

# **EVOLUTION OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM : PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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**CERTIFICATE**

Certified that the Dissertation entitled " EVOLUTION OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS" Submitted by JITENDRA PRASAD SINGH in partial fulfillment for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy, has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

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*To*

*My Parents*

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## PREFACE

The launching in July 1995 of the first ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Bangkok generated much interest and high expectations among the members of the Forum and among the security analysts in general. Inevitably, the question arose as to why the ASEAN members felt the need to set up such a mechanism and whether they intended it to play a central role in the East Asia security regime.

In the first chapter a brief introduction about the ASEAN, its historical background and how and why it was formed have been discussed.

In the second chapter the need for the ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM, what was the felt need, and what type of a New Political role the ASEAN wants to play in the region.

In the third chapter, the formation of the ARF, the membership issues, the pulls and pushes from various power had been discussed.

In the fourth chapter problems and prospects, as well as the future course of the forum is dealt with.

The last chapter is the concluding chapter based on the findings in the earlier ones.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge with gratitude my introduction to the field of research by **Prof. Parimal Kumar Das**, whose affection, invaluable guidance and encouragement have enabled me to complete this work. He has nurtured my intellectual growth and I owe a personal and intellectual debt to him.

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## Chapter - I

### THE ARF - HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The establishment of ASEAN on 8 Aug. '67 in Bangkok was the beginning of a process of establishing confidence Building measures and openness and transparency among its members."<sup>1</sup>

"ASEAN objectives, as reflected in the Bangkok Declaration represented the collective will of member governments to address a major strategic challenge of that time : how to face growing communist insurgencies, internal tensions and civil strife in the countries without being dragged too deeply into East-West conflicts and without disrupting their domestic political and economic agendas".<sup>2</sup> The response to political, Economic and security challenge was outlined in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration signed in 1971.

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<sup>1</sup> Md. Hussin Nayan, " openness and Transparency in the ASEAN countries", Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ASEAN DEFENCE JOURNAL SEPTEMBER 1996. p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> The ASEAN Declaration ( Bangkok Declaration), 8 August 1967, Bangkok, 1967, p. 250. Ibid

The document reaffirmed ASEAN state's political resolve and shared determination to secure the recognition of, and respect for, south East Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality (ZOPFAN), free from any form of interference by outside powers. "ZOPFAN was the first indication that a process of openness and transparency was making some progress within ASEAN".<sup>3z</sup> Another interesting aspect of ZOPFAN -an indigenously conceived regional security order - was that it allowed and encouraged non-ASEAN countries to associate themselves with the concept and its objectives.

Four years later, in 1975, following the defeat of the American troops in vietnam, the political and security equation changed.

Nine years after ASEAN'S creation, its heads of government finally agreed to a summit meeting in Bali in 1976 to discuss, assess and respond to the post vietnam war situation.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in the paper presented at the second Malaysia - Indonesia conference, Penang by Jusuf Wanandi, Malaysia 11-19 Dec. 1990, Organised by Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and centre for strategic and International studies (CSIS).



The first ASEAN summit produced two significant agreements, which further indicated the direction of ASEAN cooperation. The declaration of ASEAN concord and the Treaty of Amity and cooperation in south East Asia. The concord stated the objectives and principles of cooperation complete with plans of action in Economic and social development, incorporated the member's pledges of mutual assistance in the event of national disaster and reaffirmed their intention to cooperate in regional development programmes and to develop a recognizable ASEAN identity.<sup>4</sup>

The treaty, on the other hand, provided the framework of political cooperation based on mutual respect for one another's sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The most significant aspects of the first ASEAN summit was the rejection of a military-bloc type of response of a confrontational approach.<sup>5</sup> The summit

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<sup>4</sup> n.1 p. 136

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Gordon, Towards Disengagement in Asia (New Jersey, 1969) p. 127

highlighted instead the benefits of harmonizing views, coordinating positions, and undertaking common and concerted action, in both intraregional and extra-regional relations. The growth and social development, with the specific aims of achieving social Justice, increasing the standard of living of the people's of ASEAN.

"ASEAN countries have chosen an economic-cooperation model, suggesting that members integrate themselves substantially with the global economic system through trade, finance, investment and other International sectors".<sup>6</sup>

In 1977, at the second ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN heads of government reaffirmed their commitment to ZOPFAN, the concord and the Treaty of Amity. From 1977 to 1987, ASEAN countries proceeded to fulfil their commitment to ASEAN cooperation. The subsequent ASEAN summit in Manila in 1987, focused, inter alia, on improving the functioning and extent of ASEAN cooperation and joint venture in Industrial projects.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Economic co-operation among the member countries of the ASEAN: Report of a U.N. Team" Journal of Development Planning New York, no. 7, 1974. p 78.

<sup>7</sup> n.l, p.136

Progress was also made in regional security cooperation, as indicated by the introduction of concept of a south-East Asia nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) in 1984.

Although discussions at many ASEAN Ministerial Meetings (AMM) often focused on political cooperation in matters of mutual concern. ASEAN countries were nevertheless aware that security matters and security policy were still not formally on the ASEAN agenda.<sup>8</sup> It was not only the political momentum gained from the Cambodian undertaking and the conditions prevailing at the end of the Cold War that impelled discussion on specific security concerns, but the added impetus of the leaders summit, in 1992 in singapore.

Further momentum was provided by the growing importance of Asia and the pacific in the global economy leaders in the region became aware that regional instability could threaten that growth and could have global repercussions. At the same time, they recognised that rapid economic growth created interdependencies which could result in vulnerability especially because of reliance on Foreign investments and markets.

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<sup>8</sup> Pengiran Osman Bin Pengiran Hazi Patra, "The future course of the ARF," Strategic Analysis. September, 1996: p. 146

The Formation of the ASEAN Regional forum in Bangkok in 1994 (In a joint communique issued at the ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Bangkok, 22-23 July 1994) was therefore logical and can be seen as part of the overall process of regional development. The region had recognised the need to create such a multilateral security process and to provide a venue for the exchange, of views on matters which affect not only south-east Asian countries but also the other Asia-Pacific nations.

Planning the substance and structure of the Forum required two important exercises." The first was to determine its objectives, methodology, intellectual input and number of participants. The second was to decide on the style in which ARF meetings should be conducted."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> n.8 146

### 1996 JAKARTA ASEAN MEETING :

Surprisingly, the issue that dominated the deliberations during the recently concluded ASEAN meetings, the Annual Ministerial Meeting (AMM) of ASEAN foreign Ministers, ARF and the Post-Ministerial conference (PMC) meeting with dialogue partners, where India for the first time attended, were neither the comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) nor the nuclear issues, not even the potential flashpoint in the Asia-Pacific, viz., the South China sea dispute, but the military ruled isolationist state called Myanmar, and the emerging economic concerns of ASEAN.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, it reflects the distinctive style of ASEAN functioning, on the other, ASEAN's initiative in setting an agenda for the meetings based on what its current priorities and concerns are.

"The Jakarta ASEAN meetings mark a clear departure from the past and are significant because ASEAN's completion is likely to undergo a radical transformation as a result of a new trend that has been set in motion."<sup>11</sup> This is

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<sup>10</sup> Udai Bhanu Singh, "India and the ASEAN Regional Forum STRATEGIC ANALYSIS , JULY 1996. P. 584

<sup>11</sup> G.V.C Naidu - " India, ASEAN and the ARF". STRATEGIC ANALYSIS SEP. 96, P.852.

also symptomatic of the fact that south east Asia is in the throes of a new regional order.

### **THE EVOLUTION OF ARF**

In the post-second world war, multilateralism in regional security affairs found expression in a number of organizations such as the organisation of American states (OAS), the Arab League, and the organisation of African unity (OAU) that was geared primarily to the pacific settlement of intraregional disputes.<sup>12</sup> The Asia-pacific region was noticeably lacking in such regional frameworks. To a large extent, this reflected U.S policy preferences in the cold war period. As the dominant global institution builder and the strongest pacific military and economic power, the United states did not see multilateralism as a particularly necessary or desirable form of security institution in this region. American security objectives here were strongly oriented to ensuring the containment of the Soviet Union and China, which in turn required security arrangements with a collective defense function, rather than " inclusive" political institutions geared to the pacific settlement of intraregional conflicts. Thus, U.S regional security approach focused heavily on forging a network of alliances aimed

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<sup>12</sup> G.V.C. Naidu" - India's Role in South East Asia, Asian Survey, April 1994, p.108

at countering the perceived threat of communism, but these alliances were mostly bilateral in scope (with the limited exception of the tripartite ANZUS Treaty involving Australia, New Zealand and the United States).<sup>13</sup> Initial U.S. efforts to create a regionwide security structure were thwarted by the sheer diversity of security challenges in Southeast Asia versus the more direct Soviet and Chinese threat in Northeast Asia) facing the region's pro-western countries. In addition, serious limitations on the latter's military capabilities undermined the strategic coherence and deterrent value of any prospective.

NATO type Pacific alliance and diminished U.S. interest in developing them. Testifying to this was America's weak commitment to the short-lived South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), an eight-member defense arrangement that failed to make much impact on the region's defense arrangement that failed to make much impact on the region's security architecture. In contrast, the United States was able to establish a network of bilateral alliances involving Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines and the Republic of China. These bilateral arrangements promised greater U.S. control and flexibility in dealing with its

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<sup>13</sup> John Gerrard Ruggie, "Third Try at world order: America and Multilateralism after the cold war", Political science quarterly, no.4 Fall 1994. P. 556.

regional allies and reduced the need for multilateral systems; together they amounted to what Dulles termed as a " mutual security system. constituting/ a defensive bulwark for freedom in that part of the world. <sup>14</sup>

The birth of the ASEAN in 1967 marked the emergence of the first indigenous framework for multilateral political and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. ASEAN, however, fearful of provoking its Indochinese adversaries, chose initially to downplay its political/ Security functions. Until the end of the cold war, ASEAN remained an inward-looking and somewhat exclusionary subregional grouping with its members sharing a common suspicion of security arrangements with outside powers (even though all except Indonesia retained security ties with friendly Western powers).<sup>15</sup>

The end of the cold war led to a dramatic shift in the regional states' attitudes toward multilateralism for a number of reasons. first, it removes the

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<sup>14</sup> Akira Iriye, "The cold war in Asia. A Historical Introduction, Multilateral Activities in South East Asia P. 182, Prentice Hall, 1974

<sup>15</sup> n.14 p. 182



overarching security cleavage that had hitherto sustained the appeal of deterrence-based security strategies.

Second, multilateralism, is seen as a necessary "insurance policy" by policymakers anticipating a steady and marked decline in the U.S. regional military presence while the actual extent of the US military retrenchment is not significant, there countries to be a general perception of the relative decline of the United states in a regional security milieus marked by the rise of several competing centers of power. The fact that the U.S security umbrella can no longer be taken for granted has fuelled a search for alternative security strategies, involving those based on a multilateral approach.

Third, multilateralism has been viewed in some quarters as a desirable long-term alternative to balance- of -power security concept. These concepts, always regarded by their critics as conflict - aggravating and unreliable, <sup>16</sup> appeared to be particularly irrelevant and unhelpful at a time when the region's principal adversaries, such as the ASEAN states and Vietnam, Russia and Japan, and China and Russia were searching for a common ground to bury the cold war

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<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Wiseman, "Common Security in the Asia- Pacific Region", Pacific Review 5, no. 2 (1992), P. 182.

hatchet. Fourth, the dramatic success of a particular of security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE), in ending the cold war in Europe provided an initial impetus for some proposals for similar arrangements in the Asia-Pacific, despite the skepticism expressed by many regional countries about the feasibility of duplicating the CSCE here.

A final factor contributing to the perceived need for multilateralism is the growing economic and security interdependence between North-East Asian economies and South East Asia - problems such as the territorial disputes in the south China sea or the potential for regional hegemonism by China and Japan transcends subregional dimensions regional security has become more indivisible than ever before since developments in one segment of the region can seriously affect the security of the other. In this context, bilateral and subregional approaches are deemed inadequate for ensuring regional stability.

The advocacy of security multilateralism since the late 1980s has taken many forms. Among the numerous proposals and positions that have marked the security debate in the Asia - Pacific region are : <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Amitav Acharya, A New Regional order in South East Asia : ASEAN in the Post - Cold war Era, Adelphi paper no. 279 (London : International Institute

- Separate proposals made by the former soviet union (under Gorbachev) and Australia calling a new, broad - brush, macroregional security Institution to facilitate confidence building and conflict resolution within the region).
- A canadian initiative called the North Pacific cooperative security dialogue (NPCSD), which envisaged a subregional membership, and called for retention of bilateral security arrangements pending a gradual process of institutionalization addressed to both military and non-military threats.

The notion of "ad hoc" or "flexible" multilateralism preferred by Japan and the United States.<sup>18</sup> Essentially a reaction to the earlier proposals for a CSCE - type arrangements (it reflects U.S. opposition to the creation of any new security institution that might undermine the rationale for its existing alliances: this approach to multilateralism involved selective modes of cooperative action to deal with specific security problems by those most immediately affected by it.

An initiative by the ASEAN members to develop a region wide dialogue on security issues that would follow their annual multilateral consultations (called

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for strategic Studies, 1993) p. 168

<sup>18</sup> n. 17 p. 168

the ASEAN post - ministerial conferences, or ASEAN - PMC) on economic and political matters with a number of "dialogue partners".

The idea of the "enhanced - PMC" later developed into ARF, a multilateral security dialogue focusing on transparency and confidence building issues in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

## Chapter - II

### FORMATION OF ARF

"The participants of the ARF comprise the ASEAN member states, the observers, and consultative and dialogue partners of the ASEAN". Applications of the ARF have to be submitted to the ARF chairman. There are many countries waiting to join the the ARF. These include Mongolia, North Korea, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan : and even European countries like Britain and France<sup>1</sup>.

Earlier the participants of the ARF consisted of six ASEAN states (Indonesia Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philliphines and Brunei) ; the seven dialogue partners. (the US, European union, Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea and Newzealand); and the three observers (Papua New Guinea) Vietnam and Laos).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Russian not averse to ASEAN Pact", Asian Age, Uday Bhanu Singh, Quoted in "India and the ASEAN REGIONAL FORM" 2 August, 1995. Strategic Analysis, July 1996, p.580.

<sup>2</sup> The ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM : A concept paper commentary in Asian Wall Street Journal 1.

It is interesting that two key players in the region on whom attention is focused, North Korea and Taiwan continue to remain outside the ARF. The PRC has so far pre-empted Taiwan's membership. The remaining countries belonging to South East Asia - Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar are waiting to become members of the ASEAN.

Vietnam and Laos acceded to the Treaty of peace Amity and co-operation (1976) in 1993 but the latter has not pursued its case for full membership Cambodia seeks the membership of the ASEAN as well as the ARF and desired to attend well as the ARF and desired to attend the 1995 meeting in Brunei. Cambodia Foreign Minister Nordom sihivudh had stressed, that while his country's main objective is economic development, this could not come without security. Cambodia's Foreign minister announced that his country wants to become an ASEAN member by 1997<sup>3</sup>. MYanmar attended Bangkok meeting in 1995 as an observer.

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<sup>3</sup> "Cambodia asks ASEAN for preferential trade deal," Strategic Analysis, 30 July, 1996 p.580

Through the ARF claims for itself the status of sui generis organisation with no precedents to follow and which has to blaze its own trail, others say, that it has tried to copy the model of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe (CSCE) by engaging in constant dialogue with both China and Japan. That the ARF is not a military or security pact was classified by the ASEAN Secretary General Datuk Ajit Singh.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the classification was necessary because it has after been compared with the North Atlantic Treaty organisation (NATO).

The end of the cold war has also marked the beginning of a new debate across the Asia Pacific regarding the need to create a regional multilateral forum to deal with the political and security issues on the line of the Helsinki process in the form of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe. The Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, mooted the idea of an Asian version of CSCE, called conference on security and co-operation in Asia (CSCA)<sup>5</sup>. The

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<sup>4</sup> Shubha Singh, "An uneasy Association", 12 April, Pioneer p. 581.

<sup>5</sup> The Former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, was the first person to air viewson the Asia Pacific security by way of the Valdivostok Speech in 1986 in an Interview to Indonesian newspaper, Merdeka, in 1987 in speech at Krosnoyarsk in 1988. Contemporary Int.

ASEAN nations were reluctant to replicate the European example for a number of reasons : First, it was argued that politically, strategically, culturally, and economically Asia was different: second, that these countries were at Varied levels of political and Economic development; and finally the very idea of security differed vastly from country to country and region to region, and hence blind imitation of other experiences would not necessarily work ASEAN by then had evolved the concept of "comprehensive security" which took into consideration other facets of security too, such as economic, social, environmental, etc., as opposed to the European " Common security" approach where military power was the focal point"<sup>6</sup>.

Most Pacific Asian Countries felt the need to create a mechanism emanating from Asia.

With active inputs from the so called "Track" diplomacy and in response to a political atmosphere that had started becoming increasingly unpredictable and

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Relations G.V.C. Naidu. July 96: p.85.

<sup>6</sup> India, ASEAN and the ARF, Strategic Analysis G.V.C. Naidu. September, 1996 p.856.



uncertain, ASEAN came up with the ARF idea. The expediency was felt more strongly as a result of closure important American bases in the Phillipines in 1992. A fundamental shift in American political attitude and military strategy towards the Asia pacific, which were more amenable to multilaterlism, was another major impetus in the formation of ARF.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1993 ASEAN Ministerial meeting, it was decided to establish the ARF with membership including, in addition to ASEAN members and its dialogue partners, China, Laos, Papua, New Guinea, Russia and Vietnam. (which has since become the member of the ASEAN).

Although the first ARF meeting was held ing Jakarta in 1994, it was during the second ARF meeting held in Brunee in 1995 that certain concrete proposals were put forward by way of a "Concept paper" by far the only document that spells some details about the ARF's approach to addressing security problems.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> n.6 p., 856

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p., 857

There have also been some doubts about the geographical range of the ARF as far as its purview is concerned - whether it covered the entire Asia-Pacific is confined to South East Asia. By the 1996 ARF deliberations, it appears, that the whole of Asia-Pacific comes under the ARF's scope.

Since the ASEAN countries firmly believe in the concept of comprehensive security and because of the ASEAN's own experience, there is bound to be considerable differences of opinion between the west and the ASEAN with this in mind, it talks of an evolutionary approach of three stages for the ARF:

Promotion of confidence Building measures; Development of preventive diplomacy; and development of conflict resolution mechanisms. Thus, the ARF has set for itself modest goals to move in a gradualist fashion based primarily on ASEAN's experience of political and security co-operation. Two complementary approaches toward confidence building measures (CBMs) are mentioned<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p., 856

In the First approach, the ASEAN has succeeded in reducing tensions among its member states, prompting regional co-operation and creating a regional climate conducive to peace and prosperity without the implementation of explicit confidence - building measures, achieving conditions approximating those envisaged in the declaration of zone of peace, Freedom Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The South East Asia Nuclear weapons Free zone (SEANWFZ), are significant to regional peace and stability" - <sup>10</sup> and "ASEAN's wellz established practices of consultation and consensus have been significantly enhanced by the regular exchanges of high - level visits among ASEAN countries. This pattern of regular visits has effectively developed into preventive diplomacy channel". <sup>11</sup>

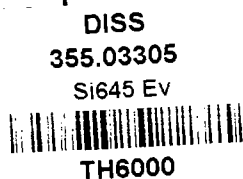
The second approaches is the implementation of concrete confidence - building measures". The ASEAN countries have prepared two lists of confidence building measures. The first list spells out measures which can be explored and implemented by ARF participants in the immediate future". <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> G.V. Naidu, "India, ASEAN and the ARF" Strategic Analysis September 1996, p. 857.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 857.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 857



The second list is an indicative list of other proposals which can be explored over the medium and long terms by ARF participants and also considered in the immediate future by the Track Two process. These list include possible preventive diplomacy and other measures.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the ARF's initial would be on CBMS and preventive diplomacy and gradually move towards conflict resolution.<sup>14</sup>

It was also agreed that the ARF is neither to be institutionalised nor will it have a secretariat in the near future and decisions would be made by consensus after careful and extensive consultations among member countries.<sup>15</sup> More importantly, it will progress at a "pace comfortable to all "participants.

In order to understand the ARF and its likely viability and future success, one has to keep in mind the way ASEAN has progressed over the years to

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<sup>13</sup> Haji Patra, "The Future course of the ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM," Disarmament 18 (2) 1995, P. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Asian Wall Street Journal, 22, July 1996, Strategic Analysis, September, 1996, p.150.

<sup>15</sup> G.V.C. Naidu, "India and ASEAN, Strategic Analysis, April 1996 p.58.

become one of the most respected and successful regional organisations in the Third World.

Planning the substance and structure of the forum required two important exercises. The first was to determine its objectives, methodology, intellectual inputs and a number of participants. The second was to decide on the style in which ARF meetings should be conducted.

That has been the main Work, undertaken since the first meeting. The forum is now in a position to consider how those tasks are to be undertaken. Discussions on the goals and expectations of the ARF over the last two years (1994-95). have tended to reflect some of the following:

- 1) "views converged on the need to find a means for consultations on regional political and security issues that would foster a habit of open dialogue, even when views differed on some issues, and that would encourage patterns of behaviour to reduce security risks."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Disarmament 18(2); 1995, Joint communiqué issued at the ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Singapore, on 20-21 May 1993.

- 2) In a Joint communiqué the Foreign Ministers noted and welcomed "ASEAN's increasingly central role in fostering political and security co-operation in South - East Asia and the Asia - Pacific region, through initiatives such as the inaugural meeting of the ARF"<sup>17</sup> They feel that ARF could become an effective consultative Asia-Pacific Forum for promoting open dialogue on political and security co-operation in the region. They considered that ASEAN should work together with ARF to bring about a more predictable and constructive pattern of relations in the Asia - Pacific region.
- 3) The ARF should ensure and preserve the current environment of peace, prosperity and co-operation in south - East Asia and the Asian - pacific region and keep the major powers constructively engaged there, notwithstanding the changes which have taken place since the end of the cold war.<sup>18</sup>
- 4) The ARF should adopt comprehensive approaches to security, taking into account not only military issues, but also political; economic social and

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<sup>17</sup> Joint Communiqué issued at the ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Bangkok, 22-23 July, 1994, Disarmament 18(2); 1995, p.151.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 151.

other challenges in the region.<sup>19</sup>

Basically, the actual intention of ASEAN member, was that the ARF should offer regional countries and other interested parties a multilateral forum where they could consult on regional political and security matters. Though the ARF was established primarily to assist the cause of regional peace and stability so that Economic growth could proceed. It was hoped that the process would encourage the idea of regular consultation as an important security aspect in the region.<sup>20</sup>

In implementing the decision of the 1992 summit to intensify internal dialogue on political and security matters by using the ASEAN - PMC, ASEAN envisaged a future "community of security interests in the region in which a culture of peace" would be fostered. It is important for ASEAN member countries to apply the concept of "open dialogue" and to continue working creatively with ARF participants and other regional states to design a pattern of relationship in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 153.

the Asia - Pacific region.<sup>21</sup>

In the region, matters of peace and stability have always been approached on the basis of respect for International law and norms, and peace has been achieved through regional co-operation at all levels.

The wide diversity of the Asia - Pacific region requires that even more because not all the ARF members are friendly neighbours and partners, some are also long time adversaries. In addition, the security concerns and the interests of member may differ. For the ARF to maintain a sense of security among its regional partners, "ASEAN members strongly feel that it should operate - as ASEAN does on consensus - building, co-operation, the principle of inclusiveness in terms of membership and in the matters under discussion, with pluralistic processes and at a gradual pace which suits everyone."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 154.

<sup>22</sup> n. 11, p. 857.



ASEAN cohesion as an association can be attributed to those working principles, which have contributed directly to the security of the sub region. By avoiding too many formal and legalistic requirements in its formation and dealings, ASEAN has been able to maintain sub-regional peace, stability and prosperity through confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy.<sup>23</sup>

It has fostered restraint in the way member deal with each other and has encouraged the observance of int. law and principles.

The commencement of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Bangkok in 1994 was therefore, logical and can be seen as part of the overall process of regional development. The region had recognised the need to create such a multilateral security process and to provide a venue for the exchange, of view's on matters which affect not only south - East Asian countries but also the other Asia - Pacific nations. The ARF is unique in the sense that it was initiated not by the major power but by the developing countries of ASEAN. Its membership span

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<sup>23</sup> Haji Patra - "Openness and the Regional approach to Disarmament". Disarmament September 1994, p. 153.

three continents, and three permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are members. That adds a certain weight to its regional efforts.

"When ASEAN conceived the idea of ARF, its objectives were broad based. The general feeling was that the Forum should not be seen as a response to any particular threat; real or perceived, nor should it exist for the purpose of identifying enemies.<sup>24</sup>

In that same spirit, it was not supposed to become a negotiating or decision - making body for any particular set of concerns or problems. Rather, it should be a process by means of which security could be sought among friends.

In the beginning, there were certain constraints on the ARF process, such as the political, economic and cultural diversity of the region. Additionally, no security structures existed which could be improved upon. Some observers were inclined to ask why ASEAN states should take up the challenge of designing a

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Richardson, "A step ahead on Asian Security" International Herald Tribune, 26 July, 1994.

regional security process was needed now, in the aftermath of the cold war, since the ASEAN countries, or atleast most of the South-East Asian states, had for quite a long time experienced uninterrupted peace stability and prosperity.<sup>25</sup>

The regional states are becoming more involved through business and trade, they hope to open their markets: Accomplishing that required ASEAN to deal directly with the major powers to attract their trade and investment and to keep them positively engaged in the region. It followed that major powers and countries with a large economic stake into the South East Asian region would need a guarantee that their interests would continue to be safeguarded. At the same time, ASEAN has to make sure that in engaging those powers, its regional interests were equally protected. Some, mechanisms to address mutual concerns were therefore, needed.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Reg gratton, "ARF is born, but will it be all bark and no bite," Reuters World Service, 29 July, 1994.

<sup>26</sup> The Salient Dimension, "In Kar D. Jackson and M. Hadi Sosastro, eds., ASEAN Security and Economic Development (Berkeley, CA : Institute of Asian Studies, University of California , 1984) p. 259.

While the constraints on the development of the Forum the small size as a group, the diversity of the region and the lack of existing structures, should not be underestimated, they are for less dominant than in the past.

### Chapter III

#### The Need For ARF

Despite ASEAN members, close cooperation in the political field related to security issues, the latest development in the region has promoted the members to attach great significance to the issue of late, the ASEAN member countries started to feel the need for a formal and exclusive framework for intra-ASEAN security consultation. "It was pointed out by a high ranking official of the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Thailand that the routine ASEAN senior officials Meetings (SOM) which took place there or four times a year would discuss a wide variety of political related subjects ranging from regional political situation to economic relationship between ASEAN and the third countries".<sup>1</sup> Security issues per se, would be singled out for attention only when dictated by circumstances. In the first special meeting of ASEAN senior officials (Special SOM) in Manila in June 1992.

ASEAN Foreign Policy, military and Intelligence establishments set down to discuss ways and means by which they could enhance their security

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Likhit Dhiravegin, "The Multilateralisation of Pacific - Asia. ASEAN DEFENCE JOURNAL, November, 1994, p.111

cooperation. But it fell short of this intended goals and the matter postponed to the second special meeting to be held in Bangkok in March 1994.<sup>2</sup>

As it was pointed out by the Thai Foreign Minister that, the focus of the special SOM is to bring to the awareness among the ASEAN members that:

"ASEAN security cooperation is necessary today not as an end in itself but as an instrumental means to ensure economic prosperity for the region" <sup>3</sup> In order to secure a sustainable economic growth, countries of the region need trust, understanding, a predictable pattern of political and security relationship, as well as, effect mechanism through which regional disputes could be resolved quickly and peacefully.

Two important questions were thus asked at the second special SOM meetings:

- 1) How (and how far) can Intra -ASEAN security cooperation in the field of Economics (Commerce and trade ) joint ventures could be strengthened.

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<sup>2</sup> n.1 p.111.

<sup>3</sup> J.N. Dixit, "ASEAN : A high priority area", THE HINDU 22 March, 1994.

- 2) How could ASEAN with the metamorphosis of the current security configuration cope within the Asia - Pacific regions? <sup>4</sup>

**A New Political Role for ASEAN in Regional Security :**

ASEAN has been an important force in the political stability of South East Asia, having provided a forum for resolving local problem internally and promoting better intra-regional relations. As a result, it also has been resilient against foreign interventions in the cold war era.

Considering the fact that ASEAN has worked effectively to deal with the regional affairs with rather flexible consultation processes, it is unlikely to transform abruptly into a bloc with coercive authority. More realistically, it will be a forum not only for cooperative response, when necessary, to intra-regional problems, but also for a coordinated stance, again only when called for, against external threats. It would, for example, strengthen its solidarity in response to what becomes of NAFTA ( the North America Free Trade Agreement) or the EU. Politically, however, ASEAN will probably continue for the time to be a loose unity because each member of the Association fully recognizes the political, social

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<sup>4</sup> n.1, p.111.

and cultural diversity in the region and respects its pragmatic partnership with others.<sup>5</sup>

ARF draws upon and extends those Very norms that have already committed the ASEAN members to self-inhibiting and peaceful conduct in interstate relations and facilitated its evolution toward a regional security community. A key element of this process is the Treaty of Amity and cooperation, ASEAN's chief normative framework for interstate behaviour. The first meeting of ARF held in Bangkok in July, 1994 saw agreement by the member nations to "endorse the purposes and principles of the Teaty" as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence building, preventive diplomacy and security cooperation.<sup>6</sup> In a dramatic concession to the principle of "inclusiveness" ASEAN, which had in the past been reluctant to let outside countries sign the Treaty, is now preparing

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<sup>5</sup> A Report of the Japanese Committee on outlook for a New Asia Multilateral Activities in South East Asia, 25 July 1994, Bangkok, 2. p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Lee Kin Chaw, "ASEAN has entered new phase in development," The straits Times 28 July, 1994 (Singapore)



a protocol that might enable them to declare their support or adherence to the Treaty's principles of co-operation".<sup>7</sup>

The stated aims of the ARF are predictably vague but clearly optimistic. These include a commitment" to work towards the strengthening and the enhancement of political and security cooperation within the region, as a means of ensuring lasting peace, stability, and prosperity for the region and its peoples." ARF's founders hope and expect that it " Would be in a position to make significant contribution to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region."<sup>8</sup>

To assess what it can do to strengthen regional security, it is important to keep in mind what ARF does not aspire to be. First, ARF is not intended to be an alliance or collective defence institution. while military cooperation such as meetings of senior defence officials and exchange of military information is envisaged, these activities are clearly geared to confidence building among the

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<sup>7</sup> Prime Minister Goh chok Tong of singapore. ARF statement : The first Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), "Multilateral Activities in south East Asia, 25 July 1994, Bangkok, 2. p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> n.7 p 185.

ARF members, rather than to developing a collective capability against any common enemy, Neither are the founders of the ARF developing a collective security arrangement in the strict sense of the term. A collective security framework provides that aggression by one member state against another would be punished through an automatic and collective response by all the other members of the grouping. Such a system requires commitments, resources, and capabilities, the ARF framework cannot realistically muster for the foreseeable future.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike in collective security or balance of power models of security cooperation, ARF relies largely on a political instrument.

The ARF through its largely constructive agenda, aims to contribute to region in three important ways:

- By promoting transparency in strategic intent and threat perception.

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<sup>9</sup> On collective security, Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "concerts, collective security, and the Future of Europe," International Security 16, summer 1991. p. 114.

- By building mutual trust and confidence with regard to military capabilities and deployments.
- By developing a "habit" of cooperation that will facilitate peaceful resolution of conflicts.<sup>10</sup>

ARF participants believe, that the forum would enable the countries of the Asia-Pacific region to foster the habit of constructive dialogue and consultations on political and security issues of common interest and concern. The ARF aims to contribute the efforts towards confidence building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia Pacific region. Consistent with the notion that peace is indivisible, the ARF explicitly recognizes that "developments in one part of the region could have an impact on the security of the region as a whole".<sup>11</sup>

The ARF is faced with the challenge of ensuring that its long term goals do not become a diversion from the need to resolve inter-state conflicts and address other non-traditional security issues in the region. A more basic questions

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<sup>10</sup> Gerold Segal and Barry Buzan, "Rethinking East Asian Security", Survival (1994), vol, 34, no.1 p. 189.

<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore Statement at the first meeting of the ASIAN Regional Forum, Bangkok, 25 July, 1995, Contemporary South East Asia p. 241.

in whether it is realistic for the ARF to aim at evolving its role from CBM (Confidence building measures) processes into a collective mechanism for conflict resolution.

The security order in the Asia - Pacific is presently in transition, or as Richard Barker of the East - West centre describes, "in suspension between a cold war framework that no longer applies and new approaches that are just being developed and cannot yet cope with major challenges."<sup>12</sup>

There are those who see a potential regional balance of power in their Pacific rim among China, Japan and the ASEAN as a result of long term changes in strategic and economic trends. Such symmetry could be maintained in part by the United States in return for greater participation in the Asian economies.<sup>13</sup> This would be an ambitious approach which the ASEAN might not be prepared to contemplate at this time. It could come as a function of future objective conditions. What is certain that the ASEAN's political weight will continue to

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<sup>12</sup> Richard W. Baker, "Sweeping Changes shape a New Pacific Asia, "in Asia Pacific Issues September 1995, p. 5

<sup>13</sup> Charmers Jonson and E.B. Keehn, "The pentagon's strategy, "Foreign Affairs, 47, no.4 (July/August 1995), p. 106.

increase as it expands its membership and sustains its economic growth. Some hope that, with the combination of the vietnamese armed, forces, the ASEAN's military strength as whole would be substantially increased and the ASEAN itself would be able to fill the security Vacuum in the region or atleast, be capable of maintaining the status quo.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, ASEAN's increased assumption of major role in the region has been associated with a process of consolidation. The integration of vietnam into ASEAN was seen as a major challenges to the region's efforts to promote lasting peace and prosperity.<sup>15</sup>

The Forum was held against the backdrop of in-depth transformations in the Asia-pacific strategic map.

East Asia has been the fastest runner in the global economic race. Infact, the Asia Pacific developing nations have been widely acclaimed as one of the

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<sup>14</sup> Hoang Anh Tuan, "what are the consequences of a new ASEAN member?" Business Times (Singapore), August 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Shared Destiny : Southeast Asia in the 21st Century Report of the ASEAN - Vietnam Study group,. Feb. 1993, p. 15.

locomotives for worldwide economic expansions in recent years on the other hand, however, major readjustments have also been under way in the regional strategic picture: The United States, Japan, China, Russia and ASEAN have all been in the process of projecting and redefining their respective roles in the forthcoming 21st century, Washington is pushing the concept of a "New Pacific Community"<sup>16</sup> with "Focus on bilateralism supplemented by multilateralism". Tokyo is pressing ahead with its strategy of a "Return to Asia on the back of Washington", in pursuit of carving a bigger political role for itself in the Asia-Pacific region while widening the scope of application of the Japan US security alliance. China has been looking for new ways to assure stability in its vicinity and the broader Asia-Pacific on the basis of the five principles of peaceful co-existence; Russia, after having drawn lessons from strategic imbalances in its external relations has shifted away from its earlier pro-Western stance to a "Double-headed Eagle strategy" in the hope of playing a constructive role in Asia-Pacific regional affairs, and last but not least, the expanded ASEAN has benefited much from greater self-confidence in boosting its weight through "checking and balancing the major powers" on its own initiative.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ding Kuisong - "ARF : Success Amid Challenges" Contemporary South East Asia, vol. 6 no.8, December 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p.3

Such a realignment of forces has not only compounded the regional strategic landscape, but also brought about some political uncertainty. Hardly regional "hot spots" not long ago, Korea, Taiwan, the Nansha Islands, have now cropped as topics of general interest.

Thus, something new surfaces on the Asia Pacific horizon, where rapid economic growth goes along with rising political frictions and dialogue co-exists with confrontation.

Three important features stood out at the third ARF meeting.

- 1) First, in the face of strong Western pressure, ASEAN insisted on its own position on matters related to the organization and Southeast Asian affairs, prior to the ARF meeting, a decision was made at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting to admit Laos and Cambodia as full participants next year and announce acceptance of Myanmar as an observer this year and a full participant before the year 2000. Thus Myanmar got its ARF membership automatically. At the ARF meeting in the course of exchange of views with the US - led Western participants; ASEAN resolutely opposed to the Western attempt to reject Myanmar's application for ARF participation

under the pretext of "the undesirable impact on regional stability" from human rights situation in Myanmar and stood its own stance of "constructive engagement with Myanmar" and its adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.<sup>18</sup>

- 2) Secondly, ASEAN resolutely safeguarded its own initiative on the ARF process. The "ASEAN approach" has characterized the ARF process, which shook off for the first time US dominance over political security discussions in the Asia - Pacific region. In this bid to call the tune for ARF, Washington has been pushing the multilateral security Forum simultaneously in southeast Asia and Northeast Asia and calling for an Asia-Pacific meeting of Defense Minister, while beefing up its forward military deployment in the region and strengthening bilateral security relations with its allies, clearly, Washington aims at building a multi-tiered, omni-directional security network favourable to itself.<sup>19</sup> In fact, prior to the Third ARF meeting, Washington made overtures to the parties concerned for turning the ARF into an "Asia-Pacific forum". As a counter measure to frustrate the US design, ASEAN officials and scholars have been

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<sup>18</sup> Xinhua, Tokyo, July 26, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> The Australian, 13, June, 1996.



working hard since the beginning of 1996 in stressing the necessity for the current ASEAN initiative over the ARF process. They expressed the hope of realizing a transition from "ASEAN concord to "Asia pacific concord" and have put forth number of principals for governing Asia pacific political security cooperation in the future. These principles include "Comprehensive security , interdependence economic development, state sovereignty ad territorial integrity, common consultations on human rights issues, mutual assistance and benefit, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs and resolution of conflicts through peaceful means.<sup>20</sup>

- 3) As for China, it has made major contributions toward plain sailing of the ARF process. In its capacity as a major Asia-pacific power and an important ARF member, China has all along been enthusiastic about upholding Asia - Pacific peace and stability China reaffirmed its commitment on the nuclear weapons issue and reiterated that the total ban on and elimination of all nuclear weapons should be the goal of all nations

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<sup>20</sup> Mohammed Jawhar bin Hassan, Deputy Director, Institute of Strategic and International Studies, paper presented at the Tenth Asia - pacific Rountable Beijing 5-6 , June 1996.

and thus pointed out the direction for the eventual solution of the nuclear problem.<sup>21</sup>

The ASEAN Jakarta meetings have also marked a new beginning vis-a-vis China. China, which for decades had been wary of any involvement in a multilateral organisation or Forum, has made a remarkable turnaround". China has since become a member of the ARF and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and at Jakarta meeting has become a dialogue partner of the ASEAN.<sup>22</sup> ASEAN can rightfully take much credit for bringing China into the regional multilateral dialogues.

The South China sea issue is an even more complicated matter. The overlapping claims of six countries (China, Brunei Darusalam, Malaysia, Phillipines, Vietnam and Taiwan) involve an irregularly shaped area of about 1-3 million square miles consisting of open seas and scattered land features.<sup>23</sup> ASEAN

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<sup>21</sup> n.20, p.5-6.

<sup>22</sup> A Report of the Japanese committee (on outlook for a New Asia Multilateral Activities in Southeast Asia, 25 July 1994, Bangkok, 2. p.34.

<sup>23</sup> South China Sea Reference Book, Research and Analysis Division, Strategic Planning and Policy Directorate, U.S. Pacific command, April 1996, p. 48.

is constrained by the fact that not all claimant states are the ASEAN members. This is the same reason being used by China in refusing to accede to the ASEAN's treaty of Amity and co-operation in Southeast Asia which establishes a mechanism for peaceful settlement of disputes. To overcome this situation, ASEAN recently endorsed the idea of concluding a regional code of conduct in the South China sea to incorporate certain principles which are supposed to govern the behaviour of all claimant states in the disputed area.<sup>24</sup> The regular exchange of views on the situation in the South China sea at the ASEAN Regional claimant and other concerned states on each other's peaceful intentions.

ASEAN countries do not want to forgo the economic opportunities a fast growing mega market like China would offer. According to world Bank estimates, China by 1995 had already emerged as the second largest economy, replacing Japan, and is expected to become the World's largest Economy by 2020. It would be observed if the ASEAN does not take into account these realities, especially in the light of geographical proximity and the presence of more than 20 odd million rich ethnic Chinese in South East Asia.

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<sup>24</sup> Joint communique of the 29th ASEAN Ministerial meeting, Jakarta, Indoneia, 20-21 July 1996 Contemporary Southeast Asia, vol. 18, No.3.

The economic success of the ASEAN countries will enhance their international standing and influence, which will continue to express through various fora such as APEC, the conference of the Non-Aligned Nations, the organization of the Islamic conference, the South commission, the commonwealth consultative commission and the ARF.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> n. 22 p. 34

## Chapter IV

### Problems and Prospects

Despite an enthusiastic start, the ARF faces a number of uncertainties and constraints. One likely source of problem concerns the ASEAN'S central role within the ARF. The ASEAN members leave no doubt as to who will dominate and set the pace of the ARF; in the words of the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Surin Pitsueevan, "ASEAN will always have the driver's seat." Although ASEAN promises to " recognize the concerns and interest of outside powers, including the four major powers (the United states, Japan, china and Russia) it clearly expects the latter to accept the ASEAN's leadership of the forum and the norms and principles that are specified by the ASEAN.<sup>1</sup>

But the ASEAN's hold over the pace and agenda setting processes in the ARF may prove divisive. ARF embodies the ASEAN's extremely cautious approach to institution building, including a preference for informal and ad-hoc consultations to formal and structural cooperation. From the very outset, the ASEAN members (particularly Singapore and Thailand), as well as , China,

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<sup>1</sup> Yang Razali Kassim ("Minister ASEAN will always have drivers seat in the Forum." Business Times, 25 July, 1994.

vietnam and Russia, have clearly stressed the need for a gradual, step-by-step approach in developing the ARF, one that establishes a "comfortable relationship among participants" before ambitious on ambitions initiatives. This position contrasts with that of some western members notably, Australia, and the United states who would like the ARF to develop quickly and adopt concrete measures.<sup>2</sup>

If the first ARF meeting is any indication, the ARF's ability to move beyond a consultative agenda and to address the region's myriad conflicts is by no means assured. Of the four major conflicts that attracted most attention at meeting, i.e. territorial claims in the south China sea, cambodia, Burma and North Korea, only the last item merited a mention in the chairman's final statement.

This prompted a comment by a Thai newspaper that "Despite blithe official pronouncements of the conviviality of the last three-hour meeting, it was obvious that the dialogue had exposed irreconcilable differences, especially on territorial disputes". Indicative of the differing priorities of ARF members and the resistance of some to quick movement was the fact that finalization of the statement

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<sup>2</sup> Ahirudin Attan and Lokman Mansor, " Thailand: Asean forum hailed as force for regional peace", Business Times 26 July, 1994. p. 186.

required" at least twelve attempts" after a debate on a host of specific proposals, especially from Australia and Canada, several items had to be dropped from the list of possible initiatives.<sup>3</sup> Among these were proposals for a regional security studies centre, establishing the practice of sending observers to military exercises, exchange of defense white papers, and creating a maritime information database. The final list of approved items to be subjected to " further study" included ideas on " confidence and security building nuclear nonproliferation, peacekeeping cooperation including the creation of a regional peacekeeping training centre, exchanges of non-classified military information, maritime security and preventive diplomacy." <sup>4</sup>

The ARF's contribution to preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution is constrained by another factor. As currently constituted, the ARF is not inclusive enough. It does not include parties to major regional conflict situations such as Taiwan (a spratly claimant) and North Korea. The united states seems opposed to the early inclusion of North Korea into the ARF framework. U.S. Assistant

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<sup>3</sup> n.2, p. 186

<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore  
"ASEAN : ARF will work if given the chance." Bangkok Post, 27  
July, 1994.

secretary of state winston lord responded to North Korea's reproted request (Pyongyang had apparently indicated a desire to join the ARF through the Australian Embassy in Bangkok) <sup>5</sup> for inclusion in ARF "interesting", but a little premature, insisting that North Korean membership was conditional upon a satisfactory resolution to the nuclear proliferation issues.<sup>6</sup>

Another important question about ARF's effectiveness concerns the relevance of ASEAN subregionally conceived norms in a larger and in many respects, more complex security arena. The "ASEAN way" of problem solving, which involves consultations and consensus and a habit of avoiding direct, public confrontation in the interest of the corporate solidarity, was developed when the threat of communist expansion served as a cementing factor for its otherwise divided membership.<sup>7</sup> It is doubtful whether these norms and practices (which relies heavily on interpersonal and informal ties withing the ASEAN grouping) can be successfully duplicated within a wider regional setting. Of particular concern

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<sup>5</sup> Business Times (Malaysia) 27 July, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> "North Korea not yet ready for security Forum, U.S. Says," 29 July, 1994. Japan Economic Newswire.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammed Ayoob, ASEAN and Regional Security, ed. Regional security in the Third world p. 221. (London: Croom Helm, 1986)



here is whether ARF is the appropriate framework for handling security issues in North East Asia; Thus, There have been suggestions for the creation of a subregional forum in North East Asia that would be more sensitive to security issues specific to that particular subregion. At the first ARF meeting, then south Korean foreign Minister Hon sung - Too argued, " countries in the North East Asian subregion are in need of a framework for security dialogue and cooperation", and the remaining vestige of the cold war structure warrants a Northeast Asia Security dialogue."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the ARF faces a significant challenge in security, meaningful support from its largest Asian member, China. China's hitherto opposition to multilateralism is particularly debilitating for the ARF. China sees multilateralism as a way for lesser regional actors to " gang up" against the chinese interests and objectives in the region. It is also suspicious that ARF may develop into a tool in the hands of the eastern powers for interfering in the domestic affairs of the Asian member states. Indicative of this is a warning by the chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, that " no attempts should be made to use confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy to resolve internal conflict or

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<sup>8</sup> Valerie lee, " US hails defence forum, warns Korea problem urgent ," Reuters world Service, 26 July. 1994.

problems of a country."<sup>9</sup> Beijing prefers bilateral solutions to the territorial dispute in the South China sea. It has also taken a particularly hardline stand against Taiwanese participation in any regional security discussions ( including Track-II fora such as CSCAP).

The Chinese position at the first meeting of ARF was particularly revealing. While the chinese foreign Minister stated, that "china does not have a single soldier stationed on foreign soil, nor does it have any military base abroad," this had the paradoxical in affirming Beijing's.

Hardline positions at the south China sea disputes since Qichen's assertion can only be valid if one considered china's stationing of troops on the spratly Islands as an " internal" military presence.<sup>10</sup>

China also successfully apposed a proposal that working groups be set up within the ARF framework to deal with specific issues in between ministerial

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Richardson, "A step ahead on Asian Security" International Herald Tribune, 26 July 1994.

<sup>10</sup> David Hague, "ASIAN : china flexes its muscles," Sydney Morning Herald, 28 July, 1994.

meetings . Indeed, china's rejection of a number of initiatives proposed by other ARF members prompted one media observer to comment that " china had taken control of the agenda and the other delegates, including the US, Russia and Japan, were forced to go along with the Beijing".<sup>11</sup>

These Questions about the effectiveness of ARF explain the continuing preference of many ARF members for bilateral, mechanisms for conflict managements. for example, the management of the recent North Korean proliferation crisis consisted of a series of bilateral exchanges between the United State and North Korea, North Korea and South Korea China and North Korea. Japan and South Korea and, atleast initially, Japan and North Korea".<sup>12</sup> Within ASEAN too, bilateral mechinism (such as joint border committees, between Indonesia and Malaysia and Thailand) continue to play a critical role in dealing with contentious territorial disputes. Obviously, multilateralism is not expected to replace these time tested bilateral mechanisms for regional conflict management.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Makabenta, " well before the conference, chinese diplomats in South-East Asian Capitals had called on the foreign ministers in their host countries to pass on Beijing's desire for the forum to reject any ambitious security agenda". Making Multilaterlism work. p.189.

<sup>12</sup> Gerold segal and Barry Buzan, "Rethinking East Asian Security", Survival (1994), p. 189

Based on the ASEAN experience the ARF planners feel that its P.M. Goh Chok Tong of Singapore must, as a first priority, concentrate on bringing all the ARF members together to engage in a constructive dialogue on regional security. The first step in the process should be for people to talk to each other frankly with a view to promoting understanding.<sup>13</sup> That will most probably last for a number of years to allow participants to become fully acquainted and confident with each other before moving on to more formal undertakings, the ASEAN's evolution in that manner has taken almost three decades. With ASEAN experience as a guide to the Forum, through discussion and consultation, will be able to create an atmosphere of openness and goodwill, confidence building, consensus and cooperation.<sup>14</sup> The task is not simple. Flexibility and accommodation may, in the beginning, compromise the substance. In the immediate stages, while the opportunity to resolve problems can never be ruled out, it is not anticipated that dialogues and consultation will lead necessarily to the resolution of major concerns. Rather, such discussion may act as a form of moral suasion for members

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<sup>13</sup> Haji Patra, Pengiran Osman Bin Pengiran in the "Future course of the ASEAN Regional Forum: openness and regional approach to disarmament". (18 (2) ; 1995 . p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong of Singapore statement at the first meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Bangkok, 25 July 1995 Contemporary South East Asia, December 1996, p. 247.

not to create problems among themselves. Elements of preventive diplomacy are inherent, in the process. The Forum may also serve as a warning system for potential issue or problems.<sup>15</sup>

The ARF chances of success appears to be good. That optimistic views stem mainly from the special momentum created following the end of the cold war. Asia pacific region can make its contribution to the new "united Nations thinking", especially in the resolution and prevention of conflict through peaceful means and its encouragement of global efforts by regional organisations to maintain international peace and security. <sup>16</sup> The ASEAN has established itself as a "community of security interests' through the application of quiet diplomacy to prevent numerous inter state conflict. Much has already been done in the area of preventive diplomacy and CBMS in the South East Asian region.

The size of the ARF membership could also determine its character. That is something current participants have to think through and address. In choosing the name, the ASEAN Regional Forum has avoided strict geographical

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<sup>15</sup> n.13 p. 153

<sup>16</sup> Richard W. Baker, "Sweeping changes shape a New Pacific Asia," in Asia Pacific issues September 1995, p.5.

delimitation in terms of membership eligibility careful consideration for the membership issue is to be taken into account, particularly, where it involves countries with potential interest in the security of the region.<sup>17</sup>

During the ARF - Senior official meetings (SOM) and the first meetings of the Forum in 1994, many proposals were put forward. a large quantity were military or defence related. many came from the developed countries and reflected the traditional wester approach to security, i.e. rapid movement to transparency measures in sensitive areas. <sup>18</sup> Various proposals reflected the specific security concerns of participants. Their immediate implementation should not necessarily serve as a benchmark of progress made at the Forum.

The proposal submitted included following measures : confidence building measures, preventive diplomacy, disarmament measures, peace keeping and maritime issues. These proposal under the aegis of the ARF might be arranged in terms of stages ranging from consensus - building and CBMs to preventive

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.5.

<sup>18</sup> The Straits Times, 23 July, 1994.

diplomacy measures.<sup>19</sup>One of the major challenges facing ASEAN countries is dispute management over certain territorial claims and overlapping exclusive economic zones. Direct bilateral negotiations are encouraged and preferred over other mode of settlement. In some cases, although claims are not completely withdrawn for domestic political reasons, some countries have decided not to actively pursue such claims. While contributing to a benign situation, this approach, on the other hand, fails in concluding a just settlement for lasting peace some observers felt that "sweeping internal problems under the carpet" could eventually threaten the ASEAN's solidarity.<sup>20</sup> These territorial disputes, include the dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia over the islands of Batu Puteh; between Indonesia and the Phillipines over the islands of Mianggas and the most serious of all, between the Phillipines and Malaysia over Sabah The south China sea issue is an even more complicated matter for dispute settlement. The overlapping claims of six countries (China, Brunei, Darussalam, Malaysia

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<sup>19</sup> n. 14, p. 247

<sup>20</sup> J. Soedjati Dijiwandono, "ASEAN solidarity more surface than substance", Jakarta Post, 27 July 1994, p.24.

Phillipines, Vietnam and Taiwan) involve an irregularly shaped areas of about 1.3 million square miles consisting of open seas and scattered land features.<sup>21</sup>

There are those who see a potential regional balance of power in the Pacific rim among China, Japan and the ASEAN as a result of long term changes in strategic and economic trends, such symmetry could be maintained in part by the United States in return for greater participation in the Asian Economies.<sup>22</sup> This would be an ambitious approach which ASEAN might not be prepared to contemplate at this time.

Several ASEAN countries have been articulating ideas on issues such as democracy and human rights, and on broader Asian Values, which often tend to be contrary to western perceptions, "it is for the first time that the ASEAN has firmly stood ground on Myanmar which has been ostracised because of its poor domestic political record".<sup>23</sup> Unlike the Americans and many Europeans who have

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<sup>21</sup> South China Sea Reference Book, Research and Analysis Division, Strategic Planning and Policy Directorate, U.S. Pacific command, April 1996 p. 103.

<sup>22</sup> Chalmers Johnson and E.B Keehn "The Pentagon's ossified strategy", Foreign Affairs 47, no.4 July/August 1995 p.106.

<sup>23</sup> "Towards a supergroup," Asiaweek, 7 February 1992, p. 24



been toying with the idea of imposing sanctions on military ruled Myanmar because of human rights violations and a lack of democracy. The ASEAN has made it quite clear that it would not only support any sanctions, but would also engage Myanmar in a big way by admitting it into the ARF and by elevating its status to that of an "observer" of ASEAN, and sooner than later offer membership of the Association. The US and the European union had to beat a retreat and fall in line with the ASEAN's views. It is a different matter whether the ASEAN privately would nudge Myanmar to undertake political reforms, and whether the military junta would oblige, the ASEAN or not.<sup>24</sup>

ASEAN's approach to addressing the regional political and security issues". The ARF particularly has come under severe criticism recently that its pace is too slow and that it has not even succeeded in evolving a common position on a number of serious security issues, most notably the Korean peninsula, Cina's recent attitude toward Taiwan, and the south China sea.<sup>25</sup> The ARF has been dubbed variously as "talk shop", gentlemen's golf club", etc. For those who wanted

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<sup>24</sup> Nusara Thaitawat and Nuktara Sawatawang "Burma Confirms ASEAN ambition", Sunday Post, 17, December, 1995, p.3

<sup>25</sup> Jusuf Wanandi, "ASEAN summit produces major results", ASEAN update, vo. 1/96, Jan-FEB. 1996, p.10

to see tangible results, the third ARF meeting at Jakarta have been a disappointment (Nevertheless since its Economic reforms began in 1991).

The ASEAN Jakarta meeting have also marked a new beginning vis-a-vis China. China which for decades had been wary of any involvement in a multilateral organisation or forum, has made a remarkable turnaround". China has since become a member of the ARF and the Asia - Pacific economic cooperation (APEC) and at the Jakarta meeting has become a dialogue, partner of ASEAN. ASEAN can rightfully take much credit for bringing China into the regional multilateral dialogues.

The ASEAN's engagement with China is a mutually beneficial policy. The ASEAN countries a fast economic opportunities a fast growing mega market like China would offer. <sup>26</sup> According to World Bank, estimates, China by 1995 had already emerged as the second largest economy, replacing Japan, and is expected to become the world's largest economy by 2020. It would be absurd if the ASEAN does not take into account these realities, especially in the light of

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<sup>26</sup> Dipankar Banerjee, "Shifting Ties : China, India and Myanmar," Business Times (Singapore), 26-27 October 1996, p.45

geographical proximity and the presence of more than 20 odd million rich ethnic Chinese in south East Asia. ASEAN seems to be pleased with the progress.

These indications only reinforce an ongoing process in which Asian countries have started expressing their impressions and beliefs about a number of concepts contradicting well known western definitions, which is broadly known as Asianisation of Asia.<sup>27</sup>

An interesting phenomenon which could further intensify this Asianisation process is the even increasing ties among the Asians themselves. A careful examination of emergent economic linkages within Asia reveals a qualitative and quantitative change in terms of trade among the Asian countries. "General global in inter-dependence notwithstanding, intra - Asian trade is one of the fastest growing in the world;<sup>28</sup> and Asian capital - surplus countries are pouring their investments into the neighbouring countries. The case of ASEAN investments in the neighbourhood in the last few years is remarkable.

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<sup>27</sup> G.V.C. Naidu - "India, ASEAN and the ARF", Strategic Analysis September, 1996, p. 164

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 164

The ARF is faced with three major challenges in the future.

- 1) Ever - intensifying contention for ARF leadership The increasing institutionalization of the ARF has entailed over mounting rivalry over ARF dominance. Bent on defending the fruits of independent diplomacy for successful checking and balancing the major power"<sup>29</sup> The ASEAN aims to maintain its unique position in the Asia-Pacific region through extending intra - the ASEAN principles enshrined in the Declaration of the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality (the Kuala Lumpur Declaration) of 1971, the treaty of Amity and cooperation in south east Asia of 1976, and the Declaration on a Nuclear free zone in South East Asia.<sup>30</sup>

While pressing for security dialogue in North East Asia, Washington beefed up bilateral security relations with its major allies in the Asia Pacific region by propping up Japan in north, befriending Australia in south and expanding the scope of military exercise in the pacific rim and focussing on the role of

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<sup>29</sup> Ding Kuisong - "ARF : Successes Amid Challengings", Contemporary Int. Relations, Vo. 6 no. 8 August 1996. p.8

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.8

multilateral military relations so as to acquire the de-facto driver's seat over the directions of Asia - Pacific security dialogue.

Meanwhile, depending on its economic clout, Japan is striving for a major political role through giving impetus to the ARF process, constraining China, checking Russia and entering Korea. Russia and the European union are also taking the initiative to expand their influence.

Up to this moment, ASEAN has played a constructive role in providing the orientation for the ARF. However, its own weakness predetermines its inability to shake off the impact of rivalry among the big players. From a long range view, the contention for the ARF leadership will surely intensify.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Ever - Intensifying contention over the concept of security

Despite the fact, that the ARF has taken "comprehensive security" as the basic concept for security dialogue, confrontation still exists over the contents of the term. The debate is focussed on this vital questions. dialogue on as an equal footing or interference in the internal affairs of other nations? peaceful coexistence or power politics?

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<sup>31</sup> Qian qichen, Chines Foreign Minister, speech at the Third ARF Meeting, The People's Daily 24, July, 1996,

On the Myanmar issue, China gave prominence to the fact, that the internal affairs of a given nation do not pose a major threat to regional security and argued, that other nations should not impose their will on that nation or try to apply sanctions on it under the pretext of "defending regional security."<sup>32</sup>

#### Ever - intensifying contention over ARF's Future Direction

The ARF constitutes the only formal organisation in the Asia Pacific region for discussion of regional security issues. It has made positive contribution towards regional peace stability. The third ARF meeting indicates that all Asia - Pacific nations hope to advance the ARF process.<sup>33</sup> In the field of security cooperation, America and its allies are now pressing for other idea one is enlargement of the political / security functions for the APEC.

Overall, despite the contention for leadership and differences over its future direction, the third ARF meeting held in Jakarta on 23 July 1996 reflected vividly the determination and aspiration of the member nations, the developing nations in particular, for defense of regional peace and stability, sustenance of high

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<sup>32</sup> Xinhua, Tokya, 26 July, 1996

<sup>33</sup> The Peoples's Daily, 27 April, 1996

economic growth, exploration and improvement of regional mechanism for security dialogue and cooperation along with deepening political/security dialogue, the ARF will certainly contribute towards, the evolution of a new strategic order in the Asia- Pacific region in the days ahead.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Xinhua Tokyo, 24 July 1994.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

In order to understand the ARF and its likely viability and future success one has to keep in mind the way ASEAN has progressed over the year to become one of the most respected and successful regional organisations in the third world.

The ARF is supposed to help and preserve the environment of peace, prosperity and cooperation in South -East Asia and the Asia - pacific region through constructive engagement.

The ARF would like to adopt comprehensive approaches to security, taking into account, not only military issues but also political, economic, social and other challenges in the region.

When the idea of the ARF was mooted, its objectives were broad based. The general feeling was that the forum should not become a negotiating or decision making body for any particular set of concerns or problems. In the beginning, there were certain constraints on the ARF process, such as the political, economic and cultural diversity of the region.



The stated aims of the ARF are predictably vague but clearly optimistic. These include a commitment to work towards the strengthening and the enhancement of political and security cooperation. Founding members of the ARF hope that it would be in a position to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence - building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia - Pacific region.

The ARF explicitly recognizes, that development in one part of the region could have an impact on the security of the region as a whole.

As for China, it has made major contributions towards the smooth sailing of the ARF. As a major Asia - Pacific power and an important ARF member, China may like to work for Asia - Pacific peace and stability.

The ARF is faced with major challenges. The likely source of problem is ASEAN's. Central role within the ARF. Despite strong Western pressure, the ASEAN insisted on its decisions related to the organization of the Southeast Asian affairs. This was evident from the fact, that the ASEAN was resolutely opposed to the Western attempt to get Myanmar's application for inclusion in the ARF rejected. ASEAN stood by its own stance of "constructive engagement with

Myanmar", and its adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. Similarly, on the question of India's admission to the ARF the ASEAN also won its point by going against oppositions from America and Japan.

The ARF's contribution to preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, is constrained by another factor. As currently constituted the ARF is not inclusive enough. It does not include parties to major regional conflict situations such as Taiwan (a spartly claimant) and North Korea.

Despite all the constraints, with the ASEAN experience as a guide the Forum through discussion and consultation, will be able to create an atmosphere of openness and goodwill, conducive to confidence - building, consensus and cooperation.

The ARF has come under severe criticism recently, by US, Japan, EU, that its pace is too slow and tha it has not even succeeded in evolving a common position on various security issues, most notably the Korean peninsula, China's recent attitude toward Taiwan, and South China sea.

Given the uncertainties and limitations facing the ARF, multilateralism is not the answer to the region's post cold war security challenges. However, there are no viable alternatives to the ARF in the region's current security climate.

The ARF has deliberately adopted the ASEAN's gradualist, step - by step approach. It may not have achieved concrete results so far in terms of resolving regional conflicts, but that should not be a major cause for concern.

It would be too much to expect the ARF to resolve various tricky issues, such as the South China sea, in such a short time, or for that matter tackle other concerns such as the Korean peninsula or the sino-Taiwan standoff.

The future of the ARF is very much in line with the ASEAN thinking. To ASEAN members, the ASEAN Regional Forum is an evolving process. The informality of the Forum avoids overly institutional approaches which limit the options of the participants and promote dogmatic attitudes. The participants should be given opportunity to talk over issues and potential problems frankly and without confrontation. The Forum will have a chance, in the long run, to fulfil the needs of its participants for a long - term regional security process.

The region needs a permanent forum to facilitate consultative processes, promote confidence - building measures, and whenever necessary, set up the machinery to investigate disputes. This implies of course, constant dialogue and interaction so that members acquire a better appreciation of each other's security concerns.

Despite the contention for leadership and differences over its future direction, the various meetings which the ARF held reflected vividly the determination and aspirations of the member nations, the developing nations in particular, for defence of regional peace and stability, sustenance of high economic growth, exploration and improvement of regional mechanism for security dialogue and cooperation. Along with deepening political, security dialogue, the ARF will certainly contribute toward the evolution of a new strategic order in Asia - pacific region in the days ahead.

The major goal of the ARF is to discourage the use of force by its member states to settle disputes, it does not make any provision for common action to punish an act of aggression. The ARF is not intended to be an alliance or collective defence institution, rather it is a Forum for discussion.

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