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**ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM
HOW ASEAN VALUES AND PRINCIPLES ARE SHAPING
A REGIONAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK FOR THE
PACIFIC IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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How ASEAN Values and Principles Are Shaping a Regional Security Framework
for the Pacific in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

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Asia is changing politically, economically, socially, and militarily as we approach the 21st Century. This study explores the successful development and accomplishments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) over the last thirty years. It argues that ASEAN values and principles of Resilience, Consensus, Dialogue and Consultation, Constructive Engagement and Non-interference, Gradualism, and Community and Common/Shared Goals undergird the ASEAN vision of a new multilateral security framework for the Pacific. Because of its credible history, ASEAN can make a significant difference in bringing about peace and stability in the Pacific region at this critical moment in world history.

INTRODUCTION

As we approach the 21st Century, Asia is changing politically, economically, socially, and militarily. Many of these changes are resulting from the demise of the bipolar adversarial relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States and the subsequent instability caused by the absence of a security framework. Militarily, Asian nations are building formidable military forces for their external security needs. Likewise, many changes are resulting from the tremendous economic growth and development of the region over the last 20 years. There are social arena changes because of new interdependencies and linkages with nations of the world. Changes are occurring in politics as democratic political systems develop to provide freedoms and opportunities unknown under old colonial regimes.

As Asian countries are undergoing these tremendous changes, they are exhibiting a growing confidence and assertiveness, especially on the part of members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This confidence and assertiveness has been nurtured and developed during almost 30 years of cooperation among ASEAN members and during many years of history before there was an ASEAN. Where does this confidence and assertiveness come from? It seems to be embedded in ASEAN values and principles which reflect historical attributes of Asian people. These ASEAN values and principles have been used during the 29 year life of ASEAN to promote cooperation, consensus, and harmony. Citing these values and principles, ASEAN is confidently and assertively proposing to world nations to use them in creating a peaceful and stable Pacific region. This paper will show how ASEAN values and principles have developed and how they are shaping a regional security framework for the Pacific in the 21st Century.

ASEAN VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

ASEAN values and principles form the foundation for the association. While the association's history only goes back in time to 1967, many of the values and principles shared by its members have a much longer history, reflecting timeless Asian values. Some of the values and principles have a more modern origin reflecting current security needs and situations. This analysis will focus on five ASEAN values and principles: Resilience; Consensus, Dialogue and Consultation; Constructive Engagement and Non-interference; Gradualism; and Community and Common/Shared Goals. ASEAN has observed these tenets with a great measure of success. They undergird the ASEAN vision of a new security framework for the Pacific.

The ASEAN nations have adopted the concept of "national resilience" from Indonesia. The concept means the mobilization of all national capabilities - political, economic, social, and psychological - in order to maximize the state's potential.¹ This concept identifies the synergy and interdependence of the elements of national power and has been broadened by ASEAN to "regional resilience" - meaning that resilience at the individual national level will contribute to a stable regional environment. ASEAN uses this concept to emphasize the importance of political, economic, and military development to improve the overall prosperity and stability in the region.

Consensus, Dialogue and Consultation are timeless Asian values for maintaining harmony in relations between people and between countries. ASEAN embraces these values as essential elements of their organization. ASEAN members readily acknowledge that their nations are not homogeneous, but diverse entities with differences in backgrounds, religion, race, ethnicity, language, culture, resources, needs, and futures. For Asians, reaching consensus through dialogue is a traditional manner of working out problems. Conducting consultations - rather than

avoiding contact - is also a traditional manner of doing business. ASEAN members have subscribed to The Principle of the Lowest Common Denominator. This means that all member nations must be satisfied with any decision or policy. ASEAN consultations have established high levels of familiarity and accommodations among member nations. Critics often point out that consensus slows down the organization, but to ASEAN consensus is fundamentally important for maintaining harmony and cooperation.² To attempt to proceed without consensus is much more wasteful than is taking the time to build a consensus.

Constructive Engagement and Non-interference is also an important ASEAN principle. The countries in ASEAN are very different in their historical, cultural and religious traditions; in their size, strength and stages of development; in their political, economic, and social systems; and also in their ideology, values and ideas. ASEAN is committed to respect each other's interests, aspirations, national sentiments, and choices. Constructive Engagement and Non-interference is a non-confrontational strategy for maintaining harmony in the relations between member nations. ASEAN insists that members must not interfere or meddle in the internal domestic affairs of other member nations. Rather, they should take a constructive approach to engaging the neighbor in consultation, information sharing, or dialogue over a particular subject. ASEAN does not tolerate threats, severing of diplomatic relations, or economic sanctions among its member states.

The principle of Gradualism is applied to the speed of doing business. Asian nations view time as a stream. They view life as a cycle. Thus ASEAN members can work on problems and issues without the need for a deadline; without the need to reach a decision or develop a solution at any particular time. This principle also applies to the manner in which business is done in Asia.

Business is not conducted between strangers, but rather between known entities. This requires a gradual approach to come to understand and know the party on the other side. The relationship cannot be rushed; it must proceed at its own pace.

The final ASEAN principle is that of Community and Common/Shared Goals. This reflects another timeless Asian value that puts the importance of the community ahead of individuals. This principle supports the value of Consensus and the Principle of the Lowest Common Denominator. ASEAN's common/shared goals include a stable regional security environment, political stability, economic development, and community cooperation. These goals unite the ASEAN nations through a common vision.

ASEAN values and principles were incorporated in the Association as it developed during the Cold War. ASEAN's strength and confidence in its values and itself since the end of the Cold War has prompted ASEAN to step up to the world's podium and strongly recommend an azimuth for security cooperation in the Pacific. That azimuth is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Before we review the ARF, we will examine how ASEAN developed and what it accomplished during the Cold War.

DEVELOPMENT OF ASEAN DURING THE COLD WAR

ASEAN was formed in August 1967 in Bangkok by Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Later two more nations joined: Brunei in 1984 and Vietnam in 1994. The 1967 Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN's founding document, stressed that the association's purpose was the promotion of economic, social, and cultural relations and development among its members.³ But the underlying political purpose of ASEAN was to

create a stable environment free of external interference and intra-regional strife so that the common goal of national development would not be adversely affected.⁴ ASEAN was established at a time when a wide variety of conflicts threatened development in the region. Domestic problems of communist insurgency and Islamic separatist movements posed serious internal challenges. Border disputes, suspected insurgency support, and the war in Vietnam were causing regional tensions. ASEAN nations did not want these problems to undermine regional security and to invite external intrusions. ASEAN worked out a three-pronged approach to development: the pursuit of socio-economic development to alleviate the threat posed by communist insurgency (represented by the concepts of national and regional resilience); the reduction or elimination of external power involvement in the region; and the limitation of competition and enhancement of cooperative relationships among members.⁵

To eliminate external involvement in the region, in 1971 ASEAN declared the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). ASEAN sought to insulate the region from the dynamics of world-power rivalry. The ZOPFAN concept was an explicit call for regional autonomy to ensure the region's stability and security from external interference. The ZOPFAN mechanism consisted of two elements. The first required external powers to guarantee the neutral status of the region by refraining from forging alliances with the neutralized states, from stationing armed forces on their territory, or from using their presence to subvert or interfere in any other way with other countries. The second element required regional countries to abstain from military alliances with the great powers and to prevent the establishment of foreign military bases on their soil.⁶

Although the implementation of ZOPFAN was undermined by disagreement between ASEAN members, by the existence of treaties between the US and the Philippines and Thailand, by the refusal of the US and Japan to support ZOPFAN, and by the outbreak of the Cambodian conflict, all ASEAN members agreed that the association should remain nonaligned in superpower disputes. ASEAN has officially adhered to ZOPFAN. With the end of the Cold War, the concept is being reviewed. It is being adjusted in the ARF process as ASEAN nations realize that they can't keep the four world powers - the US, Japan, China, and Russia - out of the region. "Equilibrium in the region would best be achieved by not excluding the great powers, but through equilibrium among them and between them and South-east Asia."⁷

To enhance regional cooperation, in 1976 ASEAN ratified the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. This treaty established a code of conduct for regional order governing relations between the states.⁸ It bound signatories to the principles of peaceful coexistence, peaceful settlement of disputes, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. It provided for a peaceful resolution of disputes by establishing a resolution mechanism, the High Council. The treaty also emphasized that members should avoid activities which could be seen as threatening to other members. The principle of non-interference was also embodied in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as "the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion."⁹ The High Council, composed of ministerial-level representatives from each state, has never been called upon. ASEAN members have resolved their conflicts bilaterally without resorting to the formal, multilateral measure of the High Council. ASEAN supporters claim this as a victory, citing the intangible but real spirit of ASEAN as the

means to resolve conflicts. The record of intramural harmony since 1967 testifies to the effectiveness of the informal, consensual ASEAN way.¹⁰

Over the 29 year life of ASEAN, there have been only 5 summits - each of them very important. The first summit in 1967 established the Association and promulgated the Bangkok Declaration, initiating ASEAN political identity in response to the fall of Indochina to revolutionary communism. The second summit in Bali in 1976 completed the identification of ASEAN's strategic goals with the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. This treaty, along with the initial Bangkok Declaration and the ZOPFAN Declaration of 1971, established the region's vision of peace. This vision sought to prevent intervention from outside powers, to recognize internationally accepted norms, and allow regional countries to resolve their own conflicts by peaceful means. Finally, it sought to facilitate regional cooperation among Southeast Asian nations.¹¹

The third summit celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the association in 1987 in Manila, Philippines. This summit was a rally of support for the embattled regime of Philippine President Corazon Aquino. ASEAN leaders reaffirmed the principles of national resilience and regional resilience. Continued support of ASEAN's efforts to resolve the Cambodian conflict were expressed. Economic cooperation was a major achievement of the summit, as member nations adopted a comprehensive set of measures aimed at improving intra-regional trade in light of the changing world economic situation. Enhanced economic cooperation and progress were identified as necessary underpinnings of security and political stability.¹²

The fourth summit in January 1992 at Singapore was significant because of the decision to begin a security dialogue with external powers, which eventually led to the formation of the ARF.

This decision to accept a role in regional security affairs was three years in the making. The end of the Cold War and the withdrawal of the Western powers left ASEAN leaders concerned about a regional power vacuum. At this summit they agreed to increase discussions both internally among ASEAN members and externally with dialogue partners on political and security matters. The January 1992 Singapore Declaration stated that ASEAN will encourage "internal talks on regional security" and strengthened ASEAN's commitment to "promote external talks on regional security by using the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences more intensively and by giving high priority to ties with the rest of the Asia-Pacific."¹³ ASEAN nations thereby proceeded on the ASEAN path of seeking solutions through consensus. The summit's declaration also asked for UN recognition of the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and for implementation of the 1972 ZOPFAN declaration in the region. At this important summit, ASEAN began assuming leadership in developing a security framework for the Pacific.

The fifth summit was held in December 1995 in Bangkok. Since Vietnam had joined ASEAN in 1994 and Burma, Cambodia, and Laos were attending as prospective members, this ASEAN summit brought 10 regional leaders together. This summit's crowning achievement was the signature of the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ) by all 10 nations. ASEAN's confidence and cohesiveness were boosted by means of this first new treaty since 1976. The leaders also agreed to speed up trade liberalization and foster closer economic ties with China. Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong remarked that the region's interconnectedness portended an even closer community in the future.¹⁴ So ASEAN continues to exude confidence and gain stature in the world community.

This short three-decade history of ASEAN has been full of exciting and challenging times for Asia and the world. Throughout this period, ASEAN and its members improved their resiliency, conducted dialogue and consensus-seeking, actively pursued constructive engagement, refrained from interference in the internal affairs of other members, gradually worked toward solutions to problems and issues, and developed a cooperative community of shared goals. Among ASEAN's indisputable achievements are the halt of communism in Southeast Asia, the absence of the use of military force or conflict to settle bilateral territorial disputes, the successful creation of an opportunity for Cambodia to be at peace and develop itself for the future, the tremendous economic boom and development of the past 15 years, and the suggestion of a future vision for the stability of Asia. The goals that ASEAN set for itself in 1967 - a stable region free of conflict and national development - are the same goals that ASEAN has in 1995; a remarkable continuity in this ever-changing world.

ASEAN has affected not only its member nations and immediate regional neighbors but also nations around the world. Its significant effect on the US has been the absence of conflict in the Southeast Asia region, except for Cambodia, so there has been no US expenditure for conflicts in the region. The growing economic markets in ASEAN have been a boom for American investment and trade. Japan enjoyed the economic boom of Southeast Asia and profited from investments, markets, and official development aid projects. Japan has, like the US, not had to expend military treasure in a conflict in the region. The European Union nations have benefited from ASEAN markets and investments, while avoiding costs of colonial rule responsibilities. The fall of the Soviet Union was hastened since the domino affect failed to transpire in Southeast Asia and the US could direct its full attention to defeating communism

elsewhere. Probably the most far-reaching and long term effect has been on China. China has seen the ASEAN nations rise out of the ashes of World War II and colonial rule with a cooperative harmony and determination to improve the well-being of its community of nations and its people. Democratic institutions are gradually developing. Economic progress has been amazing. ASEAN serves as an example to China of the benefits of accepting an open and friendly invitation to join in the community of nations.

ASEAN emerged at the end of the Cold War period with substantial credibility as a healthy, effective, and successful organization of nation-states. ASEAN's political, social, economic, and military development are an example to other nations of successful, harmonious regional growth. ASEAN's values and principles have proven successful. ASEAN is developing in the direction of a coherent, unified region, drawing on common cultural values and an increasingly complex network of commercial ties.¹⁵ Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Datku Seri Anwar Ibrahim observed at the Fifth Summit: "The Asian renaissance must not be about cultural jingoism, but rather about cultural rebirth and empowerment."¹⁶ With confidence and assurance, ASEAN member nations have begun to assert themselves as leaders on the world stage. In 1995, ASEAN's vision for the future began to emerge as reality.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM

Several factors contributed to the initiative for ASEAN-led regional dialogues on security issues: the perceived reduction in US military power and commitment to the Asia-Pacific region, the collapse of the bilateral superpower alliance system, the increased levels of military spending among ASEAN nations, the territorial disputes between nations, and the common goal of peace

and stability to permit economic prosperity. These factors, along with ASEAN's emerging stature and confidence, shaped the new regional cooperative security framework - the ASEAN Regional Forum. The focus of security cooperation was aptly described in 1994 by an official of Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

ASEAN security cooperation is necessary today not as an end in itself but as an instrumental means to ensure economic prosperity for the region. In order to secure a sustainable economic growth, countries of the region need trust, understanding, a predictable pattern of political and security relationships, as well as effective mechanisms through which regional disputes could be resolved quickly and peacefully.¹⁷

Ironically, one of the original proposals for developing new regional security institutions to replace the superpower alliance systems of the Cold War period came from the Soviet Union. In 1987 at Vladivostok, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev called for a "Pacific Ocean conference along the lines of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE)." In 1990, the Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, concurred by proposing a Conference on Security Cooperation in Asia (CSCA): "a future Asian security architecture involving a wholly new institutional process that might be capable of evolving, in Asia just as in Europe, as a framework for addressing and resolving security problems."¹⁸

These early proposals were not supported by ASEAN or the US. The US acknowledged it would be redefining its security role in the region, but planned to retain bilateral defense relationships as the basic framework. The US viewed any such multilateral institution as a threat to its existing alliance system. ASEAN nations, in keeping with their commitment to consensus and dialogue-oriented behaviors, rejected a formal CSCE-type institution. ASEAN members preferred a looser and more consultative mechanism for exchanging views on security. They also

feared that extra-regional players would gain institutional control and supplant ASEAN as the leader in the region.

ASEAN's efforts to establish the ARF began during the late 1980's and early 1990's. Gradualism and consensus-building were paramount concerns. ASEAN proposed using its well-established forums: the annual meetings between ASEAN foreign ministers and dialogue partners' counterparts. The ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC), which had been held since 1978, offered several advantages as a forum for dialogue on security within the Asia-Pacific region. First, ASEAN would have a controlling influence over the agenda of discussions and would not be relegated to a secondary position. Second, the PMC would enable ASEAN to pursue a more inclusive approach to security in the context of the growing security interdependence between Southeast Asia and the wider Pacific theater.¹⁹ ASEAN leaders began to recognize that establishing and maintaining a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia region depended not only upon ASEAN members but also upon extra-regional powers. The growing geographical, security, and economic interdependence of the Southeast Asia area, the Asia-Pacific region, and the world called for new ways and means to involve intraregional and extraregional powers in constructive engagements - not destructive power play.

At the July 1991 PMC in Kuala Lumpur, Japan offered unexpected support for regional security dialogue, using the ASEAN PMC as the forum. Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama stated that the ASEAN PMC could be used for "a process of political discussions designed to improve the sense of security among us."²⁰ Again the US did not respond favorably. But ASEAN endorsed the proposal. Through a "gradualistic" approach, the ASEAN security framework was emerging.

The Singapore Summit in January 1992 was a milestone in the gradual development of the ARF. At the summit, ASEAN leaders decided to increase discussions both internally and externally between ASEAN members and dialogue partners on political and security matters. Another milestone was the perceptible American shift toward support of multilateralism. The US developed a policy recognizing the importance of multilateral dialogue while maintaining strong bilateral relationships. In late 1991, Secretary of State James Baker's article in Foreign Affairs expressed support for flexible and ad hoc multilateral efforts to deal with specific security problems.²¹ During President Clinton's 1993 visit to the Republic of Korea, the President announced the change in US policy: He stated that multilateral arrangements "can function like overlapping plates of armor, covering the full body of our common security concerns."²² And Ambassador Winston Lord's testimony before Congress in March 1993 spelled out the ten new goals for American foreign policy in Asia - one of which was "developing multilateral forums for security consultations while maintaining the solid foundation of our alliances."²³

The decision by the January 1992 ASEAN summit to begin a security dialogue and the new 1993 US policy to support multilateralism were key events in the evolution of the ARF. World events since 1989 had propelled ASEAN and the US along the path toward multilateralism. But it was ASEAN's reputation and increasing global acceptance that served as the catalyst to the successful evolution of the ARF.

What indeed had happened in the world from 1989 to 1993 that enhanced ASEAN's reputation and acceptance? ASEAN members assertively anticipated the changing world environment and initiated accommodations and changes in the Association. Such accommodations and changes were consistent with ASEAN values and principles. From 1989

ASEAN steadily moved to the forefront and to the driver's seat in matters regarding ASEAN regional security and Pacific regional security.

ASEAN recognized the need for changes in the Pacific security framework and took initial steps to secure consensus and support for a gradual process to move to a new security framework. In 1989, the world's power structure dramatically altered with the collapse of the Soviet Union. No longer was there a serious threat of Soviet hegemony or communism in the Pacific. The Vietnamese had pulled their troops out of Cambodia. In 1990, ASEAN began internal discussions on a New World Order and the part ASEAN would play in it. Both US and Russian power were perceived to be declining in the region. The regional economy was booming. Even so, 1991 was a perplexing year for ASEAN nations as they grappled with ways to adapt to the new world order. ASEAN nations agreed on greater economic cooperation as the way to integrate the region. China was seen more as a market and investment opportunity than as a threat. Deng's "market economy with socialist tendencies" was viewed as an opportunity for constructive engagement with China to achieve the common goal of economic development and prosperity.

1992 was a watershed year for ASEAN! ASEAN countries had another bonanza economic year. Confidence glowed. ASEAN leaders in January buoyantly agreed on a path to establish a security forum for dialogue and consultation. ASEAN leaders envisioned a forum embracing ASEAN values and principles. But ASEAN was quickly shocked by expansionary moves by China and the perception that the US commitment and presence in Asia was sinking even lower on the US national interest priority list. In February, China passed a law on its territorial waters which claimed all of the Spratly Islands and control over the area's sealanes.²⁴

Then in May China signed a contract with a US oil company to explore for oil and gas in an area that Vietnam claims. ASEAN nations issued the Declaration on the South China Sea at the July ASEAN PMC, urging peaceful settlement of disputes in the area. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers also called on the US to retain a military presence in the region. Vietnam and Laos both signed the Treaty for Amity and Cooperation in July. This was a significant step because it signaled a commitment by Indochinese states to abide by the regional code of conduct on territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes. 1992 is noteworthy because ASEAN voiced strong reservation on Chinese expansionism and advocated US presence; it added Vietnam and Laos to the Treaty of Amity; and it decided to pursue a forum for security dialogue and consultation. ASEAN confidence and stature definitely were not diminished by China's potential threat to the region.

By 1993, ASEAN cultural confidence had reached a higher plateau.²⁵ ASEAN nations enjoyed another year of economic success and development. Their strong record of economic growth and political stability emboldened ASEAN leaders to move their security, economic, and political agendas forward. After years of gradual evolution, the ARF was formally inaugurated in July at the ASEAN PMC. ARF claimed 18 member nations: the six ASEAN members - Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand; the seven dialogue partners - the US, the European Union, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea; and five invited guests - China, Laos, Russia, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam. This inclusion of all the major powers in the Pacific region was vitally important. The first formal ARF meeting was scheduled for July 1994 in Bangkok.

The formation of the ARF came at a time when China was pursuing closer ties with other Asian nations in an attempt to soften the perception she was becoming an expansionary threat. At the same time, relations between the US and China were deteriorating because of arms proliferation, human rights, and Taiwan arms sales issues. ASEAN leaders achieved a breakthrough by integrating China into the ARF dialogue and consultation. ASEAN, recognizing that Asia's security, economic and political future were tied directly to the China connection, advanced its own goals for a peaceful and stable region. Constructive engagement and integration of China into the community of nations with common goals, values and principles appeared to be the best way to ensure a stable and prosperous future.

1994 brought another skyrocketing economic performance by ASEAN nations. More and more, Asian values were touted as superior to Western values. Hard work, thrift, and reliance on family were praised as the foundations of Confucian Capitalism. Asian confidence and influence continued to grow. The APEC Summit in Indonesia embraced free trade as the overriding linkage among countries.²⁶ Interdependence among nations was becoming a recognized diplomatic principle. China's economic power was praised by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir: "A prosperous China will become the engine of growth firstly for East Asia, including Southeast Asia, and then the world"²⁷

But China's actions in the South China Sea threatened regional stability and detracted from the economic connection. China justified its expansionary stance in the Spratlys as a sovereignty issue. China agreed to discuss joint exploration of the region's natural resources, but refused to negotiate on sovereignty. China also postured against internationalization of the issue, stating that it would deal only on a bilateral basis with concerned nations.

Against this backdrop of economic growth and confidence and the concerns about China's expansionary moves, the first formal meeting of the ARF convened in Bangkok on 25-26 July 1994. Professor Likhit Dhiravegin, Thammasat University in Bangkok, best described the outlook for the ARF meeting as follows:

We should not be overly ambitious. We should not expect for a consensus or complete agreement on any particular subject. Instead, the ARF should aim for the establishment of a tradition of political and security dialogue among participating countries and the creation of close personal rapport among the policy-makers of the countries involved. These objectives could serve as a foundation for further ARF meetings which could evolve towards a more formal institutionalized structure.²⁸

The first ARF was described as a remarkable success and diplomatic triumph for ASEAN. It brought together the foreign ministers of 18 countries to sit at the same table and exchange views on long-term security measures for the region. Especially significant was the fact that it was the first post-Cold War security meeting in the Asia-Pacific region between the US, China, and Russia.²⁹ All the values and principles of ASEAN were evident in the meeting: dialogue, consultation, harmony, resilience, gradualism, and common goals. Discussions centered around four main topics: Cambodia, the South China Sea, Burma, and the Korean peninsula. In addition, Australia, Canada, Japan, and Korea put forth proposals for consideration, further analysis and consensus approval at the next ARF meeting. Australia suggested a three-stage "trust building" process. Canada proposed an ASEAN peacekeeping concept, including a regional peacekeeping force. Japan's presentation included suggestions for an arms registry, publication of defense information, peacekeeping, and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Korea stressed the need for a framework for security dialogue and cooperation in the Northeast Asia region.

ASEAN foreign ministers were enthusiastic about the results of the first ARF. The official statement released at the end of the meeting stated that the ARF would be convened annually.

The forum endorsed the purpose and principles of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique instrument for regional confidence-building, preventative diplomacy, and security cooperation. The ARF agreed that it enabled Asian-Pacific countries to foster the habit of constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interests and concern.³⁰ The azimuth for security cooperation in the Pacific was set in July 1994 at this first meeting.

The stage was now set for the events in 1995, a crucial year for ASEAN and its ARF. ASEAN nations needed to continue their ARF leadership, lest the superpowers take control; ASEAN nations succeeded in advancing their agenda. Asian nations continued dramatic economic development. The amount of intra-Asian trade exceeded the amount of trade external to Asia for the first time. Growing interdependencies in markets and investment were developed throughout Asia.

But mischief was still about. China's expansionary actions in the South China Sea continued. In February, the Philippines discovered that China had occupied their Mischief Reef. ASEAN nations demonstrated their regional resilience by issuing a joint statement on 18 March calling for a peaceful resolution of the dispute. During the ASEAN PMC in July, China backed down on its South China Sea claims. While adhering to its position of indisputable sovereignty over the area, China agreed to negotiate differences under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and agreed to negotiate on a multilateral basis, rather than bilaterally, with all seven ASEAN nations. This concession was viewed as a considerable diplomatic achievement, lending credence to the value of informal dialogue as a confidence-building measure.³¹ It can also be seen as a strong recommendation for constructive engagement.

Vietnam was admitted to ASEAN and recognized by the US. Vietnam's membership in ASEAN is a major event in the post-Cold War era. It suggests a future both for multilateralism and the continued viability of ASEAN as a regional grouping.³² The planned admittance of Laos and Cambodia by 1998 will further strengthen ASEAN regional resilience. Burma signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in July at the PMC. When Burma is accessed by the year 2000, all Southeast Asian nations will be in ASEAN. Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore optimistically proclaimed: "The long term benefit is that we hope that with Vietnam, and eventually with Burma, Laos, and Cambodia...we will have a cohesive stable Southeast Asia that will cooperate and compete economically, and that is in a better position to bargain with all the other major powers, major groups in the Asia-Pacific, and that there's less of a disparity in weight with the US, with Japan, and with China."³³

The ARF met in Brunei on 1 August 1995. Membership was up to 19 countries, with the addition of Cambodia as an observer. The Sultan of Brunei welcomed the delegates and reminded them of ASEAN's abiding faith in *musyawarah* and *mufakat*, consultation and consensus.³⁴ The security issues discussed in the meeting included the tensions on the Korean peninsula, French and Chinese nuclear weapons testing, political developments in Burma, and the South China Sea Spratly Islands dispute. The discussions were described as friendly. China's softening of its position on the South China Sea claims was a very significant event which can be attributed to ASEAN's resilience and constructive engagement policies and to China's desire to be included in the ARF group.

The ARF Concept Paper was presented at the forum. It had been developed in the year following the first ARF as a consensus action by member nations. The Concept Paper offered

broad guidelines for future meetings. The future meetings will have no formal agenda and will approach sensitive security issues in an oblique and non-confrontational manner, like the diplomatic style ASEAN itself has practiced for the past 28 years.³⁵ The concept paper also outlined a gradual approach toward regional peace and stability. The approach is a three-step process involving the promotion and development of confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy mechanisms, and conflict resolution mechanisms. The paper did not specify how long it would take to move through the three phases. Some of the proposed confidence building measures were: regional arms registration; sea lines of communication cooperation in search-and-rescue and in drug and piracy interdiction; disaster relief assistance; establishment of zones of cooperation, such as in the South China Sea; prior notification of major military deployments; and disclosure of destinations for arms shipments.³⁶

The ARF statement issued at the close of the meeting clearly and strongly announced that ASEAN will remain in the ARF leadership position and that ASEAN values and principles will be used to shape the new security framework. The statement said that the forum recognized the concept of resilience involving the military, political, social and economic aspects of security. Participants also reaffirmed their commitment to open dialogue and consultation on regional politics and security issues. They agreed to discuss and reconcile different views between member countries to reduce security risks. They further agreed that all ARF decisions would be made through consensus after careful and extensive consultation among all participating countries. The statement said that "a successful ARF required active, full and equal participation of all participants, with ASEAN entrusted with the obligation to be the primary driving force of the forum."³⁷ This statement offers a resounding approval for ASEAN and the ARF.

Development of the ARF has affected nations around the world. The US changed its Asia-Pacific bilateral-only security policy to accommodate the development of multilateral relationships. The US moved assertively to participate in the ARF, while recognizing the increased levels of economic, political, and military interdependence in the region. The US has remained engaged in Asia. Japan stepped forward to participate fully in ARF security discussions. Japan's participation signifies its maturation into a more internationally sensitive and diplomatically secure nation. The ARF provided the arena for Russia to be a player in the Asia-Pacific region - something Russia wanted badly. China's participation in the ARF is essential. The ARF's constructive engagement of China will be a critical step in bringing China into the international community as a responsible member. Even though China may have accepted ARF membership to further its own goal of building better relationships with its neighbors, China is now a partner in the consensus process. This engagement process is much more promising than a disengagement process.

The ARF has laid down the azimuth for the future cooperative security framework in Asia. Because of its 29 year history of consensus-building, non-interference, dialogue, gradualism and harmony, ASEAN has gained the respect of Pacific nations. ASEAN has earned its bona fides as a leader. On the Pacific scene, a vision for security in the future is being proposed by ASEAN - and other Pacific nations are listening and engaging in the dialogue.

CONCLUSIONS - THE FUTURE OF THE ARF AND ASEAN

The ARF faces a challenging future. While there are many who support and encourage the forum; there are also many who deride it. Opportunities and problems abound. How the

ARF, led by ASEAN nations, moves the security agenda forward will have significant impact on the short term and long term security situation in the Pacific. If ASEAN can instill its values and principles to relationships between and among other Pacific nations, the Pacific may enjoy peaceful sailing to a stable and prosperous future. If ASEAN fails to lead the Pacific nations to a new security order, the Pacific may be in for rough water in the security arena in the years ahead.

Singapore's Minister of Defence Dr Lee Boon Yang, summarized future prospects of the ARF very well:

The possibilities emerging from the ARF process are endless. I foresee great potential for such a forum...we have to move at a pace that is comfortable for all members...forge a consensual approach to security issues. A gradual evolutionary approach to tackle challenges may bring better results. It will be a challenge to get consensus from such a diverse grouping, but so long as ARF members manifest genuine willingness to accommodate one another concerns, the ARF will progress.³⁸

The first major challenge is control and size. An ASEAN expanded from seven to ten members will enhance the organization's standing in the international community and boost its efforts to promote and strengthen conditions for regional peace and stability.³⁹ But a larger membership will also make consensus-building more difficult. The same problem faces the ARF. At least ten new countries have already applied to join, including North Korea, Mongolia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgystan, Britain and France. The ARF faces the formidable task of deciding where to draw the line and how to manage even more members with diverse views, concerns, and interests. Non-ASEAN ARF members will expect substantive roles in the process, or they will exit. The ARF's agenda also includes dialogue and consultation on security issues of the larger Asia-Pacific region, such as the Korean peninsula. How ASEAN nations maintain their leadership role yet substantially involve other non-Asean nations will be a difficult diplomatic task. Perhaps separate subregional groupings will be established.

The second major challenge is the management of the triangular relationship between the US, Japan and China. ARF's most important function could be helping these three big superpowers to acquire the habit of dialogue to manage future crises.⁴⁰ Including these nations in the ARF dialogue encourages talk and compromise. Keeping the US fully engaged in Asia is essential to balance China and stabilize the region. The ARF must constantly emphasize to the US that its vital economic, political, and security interests in the region requires its active engagement and consultation in the ARF multilateral forums, not disengagement and withdrawal to fortress continental America. Japan's evolution into a normal nation will be enhanced by her gradually assuming more regional security responsibilities. As Japan participates in the ARF, other Asian nations may slowly lose their fears of a revival of Japanese militarism. Japan's economic relationship with China is a powerful connecting link in the triangular relationship. But what about China? Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in May 1995 told an international conference in Beijing that

China's rising power and arms build-up has stirred anxiety in Asia. It is important to bring into the open this underlying sense of discomfort - and even insecurity - about the political and military ambitions of China. It's not preordained that China's military power will turn into a threat. China must show through its attitude and action that....it intends to be a responsible member of the international community.⁴¹

ASEAN's time-proven principles of constructive engagement, consultation, noninterference, and harmony should provide a model for China's conduct and interaction with other Asia-Pacific nations. China's vital concern for economic development and prosperity is directly linked to the stability and prosperity of the region. The ARF should use this interdependence to persuade China into more cooperative behaviors with the international community of nations.

The ARF has three areas of opportunity at hand to demonstrate its viability and strength for the future. First, the ARF can build on its Concept Paper process adopted at the second ARF meeting in 1995. A gradual approach to development of confidence measures is the first step in the process. Near term confidence-building measures should focus on white papers on defense, cooperating on search-and-rescue operations, offering disaster relief assistance, and conducting anti-drug and anti-piracy operations. Longer term confidence-building measures should include the establishment of a peacekeeping center and forces and eventually opening dialogue on collective security arrangements. The second and third steps in the process - developing mechanisms for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution - are long-term goals. They can be brought to the table after the ARF has matured and member nations are comfortable working with one another on such sensitive issues.

The second area of opportunity is the interdependence of Asia-Pacific nations in economic development and security development matters. ARF should promote economic integration wherever possible. Economic integration and engagement benefits and cements security cooperation and engagement. The ARF should promote multilateral development plans in the South China Sea for oil and natural gas exploration. The ASEAN Free Trade Area tariff cuts have improved economic integration. A plan proposed by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir and endorsed by Singapore's Prime Minister Goh is an excellent step to cement interdependence in both the economic and the security arenas: ASEAN plans to invite China, Japan, and South Korea to join with ASEAN nations in the development of the Mekong River basin. This effort services an economic development objective while giving Beijing a stake in the security of the Mekong subregion.⁴²

The third area of opportunity at hand is to cool some of the region's current hot spots. ASEAN's model of confidence- and consensus-building should be applied to the South China Sea and Korean peninsula hot spots. China's softening of its position on the South China Sea is an encouraging action; it shows that ASEAN's influence and constructive engagement approach are viable diplomatic tools. Since North Korea wants into the ARF, perhaps ASEAN can provide leadership in its own forum for reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. Discussion of the Korean problem at the ARF by all interested parties - including North Korea - would be a significant step forward. By building consensus and appealing to regional harmony, ASEAN can devise a face-saving solution acceptable to both Koreas.

CLOSING

"What the region needs is a permanent forum to facilitate consultative processes, promote confidence-building measures, and, whenever necessary, set up the machinery to investigate disputes. This implies constant dialogue and interactions so that members acquire a better appreciation of each other's security concerns." Dr Likhit Dhiravegin, Thammasat University, Thailand.⁴³

"The ASEAN experience is a useful lesson we could all learn from: consultation and consensus-building are more often than not the basis for reducing tensions and creating a regional climate conducive to peace and prosperity. We need time for countries to get comfortable working with one another on such sensitive issues." Dr Lee Boon Yang, Minister for Defence, Singapore.⁴⁴

After 29 years of association, ASEAN has established its bona fides. Its successful accomplishments of three decades have been possible because of the basic values and principles embodied in the organization. Because of its credible history of resilience, consensus, non-interference, and gradualism, ASEAN can make a significant difference in bringing about peace and stability in the Pacific region at this critical moment in world history. The ASEAN

vision for the regional security framework of the future has been placed on the table - Let's hope that all Pacific nations step forward, share the vision, and work together to establish a peaceful and stable Pacific region for the 21st Century.

ENDNOTES

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³Mark G. Rolls, "Security Co-operation in Southeast Asia: An Evolving Process," Post Cold War Security Issues in the Asia-Pacific Region (Frank Cass and Co. LTD, 1994), 66.

⁴Angela M. Hemming, "ASEAN Security Cooperation After the Cold War: Problems and Prospects," The Indonesian Quarterly, Third Quarter, 1992, 286.

⁵Rolls, 66.

⁶Amitav Acharya, "A New Regional Order in South-East Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era," Adelphi Paper 279, August 1993, 54.

⁷Zain Amri, "ASEAN Regional Forum: Towards Cooperative or Collective Security in the Asia-Pacific?" Asian Defence Journal, September 1994, 7.

⁸Acharya, 56.

⁹Hemming, 289.

¹⁰Acharya, 33.

¹¹Rizal Sukma, "Security Arrangement in Southeast Asia: A Challenge for ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era," The Indonesian Quarterly, Third Quarter, 1992, 284.

¹²Sarasin Viraphol, "Pacific Security and Cooperation: A Thai View," Cooperative Security in the Pacific Basin, The 1988 Pacific Symposium, 204.

¹³Hemming, 294.

¹⁴Michael Vatikiotis and Rodney Tasker, "Hang On Tight," Far Eastern Economic Review, 28 December 1995 and 4 January 1996, 17.

¹⁵Michael Vatikiotis, "Care to Join Us?" Far Eastern Economic Review, 7 December 1995, 23.

¹⁶Vatikiotis, 23.

¹⁷Likhit Dhiravegin, "The Multilateralisation of Pacific-Asia - Rethinking the ARF," Asian Defence Journal, November 1994, 44.

¹⁸Acharya, 60.

¹⁹Acharya, 61.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹James A. Baker, "America in Asia: Emerging Architecture for a Pacific Community," Foreign Affairs, vol. 70, no. 5, Winter 1991-92, 5.

²²Frank Ching, "Creation of a Security Forum Is a Feather in ASEAN's Cap," Far Eastern Economic Review, 12 August 1993, 27.

²³Winston Lord, "A New Pacific Community: Ten Goals for American Foreign Policy," testimony before Congress, Washington, DC, 31 March 1993, 2.

²⁴Michael Malik, ed, Asia Yearbook 1993, Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong: Review Publishing Company, 1993), 20.

²⁵Robert Delfs, ed, Asia Yearbook 1994, Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong: Review Publishing Company, 1994), 73.

²⁶Michael Westlake, ed, Asia Yearbook 1995, Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong: Review Publishing Company, 1995), 12

²⁷Westlake, 20.

²⁸Zain Amri, "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Hope for Success But Tread With Care," Asian Defence Journal, August 1994, 26

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³³Shalani Devi, "ASEAN," Asian Defence Journal, May 1995, 71.

³⁴_____, "South-East Asia's Sweet Tooth," The Economist, 5 August 1995, 31.

³⁵Murray Hiebert, "Treading Softly," Far Eastern Economic Review, 3 August 1995, 20.

³⁶_____, "Regional Security Forum To Strengthen Confidence Building," Asian Defence Journal, September 1995, 98.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Lee Boon Yang, "Interview with Dr Lee Boon Yang," Asian Defence Journal, July 1995, 5.

³⁹Lee, 6.

⁴⁰_____, "Asian Security: East Asia's Wobbles," The Economist, 23 December 1995 and 5 January 1996, 37.

⁴¹Hiebert, 20.

⁴²Vatikiotis and Tasker, 17.

⁴³Likhit, 47.

⁴⁴Lee, 5.

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