive and able to demonstrate some degree of influence over unfolding regional events.²¹ There is also consensus within the Association that it does not want any outside interference in Southeast Asian affairs. Collectively, ASEAN members would rather address issues internally and: 'Try the ASEAN way first'.²² This has created a conundrum for the Association in that it was not established as a dispute resolution mechanism and the principles of non-interference, respect for sovereignty and consensus, do not lend themselves easily to bringing influence to bear over unfolding regional events. Increasingly, the focus on human rights issues by the international community that influences the broader international agenda make it increasingly difficult for ASEAN states to ignore human rights abuses or political developments in neighbouring states.

The concept of 'flexible engagement' was raised by Thailand in relation to the engagement of Myanmar and its subsequent entry into ASEAN. Embodied in the concept of flexible engagement is the notion that states can involve themselves in dialogue with other states over some but not all issues. Myanmar's action against Karen separatists had previously, in May 1989, included military incursion into Thai territory to destroy a Karen base resulting in clashes between Myanmar and Thai forces. Offers by Thailand to negotiate between Myanmar and the Karen separatists were rebuffed with accusations of interference in Myanmar's internal affairs.²³ Border clashes between these two ASEAN states continue to dog their relationship but an improved dialogue process with the formation of a border control group and regular meetings are allowing this sensitive issue to be addressed.

²¹ Mahathir Mohamad, 'My Thoughts on East Timor'.

²² Aderemi Isola Ajibewa, 'Regional security in an Expanded ASEAN: A New Framework', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, June 1998, p. 134.

²³ Collins, 'Mitigating the Security Dilemma the ASEAN Way', p. 98.

The problem of how to tackle these types of issues, on which the international community looks to ASEAN for resolution, is a matter that the Association is attempting to address. This is particularly the case, when internal, domestic political affairs are at odds with international human rights norms. While non-interference remains central to the ASEAN Way there has been some debate among members to consider moving to a more open approach; first through its 'constructive engagement' of Myanmar and subsequently to the concept of 'flexible engagement' promoted largely by Thailand and the Philippines.²⁴

ASEAN has come some distance from its foundation when the principles of sovereignty and non-interference were developed and have since become recognised as norms of behaviour. Some decades later what we are witnessing with this development or at least discussion of change to consider, if not direct interference, is acceptance of the idea that others could comment on the internal affairs of member states. What is important to note, is that those proposing these changes are representatives from the older established ASEAN states that have developed sufficient confidence to feel comfortable with this prospect.

The idea of a delegation of senior ministers delegation was first canvassed in 1997 when efforts were made by ASEAN to intervene in the Cambodia–Vietnam situation. Malaysia's then Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim suggested in July 1997, that ASEAN adopt a policy of 'constructive intervention'.²⁵ More recently, 'enhanced interaction', as it has become known, was raised at the third ASEAN Informal Summit held in the Philippines in November 1999. At this meeting the Prime Minister of Thailand floated the prospect of an ASEAN Troika (comprising the existing, past and next ASEAN chairman) to address more effectively, at the ministerial level, issues affecting regional peace and stability. The ASEAN Troika was subsequently formalised in August 2000 at a meeting in Thailand. Its stated purpose would be to 'enable ASEAN to address in a timely manner urgent and important regional political and security issues and situations of common concern likely to disturb regional peace and harmony. By helping ASEAN to be more responsive to the growing interdependence between the countries of

²⁴ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', pp. 26, 42.

²⁵ Haacke, 'The concept of flexible engagement and the practice of enhanced interaction: intermural challenges to the "ASEAN way"', p. 582.

Southeast Asia, the ASEAN Troika would serve to elevate ASEAN cooperation to a higher plane and further serve to enhance ASEAN's unity and solidarity, as well as its overall effectiveness.²⁶

This move was however, heavily qualified to ensure consensus could be reached and the agreement of all, particularly the newer member states, could be reached. The communiqué that articulated this development included several clarifications that the Troika would carry out its work in accordance with ASEAN principles, 'in particular the core principles of consensus and non-interference.' In addressing the issue of scope it noted specifically that, 'the ASEAN Troika shall refrain from addressing issues that constitute the internal affairs of ASEAN member countries.'²⁷ Without being prescriptive, this would appear to be a strong attempt to influence the behaviour of member states in that the need to assemble the Troika would send a strong signal to the country or countries in which, or between which, a problem had developed. It would equally signal to the international community that ASEAN was dealing with the problem and perhaps prevent precipitous action by major powers to intervene. It may be this latter point that has been grasped by the more established ASEAN states—the main proponents of enhanced interaction.

There are of course obstacles to this idea having anything other than symbolic meaning. The obvious one is the continuing principle of consensus. How could ASEAN even form a Troika, let alone approach a difficult issue in a particular state if that state failed firstly to agree to the formation of a Troika and/or refused to engage in dialogue with it? The other issue is the definition of what constitutes an 'internal or domestic' issue. At what stage does the matter become the proper subject of collective ASEAN interest? This is a very subjective view—albeit collective—but it could be argued that where the matter impinges on the sovereignty of neighbouring states it would become the subject of dialogue and therefore could be construed as 'affecting regional peace and harmony'.²⁸ The consensual nature of this process does not, however, provide the degree of rigour sought by some within ASEAN and others in the international community.

²⁶ 'The ASEAN Troika', <http://www.mfa.go.th/amm33/speech/troika.htm>, (31 August 2000).

²⁷ 'The ASEAN Troika'.

²⁸ 'The ASEAN Troika'.

The lack of rigour and certainty in the ASEAN decision making process may be viewed by some as evidence of the ineffectiveness of ASEAN in being unable to address regional problems and raise itself to the status of a security regime. But the very process of raising issues of concern for discussion in the context of a 'Troika', would see the issue being addressed by ASEAN, not ignored. That no formal institutional dispute resolution measures exist does not detract from the power of dialogue, persuasion and peer pressure to bring about positive outcomes. ASEAN's agreement to the Troika is testament to a changing attitude towards raising issues that would previously have been left untouched. While not a 'sea change' it is a positive step in the evolution of ASEAN, the socialisation of member states, particularly the newer members, and recognition of increasing regional interdependence.

Informality and consensus

While ASEAN as an entity has a Secretariat and conducts regular, organised meetings, one of the defining feature of this exercise in Asian regional multilateralism is the lack of formal agendas for discussion. Decisions are reached through a process of dialogue and consensus. This can be partly attributed to the Asian way of doing things. The lack of a formal agenda means that issues can be raised in an informal setting avoiding set piece dialogue where countries follow set foreign policy positions. This element of informality allows ideas to be floated and discussed without the prospect of a formal proposal being rejected. In this sense informality could be viewed as a mechanism for saving face. A suggestion proposed by one nation is not its formally declared position and it has in, an informal setting, the flexibility to modify its position. The consensus approach also to some degree, guarantees ASEAN's principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. Carlos Romulo—former Philippines Foreign Secretary— noted that the development, in an informal setting, of close personal relationships between ASEAN Foreign Ministers meant he could pick up the phone to talk directly to his counterparts in Indonesia or Singapore. He is also quoted as saying that private talks over breakfast often proved more important than formal meetings.²⁹

²⁹ Collins, 'Mitigating the Security Dilemma the ASEAN Way', p. 107.

Post ministerial conference

ASEAN acts as a sub-regional organisation focused on Southeast Asia. ASEAN has, however, through a series of post ministerial conferences, tried to engage other international actors in dialogue on matters of particular concern and where interaction is desirable or in some cases unavoidable. While it does not function as a regional multilateral organisation, only the ASEAN post Ministerial Dialogue process could claim a near representative Asia–Pacific regional spread of membership.³⁰ The ‘Dialogue partners’ are the Foreign Ministers and officials from invited countries. These post ministerial conferences, that are now a regular feature of the annual ASEAN meetings commenced in the 1970s. They have since been expanded from the original dialogue partners to include Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea and the United States. ASEAN had managed to capture the attention of the world’s leading nations, this for a small group of developing nations, was a substantial achievement.³¹ These multilateral meetings covered a variety of issues and significantly, prior to the formation of the ARF, were the only forum that discussed security issues in a regional multilateral context.³²

Diversity and its Implications

Despite claims of ‘unity in diversity’ ASEAN’s expansion substantially increased its political and economic variety and the diversity of strategic views among its members.³³ Diversity in one way or another is a defining feature of ASEAN. Participating ASEAN nations vary dramatically in geographic size and include both maritime and land-locked nations. From Brunei, with a population of some 317,000 to Indonesia with more than 200 million people, from Thailand with a GDP of US\$17.0bn to Laos with a GDP of just over US\$1bn, from growing liberal democracies in Thailand and the Philippines to the communist regimes of Vietnam and Laos, and the authoritarian military regime of Myanmar.³⁴ Ethnic composition and religious and cultural differences abound.

³⁰ Dickens, ‘Lessening the Desire for War: The ASEAN Regional Forum and the Making of Asia Pacific Security’, p. 3.

³¹ Jorn Dosch, ‘PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific?’ Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper, No. 307, ANU, Canberra, 1997, p. 4.

³² Dickens, ‘Lessening the Desire for War: The ASEAN Regional Forum and the Making of Asia Pacific Security’, p. 4.

³³ Henderson, ‘Reassessing ASEAN’, p. 17.

³⁴ Henderson, ‘Reassessing ASEAN’, p. 35.

New and old ASEAN members

There is a perception despite the 'spirit of equality and partnership' on which ASEAN is based that a hierarchy exists within the Association. The founding member states—the senior citizens in the 'regional community'—enjoy a history of multilateral interaction spanning more than 30 years. Despite recent regional changes, the leaders of these nations, particularly the foreign ministers and senior officials, developed enduring personal and professional relationships. The subject of leadership and its influence and role in ASEAN is a factor not to be overlooked and is one that will be addressed later—the depth of institutional and bureaucratic contact developed between the original five is also apparent.

Historical disputes and political diversity

Southeast Asia as a region or sub-region, like any other region has not been free from conflict or disputes. From the Burmese incursion into Thailand to the war in Vietnam and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, Southeast Asia has a background of friction between the nations of this sub-region. At the time of ASEAN's formation in 1967, territorial disputes existed between Indonesia and Malaysia, Malaysia and Singapore, and the Philippines and Malaysia.³⁵ The territorial disputes between ASEAN nations, including competing claims over South China Sea islands and reefs, remain unresolved. ASEAN was not formed as a mechanism to resolve these competing claims but as a means of preserving the *status quo* and stabilising the political environment in Southeast Asia. The reality of ASEAN has prevented these ongoing disputes from escalation.

There were also disputes over cross-border issues between Thailand and Malaysia and indeed all founding nations, over illegal fishing and migration. These issues remain today. The growth of ASEAN to include all ten Southeast Asian states has expanded the number and complexity of unresolved issues and disputes between and within the ASEAN states. Expansion of ASEAN added to the number of South China Sea claimants and this number of border issues between Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. What has changed, however, is the method of dealing with them. While bilateral dialogue remains the main mechanism for addressing interstate disputes, some issues that affect more than two states, such as maritime and fisheries, have been dealt with collectively through ASEAN dialogue.

³⁵ Frost, 'ASEAN at 30: Enlargement, Consolidation and Problems of Cambodia', p. 2.

ASEAN nations do not share common political ideologies or aspirations. In 1967, the five founding nations were developing as guided democratic governments and have to greater and lesser degrees continued along the democratic path. Cambodia is struggling to follow suit. The monarchy of Brunei, socialist regimes of Vietnam and Laos, and the repressive military regime of Myanmar, add to this curious melange. In this context, politics and ideology are not unifying features of ASEAN but by the same token are not considered as impediments to participation and dialogue.

Economic diversity: haves and have-nots

ASEAN nations vary in economic terms from the size of their respective GDPs to their economic policies and fundamentals. Unlike the countries that joined the Association in the 1990s, the five founding nations and Brunei, despite the set back of the financial crisis in 1997, share a recent history of strong economic growth and development. Within this group there is also a divide between the oil producing nations of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei (the economy of the latter is based primarily on its oil exporting ability and potential) and the non-oil producing countries. This relative prosperity contrasts sharply with the struggling economies of Cambodia and Laos, and the stagnant economy of Myanmar. Accordingly, per capita incomes vary significantly from Singapore's US\$32,940 to Cambodia's US\$300.³⁶ The spread of relative wealth between the nations of ASEAN is uneven and relates strongly with whether a state is an 'old' or 'new' member of the Association. While a correlation also exists between economic circumstances and political ideology, this is not a subject for detailed analysis in this monograph.

The economic disparity is at present a defining feature of ASEAN. It should, however, also be seen in its historical context as representing a significant incentive to the 'new' members of the Southeast Asian family to: a) join the Association and, b) press for regional support from the more developed nations to assist in lifting their economic conditions. ASEAN will have to give

³⁶ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 34.

a lot of assistance and support to Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia if they are to catch-up.³⁷ Redressing the balance between the 'haves and the have-nots' is a potential problem for ASEAN. If it does not address this issue and fails to keep faith with the desires of the 'new' ASEAN nations to improve their economies it may entrench or deepen this divide and threaten ASEAN's coherence as a regional grouping.

Cultural/religious diversity

The nations of Southeast Asia range from Indonesia which is the most populous Muslim nation in the world to the strongly Christian Philippines. Malaysia and Brunei are also Muslim. Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are predominantly Buddhist and Singapore, while religiously tolerant, follows Confucian philosophy. Combined with a diversity of ethnicities, some of which as in Malaysia, are given political prominence by legislative fiat, and a variety of languages, a more polyglot, diverse region would be hard to find.

The peoples of Southeast Asia have co-existed along side each other and enjoyed largely peaceful relations for centuries. Ethnic tensions continue to exist between the Chinese and indigenous members of Southeast Asian states, where they are prominent in the financial and economic life of the state. The separation of largely Chinese Singapore from Malaysia and its subsequent economic success is a symbol of this phenomenon in the region. During the economic crisis of 1997, this tension surfaced in Indonesia in particular where riots witnessed the burning and looting of Chinese businesses and homes. In Myanmar, ethnic tension has arisen with the northern Karen tribesmen seeking some form of autonomy. Religious differences are also abundant in the region with conflict occurring between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia on the island of Ambon and in the Philippines on Mindanao.

Despite these differences there appears to be, within ASEAN, a sense of shared regional identity. This is not just by dint of geography but also as the earlier discussion on Asian values indicated, a shared sense of values has developed. ASEAN has showed itself to be resilient against ethnic and religious differences and tensions, and continues to operate as the major multilateral organisation in Southeast Asia.

³⁷ Ahmad, and Ghoshal, 'The political future of ASEAN after the Asian crisis', p. 772.

ASEAN Leadership

In the ASEAN Declaration reference is made to ‘the spirit of equality and partnership’.³⁸ In 1967, the founding nations were by no means equal in terms of their economies or strategic weight. These factors have varied over the 33 years of the Association’s history but the most important and enduring factor has been the centrality of Indonesia to Southeast Asia and ASEAN.

Indonesia’s role

Indonesia was an important factor in the formation of ASEAN. Coming as it did at the end of ‘Konfrontasi’ between the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia, ASEAN was seen as a stabilising mechanism to help develop better relations between these two central Southeast Asian states. The formation of ASEAN followed a change of leadership within Indonesia and marked a move away from attempts at geographic enlargement to one of consolidation both for the state of Indonesia under the New Order government and for the sub-region. As Jeanie Henderson states: ‘Indonesia did not openly claim a leadership role, but rather approached ASEAN according to the Javanese concept of “leading from behind”’.³⁹

The geographic footprint of Indonesia and its population size give it prominence as first among equals. It carries a strategic weight not matched by other ASEAN nations. In 1976, when the ASEAN Secretariat was established, Indonesia’s key location within maritime Southeast Asia made Jakarta an obvious choice as, ‘Indonesia was widely regarded as *primus inter pares* within the organization’.⁴⁰ What happens in Indonesia affects the other nations in the region in a manner, that is not replicated in the reverse. Instability in Indonesia has ramifications for all ASEAN nations with the prospect of refugees and illegal migration flowing into neighbouring states. This is particularly the case with Malaysia, which already tolerates a high level of illegal Indonesian workers.

³⁸ The ASEAN Declaration.

³⁹ Henderson, ‘Reassessing ASEAN’, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Ganesan, ‘ASEAN’s Relations with Major External Powers’, p. 263.

Accordingly, Indonesia's voice has carried more weight within the Association than its ASEAN partners. Coupled with political stability and economic growth, Indonesia was the unspoken leader of ASEAN. This position has changed since the 1997 financial crisis, that precipitated the end of the Suharto regime and the beginning of an unsteady path to democracy in Indonesia. Indonesia no longer provides the *de facto* leadership it has in the past and there is no obvious successor to rise to this position.

Personality politics

As previously mentioned, the Asian values based on Confucian philosophy included notions of respect for leaders and elders. Southeast Asia's leaders during the 1970s and 1980s were long term leaders with firm control over their respective nations. As Koo How San puts it: 'Clearly, Indonesia's chief political executive from March 1966 to May 1998 was the dominating factor in Indonesian politics and one of the dominant factors of the ASEAN dynamic.'⁴¹ Suharto and the other 'strong men of Asia' developed a genuine mutual respect for each other. This was evident between Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew and Suharto, and between Lee and Mahathir, and in the 1990s, between Lee's successor Goh Chok Tong and between Mahathir and the Philippines former President Fidel Ramos.⁴²

The relationships between ASEAN leaders were and continue to be an important dynamic in considering the interaction between the participating nations. This aspect of personality politics is difficult to understand when viewed through the realist paradigm. The neoliberalist perspective is better suited to the study of this aspect of ASEAN interaction.

This section has provided an overview of ASEAN, its history, diversity, and the factors that contributed to its development. It has covered the essential elements of the Association embodied in the ASEAN Way and outlined the commencement of a shift towards more flexible engagement and enhanced interaction. This detail is important to comprehending properly the developing norms of behaviour that shape ASEAN and, by virtue of its central role in the ARF, also influence this wider multilateral forum.

⁴¹ Khoo How San, 'ASEAN as a "Neighbourhood Watch Group"', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 2, August 2000, p. 287.

⁴² San, 'ASEAN as a "Neighbourhood Watch Group"', p. 284.

CHAPTER 3 THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

As the previous chapter shows, ASEAN was primarily a sub-regional group with no specific mandate to address security issues. Having looked at ASEAN's formation, development and unique features we must move on to examine the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and its evolution. This chapter seeks to provide an understanding of how and why the ARF came into being. It looks particularly at the changing geopolitical environment that was taking shape following the end of the Cold War and the factors that influenced the nations of the Asia-Pacific to form such a multilateral security forum. This chapter outlines the plan they developed for the ARF's evolutionary development from the development of confidence building measures, through to mechanisms of preventative diplomacy and ultimately to the resolution of conflict. In order to better understand the ARF, this chapter looks at the processes it has adopted, the role of ASEAN in the ARF, the issue of leadership and finally the implications of its growth to now comprise 23 states and the difficulties associated with the diversity that brings to the Forum.

Formation of the ARF

The ARF emerged as a consequence of the fourth ASEAN heads of government summit meeting in Singapore in January 1992. The participants at that meeting recognised the necessity of looking beyond Southeast Asia to cope with the post-Cold War regional security environment.¹ Until this time there had not been any regional multilateral forum specifically focused on security matters. As mentioned in Chapter Two, while ASEAN had adopted this mantle by default it was essentially filling the role *inter alia* of a sub-regional security forum.

The ARF came formally into being following a July 1993 meeting of Foreign Ministers from ASEAN and its dialogue partners in the ASEAN post Ministerial Conference. It was agreed at that meeting to hold separate regular gatherings, that would focus on regional security issues under the auspices of a newly constituted ASEAN Regional Forum.² As the title indicates the formation of the ARF was primarily an ASEAN initiative and it was also clear

¹ Michael Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 302, Oxford University Press, London, 1996, p. 8.

² Alan Dupont, 'The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View', Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper, No. 321, ANU, Canberra, May 1998, p. 1.

from its preeminent place in the title that ASEAN intended to play a leading role in the ARF. As Desmond Ball states: 'Mechanisms for region-wide security dialogue have now been firmly established, of which the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has emerged as the centrepiece.'³ ASEAN and the ARF accepted the very act of dialogue as the appropriate mode for strengthening intra-mural relationships in the interest of regional stability.⁴

The first working session of the ARF involving 18 Foreign Ministers, did not take place until July 1994 and took the form of a discussion on Asia–Pacific Security Challenges and Opportunities. In addition to the ASEAN member states, the gathering included the United States, Russia and China. The session agreed to encourage a form and process of political socialisation that would promote a greater sense of mutual confidence and trust among various member governments.⁵ This was an endorsement of the aims and principles of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

The ARF now includes representatives from 23 countries. It has also involved countries 'beyond the geography of Asia and the "geographical footprint" to include members such as Europe, Russia, the USA and Canada.'⁶ India was subsequently included in the ARF in 1996 and Mongolia in 1998.⁷ North Korea was welcomed for the first time at the 7th ARF Ministerial meeting in Bangkok on 27 July 2000.⁸

Post–Cold War uncertainty

The Cold War provided a degree of certainty to security decision making both globally and in the Asia–Pacific region. In 1990, the then six ASEAN nations were anti-Communist and pro-Western. This meant that neither Russia nor China were trusted or welcomed as ASEAN dialogue partners. Links between these countries, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar meant that cooperative relations with these nations was also precluded. Indeed it has been argued that the perceived external security threats posed by China and

³ Desmond Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region', Working Paper, No. 340, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, 1999, p. 2.

⁴ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 8.

⁵ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', pp. 32, 33.

⁶ Simon Tay and Obood Talib, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum: Preparing for Preventative Diplomacy', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 19, No. 3, December 1997, p. 252.

⁷ Jeannie Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 328, Oxford University Press, London, 1999, p. 68.

⁸ 'Chairman's Statement, the Seventh Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum', Bangkok, 27 July 2000, http://www.asean.or.id/politics/pol_arf7.htm

the Vietnam War combined to bring about the creation of ASEAN in 1967.⁹ While this hypothesis was qualified in the previous chapter, it is fair to say that the ending of the Cold War took away the bipolar approach to thinking about security. All nations had to make adjustments and ASEAN had to reassess its relations with its former protagonists and develop strategies to deal with them in the post–Cold War period.

Unipolarity/multipolarity

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the world moved from a global framework that had defined security for the previous four and a half decades to one dominated by the US as the sole remaining superpower able to project military power to every part of the globe. The post–Cold War period found a unipolar international system, that Desmond Ball speculates, will last until 2020.¹⁰ ASEAN nations had until 1990, sheltered under the umbrella of US protection and although they harboured aspirations of expanding the Association to include all Southeast Asian nations this had been precluded by the hitherto ideological divide. While the end of the Cold War provided the opportunity to expand, it also meant that China, effectively contained during the Cold War, was now seen by ASEAN as a significant player in regional security matters. This perception was sharpened more by the declining US military presence in the post–Cold War Asia–Pacific. There was general apprehension concerning the future role of a more powerful China and its strategic and economic posture towards the region.¹¹ ASEAN members were concerned at the withdrawal of US forces from the Philippines and the perception that US interest in Southeast Asia was waning.

In turn, China recognised that in order to have some influence on regional events it would need to develop more broadly its relations with other East Asian nations. Not being able to compete with the US, China favoured a balance of regional bilateral relationships but has since complemented these with a move to promote multilateral dialogues. China's interest in the ARF and multilateral and regional cooperation could also be construed as being

⁹ Aderemi Isola Ajibewa, 'Regional security in an Expanded ASEAN: A New Framework', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, June 1998, p. 129.

¹⁰ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region', p. 4.

¹¹ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region', p. 3.

part of a 'divide and rule' strategy designed to isolate the US from the Asia-Pacific and promote a multipolar world.¹² Despite the unassailable position of the US, the relative power of the Japanese economy, the rising powers of China and India combine to create a form of multipolarity in which different nations command different elements of power and separate regional interests.¹³

China's increasing interest and influence in the Asia-Pacific

Desmond Ball asserts that: 'China has emerged as the country of most concern in the region.' He goes on to say that it is, however, important that China not be portrayed as a threat but be engaged in multilateral dialogues and other forms of security cooperation.¹⁴ ASEAN was 'seeking through the ARF to expand its consensus building, conflict avoidance process to the region as a whole, with China as a major focus.'¹⁵ The ARF provided a suitable vehicle, that enabled the smaller nations of Southeast Asia to engage the larger regional powers, including China, Russia and the US in security dialogue. It was also a timely development for China, allowing it to meet with the US and other regional players in the benign environment provided by ARF's adoption of the ASEAN Way of doing business. The central diplomatic role of ASEAN was also acceptable to China, which as Michael Liefer notes, 'would have been reluctant to participate in any new regional security arrangements in which the pre-eminent position was occupied by either the United States or Japan.'¹⁶ China also desired to allay regional fears about its intent in order that it could continue its economic growth and not disrupt cooperative economic relations.¹⁷

¹² R Lim, 'The ASEAN regional forum: Building on sand', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1998, pp. 130–33; cited in Cameron Hill and William Tow, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum: Material and Ideational Dynamics' paper presented at *Forum on Reconfiguring East Asia: Regional Institutions and Organisations After the Crisis*, Griffith University Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Brisbane, 28–29 August 2000, p. 22.

¹³ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region', p. 4.

¹⁴ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region', p. 5.

¹⁵ David Denoon and Evelyn Colbert, 'Challenges for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 4, 1998–99, p. 512.

¹⁶ Liefer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 28.

¹⁷ Liefer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 219.

South China Sea/Spratly Island territorial disputes

The ASEAN states of Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines hold competing claims to the islands and reefs of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. This tension and the potential for conflict, is exacerbated by the competing ambit claim of China to all of the South China Sea as its sovereign territory. While initially favouring a bilateral approach to dealing with the Southeast Asian claimants, China has since shown itself amenable to dialogue on 'guidelines' for the Spratly Islands, though not to a full treaty.¹⁸ A Code of Conduct is being negotiated between the ASEAN claimants and China. In dealing with China on this issue, ASEAN has avoided individual bilateral approaches and has been able to maximise its combined bargaining position to engage China.

The role of the United States in the Asia-Pacific

The US had long been involved in the Asia-Pacific, both economically and militarily. Prior to World War II, it was economic interests in China and the zeal of its missionaries that influenced US foreign policy. It was WWII that cemented US military presence in Japan and elsewhere in Asia through its Cold War military engagements on the Korean peninsula and in Vietnam. As the remaining post-Cold War superpower, the US, while closing its bases in the Philippines, has maintained security and economic interests in the region, and continues to station troops in South Korea and Japan. In June 1999, the Philippines ratified a new Visiting Forces Agreement with the US, that has reopened opportunities for joint exercises and the acquisition of military equipment.¹⁹ An agreement has also been reached with Singapore over visits, re-supply and repairs for the US Pacific Command.²⁰ The US strategy in the Asia-Pacific continues to focus on bilateral alliances supplemented by multilateral mechanisms.²¹ The US is pursuing a policy of economic engagement with China and holds out the prospect of membership of the WTO as an inducement to continued cooperation. The US does, however, have several stumbling blocks in its relations with Northeast Asian nations.

¹⁸ Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Baladas Ghoshal. 'The political future of ASEAN after the Asian crisis', *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 4, October 1999, p. 762.

¹⁹ Sheldon Simon, 'Is There a US Strategy for East Asia?', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 3, December 1999, p. 339

²⁰ Simon, 'Is There a US Strategy for East Asia?', p. 340.

²¹ Ding Kuisong, 'ASEAN Regional Forum: Its Role in the Asian Pacific Security Cooperation', *Contemporary International Relations*, Vol. 8, No. 7, July 1998, p. 22.

Taiwan

US support for the Taiwanese regime against the Chinese Communist mainland has been and continues to be the key issue of contention between the US and China. Despite its diplomatic niceties in accepting the 'one China policy' the US continues its support for Taiwan, including the provision of military equipment. China's provocative military exercises over Taiwan in 1996 raised the prospect of US military intervention.²² A US carrier battle group was deployed to the Taiwan Straits signifying US resolve. Subsequently, the US–Japan Security Treaty and military alliance were strengthened and intensified.²³ More recently, the prospect of US National Missile Defence (NMD) and Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) being made available to Taiwan, has further damaged the Sino–US relationship. President G.W. Bush's April 2001 announcement of a significantly enhanced package of military assistance to Taiwan, following the mid-air collision of a US surveillance aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet earlier that month, took the relationship between these two powerful nations to new lows.

In its present form, the ARF provides a mechanism for security dialogue with China but needs to build confidence and develop preventative diplomacy mechanisms before it is able to assist usefully in the resolution of regional disputes. In this context the ARF is a long way from becoming a security regime that could address such a significant regional issue as that posed by Taiwan. Indeed the absence of Taiwan from the ARF will continue to render the China–Taiwan dispute out of bounds for the ARF.

Korean peninsular

The continuing US involvement on the Korean peninsular is a legacy of the 1950–53 Korean War, which ended with the partitioning of the peninsular at the 38th Parallel. The Democratic People's Republic of North Korea remains one of the last surviving socialist regimes. Through its actions and those of its leadership it has effectively isolated itself from the international community. North Korea has shown interest in developing nuclear weapons and experimented with ballistic missile delivery systems. These actions are of

²² Simon, 'Is There a US Strategy for East Asia?', p. 327.

²³ Kuisong, 'ASEAN Regional Forum: Its Role in the Asian Pacific Security Cooperation', p. 21.

concern to both South Korea and Japan. In 1994, US concern over North Korea's defiance of nuclear non-proliferation norms, coupled with China's actions towards Taiwan, prompted the US to enhance its security arrangements with Japan.²⁴

The US strategy toward North Korean missile development has been characterised by Sheldon Simon as one that, 'offers the carrot of economic aid and diplomatic recognition in exchange for the abrogation of further missile tests and exports'.²⁵ In an effort to extract itself from the dire economic circumstances and famine facing the country, North Korea has more recently begun to open up to the world. The year 2000 was a year of surprising developments witnessing: historic discussions between North and South Korea on reunification, a visit to North Korea by the US Secretary of State, Madelane Albright and North Korea's inaugural participation in the ARF. While these are hopeful signs of a peaceful resolution to the problem, it is unlikely to be resolved quickly. Certainly the ARF, in this early stage of its development, is unlikely to have a significant role to play in the resolution of this dispute. Accordingly, a US military presence on the Korean peninsula can be expected to continue for some time to come.

The Nature of the ARF

The second meeting of the ARF in Brunei in August 1995, endorsed a Concept Paper and an agenda for action. The Concept Paper outlined a 'gradual evolutionary approach to security cooperation'.²⁶ The ARF adopted a two-fold approach: a) by emulating the ASEAN model of cooperative security based on consensus and the identification of shared interests; and b) by carefully managing the shifts in intra-regional power balances and defusing unresolved territorial and other conflicts. A three stage evolutionary process involving the promotion of confidence building measures, the development of preventative diplomacy mechanisms and the development of conflict resolution mechanisms was agreed.²⁷

²⁴ Kuisong, 'ASEAN Regional Forum: Its Role in the Asian Pacific Security Cooperation', p. 21.

²⁵ Simon, 'Is There a US Strategy for East Asia?', p. 341.

²⁶ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region', p. 12.

²⁷ Alan Dupont, 'The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View', p. 1.

The three stages of evolution

The evolutionary approach to the development of the ARF is an important factor in understanding the ARF. It is this three stage process and expectations of the participating nations, academics and political analysts regarding the speed with which development should take place that defines some of the differences within the Forum and colours the views of observers. Expectations of western actors such as Australia, Canada, the European Union and the US, for the Forum to develop quickly and take concrete measures to improve regional security have not been fulfilled.²⁸ The more economically developed Asian nations of Japan and South Korea have also expressed frustration both with the pace and the priorities of the agenda.²⁹ This is, however, based on highly optimistic and perhaps unrealistic expectations, neglecting the progress that has been made since first blush in 1992.

Confidence building

The initial meeting of the ARF in 1994, included the establishment of the Inter Sessional Group (ISG) on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).³⁰ The ARF agenda for CBMs was based on developing a set of basic principles to ensure a common understanding and approach to interstate relations in the region, and the adoption of comprehensive approaches to security. The underlying intention was to enhance transparency particularly on security perceptions and selected international security issues. This transparency revolves around voluntary statements of defence policy positions, the publication of Defence White Papers, the participation in the UN Conventional Arms Register and increased military contact and exchanges.³¹

At present the discussions on CBM's and steps taken to promote confidence building are in their early stages, however, some have already been fully or partially implemented. Security dialogues, exchanges between defence colleges, the voluntary exchanges of information on military exercises and disaster relief have all been implemented. Progress has also been made on bilateral exchanges of security perceptions; increased high-level defence contacts, military exchanges and training; and the voluntary submission of

²⁸ Jorn Dosch, 'PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific?', Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper, No. 307, ANU, Canberra, 1997, pp. 7–10.

²⁹ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 59.

³⁰ Hugo Dobson, 'Regional Approaches to Peacekeeping Activities: The case of the ASEAN Regional Forum', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1999, p.162.

³¹ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region', pp. 13–14.

Defence White Papers.³² While further work is yet to be done to achieve the complete list of CBMs identified to date the list will undoubtedly continue to grow. Demonstrating transparency and building confidence is not simply a matter of ticking off agenda items. All participants will need to continue to demonstrate their commitments to regional security and to build on the trust and understanding that is developing.

While the ARF has adopted a comprehensive approach to security, non-military issues have yet to make it to the confidence building agenda. Issues such as illegal migration, including people trafficking, smuggling, piracy, drug trafficking and other transnational crimes could be considered traditional security issues. The 7th ARF meeting in Bangkok noted that these transnational issues could *inter alia*, 'pose challenges to regional peace and stability ...'.³³ Environmental and health issues such as the smoke haze and the spread of the HIV virus could also be included. While not specifically listed as CBMs, there is widespread acceptance among ARF members that non-military security issues, that are generally less politically sensitive and usually affect more than two nations, should form a central element of confidence building and preventative diplomacy measures.³⁴

Preventative diplomacy

Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined 'preventative diplomacy' as 'action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur'.³⁵ This next step in the evolutionary process will be more difficult to achieve than the development and implementation of CBMs. Prevention carries with it the prospect of intervention or interference, which runs counter to the fundamental philosophy embedded in the 'ASEAN Way' and is also a source of concern to some non-ASEAN members of the ARF.³⁶ Preventative diplomacy needs to be further defined and so the issues of 'to what degree' and 'under what circumstances' would the ARF look to preventative mechanisms. This is a matter that requires time to develop an appropriate way forward that satisfies the sensitivities and insecurities of all participants.

³² Dupont, 'The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View', p. 4.

³³ 'Chairman's Statement, the Seventh Meeting of the ASEA Regional Forum',

³⁴ Dupont, 'The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View', p. 8.

³⁵ Cited in Kuisong, 'ASEAN Regional Forum: Its Role in the Asian Pacific Security Cooperation', p. 21.

³⁶ Dupont, 'The Future of the ASEAN Regional Forum: An Australian View', p. 5.

Desmond Ball comments that despite it being one of the three stages on the ARF's evolutionary agenda, there has been no progress with the development of preventative diplomacy 'in terms of either conceptual refinement or practical proposals that might be implemented by ARF countries.'³⁷ It would appear that swift progress is unlikely while the process of confidence building is still being developed. It is, for example, extremely unlikely that the latest ARF member, North Korea will be prepared to consider moves towards preventative diplomacy until it feels more comfortable with the Forum and its fellow participants—and until the approaches to prevention are better articulated. Indeed to proceed along this path when basic confidence has not yet been established would be contrary to the ARF's purpose of promoting dialogue and cooperation.³⁸ This is not to say that concurrent work cannot be undertaken. At the 7th ARF meeting, the Ministers 'welcomed progress' in the implementation of the proposals in the overlap between CBMs and preventative diplomacy as well as the continued efforts to develop the concept and principles of preventative diplomacy for the ARF. The overlap proposals are: an enhanced role for the ARF Chair, the ARF Register of Experts and Eminent Persons, the Annual Security Outlook and voluntary briefings on regional security issues.³⁹

Conflict resolution

This is the ultimate goal for the ARF, the end of the evolutionary process of development that would mark the ARF's coming of age as a mature regional security regime. This is, of course, the most difficult and problematic of the three evolutionary stages. This could be seen from the outset in agreeing the wording of the original ARF Concept Paper. The wording of the original paper made reference to 'conflict resolution mechanisms', however, this was modified in 1995 to the 'elaboration of approaches' to conflict as the original wording was unacceptable to China.⁴⁰

The ARF is, as the Chairman's statement from the last meeting indicated, continuing to explore measures to progress the elaboration of approaches towards conflict situations. In this regard, it is noted that the Good Offices of the 'ASEAN Troika' were endorsed by the ARF in mediating the internal

³⁷ Ball, 'The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific Region', p. 21.

³⁸ Kuisong, 'ASEAN Regional Forum: Its Role in the Asian Pacific Security Cooperation', p. 21.

³⁹ 'Chairman's Statement, the Seventh Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum',

⁴⁰ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 69.

political dispute between Cambodia's two Prime Ministers culminating on 5 July 1997 in the coup by Hun Sen. This *ad hoc* ASEAN approach could provide a way forward. However, a Japanese paper proposing an enhanced role for the ARF Chair, failed to gain consensus at the April 2001 meeting of the ARF Intersessional Support Group (ISG) on Confidence Building Measures in Kuala Lumpur.

While conflict resolution may be seen as the end of the road—the security nirvana for the ARF—it should be remembered that even in developed security regimes where such mechanisms are well defined and practised there is not always universal agreement over their application. This was amply demonstrated by China in the UN Security Council where it voted against UN intervention in Kosovo and subsequently condemned the US and NATO for their 'unsanctioned' military intervention. Established practices and processes for conflict resolution will not therefore, of themselves, guarantee agreement or satisfactory resolution of crises. It is important to recognise that conflict resolution mechanisms are not ends in themselves but merely provide a framework for dialogue.

A Two Track process

The 1995 Concept Paper adopted by the ARF recommended action be taken to progress its agreed three stage agenda both through official channels (known as track one or first track) and that other measures could be considered separately by NGOs such as academic, and research institutions (known as track two or second track). The official, first track approach was to address the more immediate issues through annual meetings of Ministers and senior officials, and the establishment of ISGs such as that on Confidence Building Measures. Also, Intersessional Meetings (ISMs) on Search and Rescue Coordination and Cooperation, and on Peacekeeping, help sustain interest and momentum in the ARF.⁴¹ The second track was seen as an appropriate means of addressing the longer term agenda to bring forward proposals for official ARF consideration.

⁴¹ Dobson, 'Regional Approaches to Peacekeeping Activities: The case of the ASEAN Regional Forum', pp. 162.

Most members of ASEAN have institutes dealing with security studies—collectively known as ASEAN–ISIS (Institute for Security and International Studies). In 1993, ASEAN–ISIS representatives met with representatives of other ‘think tanks’ in the Asia–Pacific region to establish the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia–Pacific (CSCAP). According to Desmond Ball, CSCAP’s essential purpose is to contribute to the efforts towards regional confidence building and enhancing regional security through dialogue, consultation and cooperation.⁴² It is this group that Carl Thayer believes has assumed a central ‘role in enriching ARF discussions by suggesting imaginative confidence building, transparency and preventative diplomacy measures in advance of official thinking’.⁴³ CSCAP has expanded from its initial membership of ten to sixteen, as well as four observer members including the UN. In addition, 19 member committees have been established as well as a CSCAP Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur. Five working groups have been established:

- Working Group on Confidence Building Measures;
- Working Group on Concepts of Comprehensive and Cooperative Security;
- Working Group on Security in Northeast Asia;
- Working Group on Maritime Cooperation; and
- Working Group on Transnational Crime and Regional Security.⁴⁴

The second track dialogue has increased in scope and importance with some 60–70 second track meetings being held every year—more than one a week, and more than 400 since 1992–93.⁴⁵ John Garofano believes that because of the close relationship that exists between many of the academics and institutes with their governments, in reality much of the dialogue could be considered as being track one and a half.⁴⁶ For instance, prior to being elected the President of Singapore, Ambassador Nathan served as the head of

⁴² Ball, ‘The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region’, p. 19.

⁴³ Carl Thayer, ‘The New Security Architecture in Southeast Asia: Neither Collective Security nor Collective Defence’, in D. McMillan (ed.), *Globalisation and Regional Communities: Geoeconomic, Sociocultural and Security Implications for Australia*, University of Southern Queensland Press, Queensland, 1997, p. 397.

⁴⁴ Ball, ‘The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region’, p. 19–20.

⁴⁵ Ball, ‘The Evolving Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific Region’, p. 19.

⁴⁶ John Garofano, ‘Flexibility or Irrelevance: Ways Forward for the ARF’, *Contemporary South East Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 1999, p. 78.

Singapore's Institute of Strategic and Defence Studies, which is part of CSCAP.⁴⁷ Michael Leifer suggests that the lines between the two tracks has 'become blurred as a number of governments have established the practice of sending the equivalent of official representatives to track two meetings with well defined mandates which is an indication of the importance attached to such occasions'.⁴⁸ Second track dialogues and the plethora of papers they produce will remain a significant aspect of the ARFs approach to addressing regional security issues and enhancing transparency. The continuing web of second track interaction reinforces significantly the official structure and is now very much part of the regional security architecture.

The role of ASEAN in the ARF

Initial approaches to ASEAN from its post ministerial dialogue partners Australia and Canada, later supported by Japan and the US, to increase or extend dialogue to include security issues was met with characteristic ASEAN reserve. Perhaps the realisation that if these nations were to set up their own security structure—where ASEAN could find itself marginalised—helped the Association to accept the need for a wider dialogue.⁴⁹ Also ASEAN had, through its dogged 12 year pursuit of a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia enhanced its international profile, gained a reputation as an effective regional organisation and therefore, had an enhanced sense of regional presence of its own capabilities.⁵⁰ The post–Cold War perceptions of a declining US interest in the region and the growing strength and influence of China, this helped ASEAN Foreign Ministers focus on the need for a broader approach in which it could play a significant part. It is not surprising therefore, that in 1992 ASEAN (primarily Singapore)⁵¹ developed and brought forward the Concept Paper on which the ARF is based. As Jeannie Henderson comments, ASEAN instigated the ARF, retains a leading procedural role in the Forum and also acts as a caucus within it.⁵²

⁴⁷ Phar Kim Beng, 'Track Two dialogue gives meaning to ARF', *Straits Times*, 17 March 2000, p. 57.

⁴⁸ Michael Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum. A Model for Cooperative Security in the Middle East', Department of International Relations Working Paper No. 1998/1, ANU, Canberra, 1998, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Shaun Narine, 'ASEAN and the ARF, The Limits of the "ASEAN Way"', *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 10, October 1997, p. 963.

⁵⁰ Shaun Narine, 'Asean into the twenty first century: problems and prospects', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1999, p. 359.

⁵¹ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 39.

⁵² Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 68.

The leadership issue

ASEAN, from the outset saw itself as having a clear leadership role in the ARF. In 1994, the foreign ministers of both Thailand and Singapore commented respectively that 'ASEAN will always have the drivers seat' and will 'steer the ARF'.⁵³ The approach taken by the ARF is also modeled on the ASEAN experience and the Post Ministerial Conferences dialogue with which the original participants were now familiar and comfortable. This approach embodied an informal, consensual style, moving 'at a pace comfortable to all'.⁵⁴ 'The Concept Paper asserted ASEAN's pivotal and proprietorial role in the ARF within which it had "undertaken the obligation to be the primary driving force"'.⁵⁵ As Michael Leifer notes: 'The ARF represents a significant advance in ASEAN's international status'.⁵⁶

ASEAN is central to the Forum—operating a rotational chairmanship with the ASEAN country currently chairing the ASEAN Standing Committee as the ARF Chair. As the ARF has no secretariat, ASEAN provides the necessary support through the Chair of its Standing Committee. As Michael Leifer points out, not all participants were happy with the central role ASEAN had accorded itself and some believed that while initially acceptable, this should be regarded as a transitory situation. ASEAN was not, however, able to chair all ISGs or ISMs, having to share these duties with non-ASEAN participants as co-chair.⁵⁷

ASEAN's leadership role in ARF was made possible by its being seen as a regional organisation with some experience in building institutional identity and in managing regional order, making it an acceptable interlocutor to all parties. These perceptions allowed the Forum to form and progress. Rizal Sukma argues that ASEAN's leadership role in the ARF is a result not only of an act of corporate will but of strategic convenience, it was not gained through skilful diplomacy but essentially by default.⁵⁸ Despite this, ASEAN chairmanship has allowed Forum participants to coalesce, maintain dialogue and build trust through transparency.

⁵³ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 36.

⁵⁴ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 36.

⁵⁵ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 40.

⁵⁶ Denoon, and Colbert, 'Challenges for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)', p. 514.

⁵⁷ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 42.

⁵⁸ Rizal Sukma, 'ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should "The Driver" be Replaced?', *Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, 1999, pp. 236–40.

The problem faced by ASEAN in its ongoing leadership of the ARF, is not just one of confidence amongst its participants but also a looming administrative one to be faced when the rotational ASEAN Chair falls to Laos that lacks the administrative infrastructure to host the annual meetings. In addition, ASEAN's action in bringing Myanmar, considered by the US and other western nations to be a pariah state, into its number provided that state with participant status of the ARF. Unless the US and western perceptions of Myanmar change, there will probably be some dissension when (and if) Myanmar assumes the ASEAN Chair. These circumstances will likely re-focus participants' attention on the ARF leadership issue. The difficulty faced by the Forum is, however, that while there has been criticism of the speed with which the ARF is addressing its agenda, a change of leadership away from ASEAN could, well lead to the demise of the ARF.⁵⁹ The prospect of a single state or grouping of like-minded states assuming a leadership role or even providing secretariat support would test the continuing participation of some ARF participants, particularly China.

Diversity and Its Implications

ASEAN, as discussed earlier, has expanded from its original membership of five to now include all ten Southeast Asian nations embracing diversity—in geography and population size, racial, cultural, social, political and economic factors—that this entails. The issue of diversity is therefore a given for the ARF. It existed in its primary ASEAN leadership and was further compounded by the introduction of Northeast Asian nations. But this diversity should not be looked upon solely as a difficulty or a complicating factor for it is in one sense a real strength. As Jorn Dosch points out, the 'ARF is the only regional security forum in which all the major powers of the contemporary international system are represented—if one accepts representation of Britain, France and Germany through the European Union'.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Sukma, 'ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should "The Driver" be Replaced?', p. 245.
⁶⁰ Dosch, 'PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific?', p. 11.

Northeast Asia vs Southeast Asia

In establishing the ARF to include the major powers of Northeast Asia, ASEAN was aware that this would bring competing expectations that could draw the focus of the Forum away from addressing primarily Southeast Asian security issues, although China maintains an interest in the South China Sea. The ARF is, after all, a regional security grouping for all Asia–Pacific nations not just the sub-region of the Southeast.

If there is potential for a major conflict to occur in the Asia–Pacific it is more likely to come from Northeast Asia than Southeast Asia. The China–Taiwan issue and problems on the Korean peninsular are the two most serious matters that have the potential to hijack the attention of the key players. Involving China, the significant economy of Taiwan, the two Koreas and also engaging the interest of Japan, and the US, these major players do not share the same concerns over problems in Southeast Asia. Northeast Asia is also more threatening, with China and Russia possessing nuclear weapons and North Korea and Japan having the potential to develop them. This divide has the potential, regardless of the key role currently played by ASEAN, to tilt the security agenda in favour of Northeast Asian.

Big powers vs small powers

The ARF comprises some of the world's richest and most economically powerful nations such as the US and Japan and some of the poorest such as Myanmar and Laos. The ARF includes the world's two most populous nations; China and India, and small nations like Brunei with a population of around 300,000. Similarly, the participants also vary in military strength and their ability to project power. All nations big and small, powerful and weak bring individual agendas to the table when they participate in any multilateral forum.⁶¹ Perceptions and attitudes towards multilateral approaches differ between major powers and those of middle powers such as Australia and Canada, that advocate speedier development of institutionalised mechanisms for security cooperation.⁶²

⁶¹ The variety of these interests (in relation to the ARF) are indicated in tabular form in Dosch, 'PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia–Pacific?', pp. 7–10.

⁶² Amitav Acharya, 'A Concert of Asia?', *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1999, p. 96.

While all nations are treated equally within the Forum it is fair to say that some are more equal than others. The views of major powers are more likely to be taken into account than those of small nations. However, given the consensual nature of the Forum, all participants have equal authority in withholding their agreement to a particular course of action. In this sense, the size of a country, its military or economic power, are to a degree, balanced out in the Forum. Collectively, the smaller states of ASEAN carry greater weight against the major powers such as China and the US. This is demonstrated in the solidarity shown by ASEAN in dealing collectively with China on the Spratly Islands issue. Without due care larger states could find themselves isolated over particular issues. Within the Asia–Pacific there are no other historical examples of lesser states assuming such a central role in multilateral security arrangements.⁶³

In addition to self interest, ARF participants also bring with them a diverse array of existing bilateral relations. Some of these, such as the alliances that exist between the US and Australia or Japan are multi-dimensional covering all spheres of activity but importantly for the ARF, are military in nature. Other bilateral relationships do not enjoy the same history and are not as strong or as competitive or even as overtly antagonistic. Relationships between the participants have not always been amicable and China, Korea, and the countries of Southeast Asia can still recall a history of Japanese occupation and conflict. In addition, Indonesia has a proud history of leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁶⁴

East meets West: the cultural divide

ASEAN is an Association of 'Asian' nations and has proclaimed its separate identity through fostering notions of 'Asian values' and the 'ASEAN Way'. Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir's anti-western statements during the Asian financial crisis of 1997 notwithstanding, the introduction of western nations to the Forum brings with it not the 'clash of civilizations' postulated by Samuel Huntington, but an interesting meeting of cultures and perspectives. Cultural sensitivities about western interference such as the perceived

⁶³ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 29.

⁶⁴ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', p. 51.

disrespectful and politically, and culturally insensitive comments made by former US Vice President Al Gore in Kuala Lumpur in November 1998 can cause friction.⁶⁵ The western nations have accepted the informal, consensual and consultative approach of the 'ASEAN Way' within the ARF, although the slow and informal approach to multilateral arrangements tests the patience of the ARF's western members.⁶⁶ It seems that they still harbour a desire to expand the agenda of the ARF and move more quickly towards achieving a cooperative security group that will be involved in preventative diplomacy and conflict resolution in the Asia–Pacific. As Shaun Narine comments, ASEAN is 'conscious of walking a line between keeping the impatient West interested in the ARF and moving too quickly for the suspicious Chinese'.⁶⁷ As a result, tension exists within the ARF over its lack of institutionalisation and the pace of the Forum's evolution beyond confidence building. Jeannie Henderson comments that these differences 'reflect the desire of its Western participants for greater predictability in the ARF process, and a broader recognition that mechanisms appropriate for a small group of geographically proximate countries cannot be directly translated to the Asia–Pacific'.⁶⁸

The politics of difference

The very purpose of the Forum is to bring together diverse national perspectives to discuss issues of mutual concern and to create understanding and build trust between the participants. The diversity of the ARF's participants obviously has some bearing on the conduct of business, the interaction between nations, the degree and pace with which the Forum's agenda can be addressed. But the Forum is not there to dwell on the differences or frictions but to work in a cooperative endeavour to promote peace and stability in the Asia–Pacific. This is exemplified in the approach taken in discussions within the ARF developed and employed by ASEAN. The approach accentuates the positive and focuses not on controversy but on areas of common interest from which multilateral cooperation can be developed and expanded.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Jurgen Haacke, 'The concept of flexible engagement and the practice of enhanced interaction: intermural challenges to the "ASEAN way"', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999, p. 603.

⁶⁶ Acharya, 'A Concert of Asia?', p. 88.

⁶⁷ Narine, 'ASEAN and the ARF, The Limits of the "ASEAN Way"', p. 964.

⁶⁸ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', pp. 69–70.

⁶⁹ Jose Almonte (National Security Adviser to the Philippine President Ramos), cited by Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 71.

Open regionalism

Regionalism is defined as cooperation among governments or non-government organisations in three or more geographically proximate and interdependent countries for the pursuit of mutual gain in one or more issue area.⁷⁰ Certainly the sub-region encompassed by ASEAN meets this definition but it requires a loose interpretation to fit the nations represented in the ARF. While most nations have some littoral connection, the inclusion of EU nations, India and Mongolia make it a very open region. Certainly with greater international economic cooperation and interdependence the definition can be stretched to fit the ARF. The Forum is an exercise in open regionalism with a recognition on the part of ASEAN that in the post-Cold War environment it could not achieve regional stability in a world of growing interdependence without involving the major powers in the security dialogue.

As the preceding section identifies, the ARF came into being as a response to the changing circumstances following the end of the Cold War. China's increasing influence and perception that the US was losing interest in the Asia-Pacific were contributing factors in seeking a multilateral solution to counter a growing feeling of regional insecurity. ASEAN was the catalyst for the formation of the ARF and climbed 'in the drivers seat'. The ARF adopted ASEAN's consensual approach and acknowledged the problems of its own diversity by agreeing to an evolutionary process of development. The cornerstone of this development was recognised as the need to build confidence among the participating states both at the official and unofficial levels and add both breadth and depth to these multilateral relationships.

⁷⁰ M. Alagappa, 'Regionalism and conflict management: a framework for analysis', 1995, p. 359, cited in Lieutenant Commander W M. Heron, 'A Critical Assessment of the Relevance of a Concept of Cooperative Security', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, No. 140, January-February 2000, p. 28.

CHAPTER 4 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LIMITATIONS OF ASEAN AND THE ARF

The previous chapters have provided an account of both ASEAN and the ARF. These chapters looked at the history, composition and development of these important Asia–Pacific multilateral organisations. Their unique features, in particular their *modus operandi* have been studied to better understand the parameters and boundaries that define the way they operate and function. This chapter will examine the achievements of these organisations and the factors that both contribute to and constrain their progress. In particular the relationship between the principle of consensus and the preservation of sovereignty will be considered in the light of recent ARF Inter Sessional Group meeting in Kuala Lumpur and the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Hanoi.

The difficulty in making any form of assessment regarding either the ASEAN or the ARF is in agreeing how and by what criteria the judgement shall be made. This is critical to any understanding of these two regional organisations as judgements made by analysts and commentators vary greatly depending on their perceptions of the ‘correct’ instrument of measure. Western nations and realist theorists such as Michael Leifer, seek concrete examples of the ASEAN and the ARF contributing to the resolution of issues or conflicts. Their argument is essentially that to be considered effective, a regional security group must have institutionalised mechanisms for dealing with conflict situations. By this measure both ASEAN and the ARF fail the effectiveness test.

Both organisations are, however, working well at building confidence and a level of trust among their participants. This is an achievement that is often overlooked. If one considers the length of time that ASEAN has existed and the level of cooperation and dialogue that is now enjoyed between its member nations, particularly the founding five, an element of time must also be factored into any consideration of effectiveness. The ARF has adopted the ASEAN style characterised by an unhurried approach. The breadth and depth

of relations within ASEAN have matured over more than 30 years during which time there has been an absence of conflict among the participating states. They have moved from interpreting non-interference as meaning not even a comment to robust, sometimes critical, statements about the internal affairs of member states. ASEAN is now showing signs of moving towards constructive engagement. While acceptance of this idea is not universal within the Association, the dialogue on this matter is evidence of the level of confidence that now exists. Perhaps the ARF needs to undergo a similar maturation process before this sort of 'progress' can be expected.

ASEAN: Strengths and Weaknesses

By far the greatest accomplishment of ASEAN has been its longevity. It has created a forum for dialogue that did not previously exist and introduced a set of normative values that guide and inform codes of conduct and behaviour among the states of Southeast Asia. At the time of its formation none of the founding members had a history of cooperation, indeed the predominant sentiment was one of hostility and territorial dispute. To move from the unstable regional environment of the 1960s to the relatively cohesive Association of today where national leaders and foreign ministers of all Southeast Asian nations meet regularly in a relaxed environment to discuss a wide variety of issues, is by itself, a significant achievement. ASEAN has contributed greatly to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region and the sub-region that is Southeast Asia. Territorial and other disputes notwithstanding—and several remain unresolved—none of the ASEAN countries, once members of the Association, have resorted to military force or violence against its ASEAN neighbours.

Rodolfo Severino Jr., Secretary-General of ASEAN has lamented that detractors of the Association who belittle its achievements do so unfairly. He claims that ASEAN should only be judged by the standards it sets for itself not by those imposed by others or driven by different agendas.¹ Judged by the objectives outlined in the Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN could be seen as a success story. ASEAN's founding document refers to a desire to accelerate

¹ Rodolfo Severino, Jr., *ASEAN at a time of change: a selection of speeches*, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, 1998.

economic growth, social progress and cultural development, and to provide the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian nations. The Association aspired to promote regional peace and stability and it is significant that the Bangkok Declaration makes frequent use of terms such as collaboration, cooperation and mutual assistance.²

ASEAN has weathered the Cold War, expanded in size and survived a major financial crisis that halted a period of rapid economic growth. While the Region's image may have been tarnished by the economic crisis of 1997, now with the added diplomatic weight of all ten Southeast Asian nations, ASEAN and Southeast Asia are gradually returning to a period of growth and prosperity.

ASEAN's ability to control and shape events that affect the security, including the economic security of the region is the subject of analysis and examination. If ASEAN fails to act or attempts to influence without success is it to be criticised regardless of the issue or whether this was an issue rightly within its purview? The ASEAN Secretary-General does not believe it is. He defends the Association by saying that blaming ASEAN for its failure to act or ineffectiveness on issues that are largely outside its control is 'something akin to blaming the OAS (Organization of American States) for the financial crisis in Mexico or for forest fires in Brazil, or the OAU (Organization of African Unity) for Africa's recent sorrows, or the EU for the problems of the Balkans.'³ The complexity and scale of some problems place them beyond the capacity of multilateral organisations regardless of their mandate or best intentions, to effect comprehensive solutions. This should not be used as an argument for ASEAN's achievements by default. On this understanding, it is difficult to call ASEAN to account for 'failures' levelled at it over the financial crisis of 1997, or the simultaneous environmental catastrophe that caused the smoke haze that blanketed a significant part of Southeast Asia. The causes of both these events and their remedies were largely beyond ASEAN's reach.

² Bangkok Declaration, Thailand: August 1967, www.asean.org

³ Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Baladas Ghoshal, 'The political future of ASEAN after the Asian crisis', *International Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4, 1999, pp. 760–61.

It can be argued in the case of the financial crisis, that it happened when the economies of ASEAN nations were enjoying unprecedented economic growth and prosperity, that was one of, if not the cornerstone of the Association's charter. By its own measure ASEAN had been successful in bringing about this period of prosperity. In addition, it is important to note that the financial crisis was not a minor event. The Asian economic crisis has been described by Paul Dibb as 'the defining event of post-Cold War era for the Asia-Pacific ...'.⁴ Desmond Ball included ASEAN with other regional fora in saying that none of the regional multilateral institutions contributed much to the identification of solutions to the economic crisis.⁵ Denoon and Corbert also comment that, 'ASEAN as an organisation had little to contribute to its members as the economic crisis spread' and 'little to contribute to their recovery.'⁶ This criticism appears too harsh given that ASEAN did respond quickly and appropriately by calling for IMF assistance to address the source of the problem. ASEAN rightly recognised that it could not solve the problem on its own and sought immediate assistance from major powers, looked to internal imports and exports within ASEAN, based on local currencies and committed to a continuing policy of free trade. A framework for remedial collective action was also established. While ASEAN was not the only actor addressing the problems created by the financial crisis, it did what it could under difficult circumstances.

It is ironic that, ASEAN Finance Ministers met officially for the first time in March 1997—prior to the crisis. At this first meeting in Phuket, Thailand, the Finance Ministers discussed moves to greater economic integration and the initiation of new areas of cooperation and the promotion of closer cooperation in international fora. The meeting also looked at strengthening supervisory and regulatory frameworks in banking.⁷ After the crisis broke, they met several times more and by November 1997 had created the so-called

⁴ Paul Dibb, 'The Asian Economic Crisis: Future Security Implication', Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, 1999, <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/symposia/pacific99/dibb.html>.

⁵ Des Ball, 'Implications of the East Asian Economic Recession for Regional Security Cooperation', Working Paper, No. 331, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, January 1999, p. 1.

⁶ David Denoon and Evelyn Colbert, 'Challenges for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 4, 1998–99, p. 505.

⁷ ASEAN First Finance Minister's Meeting, (Phuket, Thailand: 1 March 1997), <http://www.asean.or.id/economic/prfin97.htm>.

Manila Framework.⁸ In December 1997, in Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN agreed to the early implementation of measures to:

- enhance regional surveillance;
- enhance economic and technical cooperation;
- support measures to strengthen the IMF's capacity to respond to financial crises; and
- support the proposed cooperative financing arrangements that would supplement the IMF's resources.⁹

ASEAN's role throughout the 1970s and 1980s, was central to the eventual peace settlement heralded by the Paris Peace Agreement in October 1991 that saw Vietnam withdraw from Cambodia. All ASEAN nations were invited to sign the final settlement. In addition, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand participated in the subsequent UN peacekeeping effort. ASEAN was also consulted by other Asia-Pacific nations to coordinate their actions with ASEAN.¹⁰ Achieving this peaceful outcome in Cambodia was testament to the success and growing diplomatic status and identity of ASEAN within the international diplomatic community. As Jeannie Henderson comments: 'Cambodia helped ASEAN come of age'.¹¹ By any measure, even acknowledging that it was not the only actor involved, ASEAN made a positive contribution to regional security and stability.

ARF: Strengths and Weaknesses

As with ASEAN itself, it is difficult to draw out particular incidents that can be claimed as either examples of successes or failures for the ARF. The formation of the ARF and its continuing existence are themselves accomplishments that should not be overlooked or under rated. If we apply ASEAN Secretary-General, Rodolfo Severino's test, then it is the ARF's agenda for evolutionary development that must be studied and judgments made according to those criteria not against the wishes or expectations of others.¹²

⁸ Khoo How San, 'ASEAN as a "Neighbourhood Watch Group"', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 2, August 2000, p. 295.

⁹ Joint Ministerial Statement, Special ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, 1 December 1997, para. 5, <http://www.asean.or.id/economic/prfin97.htm>.

¹⁰ Hugo Dobson, 'Regional Approaches to Peacekeeping Activities: The Case for the ASEAN regional Forum', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1999, p. 160.

¹¹ Jeannie Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 328, Oxford University Press, London, 1999, p. 19.

¹² San, 'ASEAN as a "Neighbourhood Watch Group"', p. 297.

ASEAN represents only ten of the 23 participating states in the ARF and while all participating states have agreed to the same ARF Charter and agenda, there are competing expectations, not about the goals but the timetable for development. Some western nations and critics argue that the pace is too slow. This is not, however, a view held exclusively by western nations. Within ASEAN, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines are more progressive in their approach to preventative diplomacy measures and enhancing the role for the ARF Chair than are the ASEAN members from Indochina.

What steps has the ARF taken in relation to confidence building, preventative diplomacy and conflict resolution? Certainly in order to maintain the interest and continued engagement of participating states the ARF needs to be seen to be doing more than just marking time. But how is progress to be assessed? Is it the quantum of work done in each area of confidence building, or preventative diplomacy, or whether chronological milestones have been met? Essentially it is this notion of achievement over time that is driving the debate about the effectiveness of the ARF. The debate is about expectations that the ARF would or could move quickly to become an effective conflict resolution mechanism in the Asia–Pacific. However, as no timeframes were set by the Forum for this development, or each stage of the evolutionary process, time is perhaps not an appropriate measure to use other than noting that some efforts would need to have been made since its formation in 1994.

The ARF has addressed many of the confidence building measures identified in its original agenda and has taken some steps to look concurrently at preventative diplomacy. At the April 2001 meeting of the ARF ISG on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Kuala Lumpur, papers on Preventative Diplomacy and the Register of Experts and Eminent persons were progressed. A Japanese sponsored concept paper on an Enhanced Role for the ARF Chair was also considered but referred for further consultation and work to reach consensus.¹³ A revised paper on the role of the ARF Chair was adopted at the ARF SOM in Hanoi and went forward for endorsement at

¹³ Co-Chairmen's Summary Report from 8th ARF ISG on CBMs, Kuala Lumpur, April 2001, www.asean.org.

the ARF Ministerial meeting in July 2001.¹⁴ As this is an evolutionary process no action other than some work at the Track II level, has been made to date towards addressing conflict resolution mechanisms.

Building confidence

This is the area where the most progress has been made. Not only has progress been made in addressing the formal CBMs listed on the ARF's agenda, but the continuing and deepening program of Track II dialogue is developing better relationships between elites, building understanding and trust among the 23 participating nations. The Inter Sessional Group (ISG) meetings of the ARF also 'serve a confidence building function, in principle and to a degree in practice'.¹⁵

As mentioned earlier, some of the CBMs on the ARF's formal agenda have been fully implemented including: security dialogues, exchanges between defence colleges, the voluntary exchanges of information on military exercises and disaster relief mechanisms. In addition, progress has also been made on bilateral exchanges of security perceptions, increased high-level defence contacts, military exchanges and training, and the sharing of Defence White Papers. Participation in the ISG meetings on CBMs now regularly includes defence officials in most of the delegations.¹⁶ At the ARF ISG meeting in Kuala Lumpur, a three hour Defence Officials' Luncheon was held. While this was not the first such luncheon, it was the first time the host nation had proposed a topic for discussion. Two weeks prior to the meeting, Malaysia circulated a concept paper on Capability Development for discussion during the luncheon.

The discussion in Kuala Lumpur consisted largely of the presentation of set piece, prepared statements. Nevertheless, it was the first time an attempt had been made to involve more fully the defence officials who attend this multilateral security forum. Importantly, defence officials from all participant states except for the DPRK, participated actively in the discussion. At the end of the meeting, Singapore undertook to produce a paper for consideration at

¹⁴ Co-Chairmen's Summary Report from ARF SOM (Hanoi: 18 May 2001), www.asean.org.

¹⁵ Michael Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum. A Model for Cooperative Security in the Middle East', Department of International Relations Working Paper No. 1998/1, ANU, Canberra, 1998, p. 10.

¹⁶ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum. A Model for Cooperative Security in the Middle East', p. 11.

the next ISG meeting, proposing to formalise the Malaysian initiative of having a set topic for discussion at subsequent Defence Officials' Luncheons and proposing a change of name for this gathering.¹⁷

Despite these positive developments it could be argued that there is a degree of superficiality in these CBMs and that they are essentially soft options. The fact that defence officials meet is for example not of itself significant but if regular meetings continue and the topics for discussion become more robust and start to involve specialist officers this will change. Another criticism of CBMs not providing the degree of transparency hoped for is in the level and depth of Defence White Papers, which varies from country to country. Vietnam does not mention air or naval power, mobile force or organisation in its White Paper¹⁸ and speculation exists regarding the true level of China's military funding. Again the argument turns on the detail and extent to which participating nations are prepared to open themselves to scrutiny and provide the level of military transparency that countries like Australia and the US are prepared to give and for which they expect reciprocity. This is a compliance issue that will change over time as the process itself, and the trust it develops, deepens. It is after all early days for countries that have previously not produced these documents or made public, information on defence and security issues.¹⁹

In terms of building confidence and trust within the Asia–Pacific, John Garofano comments that CBMs have not yet accomplished anything that would prevent or deter the continuing growth of arms acquisition in the region.²⁰ While this can be seen as a measure of success—or lack thereof—it would be too much to expect that in their embryonic state CBMs would bring about disarmament. Even in more developed security institutions such as the EU, the presence, maintenance and continued modernisation of conventional military capabilities by its member states, continues. The progress of security cooperation in the Asia–Pacific region and the ARF should not be judged by

¹⁷ Author's observation/participation at ARF ISG 'Defence Officials' Luncheon' in Kuala Lumpur 18 April 2001. Some defence officials noted that it was difficult to gain approval to travel to attend a 'luncheon'. Note that due to a change in the program at the ARF SOM in Hanoi in May 2001, no meeting of defence officials took place.

¹⁸ John Garofano, 'Flexibility or Irrelevance: Ways Forward for the ARF', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 21, No. 1, April 1999, p. 88.

¹⁹ Note that Cambodia introduced its first Defence White Paper at the ARF meeting in Kuala Lumpur, author's observation at ARF ISG Kuala Lumpur 19 April 2001.

²⁰ Garofano, 'Flexibility or Irrelevance: Ways Forward for the ARF', p. 90.

such criteria. The ARF is a nascent, largely informal grouping that has come a long way in a few short years in bringing security issues to the table for discussion and involving all the key international players.

Engagement of China

Proof of the success of the confidence building process is the manner in which China has become engaged in broader regional security dialogue. 'At first glance this is already an important achievement, taking into consideration that only a short time ago China, which is now part of the multilateral process, rejected any participation in an institutionalised international security dialogue'.²¹ This change is given weight by China's public statements on the ARF. For example, in opening the fourth ARF meeting of Heads of Defence Colleges, the Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian said that the Chinese Government and the Peoples Liberation Army attach great importance to and take an active part in all ARF activities.²²

China is increasingly more comfortable with confidence building concepts, demonstrating as Jeanie Henderson comments, 'its growing commitment to, and appreciation of, the multilateral security dialogue.'²³ This is also apparent in China's utilisation of a multilateral approach towards confidence building in the April 1996 Shanghai Agreement signed between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This 'Shanghai Five' Agreement enhanced mutual military trust on the borders of all of these nations.²⁴

South China Sea Code of Conduct

It would appear that pressure, albeit subtle and diplomatic, from ARF members to compromise more on the disputed territories of South China Sea has moved China to soften its previously uncompromising position. Prior to its participation in the ARF, China had steadfastly maintained a policy of bilateral discussions only with the other competing claimants over the Spratly Islands. China is now prepared to discuss the disputed territories multilaterally with ASEAN. It would appear that for China, 'the political costs of defection from a multilateral organisation like the ARF have begun to

²¹ Jorn Dosch, 'PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific?' Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 307, ANU, Canberra, 1997, p. 13.

²² 'Chinese Defence Minister Lauds New Security Concept', *People's Daily*, 9 June 2000, <http://www.china.org.cn/wmc/expe?infoid=1566>.

²³ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 70.

²⁴ Ding Kuisong, 'ASEAN Regional Forum: Its Role in the Asian Pacific Security Cooperation', *Contemporary International Relations*, Vol. 8, No. 7, July 1998, p. 20.

outweigh the strategic benefits accruing from an uncompromising territorial posture'.²⁵ Security in the South China Sea is now a regular topic of discussion amongst ARF members. The ARF SOM 'exchanged views on the recent developments in the South China Sea and welcomed the progress in the consultations between ASEAN and China to develop a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea'.²⁶

In one sense this can be seen as victory for ASEAN in being able to bring its collective weight to bear on China. China, however, still maintains its claim of sovereignty over all the islands of the Spratly group but is prepared to put the issue of sovereignty to one side and talk of joint development of resources. Despite its occupation of Mischief Reef (jointly claimed by the Philippines) in 1995 and the reinforcing of structures on the reef in 1998, discussions have been developed around a Code of Conduct proposal for the Spratly Islands. Initially developed by ASEAN it has since led to a counter proposal by China, that could be interpreted as a softening of China's previous hard line approach.²⁷ This counter proposal is a marked change for China, that can be attributed to the 'socialisation' effect of the participation in the ARF and a developing understanding of the utility of confidence building mechanisms.

The Impact of Consensus

Consensus is the defining feature of both ASEAN and the ARF. The requirement for consensus is in a large measure the reason most of the participants joined these multilateral organisations. It is at the same time both important to the continuance of ASEAN and the ARF, and an impediment to the progress of each. In one sense consensus is the failsafe. It is the primary factor that preserves national sovereignty and prevents unwanted interference in the internal affairs of participant states. Conversely, the ability of countries to block, delay or stymie the adoption of initiatives to advance the ARF along its evolutionary path can slow progress in developing preventative diplomacy initiatives and hamper the ability of the ARF to achieve the capacity to resolve conflicts. An examination of how consensus operates in the decision making of both ASEAN and the ARF in the context of some specific examples may illustrate these features.

²⁵ Amitav Acharya, 'The ARF Could Well Unravel' in D. da Cunha (ed.), *The Evolving Pacific Power Structure*, p. 65. Cited in Jorn Dosch, 'PMC, ARF, CSCAP: Foundations for a Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific?' Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 307, ANU, Canberra, 1997, p. 10.

²⁶ Co-Chairman's Summary Report from 8th ARF SOM.

²⁷ San, 'ASEAN as a "Neighbourhood Watch Group"', p. 294.

Examples of the consensus principle at work

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the ARF ISG on CBMs, that met in Kuala Lumpur in April 2001, failed to reach consensus on the Japanese sponsored paper seeking to enhance the role of the ARF Chair. This was in one sense not unusual or unexpected, as this proposal has been about for some years and the paper formally on the agenda since 1999. It was, however, unexpected when on the second day of the two-day meeting, it was blocked by the Chinese delegate. The Japanese sponsors of the paper had been working vigorously behind the scenes in a series of bilateral meetings with many other nations to find an acceptable form of words. It was believed by most delegates going into that plenary meeting, that a consensus had been reached, and that the paper was to be adopted by the ISG.²⁸

After extensive drafting over an 18 month period, delegates at the April meeting agreed to adopt the Singapore sponsored paper on 'Concepts and Principles of Preventative Diplomacy' and the Republic of Korea's 'Register of Experts and Eminent Persons'. The role of consensus was again highlighted at the conclusion of the meeting when the delegate from the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) surprised the meeting by announcing that all decisions taken at the meeting would need to be referred back to Pyongyang for further study.²⁹ At the time, this comment cast doubt over the whether the papers had been adopted at all. Some states conjectured that unless the DPRK gave its ascent to them they could not be taken the Senior Official Meeting in Hanoi. In addition to illustrating the inherent problems created by the necessity to reach a consensus, this intervention also exemplified the problems faced by more closed regimes and new arrivals to the ARF process.

²⁸ Co-Chairman's Summary Report from 8th ARF ISG on CBMs. Note: The leader of the US delegation articulated the frustration of many of the delegates when he lamented that the progress of the ARF would continue to be slow if it was always to be held hostage by one recalcitrant state. Author's observation at ARF ISG meeting 18–19 April 2001.

²⁹ The Malaysian Co-Chair adroitly sidestepped this comment by declaring that the papers were adopted '*ad referendum*', see Co-Chairmen's Summary Report para. 49. It was subsequently learned that the DPRK delegate was an official from their Embassy in Malaysia who lacked the authority to agree to anything presented at the meeting. This was not, however, the case at the May ARF SOM in Hanoi where the DPRK was represented by an 'authorised' official from Pyongyang. Author's observation at ARF meetings 18–19 April and 17–18 May 2001.

A further example of this problem arose at the ARF SOM in Hanoi in May 2001, when the Vietnamese chairman expressed a different understanding of the outcome of the Kuala Lumpur ISG meeting from all the other delegates. He declared that, as there were still some unresolved issues with the paper on Preventative Diplomacy that it had not been adopted and accordingly, would not be taken forward to the Ministerial meeting.³⁰ After much discussion and realising that he had been poorly briefed, the Chair advised the meeting that he did not have the authority to agree to adopting the paper without ministerial approval and would seek advice outside the session.³¹

This commitment to consensus and the ability of some states to block progress is exacerbated by the inability of some country representatives to commit to courses of action or revised wording of proposals. These factors combine to not only continually delay progress towards preventative diplomacy, but serve to water down the eventual effectiveness of the measures being put forward for ministerial endorsement.

Concerns for the Preservation of Sovereignty

States join multilateral organisations because it is in their interest to do so. In doing so they may cede some aspects of national authority to ensure a greater strategic objective. Depending on the organisation this can require a state to make a greater or lesser commitment. In the case of ASEAN and the ARF this requirement is quite low in terms of states ceding any element of national sovereignty. Indeed the ability of states to join these bodies and preserve their national sovereignty makes it attractive to states of all political systems, particularly those with closed authoritarian regimes such as Myanmar and North Korea. It is this inducement that enables democratic and progressive developing countries to engage with closed and restrictive regimes and seek to influence their behaviour on many fronts.

³⁰ The ISG meeting in Kuala Lumpur had in fact noted the divergent views of participants but 'agreed to adopt the PD paper as a snapshot of the state of current discussion on PD in the ARF' See Co-Chairmen's Summary Report para. 44.

³¹ Co-Chairmen's Summary Report ARF SOM and observation at ARF SOM meeting 18 May 2001.

Sovereignty and its preservation are cherished by all nations, none more so than the newly formed states of Southeast Asia: 'ASEAN declared that the countries of Southeast Asia ... are determined to ensure their stability and security from external interference in any form or manifestation in order to preserve their national identities in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples'.³²

The example cited earlier in this chapter, of the Chinese blocking the adoption of the paper on the 'Enhanced Role of the ARF Chair', illustrates clearly how perceptions of interference can be successfully tackled by a state withholding agreement to a proposition if it believes its sovereignty could be compromised. The words that proved to be the stumbling block in the draft paper were 'prior consent of directly involved states...'.³³ It would appear that China was concerned that these words could be interpreted in such a way as to exclude it from possible discussions, interventions or interference by the ARF Chair into the affairs of Taiwan, that it regards as being part of China. By withholding its consent, China was able to block the adoption of the paper until it was satisfied that its concerns over sovereignty and interference were met.

At the Kuala Lumpur meeting, China, in seeking support for its position, was holding out for all states to be notified of impending interventions by the ARF Chair and that the Chair could not act without the agreement of all 23 ARF participants. As the purpose of the three papers, considered as a package, was to enable the ARF Chair to be pro-active and to move swiftly to address developing security concerns, the Chinese view was not well received by other states. Following further redrafting and out of session negotiation by the Japanese, the paper was adopted at the ARF SOM in Hanoi, with the relevant passage changed to reflect China's concerns. The final wording constrains the Chair's ability to act and convene *ad hoc* meetings only with the 'prior consent of directly involved states and the consensus of all ARF members'.³⁴

³² Bangkok Declaration.

³³ Draft paper presented at the ISG meeting and Co-Chairmen's Statement (para. 45) from 8th ARF ISG on CBMs.

³⁴ Draft paper adopted at the ARF SOM and Co-Chairmen's Summary Report ARF SOM Hanoi, 18 May 2001.

Attempts to overcome the sovereignty issue

Any notion of preventative diplomacy involves at least influencing and at worst, interfering in the decision making processes of states in the exercise of their sovereign power. Preventative diplomacy and sovereignty are not, however, incompatible goals provided that sovereign states are prepared to accept and allow their affairs or the issues in which they have an interest or involvement to become the subject of external scrutiny.

ASEAN's role in Cambodia

In 1997, confrontation between Cambodia's two government coalition partners threatened to return the country to political turmoil. On 5 July 1997, in what was essentially a coup, second Premier Hun Sen ousted first Premier Prince Runaridah. This occurred when ASEAN was on the brink of admitting Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos to its membership. This crisis added to the debate regarding the extent to which ASEAN would be able to influence positively, internal developments within another Southeast Asian country. On 10 July 1997, at a meeting of Foreign Ministers, ASEAN decided to delay Cambodia's entry into the Association. In deferring the granting of membership, ASEAN placed direct pressure on Hun Sen to restore the authority of Prince Runaridah. By its actions in interfering in Cambodia's internal affairs, albeit indirectly, 'ASEAN had voluntarily ... taken on the responsibility of bringing back peace and stability to strife-torn Cambodia.'³⁵

Foreign Ministers from Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines formed a delegation to hold dialogue with all the major players and to try and mediate the dispute. By approving this action, ASEAN was essentially sending this group into an internal, civil war situation, while at the same time insisting that its mediation should not be seen as intervening in Cambodia's internal affairs. 'From the strategic viewpoint, the ASEAN peace initiative in Cambodia was an *ad hoc* arrangement designed to address a Cambodian problem'³⁶ involving the participation of all parties, in May 1998 as scheduled, as a precondition to Cambodia's membership of the Association.³⁷

³⁵ Ahmad and Ghoshal, 'The political future of ASEAN after the Asian crisis', p. 770.

³⁶ Aderemi Isola Ajibewa, 'Regional Security in an expanded ASEAN: A New Framework', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, June 1998, p. 140.

³⁷ Ahmad and Ghoshal, 'The political future of ASEAN after the Asian crisis', p. 771.

ASEAN's course of action was endorsed by the ARF at its meeting on 27 July 1997, at which ASEAN was given the responsibility of attempting to restore political stability in Cambodia.³⁸ Hun Sen initially resisted ASEAN's 'interference', however, he subsequently acquiesced and wrote a letter of invitation to the ASEAN delegation.³⁹ Not only ASEAN pressure but also the considerable weight of international opinion contributed to this decision and his subsequent acceptance of the conditions outlined by ASEAN. The final outcome was in fact, provided by Japan with a four-pillar proposal that paved the way for the 1998 elections and Cambodia's entry into ASEAN.⁴⁰

While this could be seen as a failure for ASEAN with Japan deserving credit, the converse is the case particularly as ASEAN was operating on the edge of its 'non-interference' principle. This approach allowed Thailand and the Philippines in particular to move ASEAN closer towards 'constructive engagement', that led to the ASEAN Troika proposal put forward at the third ASEAN Informal Summit in Manila in November 1999. This proposal was subsequently endorsed at the 33rd ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Bangkok on 24–25 July 2000.⁴¹ Indeed, enhancing the role of the Chair following ASEAN's example is also under consideration within the ARF. While close to consensus, the ARF ISG in Kuala Lumpur in April 2001 failed to reach agreement.⁴² A revised wording presented to the ARF SOM in Hanoi was however, adopted and the paper taken forward to the ARF Ministerial Meeting scheduled for July 2001 for endorsement.⁴³

China–Taiwan

It is difficult to talk of failures in the context of specific conflicts that the ARF attempted to or should have attempted to mediate or resolve, as the Forum has not yet developed the necessary mechanisms to resolve conflict. In looking at the security situation in Northeast Asia, the obvious candidates for ARF interest would be the China–Taiwan issue and the situation on the Korean Peninsula. It is unrealistic to expect a fledgling grouping such as the ARF, to tackle these major, long-term and protracted disputes. As Michael Leifer comments, the ARF is limited in its remit and the absence of Taiwan in the

³⁸ Frank Frost, 'ASEAN at 30: Enlargement, Consolidation and Problems of Cambodia', Current Issues Brief No 2, 1997–98, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 1997, p. 18.

³⁹ Ajibewa, 'Regional Security in an expanded ASEAN: A New Framework', p. 127.

⁴⁰ Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', p. 62.

⁴¹ Joint Communique of the Thirty Third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Bangkok, 24–25 July 2000, para. 19, <http://www.asean.or.id/amm/pramm33.htm>.

⁴² Co-Chairmen's Summary Report (para. 45) from 8th ARF ISG on CBMs.

⁴³ Co-Chairmen's Summary Report from 8th ARF SOM.

Forum, makes addressing this particular issue problematic. China regards this as an internal domestic issue and would probably withdraw if Taiwan were invited to attend a meeting of the ARF and most certainly refuse to discuss its relations with Taiwan in the Forum.⁴⁴ In addition, all the ARF participants accept and adopt, despite in some cases quite comprehensive trade and other relations with Taiwan, the pragmatic diplomatic 'One China' policy. None would wish to jeopardise their relations with China by changing direction on the Taiwan issue within the context of this multilateral forum.

The nature of both ASEAN and the ARF is at the same time a strength and a weakness. Despite the constraints on both organisations, they have experienced growth and progressed from a loose group of states not used to dealing with other states on a multilateral basis to organisations that now exchange views and accommodate the perspectives of others within an agreed framework. While the individual need of states to guard their sovereignty and the consensus mechanism they employ to ensure it endures, these organisations are able to reach accommodations and move incrementally forward. The three papers adopted at the 2001 ARF SOM⁴⁵ were on the table for more than 18 months and underwent significant change in the redrafting process that lessened their strength. Regardless of the length of the process or the compromises made along the way, taken together these papers mark a significant milestone in the evolution of the ARF.

⁴⁴ Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum. A Model for Cooperative Security in the Middle East', pp. 9–10.

⁴⁵ This assumes that Vietnam will endorse the paper on Preventative Diplomacy that was left in limbo at the conclusion of the last ARF SOM in Hanoi.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

This monograph has looked at the competing perspectives of ASEAN and the ARF and examined the formation and development of both to better understand and assess their performance and the factors that shape their actions and interactions. The previous chapter looked at the ASEAN Way and the norms of behaviour that combine to preserve sovereignty through the exercise of non-interference and decision making by consensus. This final chapter will draw some conclusions regarding the contribution of the ARF and ASEAN to security in the Asia–Pacific. This section comments on the challenges they face and the impact of these on both organisations future development and the security milieu of the Asia–Pacific region. First it would be useful to look at the effectiveness of regional organisations, the growth of regional interaction in the Asia–Pacific and then ASEAN and the ARF in particular.

The Effectiveness of Regional Organisations

Collective security in its purest form contains two elements: an agreement to settle disputes without the use of force, and an undertaking to use force against transgressors of this agreement.¹ At the global level collective security was introduced through the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations. Regionally based collective security organisations seek to preserve peace only among their members, not to provide protection against external threats. There are several examples of such groups that have operated outside Asia with various degrees of success. These include the Arab League formed in 1945, the Organisation of American States (OAS) formed in 1948 and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) founded in 1963.² Despite their agreements to the peaceful resolution of disputes both South America and Africa have been racked with inter and intrastate conflicts and the Arab League has failed to prevent ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait witnessed Saudi Arabia and Egypt joining forces with outsiders in war against fellow League member Iraq. Despite the hope of regional solutions being able to resolve regional problems, in the security domain this continues to be illusive.

¹ David Zeigler, *War, Peace and International Politics*, 6th edn, Harper Collins, New York, 1993, p. 302.

² Zeigler, *War, Peace and International Politics*, p. 319.

This pessimistic view is, however, focused only on their failure at conflict resolution as collective security organisations, not on broader cooperative security issues. These organisations also provide a platform for dialogue on other issues that affect the security of their participant nations. Cooperative endeavours on health and economic issues are not the win/lose issues of hard-edged security but they nevertheless directly affect the fundamental security dynamics of each nation. The climate of dialogue established over many years is an enabling factor that allows agreements to be reached on issues of mutual concern. This factor has contributed to the longevity of these organisations, that if they existed solely for reasons of military security, would have withered and died many years ago.

ASEAN and the ARF are not formally collective security organisations in the sense that while they do accept the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the tenet of peaceful resolution of disputes between themselves, there is no agreement to enforce this or use force against any transgressors of this rule. These Asian organisations were formed not on any understanding of the use of force but as cooperative, consultative bodies operating in a spirit of equality and partnership.³ In this sense, ASEAN and the ARF are cooperative rather than collective security organisations that have not set themselves ambitious security goals. It is this very point that is the focus of criticism. Despite the criticism, as mentioned in Chapter 4, ASEAN was able through consultation and coordinated effort to contribute in a significant way to the resolution of the conflict in Cambodia in 1991⁴ and again in 1997.⁵

Another security crisis in the region unfolded in East Timor in 1999, when the newly installed Indonesian President Habibie allowed the East Timorese people to vote on whether they wished to remain within Indonesia with a degree of autonomy or opt for independence. The failure of the Indonesian Government to reign-in the pro-Indonesian militia both before but particularly after the vote was captured by the international media and beamed across the world. Whether anyone expected ASEAN or the ARF to play any role in intervening to prevent the bloodshed or not, there was no evidence of any formal processes or meetings being held to address the situation.

³ Bangkok Declaration, Thailand, August 1967, www.asean.org

⁴ Sorpong Peou. *Intervention & Change in Cambodia—Toward Democracy*, Silkworm Books, Thailand, 2000, p. 142.

⁵ Peou, *Intervention & Change in Cambodia—Toward Democracy*, pp. 389–90.

Given its current mandate and the early stage of evolution the ARF has reached, it should not be considered reasonable for the Forum to have contemplated or attempted such an intervention. While the major and middle powers were busily agitating the UN and exerting pressure on Indonesia, ASEAN nations were working behind the scenes in dialogue with Indonesia. At the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in New Zealand in September 1999, ASEAN leaders gathered separately to address developments in East Timor to discuss Indonesia’s desire for a substantial ASEAN participation in any multinational force that might be formed under UN auspices. In this case, the sub-regional grouping ASEAN, ‘undertook consultations, arrived at a consensus, and let individual members decide what specific contributions to make to the UN effort’.⁶ East Timor was not formally addressed by ASEAN or the ARF but was discussed in the ASEAN Way—outside the framework of formal meetings and processes. While not devoted to the resolution of security issues ASEAN states have demonstrated an ability to if not solve, at least influence, significant security events.

Extending the Dialogue Process

The habit of cooperative dialogue has been entrenched, largely by ASEAN, in the Asia–Pacific to now cover broadly all aspects of state interaction adding to both the depth and complexity of multilateral cooperation. ASEAN sponsors and participates actively, in other multilateral groupings that make important contributions to better understanding in the region on economic issues. The APEC, the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the ASEAN Industrial Cooperation Scheme (AICO) help maintain the momentum for expanding trade and investment in Asia. As mentioned in a Government of Japan report, these dialogues are important, as healthy international relations require constant work or they fall apart.⁷

In addition to engaging their North Asian neighbours on security issues through the ARF, ASEAN has extended the breadth of its multilateral dialogue to include regular dialogues with China, Japan and Korea in what is now known as ASEAN+3. The Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation released

⁶ Rodolfo Severino Jr., ‘Sovereignty, Intervention and the ASEAN Way’, *Address to Singapore Institute of International Affairs and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation*, Singapore, 3 July 2000, http://www.asean.or.id/secgen/sg_siaw.htm.

⁷ Govt of Japan, *Report of the Mission for Revitalising of Asian Economy: Living in Harmony with Asia in the Twenty-first Century*, Findings of a report commissioned by Prime Minister Obuchi in June 1999, Part 1, para. 7.

after the Manila meeting of ASEAN+3 on 28 November 1999, referred to 'enhanced interaction' and 'closer linkages' in East Asia. The nations present at that meeting committed to building upon existing consultative and cooperative processes in economic, social, political and other fields.⁸ ASEAN+3 Ministers now meet regularly 'in the margins' of ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences. Additionally, ASEAN Informal Summit (AIS) meetings have taken place involving wider East Asian participation. At that fourth AIS meeting held in Singapore in November 2000 ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea reaffirmed their decision to move towards closer East Asia cooperation, which would contribute towards enhanced regional cooperation as well as to peace, stability and prosperity in the region.⁹

Future Challenges for ASEAN and the ARF

Regardless of whether Southeast Asia returns to the period of growth and prosperity it enjoyed before the financial crisis of 1997, ASEAN states and the Association as a whole will face a dynamic and changing regional landscape. 'Enlargement, the absence of Indonesian leadership, and divisions over the organisation's future direction and guiding principles have diminished its coherence and reduced its ability to play a stabilizing role in the region.'¹⁰ Regardless of perceptions of their success or failure to date, ASEAN and the ARF face a considerable number of challenges to their effectiveness and longevity. Interestingly enough, some of these challenges have existed from their formation and are ongoing factors that these multilateral groups must continue to confront and address. These factors are both internal and external to Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific.

⁸ Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation, Manila: 28 November 1999, www.asean.org.

⁹ Chairman's Report 8th ARF SOM, Hanoi, 17–18 May 2001, p. 2, www.aseansec.org/politics/arf

¹⁰ Alan Dupont, 'Australia, Indonesia and East Timor: Where to Now?', Address to the Royal United Service Institute of the ACT, 6 October 1999, reprinted in, *Journal of RUSI Australia*, Vol. 20, December 1999, p. 42.

Internal Challenges

Old vs new members and participants

ASEAN has from its formation, comprised states with different ethnic and religious backgrounds, however, the founding five states were moving along a similar path of development. The period of financial growth, particularly in the 1990s increased the prosperity gap between these states and the newer member states. In addition the founding states developed a familiarity with each other throughout the 13 years of diplomatic interaction that preceded the arrival of Brunei in 1985. It was a further ten years before the next state, Vietnam was accepted into the ASEAN fold—following nearly two decades of interaction. Cambodia's admission occurred after 22 years of close regional interaction among its ASEAN neighbours.

Norms and their continuing utility

This was a period in which the norms of behaviour that now govern the operations and interactions of ASEAN, and subsequently transferred to the ARF, were developed. The primacy of national sovereignty was preserved through the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and the renunciation of the use of violence in the settlement of disputes. The ASEAN Way encompassed norms of behaviour developed through the principle of decision making by consensus where compromise occurs if consensus cannot be found and issues are adjourned. Member states are also prepared to defer their own interests to the interests of the Association.¹¹

One of the major challenges for ASEAN and the ARF is the change that is slowly creeping into their multilateral interaction and challenging the norms of non-interference and decision making by consensus. The older more established ASEAN states have a strong history of interaction that has witnessed a gradual change from not commenting on the internal affairs of other member states to openly discussing them. From not commenting on Indonesia's annexation of East Timor in 1976¹²—in fact Malaysia assisted Indonesia in preparations for the 1975 invasion¹³—to ASEAN states

¹¹ Alan Collins, 'Mitigating the Security Dilemma the ASEAN Way', *Pacifica Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, June 1999, p. 107.

¹² Jeannie Henderson, 'Reassessing ASEAN', *Adelphi Paper*, No. 328, Oxford University Press, London, 1999, p. 21.

¹³ James Cotton, 'The Emergence of an Independent East Timor: National and Regional Challenges', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 1, April 2000, p. 18.

contributing forces to an international peace enforcement operation in East Timor in 1999 is a very large step. While some might argue that ‘they are primarily in East Timor because of Jakarta’s wish that Asian states be represented ...’ in the international force,¹⁴ it is noteworthy that Thailand, one of the more progressive actors in ASEAN, made a significant contribution to the force and provided the deputy commander.¹⁵

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the non-interference principle was a significant inducement to the more closed societies of Indochina and Burma to join the Association, and China the ARF. The reluctance of these states to accept a softer approach to this principle was witnessed at this year’s meetings of the ARF¹⁶ where China blocked the adoption of the paper on the ‘Enhanced Role of the Chair’, and Vietnam similarly stopped the adoption of the paper on ‘Preventative Diplomacy’. This obvious friction between the old ASEAN states and the new closed societies mentioned earlier, and the Western participants in the ARF, will continue to inhibit progress.

In one sense the ability of the consensus principle to check the progress of preventative diplomacy measures shows the resilience of this fundamental norm. On the other hand the challenges to ‘non-interference’ from the more progressive Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines demonstrate a growing friction within both ASEAN and the ARF that will severely test these norms.

Political leadership and stability

One of the defining features of ASEAN in the 1970s and 1980s was the longevity of national leaders—the ‘strong men’ of Asia. The domestic and international agendas were determined by leaders such as President Marcos in Manila, Prime Ministers Mahathir in Malaysia and Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore, and President Suharto in Indonesia. These were authoritarian leaders focused on the ASEAN vision of political stability and economic development. The changes of leadership in the Philippines and Indonesia,

¹⁴ Alan Dupont, ‘Australia, Indonesia and East Timor: Where to Now?’, p. 42.

¹⁵ James Cotton, ‘The Emergence of an Independent East Timor: National and Regional Challenges’, p. 19.

¹⁶ Reflected in Co-Chair and Chairman’s statements as cited in Chapter 4 of this monograph.

and the opening of their political systems to greater freedom and democratization means that the impact and influence of political elites no longer dictates the direction of ASEAN. Essentially this must impact on the coherence of ASEAN, particularly during periods of political uncertainty in member states such as the 'peoples revolution' in the Philippines, and the continuing domestic uncertainty in Indonesia. As Andrew Tan argues, this has dented the ASEAN principle of non-interference that was established to protect the elite authoritarianism of the ruling regional regimes in 1967.¹⁷

Indonesia had for the most part, been 'considered the leader of ASEAN right up until the time of Indonesia's economic and political crisis of the late 1997.'¹⁸ Its geographic footprint and population size mean that despite its domestic political problems it will continue to occupy a significant place within ASEAN and consequently the ARF but any proactive leadership has been lost.¹⁹ Indonesia's political future is of particular concern to all ASEAN and ARF states.²⁰ There is a fear that order will break down in Indonesia resulting in chaos and uncertain political outcome. One scenario could see the break-up of Indonesia and more recent 'calls for independence and/or ethnic violence on the outer edges of the Republic of Indonesia—namely Aceh, Ambon, Irian Jaya and Kalimantan ...' add weight to this speculation.²¹ Conversely the re-emergence of an authoritarian or 'belligerent regime that questions the need for regional or international integration ...' is of concern.²² Either outcome from the current political uncertainty in Indonesia would challenge the cohesion of ASEAN and the ARF. The principle of non-interference would surely be challenged.

¹⁷ Andrew Tan, 'Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States—Persistence and Implications', Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No.135, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, 2000, p. 125.

¹⁸ Anthony Smith, 'Strategic Centrality: Indonesia's Changing role in ASEAN', *Pacific Strategic Papers*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2000, p. 28.

¹⁹ Anthony Smith, 'Strategic Centrality: Indonesia's Changing role in ASEAN', p. 39.

²⁰ Chairman's Report of the 8th ARF SOM, Hanoi, 17–18 May 2000, noted the Indonesian governments efforts in maintaining the countries stability and expressed continuing support for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity.

²¹ Anthony Smith, 'Strategic Centrality: Indonesia's Changing role in ASEAN', p. 71.

²² Anthony Smith, 'Strategic Centrality: Indonesia's Changing role in ASEAN', p. 39.

Indonesia is, however, not alone in facing challenging political circumstances and internal security threats. The Philippines, Myanmar, and to a lesser extent Thailand and Malaysia have maintained counter insurgency capabilities since 1975.²³ The latter two states do not however, have the same level of internal dissent as Myanmar—Karen separatist movement—and the Philippines—Muslim Moro rebels on Mindanao. The Philippines in particular has a history of insurgency and presently the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) operates as a *de facto* government controlling large swathes of territory on Mindanao.²⁴ The national cohesion of 'Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar, cannot be taken for granted.'²⁵

While these separatist groups are to a large degree, seeking economic independence or autonomy they exemplify another potential challenge for ASEAN and that is the emergence of fundamentalist Islamic movements. The possibility of an independent Aceh, Mindanao or Kelantan and Terengganu in Malaysia, 'conjure images of Central Asia and the northwestern corner of South Asia, where there are unstable and warring Islamic regimes and factions.'²⁶

It is important to note here that the problems of insurgency date back to ASEAN origins. That is not say that the persistence or struggle of these groups has remained the same over time as clearly it has not, nor for that matter has the ability of their respective governments to deal with these problems. What is being noted is that these old challenges are continuing to bedevil Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar in particular, as ASEAN approaches 35 years of operation. It also points clearly to the Association's guiding principles, based on the need to build stable governments in a stable region and acknowledges that internal security remains a major preoccupation. Threats to stability in the medium term are likely to stem from internal rather than external sources.²⁷ Despite these persistent internal challenges to the authority of individual ASEAN states from ethnic and religious minorities, the Association has endured.

²³ Andrew Tan, 'Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States—Persistence and Implications', p. 3.

²⁴ Andrew Tan, 'Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States—Persistence and Implications', p. 122.

²⁵ Andrew Tan, 'Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States—Persistence and Implications', p. 117.

²⁶ Andrew Tan, 'Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States—Persistence and Implications', p. 123.

²⁷ Andrew Tan, 'Armed Rebellions in the ASEAN States—Persistence and Implications', p. 124.

External challenges

The pace of globalisation is a factor with which all states have had to contend. The impact of globalisation was demonstrated clearly during the financial crisis of 1997 when the swift electronic transfer of funds across the world by dealers in the global market place caused havoc in East Asia. While Prime Minister Mahathir's claims that this crisis was a western plot to destabilise Southeast Asia may have been difficult to prove, the comments reflect the feeling of helplessness individual states held in the face of this attack, unintended or otherwise, on their national sovereignty. Increasingly as the pace of the information revolution quickens, states will find it difficult to assimilate and work with this increasingly influential fact of modern life. While this is a challenge for all states it is more acute in ASEAN as the access to information technology is not uniform and it offers the potential to separate further the old ASEAN economies from their new member states.

Major power dynamics

It is difficult to characterise China and the US as external influences when they are both participants in the ARF, but from an ASEAN perspective, the influence of these non-Southeast Asian states is critical to the future of the region. The ARF will have to continue to contend with major power dynamics and the developing uncertainty in relations between the US and China.²⁸ Much will depend upon their willingness to bring issues of concern to the Forum for discussion rather than taking unilateral or bilateral action outside the ARF and the security architecture it has built in the Asia-Pacific. Again this is a challenge to the concept of basic sovereignty that would see the US and China, and other major powers, display a level of transparency and preparedness to have issues in which they are involved discussed in open forums such as the ARF. It remains to be seen to what degree either the US or China would be prepared to accept the implementation of preventative diplomacy mechanism involving their interest. Despite this prospect, the US has shown itself willing to discuss the EP3 collision in the open forum of the ARF.²⁹

²⁸ Relations between these nuclear powers were strained by the mid-air collision of a US surveillance aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet in April 2000, resulting in the loss of the latter and the forced landing of the US EP3 in Chinese territory. This was subsequently exacerbated by an increase in US arms sales to Taiwan and the prospect of Missile Defence systems being developed by the US.

²⁹ Attendance at the ARF SOM, Hanoi, 17–18 May 2001. The US approach appeared to take the Chinese delegation by surprise as they did not have a prepared response.

The preventative diplomacy agenda will satisfy the progressive ASEAN and Western states. The US cannot afford to disengage or wind back its attendance or participation in the ARF without risking other major power domination of the security agenda in the Asia–Pacific. The challenge for the ARF but more particularly ASEAN is to ensure the continued interest and relevance of the Forum to the major powers.

Prospects for the Future

ASEAN has since 1967, shown itself to be resilient. It has weathered regional conflicts and been a catalyst in bringing pressure to bear on neighbouring Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia. It has subsequently incorporated all ten Southeast Asian states. It has survived a major economic crisis, political upheavals of democratic change among its members and the international intervention to East Timor, and the problems that action brought to group cohesion. While there are significant challenges ahead for ASEAN, the depth and breadth of its operation and polity, equip it well for survival. Changing political dynamics and leadership, insurgency in some member states, economic problems and disparity have to be managed carefully for ASEAN to keep its preeminent position as the key Southeast Asian voice. Critically, ASEAN must be able to manage the expectations of its newer members, that lack the confidence building history of the founding states if it wishes to remain a relevant and effective in the future.

The question of ASEAN's continuing centrality to the ARF is important and at least for the time being, the Association shows no sign of wishing to give up the 'driver's seat'. While the volume of advice it receives from the back-seat drivers in the Forum is likely to increase in both level and pitch, in the absence of any acceptable alternative Chair, there is little likelihood of a change in the foreseeable future. ASEAN must balance carefully the competing expectations of its more progressive members and those new to multilateral cooperative ventures.

The ARF has an unassailable position as the only forum to address directly multilateral security dialogue in the Asia–Pacific region. As such, membership of the ARF remains compulsory for all participants. It is unlikely that any of the existing 23 states could afford to leave. On the contrary other states such as Pakistan are actively seeking membership.³⁰ The ARF is moving albeit slowly, along its evolutionary path and addressing preventative diplomacy mechanisms. Through confidence building it has broadened the scope of its security dialogue talks with states now discussing in plenary session issues from the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea, to human rights in Myanmar and political developments in Indonesia. These discussions would not have taken place even five years ago. There is every prospect that in time, the ARF will develop into a more robust organisation prepared to move beyond dialogue.

³⁰ Attendance at the ARF SOM meeting, Hanoi, 17–18 May 2001. Pakistan had approached the Vietnamese Chair on the matter but when raised, the meeting agreed that it should consolidate with its existing numbers before considering expansion.

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