

**US ROLE IN ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM DURING BUSH  
ADMINISTRATION**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the Award of the Degree of  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

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**2008**



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Date: JULY 21st, 2008

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation entitled "US ROLE IN ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM DURING BUSH ADMINISTRATION" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree to this university or any other university.


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*Dedicated*

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to my

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*Parents*

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## Acknowledgements:

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*I take great pride in acknowledging my humble gratitude to my respected supervisor, Dr. Chinatmani Mahapatra, for the scholarly guidance, encouragement, and moral support. I would like to thank him especially for suggesting the topic of my dissertation and going through it and making valuable suggestions and insightful comments, without which this precious work of my life would not have been completed. I am very fortunate to be under his blessings for all the formative years of my life. He has been helping me personally in all sphere of my academic endeavor. His constructive feedback, inputs, and suggestions helped me not only to enhance the quality of my work but also overall modification of my personality. Also, I would like to express my humble gratitude to the chairperson and all others faculty members of Center for Canadian, US, and Latin American Studies, School of International Studies for their ever supportive attitude to any proposal of student, right from time of selection course to the end of dissertation.*

*I am especially thankful to the distinguished faculties of American Studies Program in my center Prof. Christopher S. Raj, Dr. K.P. Vijyalakshmi, and Dr. Saleem Kidwai for their unselfish and intellectual support.*

*I am deeply indebted to the support staff of my center, Central Library of Jawaharlal Nehru University, the library of Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis, the library of Sparu House, and the library of American Information and Resource Center, New Delhi for their cooperation.*

*This scholastic research attempt would not have been possible without the encouragement of my parents and other family members. They all contributed in shaping my personality in one form and or other. I am*



*extremely grateful to my parents for their unfailing moral support during the entire course of my study. I express my gratitude, love, admiration to my family through this work.*

*I express my appreciation to my friends, seniors and juniors, who have supported me both at the academic as well as emotional level. I am particularly obliged to two of my friends Abhijit Sarkar and Priyadarshini Panda for their immense support and confidence in me. Both of them acted as a strong support base without which completion of this piece of work would not have been possible. I wish to express my sincere thanks to my seniors for their love and affection, which was a source of inspiration for me to complete this work. I am also especially thankful to my roommate Subir Dey for sharing knowledge and having good conversation with me on the areas related to my topic.*

*Last my thanks are to all those people who provided encouragement and extended their immense support in completing this work in their own way. Their impact and influence have some reflections on this work.*

*For all the errors and omissions in this research work I am solely to be held responsible.*

*Kaustav Padmapati*

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## PREFACE:

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The ASEAN Regional Forum, a relatively young organization in the field of international security, is an important mechanism in maintenance of Asia-Pacific security and stability. Having ASEAN countries as its core, the ARF also includes established powers, emerging powers, and small states holding the common identity of being ASEAN's dialogue partners. It is an important governmental forum for multilateral security dialogue and cooperation in Asia-Pacific region. It reflects the convergence of certain strategic interests of the member countries. Moreover, it attracts global attention as a desirable mechanism for discussion of multilateral security issues in the post-Cold War era.

The continuing political uncertainty in the Asia-Pacific region following the end of the Cold War provided the rationale for the formation of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994. With the end of the bipolar world structure, there was a general belief among countries in the region that it was necessary to proceed with multilateral security dialogue. At first, created as a security institution for the Asia-Pacific region, the ARF original aim was to facilitate constructive dialogue among its members. But soon it expanded its goal and today it is an active force in the management of regional conflicts. The ARF is based partly on ASEAN's model of cooperative security.

The ARF is the first of its kind encompassing the whole Asia Pacific region. It brings together such diverse players as the United States, China, Russia, Japan, Australia, India and European Union in the sub-category of major powers as well as emerging activists. What is more astonishing is that the sub-group consists of countries that do not share a common political ideology. The ARF's stated purpose is liberal i.e. to ameliorate security tensions among its members through confidence building, transparency, preventive diplomacy, and conflict management. However, the analysts argue that the ARF's real utility is to help institutionalize a stable Asia-Pacific balance of power by committing the

major powers –the United States, China and Japan – to regional processes in their security policies.

Now the Asia-Pacific region is going through a period of economic and political transformation. It is accepted by most of the international experts that only the United States has the strategic weight, economic strength, and political clout to exercise leadership in the Asia-Pacific region. For the United States, the Asia-Pacific has turned into a most potentially lucrative regional market for traded goods and services. The Asia-Pacific has also become the “laboratory” for the US post-cold war foreign and national security strategy.

The United States is firmly engaged in the Asia-Pacific region to shape the course of events not only in Southeast Asia but also in the entire region. Security dialogues and confidence-building measures with the members of ASEAN and active participation in ARF are among many ways the United States has been seeking to enhance politico-military ties with allies and friends in the region. The ARF has proven to be an effective forum for dialogue on a wide range of issues and challenges. The United States believes that the ARF, along with complementary institutions, can make an increasingly valuable contribution to meeting security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. Although some analysts and writers are critical of the US role in the ARF and in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States is still an important player to face the realities of a more assertive Japan and an increasingly powerful China. A careful analysis of the United States in the ARF is thus a significant theme of research.

This work has been planned to focus on the US role during the formation the ARF after the end of the Cold War. Then, I have tried to cover the US involvement and participation in the organization covering the period 2001 to 2007. Analysis of US-China critical relationship and its impact on the ARF is another important theme of this work.

Chapter-I throws light on the theoretical and conceptual framework of regionalism in Asia-Pacific region and a relative description of evaluation of regional cooperative mechanism.

The end of Cold War left the Asia-Pacific region searching for a new organizing principle for security. Various political uncertainties emerged in the region which continues to trouble even today. The end of the Cold War also marked the beginning of a new debate across the Asia-Pacific region regarding the need to create a regional multilateral forum to deal with political and security-related issues. The ARF mainly emerged during the new environment and changes that appeared just after the end of the Cold War. Chapter-II describes the conditions and environment that led to the formation of ARF. In the post-Cold War era some countries of the Asia-Pacific region regarded that region's security was contingent upon the US involvement in the ARF. Therefore, in this chapter I have tried to make a systematic analysis of factors responsible for the US role in the formation of the ARF.

The Chapter-III discusses the US role and its participation in the organization in the period covering from 2001 to 2007. During this period the main issues which both ARF and the US have placed on their agenda are piracy and maritime security, small arms trafficking, and fight against terrorism. Bush administration's policy towards Southeast Asia is another area of focus. The Chapter also throws light on theoretical conflict between "multilateralism" and "U.S alliance system" which in the future can affect its participation in the organization.

In the Asia Pacific region China is considered to be a potential challenger to the United States. Both the countries share a critical relationship in the twenty first century. As the ARF is the only security forum where both the countries enjoy confidence, most of the international experts agree that active cooperation and participation of the United States and China is essential for the success and relevance of the organization. The Chapter IV discusses the US-China critical relationship and how it can effect the functioning of ARF.

Today, the United States engages the Asia-Pacific region at the global, regional, and bilateral levels. There are various economic, strategic, political, and geostrategic reasons which compel the United States to remain engaged in the region. It has recognized the ARF's central security role as a premier regional and political security forum in the Asia-Pacific region. The US role is considered to be a critical factor in the functioning of the ARF. In conclusion, I have tried to focus on US involvement in the Asia Pacific region and vice-versa. I have tried to find out the utility of the ARF to the United States to play a significant role in the Asia-Pacific region.

The methodology of the study is descriptive and analytical research. The chapter which deals with Asia-Pacific regionalism is based on historical-analytical method of research and an examination of conceptual frameworks related to regionalism. The study referred to both primary and secondary sources of information and data. The primary sources include available reports of the US Department of state, statements by presidents and other executive officials, policy pronouncements, documents related to ARF summits, statements by executives of different member countries of ARF etc. The secondary sources include books, journal articles, newspapers reports and magazine articles and relevant materials available in the internet.

Kaustav Padmapati

20/07/2008

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<b>AALCC:</b>	Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee
<b>AAMO:</b>	Asian Association of Management Organizations
<b>ADB:</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AFTA:</b>	ASEAN Free-Trade Area
<b>AMM:</b>	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting
<b>ANZUS:</b>	Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty
<b>APEC:</b>	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
<b>ARF:</b>	ASEAN Regional Forum
<b>ASA:</b>	Association of Southeast Asia
<b>ASEAN:</b>	Association of South East Asian Nations
<b>ASEM:</b>	Asia-Europe Meeting
<b>CENTO:</b>	Central Treaty Organization
<b>CSC:</b>	Council for Security Cooperation
<b>CSCA:</b>	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia
<b>CSIS:</b>	Center for Strategic and International Studies
<b>EAEG:</b>	East Asian Economic Group
<b>EAEC:</b>	East Asian Economic Caucus
<b>EAS:</b>	East Asian Summit
<b>EGM:</b>	ARF Experts' Group Meeting



<b>ERORA:</b>	Eastern Regional Organizations for Public Administration
<b>ECAFE:</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Far East
<b>ESCAP:</b>	UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
<b>ECSC:</b>	European Conference on Security and Cooperation
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>FDI:</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>GATT:</b>	General Agreement on Tariff and Trade
<b>IORA:</b>	Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>IMF:</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IMO:</b>	International Maritime Organisation
<b>ISIS:</b>	ASEAN Institutes of strategic and International studies
<b>KEDO:</b>	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
<b>LDC:</b>	Less Developed Countries
<b>MDC:</b>	More Developed Countries
<b>NAFTA:</b>	North American Free-Trade Agreement
<b>NATO:</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO:</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations.
<b>NIEs:</b>	Newly Industrializing Economies
<b>NSS:</b>	National Security Strategy
<b>OAS</b>	Organizations of American States
<b>OECD:</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

<b>OPTD:</b>	Organisation for Pacific Trade and Development
<b>PAAC:</b>	Pacific and Asian Affairs Council
<b>PACOM:</b>	US Pacific Command
<b>PAFTA:</b>	Pacific Free-Trade Area
<b>PAFTAD:</b>	Pacific Trade & Development Conference
<b>PBDC:</b>	Pacific Basin Development Council
<b>PBEC:</b>	Pacific Basin Economic Council
<b>PECC:</b>	Pacific Economic Cooperation Council
<b>PMC:</b>	ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference
<b>PRC:</b>	People's Republic of China
<b>QDR:</b>	Quadrennial Defense Review
<b>SAARC:</b>	South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation
<b>SEATO:</b>	South East Asia Treaty Organization
<b>SEZ:</b>	Special Economic Zones
<b>SPC:</b>	South Pacific Commission
<b>SPF:</b>	South Pacific Forum
<b>TAC:</b>	Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia
<b>TNC:</b>	Transnational Corporations
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations
<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of Mass Destruction
<b>WTO:</b>	World Trade Organisation
<b>ZOPFAN:</b>	ASEAN's Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## **Chapter-I**

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# **Regionalism in Asia-Pacific**

## CHAPTER-I

The year 1994 was considered to be a milestone in the history of Asia-Pacific regionalism because the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the first multilateral security institution encompassing the whole Asia-Pacific region, came in to existence. The ARF is the first of its kind that brings together such diverse players such as the United States, China, Russia, Japan, India, and European Union in the sub-category of major powers as well as emerging activists. The ARF is also one of the rare examples of a multilateral institution in which the weak provided the leadership over the strong<sup>1</sup>. It is basically an ASEAN attempt to expand to the wider region its approach to co-operative security.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are the most prominent existing regional organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. Among them, the ARF is considered to be an important mechanism in maintenance of Asia-Pacific security and stability. It is an important governmental forum for multilateral security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF's stated purpose is liberal i.e. to ameliorate security tension among its members through confidence-building, transparency, preventive diplomacy, and conflict management. However, the main purpose of the ARF is to maintain a stable Asia-Pacific balance of power by committing the major powers of the region.

Strong intra-regional linkages and cooperation have made the Asia-Pacific region one of the most challenging areas of research. Since the late 1960's but most importantly since the end of the Cold War, the Asia-Pacific region has staged important experiments in regional multilateral cooperation. The first phase of that experiment involved cooperation among the non-communist states of Southeast Asia which led to the formation of ASEAN. The second phase which basically started after the end of the Cold War was marked by the emergence of regional security and economic dialogues and

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<sup>1</sup> Acharya, Amitav (2003), *Regionalism and Multilateralism: Essays on Cooperative Security in the Asia-Pacific*, London, New York, Beijing, Eastern University Press.

other institutions encompassing the wider Asia-Pacific region. It included the formation of APEC and the ARF. These organizations played a prominent role in the development and evolution of Asia-Pacific regionalism.

Before discussing the theoretical and conceptual framework of Asia-Pacific regionalism and evaluating the regional cooperative mechanism in Asia-Pacific region, it is essential to define certain terms like “Asia-Pacific region”, “regionalism,” etc.

### **Asia-Pacific Region:**

The Asia-Pacific region is a highly diverse region. Therefore, the Asia-Pacific region cannot be defined in an exact manner as is the case with other regions of the world. Of all the criteria for defining the Asia-Pacific region most important are:

- a) motivation or common interest to create a prosperous, stable, secure, and peaceful community of nations in the Asia-Pacific region.
- b) geographical criterion which suggests that in terms of substance, Pacific Rim most appropriately defines the region.

According to A. Hasnan Habib, an expert of Asia-Pacific region, there are four possible definitions of the Asia-Pacific region using the geographical criterion.<sup>2</sup> They are as follows:-

- 1) The broad or classical definition of Asia comprising five sub-regions. They are Russia and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Southwest Asia, and East Asia plus the Pacific Ocean. This vast region consists of 46 Asian states and over 30,000 islands.
- 2) The narrower or modern definition of Asia which consists of three sub-regions i.e. Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Ocean.
- 3) The Pacific part of Asia which only comprises Southeast Asia and East Asia.

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<sup>2</sup> Habib, A. Hasnan (2004), “Defining the “Asia Pacific Region”, *The Indonesian quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp 302-308.

- 4) The Pacific Rim, comprising nations bordering the Pacific Ocean and island countries situated in it. This definition leaves only Southeast Asia and East Asia as components of the wider Asia-Pacific region which includes all countries on the North and South American continent as well as the Oceania Sub-Region. APEC and the ARF are recognized as two “core” organizations for economic and security cooperation in this region.

It is very difficult to define Asia and Pacific in political, economic or cultural terms. Glenn D. Hook in his discourse on the Asia-Pacific region mentioned that Asia-Pacific while embracing the geographical span of the region, appellations “Asia” and “Pacific” is more a political than a geographical concept with a degree of fuzziness as to region’s boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Then in the words of Ryuhei Hastuse: “Unlike East Asia which is a historical as well as geographical concept, the Asia-Pacific is an economic concept lacking historical depth and geographical legitimacy.”<sup>4</sup> “Asia-Pacific is relatively a new concept centering mostly on economic activities. Actually after the end of the Cold War and the last decade of twentieth century the concept of Asia-Pacific gained popularity.

The term Asia-Pacific is now widely used by economists, journalists, and business professionals, though it is often unclear which countries are referred to. For the purpose of Asia-Pacific regionalism the Asia-Pacific region should be defined in the broad fashion so as to include the littoral states of the Pacific North, Central and North America, the islands of the South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South, Southwest, and Southeast Asia. The Pacific is the largest ocean and Asia is the largest and most populated continent in the world. Together, the two cover more than half of the globe’s surface and population. However, Asia-Pacific by no means represents a group of homogeneous economic and political system. In economic diversity the region includes some of the highest (the United States) and lowest (Nepal) per capita incomes in the world, some of the fastest and slowest growing countries and some of the largest and

<sup>3</sup> Palmer, Norman D, (1991), *The New Regionalism in Asia and the Pacific*, Canada and the United States, Lexington books.

<sup>4</sup> Hastuse, Ryuhi, (1998), “Regionalism in East Asia and Asia-Pacific,” Yamamoto Yashinobu (editor) *Globalism, Regionalism & Nationalism :Asia in search of its Role in 21’st Century*, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, p 116

tinest economies (the United States and Nauru). In political sphere, the region displays wide diversity; it includes old style communist dictatorship (North Korea), new style market communism (China and Vietnam), democratic capitalist countries (the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), authoritarian capitalist countries (Singapore and Indonesia) democratic socialist country with mixed economy (India) and democratizing capitalist countries (Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines). In cultural diversity Asia-Pacific region is the home to wide variety of languages, religions, ethnic groupings, and nationalities. The region also includes seven of the most populous countries in the world namely China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Russia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

This huge region is getting so much attention because of the economic dynamism it is displaying. The changing pattern of production, trade, and investment in accordance with the changing comparative advantage in the region has seen one tier of countries fueling the economies of another tier, there by resulting in deeper integration. Japan is considered to be the epicenter of the Asian region. Japan has become a highly developed country challenging US leadership in a number of industries. The next stage, where the manufacturing activity was relocated was the Newly Industrialized Economies (NIE) such as Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. The NIE's have become the most successful economies in the world with sustained growth rates of 7 to 8 percent over long periods, doubling the size of their gross national product each decade. Behind the NIE's the four member countries of ASEAN – Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines showed consistently good economic performance during the period 1992 to 1996, which was matched by very few developing countries of the world. But their good performance was hit by Asian financial crisis in 1997. These diverse and expanding production, trade, and investment linkages have been important ingredients in the growth of the Asia-Pacific as a dynamic region.<sup>5</sup> Most of the Asia-Pacific countries have chosen an export growth model and therefore trade has an important role to play in each country's economic development. Trade among these countries, moreover, has also significantly

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<sup>5</sup> Satynor, Yana (2001), "Trends in Trading Patterns of Asia-Pacific," Dharan Dasani, MD (ed.), *Asia's Role in Global Politics*, Center for Asian & European Studies, Japan, SBS Publishers & Distributors Pvt Ltd, p 211

promoted the development of the region as a whole. During the last two decades spectacular growth of the Asia-Pacific region has received global attention and admiration.

### **Regionalism:**

Regionalism is basically the expression of regional consciousness that develops from a sense of identity among states situated in a given geographical area which motivates them to mutually cooperate in one or another mode to attain common goals, satisfy common needs or to solve political, military, and other practical problems. Regionalism also refers to the political structures that both reflect and shape the strategies of governments, business corporations and variety of nongovernmental organizations, and social movements. The concept is defined differently by different scholars and foreign policy experts. One of the most comprehensive definition of regionalism can be found in the words of Kanishka Jayasuriya, who states: "Regionalism is a set of cognitive practices shaped by language and political discourse, which through the creation of concepts, metaphors, analogies determine how the region is defined, these serve to define the actors who are included within the region and thereby enable the emergence of a regional entity and identity."<sup>6</sup>

Regionalism is considered to be a middle-range approach of responding to international problems with unilateralism on one side and universalism on the other. Unilateralism simply means policy of making unilateral action regardless of outside support. It is a tendency of nation to conduct their foreign affairs individualistically, characterized by minimal consultation and involvement with other nation. Universalism on the other hand advocates a collective action which asserts the benefits of participation from as many parties possible. Regionalism is deemed to be an alternative to nationalism and globalization. In most cases unilateral actions and universal efforts are incapable of resolving interstate problems or conflicts. Thus, the regionalist argues that the pragmatic

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<sup>6</sup> Jayasuriya, Kanishka (1994), "Singapore: The Politics of Regional Definition," *Pacific Review*, Vol. 7, No.4, pp:411-420.



solutions are most likely to be found at the regional level. Regionalism can be a terminal condition where the evolution is from competitive nationalism and inward-looking thinking to the development of outward looking, albeit competitive interstate relations. In other sense it means existence of a sense of community.<sup>7</sup>

Andrew Hurrell talks about five elements of regionalism: 1) regionalization 2) regional awareness 3) regional interstate cooperation 4) state-promoted regional integration and 5) regional cohesion. Regionalism is a mental or physical orientation towards forming a regional identity predicted on the assumption that such an identity would led to further regionalization which in turn would promote the peace and welfare for the people living in the region. Regionalization means creation of regional identity, closer cooperation, and integration. Therefore, we can find two fold definitions of regionalism: first, regionalism can be defined in the strict sense as an ideology or slogan. Secondly, regionalization can be defined in broad sense relating to spontaneous regional formation, regional cooperation, intentional regional integration, and the formation of the regional identity. It is in the sense regionalism refers to a vision of solidarity which also has historical examples. Regionalization is basically a concept of analysis centering on regional formation in some spheres, with or without ideological conformity. For example: empires, economic unions, free trade areas, trading blocs, etc. In contrast, regionalism in essence refers to a vision of regional solidarity, which also has historical examples, although they may not in practice have been supported by all people in the region. Ideas of European integration, ASEAN, etc are example of regionalism.

Regions are shaped by economic and social processes of regionalization and by structures of regionalism. Whenever regionalism appears in real politics and economics, it is by definition proposed with reference to a specific region. To some extent, the size of the “region” determines the definition and content of the regionalism. Corresponding to the size of the region we can find four types of regionalism a) mega regionalism b) macro regionalism c) meso regionalism d) micro regionalism. Again the four types of

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<sup>7</sup> Kapoor, Ashok (2003), *Regional Security Structure in Asia*, London, Routledge Curzon, Taylor & Francis Group.

regionalism are based on eight factors 1) the number of actors 2) the stage of economic development 3) leadership 4) production relationship 5) cultural identity 6) the level of regionalization and integration 7) institutional formality 8) ideology and slogan<sup>8</sup>.

APEC covering the Asia-Pacific region came within the scope of mega regionalism. Mega regionalism itself is also part of the process of globalization of the world economy, which promotes capital, goods, services, and information flows. Both APEC and the ARF are considered to be two important organizations which developed corresponding to Asia-Pacific regionalism. However, it is the ARF that has been described as a milestone in the process of evolution of the Asia-Pacific regionalism.

### **Asia-Pacific Regionalism:**

Unlike Europe, the Asia-Pacific regionalism is a recent phenomenon. Historically and up until mid-1950, only the western nations have been in the centre of international organizations, creating leagues, organizations, and pacts among themselves on the European continent. African and oriental nations, on the contrary, tended to be situated in and defined on the periphery of European organizations. However, after World War II and more conspicuously in 1960s and thereafter, Asian nations have started to establish their own associations and groups.

The Asia-Pacific regionalism can be understood as a response to globalization of the political and economic structures within which region and states are embedded. The whole region is really vast or mega region where regionalism was conspicuously underdeveloped in the past for various historical, cultural, economic, and other reasons. It was mainly cultural dissimilarities and heterogeneity that prevented any institutionalized effort for building regional cooperation in the region. It is basically the common politico-strategic and economic interests of the region that have played a determining role in the evolving process of the Asia-Pacific regionalism in more recent times.

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<sup>8</sup> See Hastsuse, Ryuhi (1998), "Regionalism in East Asia and Asia-Pacific," Yamamoto Yashinobu (edit) *Globalism, Regionalism & Nationalism –Asia in search of its Role in 21'st Century*, Massachusetts,p Blackwell Publishers, pp 108-110.

The Asia-Pacific regionalism is mainly confined to four major regions - East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Southwest Pacific, and Oceania. In all four regions we can see the signs of growing new linkages among nationalism, regionalism, and internationalism. In the words of Norman D. Palmer:

“All the regions provide unexpectedly well stock laboratories for a study of three of the most significant trends in the contemporary world: the simultaneous upsurge of manifestations of nationalism, sometimes in extreme and virulent forms, the growing interdependence of the global economy and other dimensions of internationalism, and a new burst of regional cooperation both outward looking and inward turning.<sup>9</sup>”

Historically speaking, the Asia-Pacific regionalism emerging today reflects intensive search for regional identity in this diverse region. What makes the Asia-Pacific regionalism an important topic for discussion? What explains regionalism in a region full of conflicts and mutual antipathy is worth examining.

According to Majid Tehranian, regionalism in international affairs owes itself fundamentally to two main push and pull factors. On one hand regional organizations are expression of a desire for economic, political, and cultural cooperation. On the other hand, they are defensive measures against perceived domination of the region by a country from the outside world.<sup>10</sup> The history of Asia-Pacific regionalism is no different. To some extent, regionalism in the Asia-Pacific was the product of the Cold War. The ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty), South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) were the direct offspring of the Cold War politics. During the Cold War the whole Asia-Pacific region was mainly under the US nuclear umbrella. Fear of Japanese or Chinese hegemony continued to motivate the less powerful Asian states to support a US military and economic presence in the region. During Cold war the US grand strategy was the containment of communist bloc. Therefore, US bilateral defense treaties with Japan and Taiwan and a multilateral treaty with SEATO provided a

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<sup>9</sup> See Palmer, Norman D (1991) *The New Regionalism in Asia and the Pacific*, Canada and the United States, Lexington books.

<sup>10</sup> See Tehranian, Majid (1999), *Asian Peace Security and Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Honolulu, Starling Press.

cordon sanitaire around the non-communist bloc. SEATO was formed in 1954 to respond to the French defeat in Vietnam. It was mainly focused on Southeast Asia. As a part of the grand containment strategy SEATO linked up with the ANZUS, Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But SEATO had a very short life and it ceased to have its relevance after the beginning of a change in relation between the United States and the PRC in the early 70's.

Occidental and oriental efforts to establish mechanisms for regional cooperation in Asia-Pacific region continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s, generating a host of regional organizations of various kinds.<sup>11</sup> The Colombo plan and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) were one of the early examples of regional formation. Both these organizations had Asia-wide membership and were quite comprehensive in scope. The first Asian intergovernmental organization the Colombo Plan, which came into existence in 1950, was the off-shoots of Western efforts at brining about regional cooperation. The Colombo Plan has grown from a seven Commonwealth nations grouping into an international organization of 24 countries. It adopted a multilateral approach by identifying the common problems of its member states. On the basis of a UN initiative, the ECAFE was established in Shanghai, China on 28 March 1947. The location of its headquarters relocated to Bangkok, Thailand in 1949, and the name was changed in 1977 to the Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific (ESCAP), reflecting both economic and social aspects of development and the geographic location of its members. The ESCAP has grown from 10 to 60 member and associate member countries, representing some 60 percent of the world's population, or 3.5 billion people. Its membership ranges from small Pacific island countries such as Nauru, to the most populous countries of the world, China and India.

Important Asian countries like India and Japan also made attempts to create regional formations. Asian Legal Consultative Committee of 1956, which subsequently expanded and became Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, and the Afro-Asian Rural

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<sup>11</sup> Mahapatra, Chintamani (1990), *American Role in the Origin & Growth of ASEAN*, New Delhi, ABC Publishing House

Reconstruction Organization of 1962 were products of Indian efforts. Japan played a prominent role in the formation of number of regional organizations like Asian Productivity organization which was set up in 1961, the Asian Parliamentarians' Union set up in 1965, and Asian Development Bank (ADB) founded in 1966. The Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) established in 1961 and Maphilindo set up in 1963 carried more political significance of Asia-Pacific regional cooperation. Not many of these regional organizations, however, stand the test of time. The other organizations, which came into being during 1950's and 1960's like Eastern Regional Organizations for Public Administration (ERORA) and the Asian Association of Management Organizations (AAMO), were mainly professional or business organizations.

The recent Asia-Pacific regionalism can be characterized as "new regionalism." It basically emerged during 1960's or 1970's. Norman D. Palmer said that new regionalism was wide spread and did not concentrate in Europe only as was the case of old regionalism. The new regionalism gave the Asia-Pacific states meaningful and increasingly important mediatory linkages and institutions between their own countries and the outside world. It offered more understandable and more available channels for necessary cooperation. The first wave of new regionalism brought into being comprehensive regional arrangements in the area like Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN), South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the South Pacific Forum (SPF).

ASEAN emerged at a time when the major post-war wider regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States, the Organizations of American States (OAS), and the organization of African unity were in decline. ASEAN was formed in 1967, basically set up to encourage economic, social, and cultural cooperation; it evolved as a tightly knit anti-communist group, effective mainly in security matters. ASEAN adopted a model of security cooperation based on comprehensive and cooperative security. The main objectives of ASEAN was to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development of the region, to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance, to ensure the stability of Southeast Asia, and to maintain close cooperation with existing

regional organizations with similar aims. ASEAN espoused the principle of regional identity and autonomy, rejecting a military alliance approach and tried to limit the scope for great-power intervention in regional security affairs. It focused on confidence building, dialogue, and conflict avoidance rather than dispute resolution. With ASEAN's subsequent longevity and role in reducing and managing conflicts made it one of the most successful experiments in regionalism outside of the European Union.<sup>12</sup>

SAARC came into existence in 1985 due to an initiative taken by Bangladesh. SAARC is a regional organization in South Asia consisting of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives. Recently Afghanistan joined this grouping. However, it is not as successful as ASEAN. Due to the continuing hostilities between India and Pakistan, the organization has not achieved much in the field of regional cooperation.

In 1971, the SPF was set-up. It has been playing a significant role in promoting Asia-Pacific regionalism. It was first formed by Australia, the Cook Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Tonga, and Western Samoa. The Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Island, Tuvalu and Vanuatu joined later. The important achievements of the SPF are establishment of South Pacific Bureau of Economic Cooperation (1973), signing of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (1980), and the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty and a Fisheries Treaty with the United States in 1987.

### **Post Cold-War Asia-Pacific Regionalism:-**

End of the Cold war introduced a new era in international affairs characterized by shifts from national to global capitalism, from bipolarity to multipolarity, and from nationalism to regionalism. The old assumptions that shaped the political security relations among the Asia-Pacific countries during the Cold War period had undergone a

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<sup>12</sup> See Achariya, Amitav (2003), *Regionalism and Multilateralism – Essays on Cooperative Security in the Asia-Pacific*, London, New York, Beijing, Eastern University Press

sea change with end of it. Cold War logic for alliance formation did not fit in the Asia-Pacific as the ground realities were completely different from the one prevailing in the Western countries. Like in Europe, in the Asia-Pacific region too, the end of Cold War weakened the solidarity formed in response to a commonly perceived threat. During the time of the Cold War cooperative security was the key word in the Asia-Pacific strategic framework. Therefore, super power especially the involvement of the United States was considered indispensable for the multilateral security cooperation. But in the post-Cold War period this concept was renovated in view of two basic premises:-

- 1) minimum interference of external great powers
- 2) multilateral approach towards security cooperation.

In the post-Cold War world, security became a less of a military-based attribute. Therefore, the Asia-Pacific countries made a cooperative effort to chart out regional policies. One of the important themes of Asia-Pacific regionalism in the post-Cold War period was the maintenance of a stable system of deterrence against any nuclear threat. Because of various factors like the vast size of the region, the diversity of the interests of its states, the relatively local nature of their security concerns, and lack cohesion across the region as a whole, any kind of comprehensive security structure appeared inappropriate. Hence the cooperative approach became sub-regional mainly through the established bodies for co-operation like ASEAN. In addition, new security threats emerged in the forms of nationalist aspirations, ethnic conflicts, and localized animosities in some parts of the region. Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) addressing these issues became prominent in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, the main uncertainty facing the region was related to the creation of a new equilibrium between the United States and Asian powers like China and Japan and the entire Asia-Pacific region. Cooperative security became a key word in the Asia-Pacific strategic framework. Therefore, organizations emphasizing on “cooperative security” involving all the major countries of Pacific region came in to being during this phase. During this phase, countries of the region gave more emphasis on formation of

institutions with a loosely structured framework rather than on alliance formation and signing military pacts.

The second wave of new regionalism started in the post-Cold War period. This time new regionalism was market-driven instead of politically-driven and the function of new regionalism was to deal with economic uncertainties and to promote economic confidence among nations. Number of international economic changes in early 1990's like the transition to market economies in several Asian states, a change in North-South<sup>13</sup> relations, globalization and opening-up, and fear of emergence of exclusive economic blocs were mainly responsible for the emergence of the market-driven new regionalism. According to Richard Solomon, the economic and political transformation of the Pacific countries has led to the unique outward-looking regionalism.

“Open regionalism” also appeared during this phase. “Open regionalism” represented one of the earliest principles agreed upon the founding of an Asia-Pacific community. The term's origin can be traced back to discussions about regional economic co-operation in late 1970's. “Open regionalism” involved regional economic integration without discrimination against economies outside the region.<sup>14</sup>

A clear manifestation of the second wave new regionalism was the formation of North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA) and APEC. It also reflected the gradual shift on the focus of the world geo-political balance from traditional Euro-centric view to the Asia-Pacific. As a consequence of these developments, the Asia-Pacific became the new focus of international diplomacy. Moreover, these developments were fuelled by the remarkable economic performances of the Asia-Pacific countries in the past decades.<sup>15</sup>

Two main organizations that came into existence during this phase are APEC and the ARF. Formation of the APEC set a new pattern of economic regionalism in the Asia-Pacific. Its formation could be considered as the most noteworthy initiative. It was

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<sup>13</sup> North referred to economically-developed countries of the West, while South signified developing countries of Asia.

<sup>14</sup> Capie, David and Evans, Paul (2002), *The Asia-Pacific Security*, Lexicon, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.

<sup>15</sup> See Palmer, Norman D (1991), *The New Regionalism in Asia and Pacific*, Lexington, pp 50-54.



different from the earlier initiatives in two respects: first, the overriding substantive content of this arrangement was to liberalize the economies of its members. Secondly, the arrangements included developed and developing economies under the same forum. APEC's commitment to trade liberalization was premised on support for a multilateral system. APEC adopted every characteristics of an open outward-looking regional association.

During the early 1990's new multilateral structures emerged in the Asia-Pacific region. Various proposals came from number of countries to establish a new multilateral security organization in the region. But most East Asian leaders rejected a European model of cooperation because it was related to overtly structured and complex form of multilateralism. They preferred a flexible and informal arrangement whereby the level of institutionalization could be kept to a minimum. Post-Cold War multilateral security cooperation, therefore, appeared to be dependent on an extension of the ASEAN model to the wider region. First ASEAN's initiative of multilateralism came in the form of Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971. In the post-Cold War era the ASEAN states, led by Singapore as chair of Standing Committee, brought about an increase in multilateral security cooperation by forming the ARF.<sup>16</sup>

The ARF was established as a multilateral discussion group focusing on dialogue and confidence-building measures as a first step of cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific. Today, the ARF has emerged as the only security forum in Asia-Pacific region that brings together all the major powers of the region. Having, 26 countries as members, the Forum's members comprise more than half of the world's population. The ARF has rejected any form of collective defense and because of its initiative multilateral discussions are for the first time being held on regional problems and security matters. ASEAN has promoted within the ARF its own practices of self-restraint and consensus building and favored an informal security dialogue over confidence-building measures. The ARF lessen feeling of suspicion and provides a regional opportunity to discuss

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<sup>16</sup> Emmers, Ralf, "Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific-Evolution of Concepts and Practices," Tan, See Seng and Achariya, Amitav (ed.) (2004), *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, Armonk, New York, London and England, An East Gate Book. pp 15-16

different views on security and integrate isolated countries, including North Korea, into the regional security system.

In addition to APEC and the ARF, other important organizations that came into existence during post-Cold War period in the Asia-Pacific region included Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Closer Economic Relations-Trade Agreement between Australia and New Zealand (CER), Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORA), Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), and Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC).

### **Economic Regionalism in Asia-Pacific:**

The Asia-Pacific has been the only major region of the world that has not developed inter-governmental institutions in economic field. It can be explained by the central role of market forces in driving the region's dynamic growth performances. Economic interdependence in the Asia-Pacific has followed largely from the activities of the private sector with active support and cooperation of governments. This region has experienced intense trade conflicts in the past notably between the United States and Japan. The process of integration has become very complicated due to the association of the United States in major organizations operating in the Pacific Rim.

In spite of these problems we can see various initiatives and arrangements of economic cooperation in this region. Important economic cooperation can be seen in the form of APEC, the Southeast Asian Growth Triangle (Singapore, Johore-Malaysia, Riau-Indonesia), the Baht Economic Zone (Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos), the Yellow Sea Economic Ring (Korea and North China), the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), the initiative of the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) by Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir, development projects of Tumen River Area of North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia, Magnolia, and voices for the "Japan Sea" Ring. All these

developments were considered to be part of the global trend towards economic regionalism in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>17</sup>

Ideas of Asia-Pacific economic cooperation began to emerge only in mid 1960's and found their more elaborate expression in the 1970's. For example: realizing the significance of economic cooperation in the region, Japan convened a series of yearly Ministerial Conferences for Economic Development of South East Asia (SEAMCED) beginning in 1966. Security division during the Cold War period profoundly shaped the course of economic development in the Asia-Pacific region. During that period some models for the regional cooperation had been presented. The first model was the concept of a free trade agreement. Another model was the so-called Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Most of the regional institutions that appeared in the late 1950's and early 1960's were largely influenced by the newly-established European market model. By the mid sixties more than half of the contracting parties to the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) were part of a regional bloc. The GATT-based multilateral trading system provided a framework within which Asia-Pacific economies flourished.

In that period Japan was assuming new role in the Asia-Pacific region. However, Japanese conservatives convinced themselves that Japan needed to look firmly to the West, both politically and economically. A concept of a Pacific Free Trade Area (PAFTA) was advanced by Professor Kiyoshi Kojima, a Japanese economist, in 1965, which attracted a good deal of regional attention. PAFTA was to consist of the five developed economies namely Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. It was quite unusual proposal – an anticommunist Japanese-Anglo Saxon club that excluded much of Asia and gave Japan privileged access to Western markets. This proposal was followed by several attempts at regional cooperation by Southeast Asian countries. Prominent among them are the following: Pacific Trade and Development Conference (PAFTAD) held in 1967, ASEAN and the Pacific Basin Economic

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<sup>17</sup> See Hastsuse, Ryuhi, (1998), "Regionalism in East Asia and Asia-Pacific" Yamamoto Yashinobu *Globalism, Regionalism & Nationalism –Asia in search of its Role in 21'st Century*, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers, p16

Community, and the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC) which was formed in May 1968. But all these organizations were basically intended for economic cooperation and consultation not for economic integration.

The idea of an Organization for Pacific Trade and Development (OPTD), similar to OECD in Europe, developed during 1970's. The idea was credited to Sir John Crawford of Australia and Dr. Saburo Okita of Japan. Although the concept was never realized, in 1979, Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira proposed the Pacific Basin Cooperation Concept as a common policy for the Asia Pacific. The ideas of economic cooperation and regional integration in Asia-Pacific region had been thoroughly surveyed especially among academics of PAFTAD. But they failed to gain political support of the regional countries. Therefore, the main challenge for the founding fathers of Asia-Pacific regional cooperation was how to develop a structure for consultation which could accommodate the great diversity of the region. In 1980, the Pacific Community Seminar was held in Canberra, Australia. Academics and businessmen from 11 Pacific basin countries participated, leading to the establishment of the non-governmental Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC).

The emergence of a new international division of labor in eighties was also one phenomenal development in the global economy. This new international division of labor played a crucial role in the integration of the Asia-Pacific. During that time third model of economic cooperation was introduced – “the ASEAN model.” Based on the experience of ASEAN, the PECC put more emphasis on the “process” rather than the establishment of the institutional structure of regional cooperation. Concepts like “North-South” cooperation emerged and more attention was paid to strengthening it. The concept North-South cooperation was based on international division of labor and optimal use of it. The PECC basically focused on the confidence-building measures through formal and informal dialogue on the practical rather than desirable goals.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kikuchi, Tsutomu (1998), *Regional Cooperation in Asia-Pacific*, Singh Jasjit (ed.), *Cooperative Peace in Asia*, Institute of Defense Studies and Strategic Analysis, New Delhi.

The end of cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about a completely new economic structure in world. The forces of global capitalism, economic liberalization, and globalization become prominent. Transnational Corporations (TNC) mainly from North America and Europe followed by increasing number of Asian partners paved the way for a global economy. The collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe and their new market orientation in Asia signaled the triumph of globalism over nationalism. End of bio-polar structure introduced a new world political environment in which the United States became the sole superpower who could lead the global forces towards their goal of capitalist hegemony<sup>19</sup>. Responding to the potential threats of a single hegemon, regional grouping also took a new turn.

At that time Asia too was not free from the new regionalist impulses. Number of non-governmental Asia-Pacific organizations that consist of academics, businessmen, and public figures appeared at the end of Cold War. Prominent among them was the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council which parallels the membership of APEC. Under the leadership of Australia and Japan the idea of economic cooperation took shape to establish an exclusively East Asian and South-Pacific regional organization to defend the region against possible domination by the European Union (EU) and the US-Canada free trade agreement. But the United States and Canada objected to these arrangements which led to the formation of a more inclusive and open regional association. Thus, APEC was formed in 1989 to bring the vast region into an organization of regional economic cooperation. APEC is still providing opportunities for close region-wide communications and consultations among governments involved in economic cooperation and integration. A concept of an East Asian Economic Group (EAEG) was advanced in December 1990; however, not implemented. ASEAN reached agreement on creating the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) in October 1991.

Although various steps were taken for economic cooperation in the region, it was argued that it should be used as an instrument rather than an objective in the Asia-Pacific

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<sup>19</sup> Tehranian, Majid (1999), *Asian Peace Security and Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Honolulu, Starling Press.

region. For example – the ASEAN countries have chosen to co-operate on relatively less contentious economic issues, the main intention being to look for a different structure of intra-regional relationship. The most basic conflict within APEC is between the more-developed countries (MDC) and the less-developed countries (LDC). While the United States and its advanced allies have tried to establish a higher organizations with firm rules and objectives towards a more integrated national economy, the LDC's wish to maintain APEC as loose consultative forum while keeping their options open with respect to objectives and deadline. However, APEC countries agreed that the developed countries in the scheme would liberalize investment and trade fully by 2010 and that the developing countries would follow suit by 2020.

If we compare the regional organizations of the Asia-Pacific region to their Western counterparts, they are not so successful in achievement of regional goals and objectives. The most important shortcoming is to identify the common interests among the countries of the region. ASEAN, APEC and the ARF have not yet evolved into institutional manifestations of a security community, in comparison to NATO in the post-Cold War period.

In the Asia-Pacific region we may identify at least five distinctively different sets of state interests. First, the advanced industrial states the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand want to see regional integration advance quickly without much protection for the infant industries of Asia. Second, Japan stands at the forefront of rich developed countries of Asia. It is the only Asian country which belongs to the rich country's club – G8 and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In third place we can mention the original Asian Tigers – South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. They have high per capita income and about 7%-8% of growth rate in the period 2001 to 2007. Fourth, the ASEAN countries have established themselves as a pressure group in the Asia-Pacific region through innovating 'ASEAN Way' of politics and establishing their own ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). Finally, China and India, both are emerging as economic giants in the Asian region. Both the

countries are also playing important role in the security issues of the region.<sup>20</sup> Bringing all these countries under one single framework and process is the most difficult task facing the entire region. However, major organizations of the region like ASEAN, APEC, and the ARF have potential to use proper mechanisms facilitating healthy interactions among the major powers of the Asia-Pacific region, which would give a right direction to Asia-Pacific regionalism.

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<sup>20</sup> See Tehranian, Majid (1999), *Asian Peace Security and Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Honolulu, Starling Press.

## **Chapter-II**

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### **Formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum**

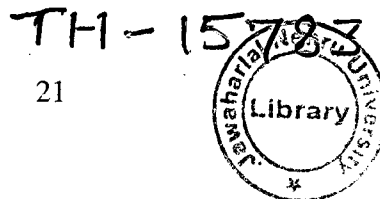


## CHAPTER-II

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is the first multilateral security organization covering the Asia-Pacific region. In 1994, the ASEAN along with other countries of the Asia-Pacific region launched the ARF to bring about a more predictable and constructive pattern of relations in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF was founded explicitly to address political and security issues and to expand the dialogue beyond Southeast Asia. Now its participants includes Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Canada, China, the EU, India, Indonesia, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, East Timor, the United States, and Vietnam. The diversity of its membership and the broad geographical span makes the ARF a unique organization amid the emerging uncertainties of the post-Cold War era.

The ARF mainly emerged during the new environment and changes that appeared after the end of the Cold War. According to the realist thinkers, the ARF was regarded by ASEAN as an instrument for ensuring a continued US involvement in the region and to encourage China to practice good international behavior. The end of Cold War left the Asia-Pacific region searching for a new organizing principle for security. Various political uncertainties emerged in the region that continue to trouble even today like tensions in the Taiwan straits, uncertainty on the Korean Peninsula, confrontation in the South China Sea, India-Pakistan hostility in South Asia as well as ongoing territorial and maritime disputes, armed insurgencies, and ethnic strife in various parts of the region. So, it was increasingly clear in the post-Cold War period that the Asia-Pacific region needed security structures in order to manage developing regional tensions. It also led to a dramatic shift in the regional states attitude towards 'multilateralism'. Asian countries unlike Europe had no multilateral security framework during the Cold War. During that time, Asian countries did not share a common threat which was a pre-condition for creating collective defense institutions like NATO.

Before the arrival of the ARF the regional multilateral security machinery in the Asia-Pacific region was underdeveloped. The security cooperation was limited in the



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region. To undermine the various regional threats among the states there was no regional security mechanism. The Asian States were mutually suspicious of the military intentions of other states within the region. APEC was the only genuinely inclusive regional multilateral instrument that existed before the formation of the ARF; however, it was economic in nature. Security multilateralism was confined to two sub-regional organizations namely ASEAN and the South Pacific Forum (SPF). ASEAN and the SPF, while prepared to tackle security-related issues, had until 1994 confined their attention to sub-regional problems only. But due to the changes and uncertainties in the post-Cold War period, the Asia Pacific region recognized the need to create a multilateral process and to provide a venue for the exchange of views on security matters that affected not only Southeast Asian countries but also the other Asia-Pacific nations too. From 1980's onwards a number of trends began to affect this position: the sense of uncertainty engendered by a shifting balance of power, as the United States and the Soviet Union's power decreased and Chinese and Japanese influence began to increase, the change in attitude towards Vietnam, and increased arms spending as a result of high economic growth in the region. These trends required a shift in security policies. In these backgrounds two types of proposals emerged: the use of arms control and confidence-building measures and the establishment of a security regional forum. The countries in the region were not interested in military or defense-based organization rather they opted to create a loose form of security institution. Therefore, in the early 1990's thinking had rapidly developed in the Southeast-Asian region to establish a new organization for security dialogue and to expand ASEAN to include all Southeast Asian states. All these developments materialized as the ARF. The ARF represented a bold experiment in regionalism geared to addressing the uncertainties and anxieties associated with the post-Cold War security scenario in the Asia-Pacific region. It was created to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern, and to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Post-Cold War Security Environment:-**

The inter-governmental ARF and the non-governmental Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific are multilateral processes that tried to cope with developments in the post-Cold War era in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>1</sup> Realist thinkers like Michael Leifer drew attention on how the great power politics dominated regional order that led to the formation of the ARF. China's power was growing rapidly. A rivalry between China and the United States was emerging. China was asserting territorial claims to parts of the South China Sea. All these developments had an impact on the ARF. However, the road to the creation of the ARF was not smooth. Before discussing the various steps taken for the creation of the ARF, we need to look at the new environment that appeared just after the end of Cold War.

The impact of the Cold War confrontation on the Asia-Pacific region as compared to Europe was not so significant. There was no dividing line in the region because of the incongruent nature of forces of both the super powers, existence of non-aligned countries in the region, and the emergence of new China. Therefore, various regional actors including ASEAN members viewed the demise of the Cold War as an unmixed blessing. While in the international level there were positive developments marked by the reduction of global tensions and the settlement of some regional conflicts, regional policy makers of the Asia-Pacific region expressed concern about the strategic uncertainties and potential conflicts that would likely to occur at the regional level.

The end of the Cold War resulted in a more unpredictable Asia-Pacific. Although it brought profound changes in the pattern of interstate relations in the region, the end of the Cold War raised the prospects of both hopeful new developments as well as some worrying uncertainties. No doubt the changes directly contributed to a subtle reduction in regional tensions and the prospect for a competitive external intervention, which previously helped to internationalize conflict. But the transformation of great power

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<sup>1</sup> Wanandi, Jusuf, (1996), "The future of the ARF and CSCAP in the Regional Security Architecture," Nagara Bann, Ean Cheah Siew (editors), *"Managing Security and Peace in the Asia Pacific"*, Malaysia, ISI

relationship entailed a major retrenchment in the superpower military presence in the region, which in turn fuelled regional anxieties.

The post-Cold War strategic trends of the Asia-Pacific region presented a strategic paradox. What unfolded in Asia was a race between the accelerating dynamics of multipolarity, which could increase the chances of conflict and the growth of the mitigating factors that would tend to demand them and to improve the prospects for a continuing peace. With the new international political developments in the later 1980's and early 1990's the security environment in the region changed fundamentally. As a consequence, the regional security policies and bilateral institutional arrangements that operated during the Cold War days were not applicable in the new environment. Traditional alliances became inadequate to deal with security challenges which were non-military nature like transnational crime, environmental pollution, AIDS, and the illegal human trafficking, etc. In addition, traditional security issues continued in the form of unpleasant territorial disputes, divided states, and nuclear weapons proliferation. Some countries of the Asia-Pacific region saw unprecedented economic growth, and ASEAN emerged as an economic power house. But despite positive economic growth, and long economic and political ties with the West, the leaders of the ASEAN were caught in an ideological debate with the West on the question of values. The relationship between democracy and development and the role of human rights were the issues that drove apart long standing allies, the United States and ASEAN. The reordering and readjustment of the great power relation generated fears among the Southeast Asian states about an emergence of "power vacuum" in the region. The fears were mainly based on the possible declining commitment of the United States towards Southeast Asia. The Asia-Pacific states were apprehensive about the behavior and intentions of China. China's rise as an economic and military power in the Asia-Pacific region had significant implications for Southeast Asia's strategic and economic future. It was reshaping the balance of power and posing an economic challenge of considerable magnitude to the region. Also worrying were questions about Japan's future role in the region. Therefore, some kind of cooperative security enterprise linking the region to its major patterns in Northeast Asia and North America was needed to fill up the gap.

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At that time number of views of the prospects for peace and stability in the region had emerged. The pessimistic views suggested the inevitability of conflict and tension in the region and argued that the ongoing process of economic integration and multilateral discussion on security were unlikely to prevent to dangerous drift to war. On the other hand, optimistic views saw the possibility of great cooperation and integration among the Asian countries due to new challenges and emergence of a new world structure. According to the advocates of the optimistic views, economic cooperation would likely to undermine hostilities and conflicts among nations.

The end of the Cold War also marked the beginning of a new debate across the Asia-Pacific region regarding the need to create a regional multilateral forum to deal with political and security-related issues. But initially doubts were expressed on the viability of a security forum in the region. Udai Bhanu Singh from Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis identified certain reasons for those uncertainties:-

First, as the Asia-Pacific region had not witnessed the organic growth of a security structure, it was assumed that the region had not developed a uniform conception of security or a common threat perception because of its diversity.

Secondly, it was argued that economic and political developments in the region had not been uniform and the Southeast Asian countries were at varying degrees of development. Therefore, the Southeast Asian countries emphasized the need for internal stability rather than for a forum for security dialogue.

Thirdly, the very need for a security structure was questioned when the region was already witnessing peace.

Fourthly, it was feared that even if such a forum took shape, it would be a slow moving due to the Southeast Asian habit of consensus building.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Singh Udai, Bhanu (2001), *ASEAN Regional Forum and Security of the Asia-Pacific*, New Delhi, IDSA.

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In addition, a number of bilateral mechanism for security management among many countries in the region had existed, which reduced the worth and relevance of multilateral mechanisms.<sup>3</sup> The suspicion and lack of trust and confidence among many countries in the region, a legacy of past bitter conflicts, and on-going disputes were also responsible for lack of awareness among the countries.

However, number of post-Cold War trends emerged which affected the Asia-Pacific region leading to the formation of the ARF.

First trend was that the breakdown of the more predictable balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union and the allies created new uneasiness in the Asia-Pacific region particularly in Southeast Asia. Doubts over the US military commitment had risen, which was reinforced by its withdrawal from the Philippines. During the Cold War the United States was considered as the linchpin of Asia-Pacific security. During the heady days the United States had committed more than half a million troops to this region, backed by a number of security arrangements and agreements. In the past, the US presence in the region suppressed historical animosities between Japan, China, and two Koreas. It also maintained stability in the Taiwan straits and on Korean Peninsula. In Southeast Asia, the presence of US Seventh Fleet gave the sub-region security and stability. But the end of the Cold War and the slow growth of its economy led the United States to reconsider its Asia-Pacific strategy. In addition, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 dramatically limited Russia's regional role and influence. It led to decline of Russia's economic influence and reduced its naval presence in the Asia-Pacific region. As a consequence, Russian political influence had also declined dramatically since its peak in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The collapse of the Soviet Union and budgetary constraints obliged Washington to reconsider its military deployment in East Asia. This forced the United States to measured reduction of its forces in the Asia-Pacific region. This move made the Asia-Pacific states realize that a US military presence could not be taken for granted. The ASEAN states viewed this

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<sup>3</sup> Jawhar, Mohamed (2001), The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Critical Appraisal, available at <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/symposia/pacific2001/jawharpaper.htm>.

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development with much concern. They felt that there was a need to engage the regional powers like China and Japan and the only surviving superpower the United States in a broader security forum to enhance the regional security. Actually, ASEAN states were much more worried about the trends in US force reductions, despite repeated US statements emphasizing its intention to remain a Pacific military power with significant forward deployed forces. Engaging and persuading the United States to stay in the Asia-Pacific therefore became an important strategy for a number of Asia-Pacific states.

Second trend was that the influence of Japan and China became more significant due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the uncertainties of US involvement in the region. Japan presented security concern for the ASEAN states. The 1994 report commissioned by the Japanese Government recommended that Japan should develop alternative strategies and build up its autonomous capacity as a hedge against the possibility of reduced US interest in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan also became an economic superpower and its business concerns embraced a new “Asianism” in their search for new markets and lower production cost abroad. Although the Japanese defense budget remained extremely low as a percentage of gross domestic products (GDP), the high level of economic growth in Japan over the past decade increased the possibility to translate this growth into a considerable military expenditure. It was matched by a growth both in political assertiveness and Japanese involvement in security affairs. In the post-Cold War years, Japan also started defining its security into both military as well as economic terms ensuring safe sea lines of communications and thus regarded access to market and resources as important security concerns.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, some nations in Southeast Asia feared that in matter of time Japan would assume an independent role to protect its interest.

However, the most important issue in the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific was the potential Chinese hegemony which had an additional significance in the region. China plays a key role in the Asia-Pacific security architecture because it is the biggest resident power in Asia, and it has the potential to become the “next superpower”. China had

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<sup>4</sup> Vatikiotis Michel (1997), “Fears of Influence”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January, pp 14-15

experienced a sustainable economic development that had accelerated up to a point the modernization of its military capacity. In addition, China continued its role as a major arms producer, building weapons both for its own forces and for export purpose. It caused considerable concern for regional stability because China was willing to export arms. The growth of Chinese military power was matched by growing intransigence and assertiveness over territorial disputes. Therefore, a number of ASEAN member countries identified China as the most imminent external threat. China's support for communist insurgencies in the region was a key factor in creating negative feeling and hostility towards Beijing among the non-communist Southeast Asian states.

The end of Cold War created new concerns about the shifting balance of power with China as the chief catalyst. A number of intra-regional conflicts involving China such as the territorial disputes in the South China Sea challenged regional order. Southeast Asian countries were not able to deny China's economic growth and its influence in the regional balance of power. Malaysian former foreign minister Abdullah Badai stated, "As a potential economic and political super power China has to be reckoned with. It would be in the interest of Asia-Pacific countries to ensure that China become constructively engaged in regional affairs."<sup>5</sup> Consequently at the end of Cold War China's regional influence was viewed with apprehensions. Some Southeast Asian States, like Singapore feared that a US military disengagement in East might encourage China or even Japan to fill the "power vacuum" left by retreating external powers. In addition, most of the Asia-Pacific countries like Thailand, South Korea, and Australia preferred strong US military presence in the region for maintaining peace and stability.<sup>6</sup>

Third trend was that unlike the Cold War era, the situation in Asia-Pacific during the early 1990's became more unpredictable and uncertain. This strategic uncertainty was partly due to the increase in military expenditure and defense modernization programs undertaken by nearly all the Asia-Pacific states over the past decades. Many states upgraded their militaries as a strategic hedge and acquired a minimal capability to deal

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<sup>5</sup> Vatikiotis Michale (1993), "Mixed Motives", *Far eastern Economic Review*, June, p 13

<sup>6</sup> Mak J.N. (1998), *The Asia-Pacific Security Order*, McGrew Anthony and Brook Christopher (edits) Asia-Pacific in the New World Order, London and New Work, Routledge, p 8.



with various contingencies. They could afford those defense programs because of their booming economies. This new-found wealth also brought political power and status to Asia. Thus, countries like China had found new assertiveness as it began to realize that economic power could often be translated into political and military clout.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the potential for conflict from the persistent territorial and border disputes among the states of the Asia-Pacific region created more uncertainties in the region. Islamic fundamentalism emerged as a major challenge to some of the Southeast Asian nations.

The rapid economic growth in the region had helped to make Asia-Pacific one of the most dynamic arms market in the world. The economic success of countries like Taiwan, South Korea and most significantly China generated the wealth and foreign exchange needed for purchase of sophisticated weapons. It also led to the increased allocation of the budget for defense and a rapid modernization of the military. At a time of global recession in the arms trade, the Asia-Pacific region was bucking the trend and spending more on arms than ever before. The increased regional prosperity particularly amongst the ASEAN states allowed much greater expenditure on weapon procurement fueling fears of a regional arms race. Both domestic and international factors were responsible for the increased arms spending among the countries of the Asia-Pacific. The domestic factors included the prominent role of the armed forces in political decision making, internal security problems, military mission, technological entrepreneurship, increased importance of maritime issues, smuggling, piracy, etc. Among the international factors the fear of a resurgent and militarily powerful China, the fear of a sudden US military withdrawal and all its attendant consequences, the availability of post-Cold War surplus arms at bargain basement prices, and the perceived need to fill the potential power vacuum were prominent.

The most destabilizing trend for the region, however, was that of nuclearization particularly the possible development of nuclear weapons by North Korea. Then some new security-related issues like international terrorism, maritime disputes, sea piracy,

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<sup>7</sup> See Mak J.N. (1998), *The Asia-Pacific Security Order*, Mcgrew Anthony and Brook Christopher (edits) Asia-Pacific in the New World Order, London and New York, Routledge, p 8

narcotics trafficking, AIDS, environment pollution, and information warfare also produced uncertainties. However, they created awareness among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region for multilateral cooperation.

Because of these trends and power shifts in the post-Cold War era, many states in the Asia-Pacific region particularly the ASEAN states saw the need for a new political and security framework that would help to maintain the necessary equilibrium for sustained peace and prosperity in the region. Actually, changes in the regional strategic environment forced the ASEAN countries to question their sub-regional approach to security. The economic and strategic interdependence of Southeast Asia to the rest of the Asia-Pacific region was another reason to the ASEAN states to look for an alternative framework. The ARF, the only security organization covering the Asia-Pacific region, took birth during these changed environments. Initially, the ARF was seen by the ASEAN states as an instrument to “engage Beijing” in a comprehensive fashion in a stable regional international system. According to Ralf Emmers, the ARF came as an ASEAN attempt to preserve its post-Cold War relevance. ASEAN sought to develop or further define its stabilizing role in Southeast Asian relations through the formation of the ARF.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Formation of the ARF:-**

The process of creation of a security organization for the Asia-Pacific region started in the last phase of the Cold War. Initially, the regional security cooperation was proposed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War era, and was reiterated by the Soviet leaders after the Cold War. Soviet Union’s President Mikhail Gorbachev proposed a “Pacific Ocean Conference” along the lines of the “Helsinki Conference” in his Vladivostok speech in July 1986 and in an interview into the Indonesian Journal Merdeka in 1987. He also proposed a region-wide security consultative community with a seven-point proposal

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<sup>8</sup> Emmers, Ralf (2003), “The Post-Cold War Regional Security Context: The Role of the Balance of Power Factor Within the ARF,” *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF*, London and New York, Routledge Curzon, Taylor and Francis Group, p 112

in his Krasnoyarsk speech in 1988. But Gorvochev's proposals did not get much importance among the Asian countries.

In July 1990, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans proposed the idea of a 'Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia (CSCA)' at an ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) held in Jakarta. It was an ambitious proposal that aimed at building conference and patterns of cooperation not only between old friends but also between old adversaries. In the proposal, Evans suggested that countries in the Asia-Pacific region should look ahead to the new institutional process that might evolve over time as an appropriate for the discussions and handling of security issues. To the proponents of the concept, the CSCA could also be a means to ensure that the United States and Japan to remain engaged more formally into the Southeast Asian security engagements. Therefore, the CSCA was envisioned to comprise the five ASEAN states, its dialogue partners, as well as Vietnam, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and states in the Indian Subcontinent.

A similar forum was also proposed by Joe Clark, former Canadian secretary for External Affairs, at the same ASEAN meeting. Clark stated, "There has not been a structure of security cooperation of traditional military alliances of regional political institutions to mirror the European experience. I suggested it is time to consider security or political institutions in the Asia-Pacific."<sup>9</sup>

Although these proposals influenced by the success of the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) were met with wide spread skepticism and suspicion, they were not completely rejected. Washington opposed them because it was afraid that it would undermine its bilateral arrangements with countries of the region. Southeast Asian countries were especially worried of ideas that CSCE-type of model would fail to appreciate Asian concepts of security and pattern of relationships. They argued that it was not possible to replicate the European model since Asia was seen to be strategically, politically, economically, and culturally different from Europe. According to Southeast

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted from Jane Boulden and John Lamp, "Institution- Building in the Pacific", Goldie Mary, Ross Douglas (editors),(1991) *Pacific Security 2010: Canadian Perspectives on Pacific Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ottawa: Canadian Center for Arms Control and Disarmament

Asian leaders, both Europe and Asia-Pacific had divergent security cultures. For many Asian states security was perceived comprehensively as encompassing economic, political, and social dimensions besides the military. There was also suspicion among the Southeast Asian states that other powers did not have Southeast Asia's best interest in mind. In addition, post-colonial sentiments of the people in the region contributed to their sense of reluctant receptivity towards these proposals particularly from Indonesia and Malaysia. As a matter of fact, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Atlas voiced his opposition to such transplantation of European institutions to an Asian sitting which had its own unique characteristics in the political, social, cultural, and economic domains.

Therefore, the ideas of a CSCA-type of regional security framework became less attractive to the countries in the Asia-Pacific. It was thought that the CSCE-type process was far too elaborate and complex for a newly emerging framework in the Asia-Pacific region. The Southeast leaders stated that it was difficult to transpose a ready-made system from one region to another in spite of some modifications to the model. In addition, the CSCE policy of linking human rights to political and security cooperation also caused uneasiness among some of the Asian countries.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the ASEAN and other Asia-Pacific countries also started to explore other possible models that were more suitable to regional conditions. Between 1990 and 1991, several official meetings were held on this subject. These in turn generated specific proposals emanating from academics, think tanks, and government officials on how Southeast Asia could address the security challenges. A realistic proposal was put forward by the ASEAN Institutes of strategic and International studies (ISIS) in 1991. The ISIS suggested to use the PMC forum for political and security dialogue with ASEAN countries in the region. It was due to the ASEAN was the only regional organization with which most of the major powers were comfortable and whose security dialogue proposal was found to be acceptable. The proposal was widely discussed at the Kuala Lumpur ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) held on 19 to 20 July 1991. The

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<sup>10</sup> Anthony, Mely Caballero, (2005), *Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way*, Singapore, Institute of southeast Asian Studies.

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meeting adopted a memorandum entitled: "An ASEAN initiative for an Asia-Pacific political dialogue," which proposed looking into the creation of a multilateral security framework -- the conference on stability and peace in Asia-Pacific -- using an existing institution namely the ASEAN-PMC. In addition, it recommended the utilization of already existing PMC mechanism for dialogue with a large number of Asia-Pacific countries of common political and security concern. Immediately afterwards, at the ASEAN-ISIS meeting in Jakarta, the foreign office of the Philippines hosted a conference on "ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Region: Prospects for Security Cooperation in the 1990's".

Japanese Foreign Minister Nakayama, at the ASEAN-PMC held in July 1991, also made a proposal for security discussion in an enhanced PMC. He rejected both the Canadian and Australian proposals by saying, "Japan doubts if such a grouping can produce fruitful results. Conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region will be better settled through meeting of the concerned parties rather than an international security forum". Japan rejected the CSCA idea on the ground that security imperatives were different mechanisms to maintain security. Nakayama argued that Asia needed indigenous solutions for its security needs tantamount to a web of bilateral alliances. He proposed the creation of multilateral security dialogue with the ASEAN-PMC framework that could create a sense of mutual reassurance among the states in the Asia-Pacific. This proposal was endorsed by the Kuala Lumpur AMM in July 1991 and the Singapore summit in January 1992. But some scholars have pointed out that ASEAN, which wanted to expand the membership of a new security forum beyond ASEAN-PMC members by including China, Russia, and South Korea, was uncomfortable with Nakayama's idea of limiting membership to ASEAN-PMC.

Participants of the Singapore summit stated that beyond ASEAN's dialogue partners, the composition of an extended PMC was to be broadened to include South Korea as a regular dialogue partner and India as a "sectoral" partner. More importantly, China and Russia were also to be invited as guests at the AMM, and Vietnam and Laos as observers. Following the agreement at the summit preparations were then made during the ASEAN-

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PMC in Manila in July 1992 to plan the modalities that this regional security forum should take.

After its successful deliberations in Manila, ASEAN decided to call for a special ASEAN-PMC meeting at the Senior Officials Level (SOM) to discuss regional security issues and to add more substance to the birth of a regional forum. The meeting was held in May 1993, where Singapore, which held the chairmanship of the ASEAN standing committee, proposed the name "ASEAN Regional Forum" because of ASEAN's leading role in the forum. Finally, at the ASEAN Foreign Minister Meeting in Singapore in July 1993, ASEAN decided to christen the security component of the PMC dialogue as the "Regional Forum" with 18 members. So, the multilateral organization that came to be known as the ASEAN Regional Forum finally came into existence. The very cause for the formation of the ARF was seen in the context of keeping the United States within the Asia-Pacific region. The ASEAN was trying to minimize the role of both China and Japan and finally to use the ARF as platform to keep relevance ASEAN alive in Southeast Asia and within the broader context of the Asia-Pacific.<sup>11</sup>

The inception of the ARF began with its inaugural meeting in Bangkok in July 1994. It was in accordance with the "1992 Singapore Declaration of the Fourth ASEAN Summit" where by the ASEAN heads of state and government proclaimed their intent to intensify ASEAN's external dialogues in political and security matters as a means of building cooperative ties with states in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>12</sup> The session was patterned after the ASEAN PMC which was consultative meeting between ASEAN and its dialogue partners on economic and security issues. The session brought together the foreign ministers of 18 Asia-Pacific countries for a multilateral dialogue on the various security issues that posed a problem to the region. Those who took part included ASEAN-6 -- Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Brunei -- the United States, Russia, China, Japan, Vietnam, Laos, the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Papua New Guinea. Being the first time ever that high-ranking representatives from the majority of states in the Asia-Pacific region

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<sup>11</sup> Leifer Michael, (1996), "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security, *Adelphi Paper*, No. 302, pp 19, 20.

<sup>12</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum, Documents Series 1994 – 2000, ASEAN Secretariat. p 1

came to specifically discuss political and security cooperation issues, the meeting signified the opening of a new chapter of peace, stability, and cooperation for Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup> The ARF was identified as a “forum for dialogue” in which members could exchange ideas about the Asia-Pacific region in particular and international politics and defense affairs in general. The meeting was chaired by Thai Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri. In the meeting ARF participants agreed to an annual foreign minister’s meeting. The ARF was clearly portrayed as a security dialogue process amongst foreign ministers. Regarding its method and approach, the chairman’s statement stipulated:

“The approach shall be evolutionary taking place in three broad stages namely the promotion of confidence building, development of preventive diplomacy, and elaboration of approaches to conflicts.” It was agreed that, as a high-level consultative forum, the ARF would enable the countries in the Asia-Pacific region to foster the habit of constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern. On the basis of these, the ARF would be in a position to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence building and preventative diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>14</sup>”

In its functioning the ARF had followed two pronged policy. The first was the official Track 1 approach in which the security platform was enhanced by the conduct of regular meetings and intersession seminars where the members of the ARF articulated their security concerns in a broader framework which ensured a common platform for such discussions. Within the official parameter of its objectives the ARF was not regarded either as an alliance or as a collective security mechanism.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the ARF adopted secondary method of dialogue through the Track 2 or the unofficial level of discussion. The ARF set up the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) using this model of Track 2 policy formulation. Within the CSCAP each member state might establish its own National Council and this had been

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<sup>13</sup> See ASEAN Regional Forum, Documents Series, 1994 – 2000, ASEAN Secretariat. p 1

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Sundararaman, Shankari,(1998) “The ASEAN Regional Forum Reasseing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific,” *Strategic Analysis*, July, 1998.

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done so by ASEAN states, Japan, Canada, Australia, Republic of Korea, and the United States. The functioning of the CSCAP was extended to include several other activities like the formation of a register on regional arms, more enhanced interaction among the members by the regular exchange of defense white papers, the presence of outside observers at military exercise, interaction as well as exchange among military personal, and the creation and development of centers that would deal with issues relating to regional peace-keeping measures. The ARF, therefore, with CSCAP emerged as the major security organization for the Asia-Pacific region in the post-Cold War era. It was hoped that ARF could promote international peace and security while engaging the regional powers, in particular China and Japan and most importantly the United States.

The formation of the ARF was intended to broaden to the ASEAN's approach to cooperative security amid the emerging uncertainties in the region. At the core of ARF was ASEAN. The central position of ASEAN within the ARF was most clearly reflected in the norms on which the ARF was based. The chairman's statement of the first ARF in 1994 was built upon the principles of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia. TAC was based on the higher principles of non-interference in domestic affairs, renunciation of the use of force, and cooperation.

A considerable part of the ARF's appeal to non-ASEAN states was due to its reputation as a cohesive diplomatic entity. ASEAN developed a method of cooperation that alleviated tensions among its member states. This method was broadly referred as the "ASEAN way". Axelord and Keohane defined the ASEAN way as a way of utilizing the "shadow of future" for the fulfillment of agreement by basing these agreements on a long-term relationship instead of one time. So, the main purpose of the ARF was to provide the venue where participating countries can voice their legitimate interests.



**US Role:-**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War completely changed the map of international politics. However, it affected the United States more than any other major power in the Asia-Pacific region. William Jow, an US policy expert, argued that Washington's rhetoric had continued to stress the region's importance and in particular US interest in its political and economic stability, but that US actions had failed to persuade states in the region of depth of that commitment. US military restructuring and Washington's failure to develop a satisfactory regional strategy were mainly responsible for this.

However, if we look back there were various factors which indicated that the United States played a significant role in the formation of the ARF. The United States lost much of its clout in Southeast Asia in the 1970's and 1980's. The communist victory in the second Indochina war in 1975, Thailand's gravitation towards China for external security, and a resurgence of Philippine nationalism culminating in the US withdrawal from Clark Airfield and Subic Bay Naval Base in 1991 were high points of diminishing US influence. As a result, the three countries which anchored US security policy during the Cold War either ceased to exist or significantly disengaged themselves from the United States. Domestic political contention leading to reconfigured governments, two decades of spectacular economic growth and development in ASEAN, emerging tension on values, and growing trade and investment opportunities in East Asia led to smaller US presence in Southeast Asia.<sup>16</sup>

With the end of the Cold War the US policy on force reductions in Asia continued to evolve. The US Defense Department's 1990 East Asia Strategic Environment outlined a plan to cut US forces in Asia from 143,000 in 1990 to less than 100,000 by 1993. But in the wake of the rejection by the Philippine Senate of a bases treaty with the United States, additional adjustment in the presence of US forces in the Asia-Pacific was considered

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<sup>16</sup> Ganesan, N (2000), "ASEAN's Relationship With Major External Powers," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.2, August

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necessary. The impact of this reduction on US military readiness and force-projection capability in the Asia-Pacific remained uncertain. Due to these developments Pentagon officials expressed fear that cutbacks necessitated by the loss of these Philippine bases would eliminate real combat capability and might initiate destabilizing actions by regional powers.<sup>17</sup> This prospect dampened much of the early enthusiasm for a new regional order based on opportunities for confidence building and conflict reduction created by the end of the Cold War. Then a possible competition among regional powers seeking to step into the vacuum left by departing superpower forces had emerge as a major source of concern for ASEAN states. Among the regional powers China, Japan, and Russia and to some extent India were identified as the four leading contenders for influence mainly because of their capability to project power in the Southeast-Asian region. According to China, peace in East Asia was dependent on the balance of power. Chinese leaders stated that respondent powers in past encroached, portioned, and manipulated the balance of power. Hence Beijing's desired for a strong state and modern armed forces to balance against this possibility. India balanced against potential Chinese predominance. Russia balanced against the prospect of NATO in the West or China, Japan, and the United States in the East, translating predominance into enforcement. Despite their differences, China, Russia, and India each called for a multipolar distribution of power in the region. Their proposals reflected that power should be distributed more evenly among states to prevent predominance by any one state. All of them shared a realist mode of analysis, sought the symmetrical distribution of power, and strived for equilibrium.<sup>18</sup> But the idea that regional equilibrium maintained through balance underpinned the US view that its military presence provided the bedrock for stability in East Asia. This presence was designed to prevent another nation from filling the strategic vacuum that would be created by its withdrawal.

In contrast, ASEAN states feared that a reduced US military presence might give rise to a regional instability. They were alarmed with the ongoing moves by these potential

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<sup>17</sup> Pendly, William T (1994), "US Security Strategy in East Asia for the 1990's," *Strategic Review*, Vol. 20, pp 12, 13

<sup>18</sup> Jawhar, Mohamed (2001) The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Critical Appraisal, available at <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/symposia/pacific2001/jawharpaper.htm>.

dominant powers to develop capabilities that could be used for projecting power and asserting influence in the Southeast-Asian region. Furthermore, they were worried that regional order in the post-Cold War era could also be challenged by adverse trends in the relationships between the United States and of the two leading regional powers: China and Japan. The state of Sino-US relations was seen by ASEAN as a key factor in Southeast Asian security. For ASEAN, a constructive regional order would ideally base on the balancing military engagement of the United States.<sup>19</sup> So these uncertainties and new developments made the ASEAN states interested in finding an indigenous solution to their security requirements. It paved the way for them to appreciate the potential value of a regional security forum. They mainly needed to keep the United States engaged and interested in the region so that ambitions of the other upcoming powers like China and Japan were kept in check.

In addition, the ASEAN concerns were reinforced by an increased US preoccupation with trade and calls for burden sharing from US public that perceived US jobs were going overseas and a widening trade gap between the United States and its Asian trading partners. The 1992 presidential campaign in the United States reinforced these concerns as both the Republicans and the Democrats identified Asia as a particular foreign policy problem.<sup>20</sup> Together with the coincidental shift in US policy from bilateralism to a more multilateral approach in the search for an alternative security order was an impetus to move in the direction of a region-wide process of dialogue. But the United States failed to develop a new strategy for the Asia-Pacific region to replace the Cold War strategy of containment. More serious, however, the United States failed to accept the need to develop a regional approach to post-Cold War security issues, rather than a global one. For decades, security in the Asia-Pacific region was built around US Cold War treaties with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia and others. Those treaties remained. But their governing assumption was that the enemy would always be international

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<sup>19</sup> See Leifer, Michael, (1996), "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security, *Adelphi Paper*, No. 302.

<sup>20</sup> Delf, Roberts and Awanohara Sasuam (1992), "Strategic Error", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 January, p 16

Communism; therefore, they provided little guidance or reassurance in disputes that pit one US ally against another.<sup>21</sup>

At first the United States was very skeptical about the formation of a security organization based on multilateral principles. So it openly opposed Nakayama's proposal of security organization because it was suspicious of a multilateral security dialogue that might undermine its bilateral defense arrangement with the regional players. The annual meeting of the ASEAN foreign ministers held in Manila in July 1992 was dominated by the problem of the overlapping claim in South China Sea. During the ASEAN-US dialogue session US Secretary of State James Backer referred to the US withdrawal from Clark Airfield and Subic Bay Naval Base. The South China Sea question and the closer of the US bases in the Philippines by the end of 1992 further influenced the ASEAN states to establish a new multilateral security dialogue organization that would include non-PMC members.

The post-Cold War political and security context of the Asia-Pacific region was discussed by the senior officials of ASEAN countries in May 1993. They agreed on the need to form a multilateral process of co-operative security to promote cooperation in the region. Significantly, the ASEAN-PMC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) registered balance of power considerations in signaling the forthcoming establishment of the ARF. The chairman statement affirmed that the continuing presence of United States, as well as stable relationship among the United States, Japan, and China and other states of the region would contribute to regional stability. Therefore, it was clear that the prime objective of a region-wide cooperative security arrangement would be to secure a continuing US involvement in the Asia Pacific and to address China's rising influence in the region.

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<sup>21</sup> Unger, David C, US and the ASEAN Regional Forum, available at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9500E2DB113FF937A35757C0A962958260&scp=1&sq=ASEAN+REgional+Forum%2C+America&st=nyt>

At the start of the ASEAN-PMC, Singapore Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng stated: "Peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific depends not only on whether the United States continues to lead as she has in the past. It also depends on how the United States settles her relationships with other major powers-Russia, China, and Japan." A key purpose of the ARF was therefore to engage the United States, Japan, and the PRC in a structure of multilateral dialogue in order to promote a stable distribution of power in the Asia-Pacific. This core ASEAN objective has not changed since the formation of the Forum.<sup>22</sup>

Substantial US military engagement premised on balance of power and deterrence was the linchpin of Asia-Pacific security since the end of the World War II. The backbone of the successful US dominance was its forward deployed military and a network of bilateral alliances. During the Cold War the United States eschewed multilateralism in favor of bilateralism. The end of Cold War, however, led to a dramatic shift in the regional states attitude towards multilateralism. But in the post-Cold War Period too the United States was unwilling to support multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific as it feared that a multilateral security structure might undermine bilateral arrangements with regional actors. This position had changed by the end of the senior Bush administration. Elected in November 1992, US President Bill Clinton welcomed the establishment of a multilateral security forum. Clinton Administration fully endorsed the idea of a multilateral security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific. Clinton's early foreign policy viewed multilateral diplomacy as a device for spreading the costs of common security among friends. Clinton was not concerned that a Pacific security forum would undermine traditional US alliances. US Secretary of State Warren Christopher confirmed during the 1993 ASEAN-PMC that the United States would remain actively engage in Asia and it would remain an Asia-Pacific power. A driving impulse behind the organization of the first ever ASEAN-PMC SOM was the need to cope with the potential US strategic retreat from the region. Yet, regional concerns about the uncertain long-term US involvement in

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<sup>22</sup> Emmers, Ralf (2001) The Influence of the Balance of Power Factor Within the ASEAN Regional Forum, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 23, No 2, August.

the Asia-Pacific had primarily disappeared, and the United States had also actively taken part in the ASEAN-PMC SOM.

When the ARF was finally launched the United States welcomed it. The US Secretary of State could not attend the inaugural meeting, instead Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Winston Lord, and Under Secretary of State for Economics, Business and Agriculture Joan Spero attended the meeting. The delegation stated that the United States wanted the ARF to play a proactive role in tackling conflict situations. They also reassured in the meeting that the United States intended to continue its forward military presence in the region.

The ARF managed to broaden the scope of the security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region as it remained the only grouping where all the major powers were represented on a common stage having the benefit of interacting in security-related issues. The United States became an enthusiastic participant of the ARF. It provided a natural forum for the United States to engage with other major players in the region through a regional security framework. The United States believed the ARF along with complementary institutions could make an increasingly valuable contribution to meeting security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. It considered that the ARF was well-suited to combat various transnational and non-traditional threats like terrorism, lawlessness, natural calamities, illicit trafficking in WMD (weapons of mass destruction) materials and technology. As the ARF's activities continued to increase, the United States believed that some form of structural support was likely to become necessary and the structure must take into account the interests of all ARF members. The United States in Annual Security Outlook 2007, issued by the ARF, stated that it remained committed to its stabilizing and integral role as an Asia-Pacific power and this was possible only through the participation of multilateral organizations like the ARF.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum, Annual Security Outlook 2007, United States of America. URL: <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/Publications/AnnualSecurityOutlook2007/UnitedStatesofAmerica/tabid/245/Default.aspx>

## **Chapter III**

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### **US Role in the ASEAN Regional Forum**

### CHAPTER-III

Anxious over the growing power of China and the pullout of the US armed forces from Asia, many Southeast Asian countries moved towards the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to discuss military stability and other security-related matters of the Asia-Pacific region. In course of time, the ARF emerged as a premier multilateral body to discuss security-related issues of the Asia-Pacific region. Today, the ARF is serving as a promising new vehicle of multilateralism that seeks to avoid armed conflicts in the region.

The formation of the ARF occurred at the end of Cold War and a new phase in international politics, where the development of multilateralism came to be seen as a viable option for the solution of regional problems and even extra-regional issues in the Asia-Pacific. With the growing interdependence among nations in both security and economic matters, the need for a platform like the ARF was even more augmented. Due to the complexity of the political issues in the region, the ARF was assigned three main objectives: confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and finally conflict resolution. Today with a membership of 26 countries, participation of two most powerful countries namely the United States and China, and involvement of other diverse players like Japan, India, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN countries, the ARF stands at the forefront of multilateral security arrangements of the twenty first century.

At the time of its creation, the ARF received scant attention in the West, although the United States was an important participant of it. It was not a military alliance like NATO or a collective security organization like the European Conference on Security and Cooperation (ECSC). The United States got involved in the organization because it thought that in the future the ARF could play an important role in the US strategy for the Asia-Pacific region.

Since the Asia-Pacific region is the world's axis for expanding trade and economic growth and vital for US security interests, the United States shows a strong interest in



various multilateral organizations of the region. It has recognized the ARF as a prominent multilateral organization of the Asia-Pacific region.

**US Influence in Regional Dynamics:-**

The United States plays a crucial role in the Asia-Pacific region. It recognizes itself as a Pacific country and deeply engages in Pacific affairs. According to Tommy Koh, a Southeast Asia foreign policy expert, all the countries in the Southeast Asian region want to have a good relation with the United States and appreciate the “indispensable” role that the United States has played in maintenance of regional security and the region’s rapid social and economic development.<sup>1</sup>

Despite a positive role in the Southeast Asia, the region has always felt that it does not receive the attention it deserves. US foreign policy in Southeast Asia from 1975 to the last decade of the twentieth century could be characterized as exhibiting varying degrees of benign neglect, with episodic attention to perceived security threats.<sup>2</sup> Between the end of the Cold War and 11 September 2001, Washington treated the region with benign neglect because it was relatively calm and trouble free. It was only after President Bush launched the global war against terrorism that the United States elevated the regions importance.

Although end of the Cold War led to a major readjustment in US foreign policy around the globe as the United States emerged as the only super power, for Southeast Asia major changes began earlier with the military readjustment and subsequent messy departure of the United States from Vietnam in 1975. Subsequently, through succeeding administrations, Washington remained generally inactive giving only selective response to political crises and to ensure access to markets in this region. This outlook changed after the 9/11 incident in 2001, when President Bush declared Southeast Asia as the “second front” of terrorism and took steps to re-involve the United States in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Koh, Tommy (2004), *America’s Role in Asia*: Asian News, The Asia Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Mauzy, Diane k and Job, Brian J, (2007), "US Policy in Southeast Asia: Limited Re-Engagement After Years of Benign Neglect," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No: 4, pp- 662-642.

The Bush administration came to office in 2001 believing that virtually every thing the Clinton administration had done was either wrong or poorly executed. Clinton lacked unifying foreign policy themes equivalent to the Cold War anti-communist ideological struggle. But his administration recognized the United States as an Asia-Pacific power. Clinton continued his predecessor's view of Southeast Asia as a peaceful region of energetic economic growth. However, he placed greater emphasis on multilateral institutions particularly on US participation in APEC and tacit support for the ARF. Southeast Asian countries were placed only episodic attention, with occasional pressure applied for democratization and improvement of human rights. Clinton's overall record was characterized by the conservative critics as one of "unwarranted US activism" involving a "promiscuous" expansion of security relationship.<sup>3</sup>

The Bush administration's relation with Southeast Asia started with a critical phase. Bold foreign and security policy pronouncements and actions by the Bush administration, the subsequent terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, the start of "Operation Enduring Freedom" against Afghanistan-based Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, foiled terrorist plots and successful attacks on several Southeast Asian countries in 2002, and then "Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003" contributed to a period of intense and complex US-Southeast Asia relations.

At first, the Southeast Asia did not appear on the Bush administration's priority list, despite its economic importance to the United States as its fifth largest trading partner and the geo-strategic significance of the region's maritime lines of communication for the US Navy. Although, the US military and security cooperation with much of the region was improving, the net early outlook of US-Southeast Asia relations under the Bush administration was one of the gaps between US priorities and policies and Southeast Asian ones. According to the new framework of the Bush administration, assuring allies and friends of the United States steadiness of its purpose and its capacity to fulfill its security commitment was its primary goal. The Bush administration within this context

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<sup>3</sup> See Mauzy, Diane k. and Job, Brian L, (2007), "US Policy in Southeast Asia: Limited Re-engagement After Years of Benign Neglect," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No: 4, pp 662-642.

signaled its intention to revive attention on number of Southeast Asian countries including Singapore, Thailand, and Philippines and sought to restore limited military links with Indonesia. The US primacy in the region was based on politico-military relationship with the welcoming partners rather than engagement through weak multilateral organizations. According to Simon Tay, a prominent analyst of the Southeast Asian region, the initial Bush strategy embarked on a “neo-imperialist strategy” to use and reinforce US primacy with policies of “benign selfishness” driven by domestic priorities and thus impermeable to outside influence.<sup>4</sup> Southeast Asian countries, somewhat sensitive about sustaining Washington’s attention, welcomed the prospective offered by the new Bush administration’s emphasis on them as “allies” and “friends”.

The US strategy towards the Southeast Asian region was based on following interests: retention of access to Asian markets, continuation of a permanent US military presence, prevention of rise of a dominant regional rival, availability of military bases and facilities to assure freedom of access and maneuver, and advancement of democracy. But the Bush administration sought to advance these interests through reorienting priorities and recasting politics. The low priority given to Southeast Asia changed quickly when, in the post 9/11 incident, the arrests of members of Jemmah Islamiyah in Singapore revealed the existence of an Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist network in maritime Southeast Asia intent on targeting Western interests. This wake-up call focused Washington’s attention on the entire region as the “second front” in its “War on Terror.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Southeast Asian countries confronted with terrorism and desirous of maximizing opportunities from constructive relations with the United States, sought to buttress ties with Washington. This pragmatic response on both sides to the post 9/11 environment led to the minding gaps rather than any rethinking on the part of the United States or Southeast Asian countries.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tay, Simon S.C (2004), “Asia and the United States After 9/11: Primacy and Partnership in the Pacific,” *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol.28, No.1, Winter, p 121

<sup>5</sup> Greshman, John (2002), “Is Southeast Asia the Second Front?” *Asian Affairs*, Vol:17, No.2, pp 223-48

<sup>6</sup> Limaye, Satu P (2004), “Minding the Gaps: The Bush Administration and US-Southeast Asia Relations,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No.1, pp 73-93

**US Outlook to Multilateralism:**

Security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region has been influenced by two approaches: bilateral alliances and comprehensive and cooperative security. These distinct modes of security cooperation can be distinguished by two key differences. Alliances are narrowly focused on military security and based on the notion that security should be promoted against potential and actual enemies. On the other hand, comprehensive and cooperative security adopts a broader understanding of security and supports the notion of security promotion “with others” as opposed to “against others.”<sup>7</sup> Although comprehensive and cooperative security has been the key influence within multilateral structures in the Asia-Pacific, bilateral alliances have dominated the strategic architecture and remained the corner stone of security cooperation in the region.

For half a century the security framework of the Asia-Pacific was built not on a multilateral institution but on a series of bilateral alliances between the United States and Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea, the United States and the Philippines, and the United States and Australia and the New Zealand. The bilateral alliance structure in Asia-Pacific during the Cold War period was defined as “hub and spokes architecture” having the United States as the hub and the allies as spokes. During that period the main purpose of the United States was to contain communism. In the Asia-Pacific region the concept of multilateralism emerged only in the last stage of Cold War. Two factors were mainly responsible for this: first, the communist states of Asia like China, North Korea as well as the states of Indo China were more independent of the Soviet Union than was the case in Europe. This could be attributed to the fact that in Asia the growth of nationalism and communism was more or less synonymous with one another. Secondly, the US allies in North-East and Southeast Asia had little in common as a result of which multilateral

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<sup>7</sup> Emmers, Ralf (2004), “Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, Evolution of Concepts and Practices,” Tan, See Sang and Acharya, Amitav (editors) *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, P 1, Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharp p 16

security policy could not be effectively evolved and the existing security links both the United States and the Soviet Union remained primarily bilateral.<sup>8</sup>

Multilateralism is a term in international relations that refers to multiple countries working in concert in a given issue. Multilateralism in international setting, the nature of relationships among the actors is more important attribute than the number of actors involved. The key aspect of multilateralism is its “inclusiveness” or “non-discriminatory” character. A perfect form of multilateral order embodies rules of conduct that are commonly applicable to countries as opposed to discriminating among them based on situational exigencies and particularistic preferences.<sup>9</sup> Security multilateralism involves an essentially equitable and non-exclusionary setting for cooperation in peace, conflict resolution, and order maintenance.

As a dominant institution-builder and the strongest Pacific military and economic power, the United States did not see multilateralism as a necessary or desirable form of security institution in the region. US security objectives were strongly oriented to ensuring the containment of the Soviet Union and China, which in turn required security arrangements with collective defense function rather than inclusive political institutions geared to the Pacific settlement of intra-regional conflicts. Thus the US regional security approaches focused heavily on forging a network of alliances aimed at countering the perceived threat of communism. Following Korean War, an US bilateral alliance network to contain communism in Asia was constituted involving Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand. Collectively this group of associations became known as the “San Francisco system.” The primary purpose of this US-based security system in the Asia-Pacific was to contain or deter, or to insulate the region from a potential external threat namely the Soviet Union.

During the Cold War the United States eschewed multilateralism in favor of bilateralism. The end of Cold War, however, led to a dramatic shift in the regional states

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<sup>8</sup> Sundararaman, Shankari (1998), “The ASEAN Regional Forum Reassessing Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific,” *Strategic Analysis*, July pp 655-665

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

attitude toward multilateralism. In that period neorealist international security observers predicted that the US post war global framework in the Asia-Pacific would collapse because the mutually perceived communist threat that it was designed to contain no longer justified its existence. However, the US administration preferred to continue its policy of bilateral defense arrangements with Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, and Australia since it believed that any move toward a multilateral structure in the long run would undermine US ties to its primary allies and generally weaken US influence in the region. The fact remained that the Pacific allies of the United States were far too weak to offer a credible option for the formation of a multilateral security arrangements since this would not have had any bearing upon the US capabilities. The United States thought that the furtherance of the bilateral arrangements offered greater flexibility and also provided the United States with an opportunity to exercise more leverage and control over its weaker allies. In addition, other factors apart from threat response provided new foundations of alliance: preserving free-market economies in allied states, democratic governance, and related institutional outlooks based on shared sociopolitical contexts. Therefore, US strategy focused primarily on balance of power approach maintained by a regional network of bilateral military alliances.

In the “New Asia Doctrine” speech in Seoul 1993, the US President Bill Clinton acknowledged the role of multilateralism and co-operation in the security domain. This followed the US support for the establishment of the ARF reflecting the administration’s general commitment to cooperative security. However, it made clear that multilateralism would supplement basic US policy and not supplant it. Clinton administration imposed a “missionary approach” of narrow human rights agendas as precondition for US participation in regional multilateral initiative such as APEC and the ARF. During 1996 President Clinton visited all five Asia-Pacific bilateral allied countries and reaffirmed the relevance of each alliance. The hubs and spoke strategy thus remained the key focus of US strategic thinking when the administration released an East Asian Strategy Report in November 1998 stating: “Foremost, the United States will continue to strengthen its strategic partnership with allies, which serve as important pillars from which to address

regional political and military challenges.<sup>10</sup> Clinton administration's early foreign policy viewed multilateral diplomacy as a device for spreading the costs of common security among friends.

However, the conditional US support for multilateralism was a response to changed political environment in the Asia-Pacific region. In the absence of the global threat posed by the former Soviet Union, the US Government faced domestic pressure to delegate more of the security burden to its allies and to reduce the chance of US military involvement where US interests were not critically at stake. However, the US commitment to its bilateral relationships presented problems for the development of multilateral security arrangement in the region because alliance systems were not necessarily compatible with multilateral approaches. Therefore, the US officials debated about the US alliance system and its support for multilateralism. The traditional alliance was externally oriented toward threat where as multilateral institutions such as ARF were internally oriented, striving to forge security cooperation among its members. It involved a theoretical conflict between multilateralism and bilateralism.<sup>11</sup>

Traditional strategic calculations evolved around the dominance of US politico-military power in the Asia-Pacific region and President Bush came to office determined to reaffirm this stand. In the initial years, Bush administration was skeptical about regimes, treaties, and multilateral organizations. The Bush administration's objective was a US foreign and security policy built on self-reliance and based on universal power, assured self-defense, flexibility, and key bilateral relationship around the globe. Advocates of a "realist" strategy of collective defense argued that state-centric consideration prevailed over trans-regional security threats in shaping Bush administration's strategy.<sup>12</sup> China appeared as a major potential regional security threat

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<sup>10</sup> US Strategy Documents, The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia and Pacific Region, 1998, US Department of State. Available at <http://www.dod.mil/pubs/ears98/>

<sup>11</sup> Naidu, G.V.C (2000), "Multilateralism and Regional Security: Can the ASEAN Regional Forum Really Make a Difference?" *Analysis from the East-West Center*, No.45.

<sup>12</sup> See Tow, William T (2004), "Convergent Security Revisited: Reconciling Bilateral and Multilateral Security Approaches," Tan, See Sang and Acharya, Amitav (editors) *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharp, p 19

based on its alleged propensity to transform its economic growth into a greater military power and regional hegemony. Then North Korea loomed as a nuclear “rouge state.” Prior to the 9/11 incident Bush administration’s foreign policy was appeared to be influenced by “realist” approach as it moved to revitalize the US-Japan security Treaty, upgraded military ties with India, and strengthen relations with Taiwan. The US Quadrennial Defense Review of 2001 anticipated that “large-scale military completion” would prevail in Asia and the United States had to ensure greater access to allies’ ports, airports, and other facilities to project an effective deterrent strategy. President Bush’s version of Asian geopolitics was a direct refutation of what he viewed as his predecessor’s flawed endorsement of multilateral security posture during the 1990’s. In the initial years of Bush administration, various efforts were also made to increase military cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. It was seeking to turn Southeast Asia, and by extension ASEAN into a security organization. The efforts of bringing Southeast Asian countries into a military orbit were aimed at encircling and possibly containing China.

Richard Haass, former director of policy planning at the US Department of State, made the famous statement “a la carte multilateralism”-- a formulation interpreted to suggest that multilateralism was not rejected out of hand, but would be engaged only as and when the United States choose to participate. At that time Bush administration emphasized on concrete cooperation with “allies and friends” and formed new security partnership in the form of a “coalition of willing.” Bush administration’s early position resembled to “accountable multilateralism,” in which a premium was placed on making institutions to achieve concrete ends. President in the National Security Strategy 2002 stated, “Multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations.” However, he also cautioned: “International obligations are to be taken seriously and that are not to be undertaken symbolically to rally support for an ideal without furthering its attainment.”<sup>13</sup> Southeast Asia’s response to these elements of Bush administration’s policy was generally negative. The region had done much to build multilateral groupings

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<sup>13</sup> Bush, George W, National Security of the United States, September 2002



over the preceding decade and feared opposition and US unwillingness to them would sound their death knell.<sup>14</sup>

Following the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, its relations with Southeast Asia as well as with rest of the Asia-Pacific region shifted to a concentration on combating terrorism. The issue had a special resonance in Southeast Asia, where government had been battling various insurgencies and terrorist groups long before the 9/11 attack. Moreover, it soon became evident that Southeast Asia was an area in which Al-Qaeda terrorist had lived, traveled, and cooperated with other groups most notably the Jemmiyah Islamiyah network. The Bush administration laid emphasis on both bilateral and multilateral approaches to combat the threat of terrorism in the region and redefined its foreign policy outlook. It encouraged and put diplomatic pressure on various multilateral organizations to adopt counterterrorism measures. In addition, it cooperated in various counterterrorism initiatives launched by ASEAN and the ARF. However, in the post-9/11 environment, the Bush administration regarded the participation in multilateral organizations was an important step to play a significant role in the Southeast Asian and the Asia-Pacific region. It identified both APEC and the ARF as important multilateral organizations in their respective fields, which could fulfill its interest in the region.

#### **US Participation in ARF Activities:**

The United States became an active participant in the ARF since its creation and strongly supported its continued development. The level of participation within the ARF at different point of time varies but the average level of support in the two evaluated categories “Chairmanship of the Inter-Sessional Group (ISG) and Inter-Sessional Meeting (ISM)” and “hosting the workshop/seminar” was good. During 1995 to 2000 the United States participated seven times as a chair of the ISG or the ISM. Within this

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<sup>14</sup> Limaye, Satu P (2004), “Minding the Gaps: The Bush Administration and US: Southeast Asia Relations, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 26, no.1, pp: 73-93.

period eight ARF workshops were held in the United States.<sup>15</sup> In "Annual Security Outlook 2000," issued by the ARF, the United States confirmed its continuous participation in the ARF in the future course of action. It stated: "We strongly support the ARF as confidence-building institution as well as vehicle for promoting peace and stability over longer term with us." The United States believed that the ARF had made significant progress during 1994-2000 inter-sessional years under the leadership of Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan as ARF chair.<sup>16</sup> During that period it put emphasis on the regional cooperation on maritime issues and emphasized the role of preventive diplomacy.

After the 9/11 incident, there was a significant change in the US role in various multilateral organizations, including the ARF. During 2001 to 2007, there were certain areas where the US cooperation and participation in the ARF was more clearly visible. They were maritime security and anti-piracy, illegal arms trafficking, and most importantly war against terrorism.

#### **Maritime Security:**

Complexity and ambiguity are hallmarks of security environment, especially in the maritime domain. In addition to the potential for major combat operations at sea, terrorism has significantly increased the nature of nonmilitary, transnational, and asymmetric threats in the maritime domain. The safety and economic security of the United States, therefore, depends upon the secure use of the world's oceans. Realizing these facts, the Bush administration reviewed and strengthened all of its strategies to combat the evolving danger of maritime threats. Various departments also implemented a

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<sup>15</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum, Annual Security Outlook 2000, United States of America, available at <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/Publications/AnnualSecurityOutlook2000/UnitedStatesofAmerica/tabid/245/Default.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> Heller Dominick (2005), "The Relevance of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) for Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol 27, No: 1

number of maritime security strategies, which provided an effective layer of security since 2001.

After coming to power, President George W. Bush soon realized that maritime security could be best achieved by blending public and private maritime security activities on an international scale into an integrated effort that addresses all maritime threats. One important step in this direction was to use the platforms of multilateral organizations to combat the threat posed by maritime terrorism and other illegal activities in the sea. Therefore, the United States showed active interest in various measures taken by the ARF to combat global maritime threat.

The chairman of the ARF, in the "ARF Statement on Cooperation Against Piracy and Other Threats to Security" issued on 17 June in 2003, gave the following statement:

“Maritime security is an indispensable and fundamental condition for the welfare and economic security of the ARF region. Ensuring this security is in the direct interest of all countries and in particular the ARF countries. Most maritime armed-robberies in the Asia-Pacific region tend to occur in the coastal and archipelagic waters; to deal with this increasingly violent international crime, it is necessary to step up broad-based regional cooperative efforts to combat transnational organized crime, including through cooperation and coordination among all institutions concerned, such as naval units, coastal patrol and law enforcement agencies, shipping companies, crews, and port authorities.<sup>17</sup>”

Realizing the threats posed by piracy and armed-robbery against ships in the Asia-Pacific region, the ARF placed special importance on the protection of the maritime security which must be based on recognized international law like the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention. It also mentioned that Effective responses to maritime crime required regional maritime security strategies and multilateral cooperation in their implementation. The United States responded positively to various steps taken by the ARF to combat piracy and maritime crime. The 11<sup>th</sup> ARF Ministerial Meeting held on 2 July 2004 in Jakarta reviewed the progress of its effort to combat maritime piracy and armed-robberies against ships. Various participating countries including the United States shared their

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<sup>17</sup> See the Chairman's Statement on Cooperation Against Piracy and Other Threats to Security, 2003, available at <http://www.aseansec.org/14837.htm>

experiences to combat the crime with member states of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

On the basis of a decision taken on the 11<sup>th</sup> ARF held on 2 July 2004 in Jakarta, Singapore and the United States co-hosted an ARF CBM on “Regional cooperation in Maritime Security” in Singapore on 2 to 4 March 2005. The meeting was attended by all the major Asia-Pacific countries, the ASEAN secretariat, and the IMO members. The co-chair of the ARF CBM stated that the meeting was built on the positive dynamics that had developed within the ARF since the adoption of the 2003 ARF statement on “Cooperation Against Piracy and other Threats to Maritime Security,” as well as the consensus on the importance of maritime challenges and the need to manage threats to maritime security through comprehensive national strategies and multilateral cooperation that was forged at the ARF workshop on maritime security co-chaired by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States in September 2004.<sup>18</sup> According to the co-chairs report, the meeting sought to take the next step by identifying concrete “solution sets” through focused discussions in four key areas: multiple cooperation, operational solutions to maritime security, shipping and port security, and applicable technology for maritime security. As realized by most of the Asia-Pacific countries, the meeting accepted that the maritime security agenda had moved beyond its traditional concern of maritime piracy and armed robbery to include the threat of maritime terrorism and other transnational maritime crimes. The meeting noted the efforts of many ARF member countries to strengthen measures against maritime piracy like the establishment of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency. It also recognized the US identification of a performance model that would provide a framework of collaboration on all the critical elements of maritime security. The United States made presentations on technological solution to maritime security threats. The CBM was considered as a great success and the participants applauded the informal US efforts to assist the littoral states in capacity building in maritime security.

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<sup>18</sup> Co-Chairs Report, ARF CBM on Regional Cooperation in Maritime Security, 2-4 March 2005, Singapore, [www.aseanregionalforum.org](http://www.aseanregionalforum.org)

On 23 January 2007, the ARF took a crucial step by carrying out its first operational exercise aimed at shoring up defenses against maritime security threats. Singapore took the initiative and conducted the operation where 21 nations including the United States, Russia, China, India and Japan participated in the onshore-simulated exercise. It was for the first time that an operational exercise was carried out under the umbrella of the ARF. One hundred and two delegates, including military and naval officers, port authority representatives and policy-makers participated in the event held at the Singapore Navy's Tactical Training Centre at Changi Naval Base. The United States coordinated and cooperated in the operation realizing the fact that the maritime security threat had clearly moved beyond its traditional concerns of maritime piracy and armed robbery to include the threat of maritime terrorism.

#### **Illegal Arms Trafficking:**

Another important threat that is a major source of concern for all the countries of the world, including the United States, is the illegal arms trafficking. The ARF recognized that illicit trafficking in small arms posed a danger to the well-being of citizens, economic and social development, and regional security of nations. Therefore, it emphasized on both global and regional initiatives to combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of and trafficking in small arms. A number of measures were suggested by the ARF member countries to deal with illicit trafficking, such as information exchanges on effective practices and national legislations and improved cooperation among law enforcement agencies. The illegal arms trafficking provided fuel to terrorism. The United States identified the ARF as one of the important forum to deal with this problem.

The "ARF Experts' Group Meeting (EGM)" on transnational crime was held on 16 to 17 April 2001 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In the EGM, a number of experts raised the possibility that the ARF countries exchange information concerning the illicit transfer of small arms. Coordination among the members was considered very important to deal with this problem. In the meeting the United States made presentation on various steps taken by it to deal with the small arms transfer and encouraged other members of the

ARF to play an active role in the overall UN process to prevent this crime. Emphasizing it as an important global threat, information sharing and data gathering by all members on internal arms trafficking was considered important by the United States.<sup>19</sup>

**Counter Terrorism Measures:**

Terrorism constitutes a grave threat to stability, peace, and security in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. Terrorism is a multidimensional threat as it has links with transnational organized crime, such as money laundering, arms smuggling, people smuggling, and the production of and trafficking in illicit drugs. It is also associated with the illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological, and other deadly materials. As terrorism has multiple dimensions, manifestations, and causes and respects no national boundaries, it is a complex phenomenon that requires a comprehensive approach and unprecedented international cooperation. The ARF is not known to have taken a serious stand on international terrorism during the early years of its evolution. But the 9/11 incident changed all that. The ARF issued a statement on counterterrorism in 2002 and emphasized that the fight against terrorism required a comprehensive approach and unprecedented international cooperation.<sup>20</sup>

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the United States, in fact, changed the security scenario all over the world. The US declared “war on terror” had a bearing on ASEAN states both within the domestic front and at the regional level. The Bush administration assigned the role of critical second front to the Southeast Asian countries in the war against terrorism. It was done after the discovery of internationally and regionally linked terrorist cells plotting against the United States and its regional assets in several countries of the region. Southeast Asia, with its combination of large Muslim populations, dissident, and separatist movements; porous borders and easy transitional

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<sup>19</sup> Co-Chairmen’s Summary Report of the ARF Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Transnational Crime, Seoul, 30-31 October, 2000 and Kuala Lumpur, 16-17 April 2001., URL:  
<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=7IrXj2KkiD4%3D&tabid=66&mid=401>

<sup>20</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum statement on counterterrorism, 2002, available at  
<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/AseanRegionalForumARFStatementonCooperativ/tabid/81/Default.aspx>

communication was characterized by Washington's observers as a "fertile breeding ground for terrorist operations."<sup>21</sup>

Southeast Asia was perceived as a hotbed for terrorist activities including training, financial transactions, and terrorist acts. By 2006 there was a significant increase in the terrorist activities in the region. Between 1986 and 2004 there were 619 terrorist incidents in the region. There were 296 incidents between 2001 and 2004 alone. The United States noticed as early as 2000 that the flow of terrorists was moving towards the East and Southeast Asia from other regions. Southeast Asia proved to be a fertile land for terrorists group for many reasons. The most important factor was by the relatively weak central governments of many of the states and considerable social and political instability particularly in Indonesia. The connection between terrorism in Southeast Asia and the Islamic faith made it easy to gain support in the region even if most Muslims were moderate and had no connections with the terrorist activities.

While many countries came forward to assist the United States in combating terrorism, there were concerns in certain circles about the derivability of cooperating with the United States.

First, the most important concern was about the impact of cooperation with the United States on public sentiment in these countries. These calculations, however, convinced at least some Southeast Asian countries that the United States, in the wake of 9/11, would better appreciate the constraints under which they operated and make Washington more sympathetic and helpful in their unique national terrorism battles.<sup>22</sup>

Another concern in Southeast Asia, notwithstanding repeated denials by the Bush administration was that the US war against terrorism appearing as a struggle against Islam. Unfortunate wording used at times by the Bush administration gave credence to

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<sup>21</sup> Vaughn, Bruce (2005), "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *CRS Report for Congress RL31672*, February 7, available at, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org).

<sup>22</sup> See Limaye, Satu P (2004), "Minding the Gaps: The Bush Administration and US: Southeast Asia Relations," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 26, no.1, pp-73-93.

this Southeast Asian worry. A third consideration for Southeast Asia was that their economies were still relatively weak and US exaggerations of the terrorism problem in Southeast Asia threatened to undermine their fragile economies particularly the lucrative tourist sector.

In addition, the United States had its own concerns about terrorism in Southeast Asia and the response of governments there. The United States established that its primary strategy in combating terrorism would be a war conducted largely by military means. Countries were expected to choose sides and expected to publicly endorse Washington's regional and global initiatives. Bush's "you are either with us or you are against us" approach was echoed in Southeast Asia.<sup>23</sup> Then, there was a channeling of relationship with Southeast Asian countries through their national militaries, especially their intelligence and counterinsurgency components. Accordingly, over the last several years Bush administration effectively constructed a hub-and-spoke arrangement of bilateral, counterterrorist-oriented relationship with Southeast Asia states.

However, despite the different perceptions and specific disagreements between the United States and Southeast Asian countries about the war against terrorism, over the time US-Southeast Asian cooperation against terrorism generally improved. A major impetus to this cooperation was the discovery of terrorist plot in the region and incidents like Bali bombings on 12 October 2002 and the terrorist attack on Marriot Hotel in June 2003. The Bali bombings drove home the reality of the terrorist presence in Indonesia, and thus significantly enhanced the potential for region-wide counterterrorism cooperation. These incidents also cleared the path for increased cooperation against terrorism and a commitment to the management of the policy and perceptual gaps on the issue. During his October 2003 visit to the region, President Bush emphasized the positive aspects of cooperation with Southeast Asia in the war against terrorism. The cooperation in the war against terrorism gave a fillip to regional multilateral cooperation

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<sup>23</sup> See Mauzy, Diane k. and Job Brian L, (2007), "US Policy in Southeast Asia-Limited Re-engagement After Years of Benign Neglect," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No: 4, pp 662-642.



and increased US engagement with these efforts. Such an effort was consistent with Bush administration's emphasis on "accountable multilateralism" despite complains within the region that the United States was turning regional organizations such as APEC into terrorism-fighting, security-oriented organizations contrary to their originally envisioned purpose.

However, prior to the 9/11 terrorist attack, ASEAN and the ARF had done little to curb trans-national terrorism; there was no legal commitment, but only a pledge to fight transnational crime in general and enhance cooperation. Terrorism was indeed neglected, but the illegal trafficking of narcotics and women was a much more pressing concern for Southeast Asia at that time. Not even during 2000, with an apparent surge of terrorist activities and related deaths, was it recognized that terrorism had to be targeted specifically on the multilateral level. The failure to take terrorism seriously changed, at least on paper, after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001. Since then, only unilateral and bilateral attempts were made to deal with the situation in the Southeast Asian region. These attempts focused on security coordination of national agencies and the sharing of information among states. The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia signed the Southeast Asian Trilateral Counterterrorism Agreement in May 2002. According to critics, the success of this agreement was limited. In July 2003 the Malaysian Government unilaterally set up a regional counter-terrorist center with the assistance of the United States. In competition with the Malaysian regional center, Thailand and Indonesia established their own centers. There were several attempts to coordinate regional efforts to combat terrorism, often under pressure and in cooperation with the United States. Such attempts started when the United States virtually forced ASEAN to sign the May 2002 anti-terror treaty.

Realizing the pressure of the threat posed by terrorism, the Chairman of ARF made a statement on counterterrorism measure on 4 October 2002, which stated:

"The threat of international terrorism to international peace and security requires concerted action to protect and defend all peoples and the peace and security of the world. Recognizing that terrorism and its linkage with transnational organized crime form

part of a complex set of new security challenges, we stress the necessity to address them urgently in all aspects and in all forums, including the ASEAN Regional Forum.<sup>24</sup>”

The ARF’s annual plenary 2002 held in Brunei concluded with a call to support US global “war against terrorism.” In the session more conspicuous issue was whether the United States would bend the collective ARF to support its anti-terror campaign. US Secretary of State Colin Powell played a prominent role in the plenary influencing the ARF’s collective thinking on global terrorism. The US diplomatic hyperactivity at the ARF session was, for the most part, geared to convince the forum that the planet was still very much under siege from sundry groups of political terrorists with a common anti-civilization agenda. The US view was that the ARF should take that issue seriously and implement a newly-minted “statement on measures against terrorist financing.”<sup>25</sup> On 2 August 2002 Southeast Asian nations signed a comprehensive pact with Colin Powell to combat terrorism, cut-off terrorist funding, and develop more effective counter-terrorist policy.

After that the United States extended the hand of cooperation to all important multilateral organizations of the world in its so-called “war on terror.” Recognizing that the ARF could provide an impetus for cooperation in counterterrorism measures, the United States along with Malaysia co-hosted the ARF workshop on “Financial Measure Against Terrorism” from 24 to 26 March 2002 in Honolulu. This initiative boosted the common effort of the United States to work cooperatively along with the ARF in counterterrorism measures.

In the ninth meeting of the ARF held in Bandar Seri Begawan on 31 July 2002, participant countries acknowledged the US effort to deal with the issue and noted the

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<sup>24</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on Counterterrorism, 2002, available at <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/AseanRegionalForumARFStatementonCooperativ/tabid/81/Default.asp>

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<sup>25</sup> Rahman, Roslan (2002), “A US Dictated Agenda, at the ASEAN Regional Forum Meeting on July 31 in Brunei,” world affairs, *Frontline*, 7-14 August, Chennai.

holding of the workshop in Honolulu. The participating ministers welcomed the “ARF Statement on Measures Against Terrorist Financing” issued by the chairman on behalf of all participants, and agreed to review its implementation. The July 2002 ARF statement mandated several actions that could strengthen anti-terror cooperation, including the creation of financial intelligence units which would share information on public lists of terrorists whose assets were frozen as well as member’s implementation of several UN resolutions designed to halt terrorist financial transfers. The ministers also welcomed the establishment of an “Inter-sessional Meeting on Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM on CT-TC)” and noted that a concept paper submitted by the United States and Malaysia would serve as a good basis for the work of the new ISM. The ministers expressed appreciation to the United States and Malaysia as “Co-Chairmen of the ISM on CT-TC” in the next inter-sessional year. The meeting ended with ministers pledged to strengthen bilateral, regional, and international cooperation in combating terrorism comprehensively to make the region a safer place for all.

In June 2003, ARF members adopted two statements that linked new measures to fight piracy with anti-terrorism. At its Phnom Penh 10th Annual Meeting held in 2003, the ARF announced that experts of the member states were developing a legal framework that all countries could adopt as a uniform base to address transnational terrorism and crime in the Asia-Pacific region. Although the efficacy of such an effort appeared problematic owing to the varying levels of law enforcement transparency as well as political control of judicial authorities, the United States showed interest to the effort of the ARF. Optimistically, the 2003 ARF statement concluded that the forum’s work on “common security threats, including transnational crime, and piracy” had advanced the ARF to preventive diplomacy.

Pursuant to the decision of the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the ARF held in Laos on 29 July 2005, the second meeting of the “Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy (ISG on CBM and PD)” was held in Manila from 1 to 3 March 2006. The meeting was co-chaired by the Philippines and the

United States. Among the various issues discussed in the meeting combating terrorism was given special importance. In the meeting participants expressed concern on the continuing challenge posed by terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region. The meeting stressed the importance of strengthening regional cooperation within the context of the ARF to improve measures that would effectively combat the threat of terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region. Some participants cited the need for better information and intelligence sharing to fine tune the regional and global efforts. Participants also welcomed various counterterrorism initiatives and programs presented by Indonesia, the United States, and Japan, and reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism in the region. Some delegations stressed the importance of dealing with the root causes of terrorism and tackling the factors contributing to support for, and recruitment into terrorism. Such efforts at counterterrorism included maritime cooperative activities among countries to secure the seas and the increasing volume of maritime trade passing through the region's maritime area, capacity building through information exchange and training. The meeting also noted various military exercises undertaken by the United States to combat terrorism in the region.<sup>26</sup>

The United States showed active interest in the ARF and took part in all major counterterrorism initiatives like ARF Measures Against Terrorist Financing, Cooperation Against Piracy and Other Threats to Maritime Security, and endorsed ARF Statement on Cooperative Counter-terrorist Action on Border Security on 18 June 2003, etc. The United States recognized Malaysia's co-sponsorship of the ARF Inter-sessional Meeting on Counterterrorism and Trans-national Crime in Sabah in March 2003, and provided support for the opening of Regional Counterterrorism Center in Kuala Lumpur. It took some bilateral counterterrorism efforts with some Southeast Asian countries. During that period cooperation with the Philippines to tackle the terrorist threat in the southern Philippines remained a high priority. Various joint military operations like "Balikatan"

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<sup>26</sup> Co-Chair's Summary Report of Meeting of ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy, Manila, Philippines, 1-3, March, 2006, available at [www.aseanregionalforum.org/search](http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/search)

were conducted in the region. It strengthened security cooperation with Philippines. In November 2001 Washington meeting, Presidents Bush and President of Philippines Macapagal-Arroyo agreed to intensify the US military training and assistance program for the Philippines. US military aid to the Philippines in 2002 enhanced Philippine militaries capabilities in fighting terrorist groups, particularly the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which had held US hostages in Mindanao. The joint operation involved some 160 US trainers, including the Special Operations Forces. More than 400 support personnel provided advice and assistance to Filipino soldiers.

However, the United States was more interested in creating a worldwide web of anti-terror alliances on the assumption that nuanced differences over notions of terrorism could be papered over as long as two or more parties were able to cooperate with one another in a mutually beneficial manner. To meet this end, the Bush administration developed a strategy that included non-proliferation and counter-proliferation measures. This led to several attempts to coordinate regional efforts to tackle terrorism, often under pressure and in cooperation with the United States. The external influence made several states to reconsider the regional necessity of supporting a war against which they viewed as the concern of the United States. As a consequence, the anti-US feeling started growing in the Southeast Asian states. Bush strategy led to a much speculation about the possibility of a hidden US agenda to engage in covert military activities within the Southeast. Then US invasion of Iraq struck a twin blow to diplomatic relations and to attitudes of Southeast Asian populations. By invading Iraq without UN approval, US actions undercut the norms of sovereignty, territoriality, and noninterference that were seen by Southeast Asian states as fundamental to legitimacy. By fostering the impression of having mounted a campaign against Islam, the Bush administration angered the moderate Muslim populations of key Southeast Asian states like Indonesia and Malaysia.<sup>27</sup>

There were mixed views among various writers and analysts of Asia-Pacific region regarding the capability of the ARF to deal with terrorism. Director of Central Asia

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<sup>27</sup> See Mauzy, Diane k. and Job Brian L, (2007), "US Policy in Southeast Asia-Limited Re-engagement After Years of Benign Neglect," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No: 4, pp 662-642.

Caucus Institute Niklas Swanstrom said, "ASEAN is now in a weak position, the political strength and willingness to initiate formalized and active counterterrorism effort has been doubtful. Now the ARF is even worse position than ASEAN because the ARF not only have to coordinate policies within an organization but also coordinate efforts between two cultures of interaction i.e. the more direct and US formal culture, and the more informal Southeast Asian culture."<sup>28</sup> According to the critics of the ARF, the organization was largely inactive in dealing with terrorism, except for a few statements and workshops, which failed to yield operational results. Even, many members were reluctant to formalize the ARF, and the much-politicized question regarding terrorism only accentuated this trend. In addition, lack of support among the states for a US-dominated war against terrorism account for the weak impact of the ARF on the problem. The critics alleged that there was no regional structure, neither within ASEAN nor the ARF to face the challenge of trans-national, religious terrorism. Although the ARF acknowledged that terrorism had links with transnational crimes as well as illegal movements of nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly materials that pose a complex set of new security challenges, the forum itself was unable to establish common criteria to deal with them, legislation to stop them or collaborative enforcement mechanisms.<sup>29</sup> Therefore it was feared that if nothing was to be done to improve the functionality of the ARF with regard to combat terrorism, its importance would diminish in the Asia-Pacific region.

Despite its shortcomings, regional cooperation was considered as the best way to combat trans-national religious terrorism, not only by military force but also by increasing economic development, social stability, and political participation. So, it was expected by the advocates of regional cooperation that ASEAN and the ARF by taking a proper step and appropriate policy could tackle this complex problem. More cooperation with the major powers like the United States was emphasized in certain circles. The United States was considered indispensable because the Southeast Asian region was

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<sup>28</sup> Swanstrom, Niklas (2005), "Southeast Asia's War on Terror," *Orbis*, Volume IX, Nos. 1 & 2 winter/spring 2005

<sup>29</sup> Simon, Sheldon, (2006), *Realism and Regionalism in Southeast Asia: The ARF and the War on Terror*, Liow, Joseph Chinyong and Emmers, Ralf (eds) *Order and Security in Southeast Asia: Essays in Memory of Michael Leifer*, London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. p 100

pushed back into the US orbit much as during the war against communism. However, US involvement had both positive and negative effects. In the negative side the United States was increasingly seen as an imperialist power that seeks to expand its own interests in the region. In the positive side cooperation in the war against terrorism has gave a fillip to regional multilateral cooperation and increased US engagement with these efforts.

The truth was that the complex nature of transnational terrorism could not be dealt with through regional organizations without external support in the short run. The United States seemed to be the only power that was well-equipped to assist the Southeast Asian region both politically and militarily and through the active participation in regional organizations particularly the ARF. Notwithstanding differences on the scope, causes, and means of addressing terrorism, the over all effect of war against terrorism on US relations with Southeast Asia was to ease not eradicate earlier difficulties in bilateral relations, create more robust relations with certain countries, and consolidate ties with long-standing friends and allies. Despite differences, opportunism and pragmatism dominated the US role within the ARF in its various counterterrorism efforts. Moreover, ARF members were developing “coalition of the willing” to advance counter-terror cooperation. Therefore, the United States became hopeful that the ARF would become a more important security player to counter the threat of global terrorism.

The scope of US cooperation and coordination with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region further increased with the emergence of non-traditional and transnational security threats like lawlessness, natural calamities, illicit trafficking in WMD materials and technology, narcotics, and drug trafficking. The ARF is the platform where the United States could play a leadership role to challenge these transnational threats. Some experts from the Asia-Pacific region are still optimistic that the continued strengthening of US security dialogues and confidence-building measures with the members of ASEAN and through the ARF are among the many ways the United States is seeking to enhance politico-military ties with Allies and friends in the Asia-Pacific region. But US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s decision to skip the ASEAN foreign minister’s meeting and the ARF in 2005 pointed to a lack of US interest and no doubt stimulated an already growing diminished interest in a wider Asian grouping. The Bush administration

continues to view the ARF as an overly large underperforming talk shop that does not merit significant bolstering even though it is the only region-wide security institutions that includes the United States.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it is not easy to predict what role the United States would likely to play in the ARF in the future.

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<sup>30</sup> See Mauzy, Diane k. and Job Brian L, (2007), "US Policy in Southeast Asia-Limited Re-engagement After Years of Benign Neglect," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No: 4, pp: 662-642.



## **Chapter IV**

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### **Impact of US-China Relations on the ARF**

## CHAPTER-IV

In recent times, except the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), no other regional security organization enjoys both US and Chinese confidence. The relationship between China and the United States is considered important in the working of the ARF. According to realist viewpoint, China joined the ARF on the basis of the calculation that the US-led alliance system in the region was primarily aimed at China and the best way to reduce the significance of US bilateral arrangement was to accept multilateralism as an alternative. Due to the differences in ideology, history, and political organization between the United States and China, many analysts considered the US-China confrontation as the region's greatest potential threat. From any perspective, the ARF's fate was critically dependent on the attitude and behavior of China, a rising power whose long-term ambitions remained vague. Because, what China expected from multilateralism might be quite different from what the rest of the region expected from China's participation in multilateralism.<sup>1</sup>

China plays a key role in the Asia-Pacific security architecture because it is the biggest resident power in Asia, and it has the potential to become the "next superpower." The potential Chinese hegemony has also an additional significance within the ARF. The reason for this is that a number of ASEAN member countries have either identified China as the most imminent external threat or have unresolved dispute with it. During the formation of the organization, it was clear that China perceived the ARF as a vehicle for promoting multipolarity in the Asia-Pacific to counter US unipolar status in the post-Cold War era. Therefore, it became clear that the ARF was essentially dominated by balance of power consideration. The most important part was that if China was regarded as the regional power with the most suspect intentions, than the United States was regarded as the country with the most benign intentions by ASEAN states and some US allies in the Asia-Pacific region.

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<sup>1</sup> Naidu G.V.C (2000), "Multilateralism and Regional Security: Can the ASEAN Regional Forum Really Make a Difference? *Analysis from the East West Center*, No. 45, August.

**China Factor:**

The twenty first century is being referred to as both the “Asian era” and the “century of China.” According to some international thinkers, the age of Western culture and of the great powers has passed, and now we are living in a multilateral and multipolar world. Some of the Asian powers have already challenging the dominance and influence of the Western powers. The economic development of China has certainly been outstanding, and its enhanced economic power is linked to a growing voice in political affairs.

China, a rising economic and military power with an economy of more than \$7 trillion and a population of over 1 billion, sits on the northern doorstep of Asia. China’s rapid economic growth and its emergence as a great power is a defining event in the current geopolitical landscape of Asia. Ever since the discovery of China by Western nations, the West has continually tried to gain access to China. In contrast, many Eastern nations who were within China’s reach have preferred to keep her at arms length. The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) sheer geographical size, its location in the heart of Asia, its huge population and thus its potential as an economic power instills fear in many. Most of the international scholars also believe that China's rapid economic, social, and technological progress is transforming the global community.

The East Asian region is rapidly changing due to the rise of China, which is fueled by China’s impressive economic growth. China has the second largest economy in the world after the United States. It also has been the fastest-growing major nation for the past quarter of a century with an average annual GDP (gross domestic product) growth rate above 10%. China’s total trade in 2006 surpassed \$1.76 trillion making China the world’s third-largest trading nation after the United States and Germany. China’s new economic clout gave it new power and influence not only in East Asia but also in the entire Asia-Pacific region. China also has a larger diplomatic presence in the international relations. According to some international experts, what is more alarming is that China is an “unsatisfied” power whose goal is to dominate Asia and that the US and Chinese interest are bound to collide.

After the end of the Cold War many academicians and international relations experts noticed the emergence of China as a potential threat to ASEAN countries. Michael Leifer observed:

“The rising power in Asia-Pacific as the twenty first century approaches is China, whose leaders harbor a historical resentment of national humiliations inflicted on their weakened state by rapacious West. China’s successful past, Cold War economic reforms have provided it with a historic opportunity to realize a sense of national destiny, which many regional states view with apprehension.<sup>2</sup>”

Therefore, many scholars in the Asia-Pacific region emphasized the “China factor” in their analysis of the reasons why the ARF was created.

With the opening-up of China’s economy in the mid-1970’s and its rapid economic modernization program, the potential of a powerful, rising China became an area of concern. Economically, since China embarked on an aggressive economic modernization program and set up the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), it attracted massive “Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs).” These SEZs were close to Southeast Asia. Thus, while China was becoming a trading partner for the ASEAN states, it was also becoming a strong competitor for international markets. There was an increase in volume of bilateral economic trade between China and the ASEAN countries in the period of 1980 to 1990. However, the competition for markets and FDIs made China a formidable rival in the Asia-Pacific region.

The rapid economic development in the country also saw China embarking on a modernization program of its military. There was an acute awareness among ASEAN countries regarding China’s growing military strength, particularly its Navy. It was one the prime factors driving the desire of regional players to engage China in the ARF. China’s effort to expand its naval power was regarded as particularly worrisome in light of the China’s presence in South China Sea and its claim to the Paracels and Spratly Islands. The territorial disputes over the Spratlys involved mainland China, Taiwan, and the Southeast Asian states of Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. As the

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<sup>2</sup> Leifer, Michael (1996). ASEAN Regional Forum, *Adelphi Paper*, London.

Chinese Navy modernized and became stronger, there were concerns that the chances of conflict over the Spratlys could become imminent.

Finally, the domestic developments in China coincided with the period when the country was redefining its relations with most of the ASEAN states. During that period, China's domestic situation was loaded with uncertainties with the prospects of transition to a post-Deng Xiaoping era. There had been concern that the political system in China was changing, increasingly becoming less like the "Beijing-centered model of decision-making" that prevailed in the past. The role and significance of other state institutions increased due to the decline of the Communist Party of China. Thus, the confluence of these strategic developments with the developments within China had become major concerns shared across the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>3</sup>

As ASEAN states recognized China as a major power they were also suspicious regarding China's intention towards Southeast Asia. It was mainly China's unwillingness to deal with ASEAN as a corporate body. ASEAN's relationship with China was also complicated by the multiethnic makeup of many of the member states in which economic dominance and prosperity was often a cause of tension and conflict. In contrast, the United States was actively involved in difficult situations in East Asia with the potential for military conflict like the status of Taiwan. In this regard the United States was viewed as a helpful superpower to contain both China and Japan's potential hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region.

The ARF came into existence to promote multilateral security dialogues and cooperation among the countries of the Asia-Pacific region in different forms and at different levels. Its ultimate aim was to maintain peace and stability in the region and to promote regional development and prosperity. However, according to realist thinkers like Michael Leifer, the ARF was perceived by the ASEAN members as a tool to constructively engage China with good international citizenship in mind. At a less generalized level, a central ARF goal was the socialization of China to the point where

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<sup>3</sup> Caballero-Anthony, Mely (2005), *Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 121-123

there exists a stable expectation that the country would act as a “responsible regional power.”<sup>4</sup> As a part of that calculation, the ARF wanted the PRC to be constrained through its participation in an embryonic security regime and respect its rules and interests. So the ASEAN states wanted to constrain the power of China through political means within the cooperative process rather than a reliance on traditional military tactics.

However, China’s attitude towards the ARF has come a long way, from total reluctance to cautious support. When the ARF was formed China’s support was probably based on the assumption that the multilateralism would undercut the US-led alliance system and enhance its own importance, whereas the United States saw multilateralism as a challenge to its time-tested strategy of forward deployment and bilateral security arrangements. Again, out of the important extra-regional powers, China invoked the greatest difference in perceptions. Although the United States disputed a large measure of its goodwill in Thailand and the Philippines, the termination of conflict on the Indochina peninsula earned it some goodwill, especially from a country like Vietnam.

Before 1994, China was highly skeptical about the value of participating in regional multilateral organizations. It preferred to deal with its neighbors and with the major powers on a bilateral basis. China feared that any grouping of Asians would inevitably gang up against it as the largest, most obvious target. Therefore, when there were initial discussions in late 1980’s regarding the establishment of a multilateral organization in Asia, the Chinese leadership was not enthusiastic about the proposals. Publicly Chinese leaders argued that the region was too diverse and that the time was not ripe for such a body. Specific, more private concerns related to its fear that the status of Taiwan or the question of contested sovereignty in the East and South China seas might be a part of its multilateral deliberations. In addition, at the time when the ARF idea was first mooted, China was particularly concerned about the deterioration of its relationship with the United States, and irritated by the emergence of the United States as “sole superpower”

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<sup>4</sup> Foot, Rosemary (1999), “The Present and Future of The ARF: China’s Role and Attitude,” San, Khoo How (editor) *The Future of the ARF*, Singapore, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, p 119

after the collapse of the USSR.<sup>5</sup> Beijing believed that this increased the likelihood that such a multilateral security organization would be dominated by the United States and would turn into yet another venue for collective criticism of China's internal and external behavior. According to Chinese leadership, the most serious threat to its security was not an external military challenge but Western schemes to promote "peaceful evolution," a code phrase to subvert the Communist Party of China (CPC) by political and cultural infiltration designed ultimately to make China a Western dependency. This initial approach to the ARF reinforced and grew out of aspects of China's traditional security paradigm and the core values that have long been associated with the country: a real-politik approach to security together with a desire to retain autonomy, to be self-reliant, and to protect vigilantly its territorial integrity.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, in the post-Cold War period, the ASEAN members were not able to depend on a policy of containment against China because of their lack of countervailing. They shared no common security perspective and had differential relationships with Beijing. In addition, the economic opportunities provided by China's growing economy made a policy of cooperation an attractive option. As a part of their calculations, it may be asserted that ASEAN countries wanted China constrained through its participation within a co-operative security arrangement. They also wanted China to develop respect for standard international norms and principles. Moreover, they assumed that the PRC would find itself isolated within the arrangement if it failed to follow a policy of self-restraint. Among other objectives, the ARF was therefore expected to become a spectrum of dialogue helping regional states to deal with the "China factor."<sup>7</sup>

But convincing China of the ARF's utility was not an easy task. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) particularly resisted attempts to probe its doctrine and order of battle, while the Chinese leadership was apprehensive that an Asian organization might

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<sup>5</sup> Naidu, G.V.C (2000), "Multilateralism and Regional Security: Can the ASEAN Regional Forum Really Make a Difference?" *Analysis from the East-West Center*; No.45.

<sup>6</sup> See Foot, Rosemary (1999), "The Present and Future of The ARF: China's Role and Attitude," San, Khoo How (editor) *The Future of the ARF*, Singapore, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. p 119

<sup>7</sup> Emmers, Ralf (2001), "The Influence of the Balance of Power Factor Within the ASEAN Regional Forum," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vo 23, No 2, August, pp 275-289.

become involved in the Taiwan issue. Even after the formation of the ARF, China remained hesitant and defensive about joining a multilateral security institution. China was cautious concerning multilateral dialogues, being actually sensitive to intrusion into its internal affairs on subjects like Taiwan and Tibet, as well as territorial issues like Spratly Islands. Regardless, China joined the ARF, recognizing the political costs of non-participation in this forum. China could not afford to be excluded from such a group for fear of isolation in regional security affairs. Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen attended the ASEAN Foreign Minister's Meeting as a guest in July 1993 and agreed to establish the ARF. However, he asserted that the ARF should not make decision nor take action on a certain country, a certain region, and a certain question.<sup>8</sup> In addition, China's participation was conditioned on the assurance that Taiwan would not become a member of the ARF and Taiwan would be treated as an internal Chinese matter. Likewise, regarding dispute in the South China Sea, Beijing maintained since the first ARF meeting in 1994 that these should not be a part of the forum's agenda. So from the beginning it was clear that China did not want the ARF to evolve into a conflict-resolution mechanism.

In the positive side, China realized that the ARF was useful to it as a conduit for improving its relations with the states of Southeast Asia. For its perspective, ASEAN could work as a stabilizing force in the China-Japan-US triangular relationship. International observers assumed that if China did not support the ARF, it would lose a great deal. In addition to possible erosion in its relations with neighbours, especially ASEAN, a major setback in Asia-Pacific regional development would hurt China's economic interests. Therefore, China reluctantly joined the ARF, the official arena for multilateral dialogues and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

Once China became a member, it steadily developed a more positive stance on the ARF. Compared with the grudging and wary approach of the early 1990's, by 1998 Chinese elites were regularly praising the ARF, and appeared reasonably sanguine about

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<sup>8</sup> See Caballero-Anthony, Mely (2005), *Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. p 123



the gradual widening and deepening of ARF discussions. China's anxieties about joining the ARF were actually eased by ASEAN's core position in the organization. The ARF also adopted "ASEAN way" in conducting its affairs. The so-called "ASEAN way" was to emphasize informal dialogue and trust-building over formal agreements and concerted actions, avoid interference in internal affairs, and operate by consensus so that the most cautious member could set the pace. From China's point of view, these elements of the informal, non-institutionalized character of the organization reduced the risk of a coordinated effort to constrain its freedom of action.

Although China showed positive signs, however, it was argued by some international relations experts that the PRC could promote some of its selfish interests by adopting restrained behavior within the ARF and vis-à-vis its different participants. In addition, China's assertiveness in foreign policy led to a sense of insecurity and vulnerability among other regional states. For example, China's seizure of Mischief Reef in February 1995 and its military exercise in the Taiwan in March 1996, which led the United States to deploy two carrier battle groups to deter further Chinese military moves, complicated China's relations with ARF members. China undermined the premises of confidence building and trust on which the forum was based. However, the PRC continued its relations with the forum after the Mischief Reef incident mainly to promote multipolarism in the Asia-Pacific in view of its worsening relations with the United States and Japan.

China expressed strong reservation about the forum moving on to next stage – preventive diplomacy – on the stated grounds that confidence-building measures (CBM) process was still incomplete. It mainly opposed it due to the fear of external interference in its domestic affairs. Indicative of this was a warning by Chinese Foreign Minister Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, who stated: "No attempts should be made to use CBMs and preventive diplomacy to resolve internal conflict or problems of a country." On the contrary, Beijing preferred bilateral solutions to the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. China also objected to the establishment of ARF intercessional working groups within the ARF framework to deal with specific issues in between ministerial meetings;

but in 1996 it offered to co-chair a group on confidence-building methods with the Philippines. It was a prime illustration of China's more active approach towards the ARF.

Facing a united ASEAN, China agreed for the first time to multilateral discussions on the South China dispute in Brunei meeting of the ARF held in 1995. The PRC agreed that the 1982 Law of the sea could form the basis for these discussions. Since then this issue had been referred to in the subsequent ARF chairman's statements. Moreover, in the longer term, the ARF discussions of the Spratlys issue served to underline that it was essentially an ASEAN-China matter in which other states were not supposed to directly involve. Conterminously with the reference to the Spratlys dispute at ARF summits, China and ASEAN put the matter formally on the agenda of the annual China-ASEAN consultations. At the sixth ARF meeting held in Singapore in July 1999, the ARF took note of the regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea which was being prepared by ASEAN. The Code of Conduct was based on self-restraint, the non-use of force, and peaceful resolution of disputes. It relied on the norms and principles initially introduced in the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) of 1976. In 2002, Declaration of the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea was finally adopted. Parties agreed to resolve their territorial disputes by peaceful means without resorting to the threat or use of force through friendly consultation and negotiations by sovereign states directly concerned in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law.<sup>9</sup>

After initially opposing the notion of preventative diplomacy, later China supported the concept while seeking to carve out the Taiwan issue and its other territorial disputes from it. It took part in the ARF track-two seminars on the subject held respectively in Seoul in May 1995, in Paris in November 1996, and in Singapore in September 1997. Moreover, it was a participant at a workshop on preventive diplomacy organized by CSCAP Working Group on Confidence-and Security-building Measures held in Bangkok from 28 February to 2 March 1999. China's public statements at the ARF endorsed the concept of "mutual security."

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<sup>9</sup> Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, Phenompenh, Cambodia, 4 November

In the Annual Security Outlook 2000, issued by the ARF, China praised ARF's value in promoting multipolarity, a structural condition that Beijing preferred since it believed that multipolarity imposed some constraints on the exercise of US power and established a place for China itself in creating an international order<sup>10</sup>. During 2000-2001, China's level of comfort with the ARF increased due the organization's structure and the way various security questions were addressed.

China recognized the utility of the ARF process because it provided opportunities to disprove or undermine what it referred to as the "China threat theory." Indeed, China in November 1997 was called upon by the ARF ISG on CBMs to explain the nature of its border agreements with a number of countries that comprised a number of CBMs. This request fit well with an obvious desire on China's part to demonstrate through such agreements that it was committed to the idea of confidence building and demonstrated through such concrete behavior that it was truly supportive of enhancing peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. Those agreements provided useful opportunities for China to explain its so-called "New-Security Concept (NSC)," an idea that was elaborated most vigorously after the development of the US-Japan defense guideline agreement, and which was particularly prominent after a year of successful bilateral and multilateral diplomacy as exemplified by summits with the United States, Russia, Japan, ASEAN, ASEAN+three, and the ARF. The promotion of NSC performed several functions for Chinese diplomacy. It also became a diplomatic means of attacking the United States for the continuance of its alliance arrangements. Thus, the NSC was used as a way of lambasting bilateral alliances as being destabilizing and representative of old-style, Cold-War thinking. Actually the NSC was an attempt to weaken US ties with its Asian allies - especially Japan - and reduce the US presence in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it became clear that without the ARF process, Chinese exposure to and debate

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<sup>10</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum, Annual Security Outlook 2000, China, available at <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/PublicLibrary/Publications/AnnualSecurityOutlook2000/China/tabid/245/Default.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> See Foot, Rosemary (1999), "The Present and Future of the ARF: China's Role and Attitude," San, Khoo How (editor) *The Future of the ARF*, Singapore, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. pp 123-124

of ideas associated with cooperative security would have been less complete or not happened to all.

Due to the economic and security challenges posed by China, the Southeast Asian nations choose a course of engaging China, assuming that it would lead to China's participation in a system of regional order in which the costs of any use of force in dealing with problems with its neighbours would be outweighed by benefits. The key to this approach was the ARF. Fundamentally, the ARF's one of the primary goals was to enhance China's stake in regional cooperation. Engagement with the PRC was the region's important alternative because it was impractical to take on China militarily. But the fulfillment of this goal was to depend on whether China wished to adopt the ARF's rules of engagement. China to begin with at least paid lip-service to the standard of international norms promoted by the ASEAN states through the ARF.

Nevertheless, there were various worrying elements to Chinese behavior that could negatively impact on the ARF. China argued that the "ARF process shall move at a pace comfortable to all participants<sup>12</sup>." Chinese officials continued to make reference to the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, which required in their view diversified forms of dialogue at various levels and through various channels, and only incremental advancements in proposals and recommendations at the ARF level. In the case of territorial issues, ASEAN states were concerned that China was reluctant to move forward its averred desire to put the sovereignty issue aside and to start joint development of the resources in the area. However, the most important cause of concern was the China's competition and confrontations with the United States, which bound to effect the effective functioning of the forum.

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<sup>12</sup> See Foot, Rosemary (1999), "The Present and Future of the ARF: China's Role and Attitude," San, Khoo How (editor) *The Future of the ARF*, Singapore, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. pp 127-128

**US, China, and the ARF:**

Most analysts and experts of international relations say that no relationship would be as important to the twenty first century as the one between the United States, the world's great power, and China, the world's rising power. They say that the Sino-US relations would be a major factor in determining the future course of global politics. They have characterized the present Sino-American relations as complex, multifaceted, and unpredictable with the United States and the PRC being neither allies nor enemies. Both the countries also had vast differences in history, ideology, regional perspective, values, attitudes, culture, and economic conditions. As the ARF is the only security forum where both the countries enjoy confidence, most of the international experts agree that active cooperation and participation of the United States and China is essential for the success and relevance of the organization. Right from the time of creation, both the countries, however, assumed different roles and set different goals in the ARF.

The three regional players namely the United States and Japan on the one hand and China on the other held opposing expectations of the role of cooperative security arrangement. The United States perceived the multilateral security dialogue as a means of complementing its bilateral arrangements with regional states. US reliance on bilateral security structure was further demonstrated since the formation of the ARF. By establishing the ARF, the ASEAN states recognized the need for a new security structure in the post-Cold War era that could supplement existing bilateral relations. Japan regarded the ARF as supplementary to its alliance with the United States and as an instrument to preserve an ongoing US engagement in East Asia.

In contrast to the United States and Japan, China perceived the ARF as a vehicle for promoting multipolarity, defined with reference to countering US unilateralism. The PRC advocated a multilateral perspective in the Asia-pacific that would include not only the traditional Sino-Japanese-US triangle but would also recognize India, Russia, and the ASEAN states as relevant regional actors. China embraced ASEAN's diplomatic centrality and managerial role within the ARF as a way to enhance multipolarity in the

Asia-pacific and to avoid US domination of the cooperative security. The ARF provided the PRC with a diplomatic tool to preserve its political ties with the ASEAN states and to avoid potential isolation in the Asia-pacific.

In addition to its participation in the ARF, China opposed US unilateralism in the Asia-pacific through other diplomatic means. It tried to improve relations with number of Southeast Asian states. e.g.:- Sino-Malaysian relations improved in 1990's as a result of a shared desire for a multipolar regional order. Malaysia opposed US domination of the ARF and APEC, and China supported its increasingly anti-Western foreign policy. China became a part of East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) and ASEAN plus 3,<sup>13</sup> which excluded the United States and provided china with alternative and strategic partners. As the rising economic power in the region, China used ASEAN plus 3 to enhance its influence and encouraged the expansion of the group's agenda beyond economic issues.

The two major powers assumed significant differences regarding the role of the ARF, which sometimes effected the normal functioning of the organization. The United States, as part of its broader Asia-Pacific policy of engagement with China, expected the ARF to perform a certain structural and leadership role through confidence-building measures that involve the discussion and eventual resolution of outstanding disputes. It was for this reason United States was less than enthused about the progress of the ARF as a multilateral security Forum. The problem also arose regarding the US challenge to ASEAN's leadership in the ARF and its measured support for multilateralism. The United States always criticized the ARF for its lack of ability to address properly core regional security issues such as Korean Peninsula and Taiwan. Moreover, Washington did not consider the ARF's progress in over-coming mutual suspicion among states to be impressive one. This was the reason why the United States continues to put a higher priority for bilateralism in its approach to regional security. The US bilateralism puts ASEAN's central role in regional multilateralism under increasing pressure.<sup>14</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>13</sup> ASEAN plus 3: ASEAN plus China, South Korea, and Japan

<sup>14</sup> See Sukma, Rizal (1999), "ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should 'The Drive' Be Replaced?" *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol.27, No.3, pp 236-255.

the US emphasis was more on the structures and rational legal norms that provide for the arbitration and resolution of dispute and conflicts. The ARF, on the other hand was unwilling to institutionalize a process that might result in the agenda and pace of development spiraling out of control. Familiarity and accommodation leading to contained and quite diplomacy was traditionally the ARF's instrument of choice.

In contrast, China expected the ARF to function as an independent organization and was extremely anxious that the organization did not draw closer to the United States and Japan. The ARF was familiar with China's predicament and tried to maintain certain latitude in its dealing with the United States and Japan in order to engage China.<sup>15</sup> It was essential because China was an emerging force in the Asia-Pacific. However, China's role in the ARF suggested that Beijing continue to view the ARF as a secondary instrument of regional order. It continued to oppose the institutional development of the ARF out of a fear that it would compromise the norms of sovereignty and non-interference. China argued that the ARF should remain as a forum for consultation, confidence-building, and dialogue rather than mediation and problem-solving. Notwithstanding its "New Security Concept," which was apparently geared to the promotion of common security and multilateralism, there remained in China's world view a strong realist element, in which power-balancing occupied an important place. According to Beijing, the prime mover of regional order in Asia-Pacific was the relationship among the major powers, especially itself, the United States and Japan. Therefore, the ASEAN-led ARF could not by itself guarantee the peace and security of the region.

Therefore, China's position and role in the ARF often created a sense of frustration and posed a dilemma for ASEAN. On the one hand, ASEAN tactically expected the ARF to serve as a vehicle through which China's positive engagement in a region-wide multilateral security dialogue could be assured. For ASEAN member countries, the ARF without China's full participation would be meaningless. On the other hand, ASEAN

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<sup>15</sup> See Emmers, Ralf (2001), "The Influence of the Balance of Power Factor Within the ASEAN Regional Forum," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 23, No.2, August, pp 275-289

made it clear that it intended to undertake the “obligation to be the primary driving force of the ARF.” But the ASEAN faced challenges in undertaking that role. The absence of critical issues to regional security and stability, such as Taiwan on the agenda of the ARF, demonstrated the limited capacity of this forum. To accord more importance to China’s participation in the ARF would provide a greater opportunity for China to exploit its “special” place in the forum to its advantage. In contrast, this would weaken ASEAN’s claim to become the “primary driving force”. If ASEAN tried to impose its way to assert that role, this would entail the risk of hampering the normal ARF process. A more assertive ASEAN’s attitude towards China might be seen by Beijing as an attempt to entertain the idea of “ganging up against China.”<sup>16</sup>

As already mentioned, China joined the ARF because it offered China a chance to question the US leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region and to prevent Japan from assuming a military role. In addition it provided a forum to refute the theory of “China threat.” For ASEAN the peaceful incorporation of China into a system of regional order was a leitmotif of the launching of the ARF.<sup>17</sup> China’s involvement in the ASEAN-led ARF was a key indicator of its strategic approach to Asia-Pacific. But according to critics, this policy was a failure. The PRC basically joined the ARF as the prime beneficiary of the changing strategic environment in East Asia. Hence, the ARF did not contain sufficient incentive to counter a disposition towards hegemony by the PRC. In sum, the ARF seemed so far failed to operate as a structure of constraint on China’s regional foreign policy.<sup>18</sup>

In the initial years both China and United States were really doubtful about their role within the ARF. However, after the terrorist attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001, China realized that bilateralism was an essentially empty concept for the making of foreign policy, and regional multilateralism presented an effective way

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<sup>16</sup> Sukma Rizal (1999), “ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Should ‘The Drive’ Be Replaced? *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol.27, No.3, pp 236-255.

<sup>17</sup> Achariya, Amitav (2003), *Seeking Security in Dragon’s Shadow: China and the Southeast Asia in the Emerging Asian Order*, *Working Paper Series*, No.44, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, Singapore

<sup>18</sup> See Emmers, Ralf (2001), “The Influence of the Balance of Power Factor Within the ASEAN Regional Forum,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.23, No.2. pp 275-289



to protect China's core national interests.<sup>19</sup> Since then China continued to shy away from directly confronting United States over issues outside its immediate vicinity. Meanwhile, the use of regional policy as a way to protect China's core national interests from the expansion of US power continued to take an increasingly prominent position in Beijing's diplomacy. In some respects the conditions for China's multilateralism in Southeast Asia was put in place by the shift in Washington's priorities away from normative issues of human rights and trade in favor of the "war on terror." In fact, China's "New security Concept" reiterated at the July 2002 ARF meeting, originally proposed to the persistence of US bilateral alliances, emphasized that comprehensive security could be a basis for China's anti-terror cooperation. China proposed a new ARF "Security Policy Conference" consisting of military officers and defense officials in the ARF meeting held in June 2003. The idea would be to promote security through united action rather than seeking "absolute security for oneself and threaten other parties security." Although this initiative was also a part of a Chinese effort to present an alternative to US-dominated counterterrorism arrangement in Southeast Asia, it indicated China's growing role in regional counterterrorism cooperation. In that climate Beijing's attempts to shape the rules of international behavior, which appeared to be somewhat less of an open challenge to US power than on the debate on "Asian's values" triggered by some of the ASEAN leaders.<sup>20</sup>

The Asian financial crisis and the war on terror, however, strengthened the argument that the China had the opportunity to avoid Russia's fate by extending its influence through a multilateralism that did not directly challenge the United States or raffle the features of its neighbors. But, at global level also it was already possible to see some linkages of the ways in which China was using its relationship with ASEAN to develop counterweight to US power. For example: the statement of support for China's role in working towards a resolution of the North Korean nuclear weapons issue. Again China

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<sup>19</sup> Hughes, Christopher R.(2006), Nationalism and Multilateralism in Chinese Foreign Policy Implications for Southeast Asia, *Order and Security in Southeast Asia-essays in memory of Michael Leifer*, Rutledge, New York. pp 102-103

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

perceived the US security policy from a regional security perspective whereas the United States in particular because of the focus on the war on terror perceived the development more from a global security perspective.

President George W. Bush came to power promising during the election campaign to focus more on Japan and spend less time on issues with China. Bush administration's initial intentions towards China were a source of acute concern in Southeast Asia. China appeared to elicit two contradictory approaches from the incoming administration. The first was to regard China, in Secretary of State Colin Powell's words, as a "competitor or regional rival" and second to treat it as a less central player in US Asia policy. Both approaches deviated sharply from the Clinton administration's formulation of China as a "strategic partner and de facto treatment of it as a center piece of the US-Asia relationship." In the half-year in administration the Bush administration appeared to be setting a time on policy towards China that was considerably more antagonistic than the Clinton administration, especially in regard to Taiwan.

In 2002, the Bush administration's national security strategy report stressed that the United States had "profound" disagreements with China over Taiwan and human rights, condemned China for its failure to embrace democracy and freedom of religion, and took a particularly dim view of China's defense modernization.<sup>21</sup> From various efforts of initial Bush policy it became evident that the United States intended to take China off center stage of US Asia policy. By treating China as a less integral and determinative country to Asia's international relations, the Bush administration was again reinforcing China's distinctiveness from US allies and friends, while simultaneously highlighting its potential threat. This new US approach to China promised to complicate US-Southeast Asia relations due to the divergent assessments of the threat posed by China, a lack of co-

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<sup>21</sup> . George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House, September 2002), p. 5.

ordination on China policy, and fears among Southeast Asians that the evolving post-1995 rapprochement among themselves and Beijing would be interrupted.<sup>22</sup>

Sino-American relations changed radically following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. Given the new emphasis and priority on fighting against terrorism, both nations found a new common interest, which led to some improvement in relations. As US decision makers turned their attention to the urgent dangers of terrorism and proliferation, they seemed less inclined to view China as an actual or potential strategic competitor and more hopeful that, in the post-September 11 world, all the great powers would be “united by common dangers and increasingly by common values”. The fight against terrorism also served as common ground for US-China cooperation in the ARF. Various counterterrorism measures adopted by the ARF extended the ARF agenda of cooperative security while incorporating the United States and China into these plans. During the period of 2002-04 the Bush administration seemed to shift from its original neo-Cold War policy to tacit Sino-US condominium as Beijing and Washington proceeded to co-emerge as East Asia’s two hot spots, North Korea and Taiwan. To cope with Korea, China in 2003 launched the six power forum or the six party talks welcomed by Washington in preference to US-DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) negotiations. Both the issues had great significance as they were related to Asia-Pacific security. The ARF could not address Taiwan issue. However, the ARF meetings provided a unique multilateral opportunity to both China and the United States to address various issues related to North Korea by coordinating efforts to counter its threatening behavior and humanitarian disaster.

As President Bush began his second term in office, however, there were signs of mounting friction between Washington and Beijing and increasing skepticism, on the US side at least, that the relationship was as harmonious, and the interests of the two parties as compatible, as had often been claimed.<sup>23</sup> Alarm over the possible lifting of the European arms embargo helped to draw renewed attention to the pace and meanwhile,

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<sup>22</sup> See Limaye, Satu P (2004), “Minding the Gaps: The Bush Administration and US-Southeast Asia Relations, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, No.1, Vol. 26, pp 73-93.

<sup>23</sup> Towmey, Christopher P (2007), “Missing Strategic Opportunity in US-China Policy Since 9/11: Grasping Tactical Success,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No.4, pp 536-559

evidence that China was expanding its interactions with Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East raised the specter of a new global rivalry for power and influence. Following changes could be noticed in the US policy towards China in President Bush's second term.

First, an overtly confrontational stand was largely avoided, and bilateral communications remained intact at both political-economic and military, and strategic levels.

Second, through the administration's neo-containment policy in anticipation of conceivable future threats from China was re-emphasized. Various bases were established surrounding China in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Third, apparently alarmed by Beijing's emerging leadership in regional multilateral cooperation forums, the Bush administration attempted to utilize existing multilateral organizations somewhat more effectively, as Bush introduced terrorism issue to the 2002 APEC summit and Colin Powell convinced the ARF to take counterterrorism measures seriously.<sup>24</sup>

However, one important direction of President Bush's policy towards China was engagement or interaction with China with the objective of inducing it to become integrated with international system, and to adopt the behavior of a responsible and involved state. In 2005, US Secretary of States Condoleezza Rice stated: "The United States has reason to welcome a confident, peaceful, and prosperous China. We want China as a global partner, able and willing to match its growing capabilities to its international responsibilities." Due to the various efforts taken by the United States, China moved from being a relatively isolated country to one that became key participant in international institutions and a major trading nation. After the recognition of India and China as two most important emerging nations of the world by President Bush in 2005, there was further normalization of relation between China and the United States. In addition US-China economic relation grew significantly over the last two decades. US direct investment covered a wide range of manufacturing sectors, several large hotel

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<sup>24</sup> Dittmer, Lowell (2007), "Assessing American Asia Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLVII. No.4, July, pp-521- 535

projects, restaurant chains, and petrochemicals. Cumulative US investment in China was estimated at \$57 billion, through the end of 2007, making the United States the sixth-largest foreign investor in China. Total two-way trade between China and the United States grew from \$33 billion to over \$386 billion in 2007. The United States became China's second largest trading partner and China became the third largest trading partner for the United States. With these positive signs of US-China relations it was increasingly hoped by international experts that both the countries would coordinate their role in the ARF too.

### **Impact Assessment:**

The Bush administration has two long-term interests towards China: promoting a profitable equitable economic relationship and managing Beijing's challenge to the US-led international order.<sup>25</sup> Although the Bush administration managed tactical, day-to-day bilateral relations with efficiency and occasionally some deftness, the broader strategic issue of rising China was not adequately confronted. Despite the overall success of engagement in helping to shape China's interests in ways desired by the US Government, US political support for engagement was under strain.<sup>26</sup> As China's economic and military power grew, there was inconsiderable uncertainty about its future course. China's development raised concerns about the implications for US economic health, security, and global political influence. Therefore, many Americans were not confident that China's strategic interests were still compatible with those of the United States and argued that engagement did not sufficiently protect the United States against a China that could emerge as a threatening adversary in the future.

Former Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick gave the most thorough explanation of the Bush administration's approach towards China in a speech to the National Committee on US-China Relations on 21 September 2005. Zoellick called on China to act as a "responsible stakeholder" in global affairs. Zoellick pledged continuing

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<sup>25</sup> See Twomey, Christopher P. (2007), "Missing Strategic Opportunity in US China Policy Since 9/11: Grasping Tactical Success," *ASEAN Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No.1, July/August, pp 536-559

<sup>26</sup> Friedberg Aaron L (2005), "The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Vol.30, No.2, pp-7-45

US efforts to integrate China into the international community, but he also stated that the United States would “hedge” its security bets against the possibility that China might become aggressive or otherwise prove hostile to US interests.<sup>27</sup>

In Beijing, as in Washington, support for globalization was under strain. Chinese debated US intentions and how best to balance their relations with the United States. Some Chinese officials interpreted the US military deployments to Central Asia and outreach to Mongolia and Vietnam as part of an effort to encircle China. Beijing remained deeply concerned about the implications of US arms sales to Taiwan and military planners also feared that the United States in a crisis might seek to cut off China’s access to strategic commodities. Some Chinese strategists argued that the United States was seeking to thwart China’s economic development, citing US export controls on advanced technologies. Others believed that US calls for democracy betrayed an intention to foment social upheaval in China.

From US perspective Chinese were simply using multilateral diplomacy to pretend to be cooperative while building up militarily in a quest to supplant the United States as the hegemon of the region.<sup>28</sup> In the early 1990’s China joined regional groupings created by others only because it did not want to be left out. After fifteen years of experience in such groupings, China had an affirmative commitment to multilateral cooperation in the region and confidently took its own initiatives to strengthen it. From Chinese perspective its primary motivation for its participation in regional multilateral processes was to reassure its neighbors and the United States about its benign intentions. By joining multilateral organizations and taking multilateral initiatives China built a reputation as a “responsible power” and heads off hostile reactions to its growing might.

However, international observers differed as to whether China’s multilateral diplomacy was a carefully cultivated effort to advance national interests by reassuring those who might collaborate against an assumed Chinese threat or a genuine conversion

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<sup>27</sup> US China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda: A Responsible Course, A Report of an Independent Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>28</sup> Shirk, Susan L (2004), “China’s Multilateral Diplomacy in Asia-Pacific.” Available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2004hearings/written\\_testimonies/04\\_02\\_12wrts/shirk.htm](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2004hearings/written_testimonies/04_02_12wrts/shirk.htm)

to mutual security values inculcated by the experience of participating in multilateral processes. It was difficult to find empirical evidence to distinguish the two interpretations, and indeed, both may be occurring simultaneously.<sup>29</sup> According to some American observers, China might promote multilateral security cooperation in Asia for a number of instrumental reasons: not only as a mechanism for reassuring its neighbors, but also eventually to replace the US-centered system of bilateral alliances with a cooperative security architecture in which it plays a leading role. This role was reflected in the organizations like APEC and the ARF. Yet China's foreign policy officials and members of the unofficial policy elite might believe sincerely that the values embedded in multilateral cooperation were superior to the values embedded in the US bilateral alliances that originated during the Cold War.

The multilateral processes established in the Asia-Pacific region have much less binding force. Organizations like the ARF, APEC, and ASEAN plus 3 aims to use dialogue to create a normative influence on the actions of their members, but they have not yet established either specific rules or the mechanisms to enforce them. If China's multilateral diplomacy turns out to be "cheap talk" designed to lull others into believing that its rise is non-threatening until it has the capability to achieve its territorial objectives and dominate its neighbor, the ARF, APEC, and ASEAN plus 3 have no mechanisms to restrain it. From the standpoint of China's neighbors, the country's activism in multilateral settings is a reassuring signal but not a guarantee of non-aggressive actions. China is also recognized as a frustrated aspirant for the status of a regional dominant power. It is because China has been modernizing its military forces in such a way as to give it the capacity to project power into the regional order to support its aspirations to expand its influence.<sup>30</sup>

China is actually aware that in its current engagement with the United States it is very much the junior partner and the dialogue is between two unequal partners. China has

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<sup>29</sup> See Shirk, Susan L (2004), "China's Multilateral Diplomacy in Asia-Pacific." Available at [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2004hearings/written\\_testimonies/04\\_02\\_12wrts/shirk.htm](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2004hearings/written_testimonies/04_02_12wrts/shirk.htm)

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

long way to go to match the United States militarily, economic, and political terms.<sup>31</sup> The United States is equally conscious of China's ability to undermine US interests, for example in containing the spread of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and ensuring stability in the Asia-Pacific. China considered a number of recent US actions as primarily aimed at containment of China. These included the development of Theater Missile Defense, the enhanced security role of Japan under the Revised Defense Guidelines, enhanced security relations with Australia, close US security relations with India, and US participation in quadrilateral military exercise "Malabar 07." According to the Chinese foreign policy experts, the quadrilateral initiative was an effort by a democratic coalition to "contain" rising Chinese power in Asia. China considered the Malabar exercise as a step towards the creation of an Asian NATO. US nuclear modernization also provoked China among other countries.

While economic links between the United States and China were robust and growing, military-to-military relations remained relatively undeveloped, even tough problems, such as North Korea's nuclear ambitions required close coordination. Although Sino-US military relation reached its lowest point during EP-3 incident; bilateral military interactions rebounded in recent years, particularly since 9/11, and included a program of high-level dialogue, working-level talks, reciprocal ship visits, yet military relations remained modest and are hampered by mistrust. Washington and Beijing have had difficulty talking about two issues at the heart of the bilateral military relationship: Taiwan and strategic nuclear forces. President Bush and President Hu Jintao agreed in April 2006 to several confidence-building measures, including opening a dialogue on China's strategic forces modernization and US national missile defenses, but little has been accomplished to date.

Relations between China and the United States would continue to have a profound impact on the security of Asia. According to Professor Joseph S Nye, opinion polls conducted by a reputed research organization in 2008 indicate that one-third of

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<sup>31</sup> US China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda: A Responsible Course, A Report of an Independent Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations.2008



Americans believe that China will “soon dominate the world”, while nearly half view China’s emergence as a “threat to world peace”. In turn, many Chinese fear that the US would not accept their “peaceful rise”. International experts agree that maintaining good US-China relations would be a key determinant of global stability. If tensions between the two Pacific powers worsen, the whole of Eastern Eurasia could become divided in a new Cold War, and the prospects for confrontation and conflict would seem certain to rise. In contrast, a deepening US-China relations could bring with it increased possibilities for sustained worldwide economic growth, the peaceful resolution of outstanding regional disputes, and the successful management of pressing global problems, including terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Whether for good or ill, the most significant bilateral international relationship over the course of the next several decades is likely to be that between the United States and the PRC. As far-reaching as its impact may be, however, the future character of the US-China relationship is also profoundly uncertain in this century.<sup>32</sup>

However, in the recent years we can see a significant change in the US policy towards China. As US President Bush identified China as one of the emerging powers in Asia, there was a shift in Sino-US bilateral relationship. The United States sought a cooperative, constructive, and candid relationship with China that likely to contribute to the promotion of the shared interests in peace, security, and prosperity in the region. The United States welcomed China's engagement in Asia-Pacific and other organizations that promote security and economic development, including APEC, the ARF, and ASEAN plus 3. It considered China's accession to the WTO was a major step towards economic reform and the full integration of China into the global economy.

It is also true that China required peace and stability internationally, and cooperation with the United States to continue to grow and deal with its pressing domestic problems.<sup>33</sup> But even the Chinese people themselves could not know for sure which paths China should walk down. For the United States, the objective was clear: further

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<sup>32</sup> Friedberg Aaron L (2005), “The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?” *International Security*, Vol.30, No.2, pp-7-45

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*

integrating China into the global community offers the best hope of shaping China's interests and conduct in accordance with international norms on security, trade and finance, and human rights, and encouraging collaboration to confront the challenges both countries face. The United States needed to invest heavily to maximize the areas of cooperation with China and minimize the likelihood of conflict. Accordingly, China's leaders needed to maintain stable, if not amicable, relations with the United States, the world's preeminent power.<sup>34</sup>

On the basis of recent developments, we can expect a positive relationship between these two regional powers in various multilateral organizations, including the ARF. However, it is too early to draw any conclusion. Most of the international experts urge that both the United States and China must maintain a cordial relation in various ARF process like preventive diplomacy and confidence building. Otherwise the ARF would turn into a confrontational ground for major powers mainly the United States, China, and Japan. It is true that the United States now relies on Chinese savings and trade surpluses to finance its super-size budget deficits, hold down US interest rates, and prop up the value of the dollar. China, indeed, has become an engine for US economic growth. Politically, too, the United States depends on Beijing's assistance on challenges ranging from North Korea's future to the Iranian nuclear program. In reality the United States and China today are partners tied by interdependence. Therefore US cannot ignore China and vice versa. The US wants to ensure that China rises peacefully, without becoming an overt threat to US interests. Washington has sporadically attempted to enmesh China within the US-led order. If the United States fails, Beijing might work to undermine that order.<sup>35</sup> China has already begun to chart its own regional and global leadership path through initiatives like the East Asian Summit (EAS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organizations, "Peaceful Rise" rhetoric etc.

It is argued by many scholars that the United States in many ways holds the key to moving the Sino-US security relationship in a positive direction. The United States

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<sup>34</sup> See Friedberg Aaron L (2005), "The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Vol.30, No.2, pp-7-45

<sup>35</sup> See US China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda: A Responsible Course, A Report of an Independent Task Force, Council on Foreign Relations.2008

should focus on improving its political and security relations with China by being more proactive and prioritizing the strengthening of regional multilateral mechanism and institutions that could help to ensure Sino-US dialogue on broader security issues. This should include track II dialogue such as Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue and track I institutions such as the ARF.<sup>36</sup> In this way the United States could contribute creating a managed competition between the United States, and China in the Asia-Pacific. So, it is mainly the responsibility of the United States to guide and cooperate with China to play a significant role in the ARF along with the support of ASEAN states.

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<sup>36</sup> See Towmey, Christopher P (2007), *Missing Strategic Opportunity in US-China Policy Since 9/11: Grasping Tactical Success*, Asian Survey, Vol. XLVII, No.4, pp 536-559

## **Chapter V**

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### **Conclusion**

## CHAPTER-V

No other part of the globe holds greater potential benefits and challenges for the United States than the Asia-Pacific region. In the recent times, the Asia-Pacific has emerged strategically and economically the most important region for Washington. Since the last quarter of twentieth century, the world economy's center of gravity has shifted steadily to the Asia-Pacific, making the region a dynamic theater of global action. Political and security-related issues of the region have also generated attention around the world. For the past 60 years, the United States has played a vital and active role in economics and politics of the region. US economic and political ties to the Asia-Pacific region have resulted in a dense network of alliances and friendship as well. The United States has sustained its interest in the region through participation in important regional organizations like ASEAN, APEC, and the ARF.

Asia-Pacific is a vast mass of land and sea territory with huge economic and geopolitical potentials. As the Asia-Pacific region is contiguous to the US mainland and its Pacific territories, it remains of immense strategic interest to the United States. Therefore, US policy makers think that without a strong power projection in Asia-Pacific, US drive for global hegemony and domination would be compromised. The United States engages the Asia-Pacific region at the global, regional, and bilateral levels. It not only seeks to advance its policy interests, but also tries to build a sense of community within the region by promoting shared values in human rights, social stability, democratization, free markets, and regional security. According to Anthony McGrew and Christopher Brook, an isolationist posture towards the Asia-Pacific is no longer a rational option for the guardians of the US national interest. Indeed, the Asia-Pacific has become a focal point of the US post-Cold War energies and interests. The following reasons tell why it is important for the United States to remain engaged in the Asia-Pacific region.

First is the economic. Two-way US trade with economies of East Asia and the Pacific totaled approximately \$ 700 billion in 2007, accounting for 46% of total US international trade. Four of US top 10 trading partners are in East Asia and the Pacific region – Japan,

China, South Korea, and Taiwan. Between 1990 and 2000, export of US products to Asia grew by over 80% and imports to the United States from Asia went up by 150%. US direct investment in Asia tripled during the past decades to over \$200 billion, roughly equal to the amount Asians have invested in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Southeast Asia has a combined Gross National Product (GNP) of \$US800 billion (2008) and is the US' fifth largest trading partner. The US direct investment in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore accounted for more than \$50 billion in 2003. US private-sector investment in ASEAN exceeded \$150 billion in 2007, surpassing the US investments in each of China, Japan, and India. Most of the US top 500 transnational corporations (TNCs) have significant interests in the region. More than half-a-million Americans actually work in the Asia-Pacific region and many more millions of US jobs are dependent on trade with this region.

To the United States, furthermore, Asia-Pacific is a place of great “geopolitical consequence” because it sits astride some of the world's most critical sea-lanes. According to the Energy Information Administration, more than half of the world's annual merchant fleet tonnage passes through the straits around Indonesia. This includes more than 80% of crude oil supplies for Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The South China Sea, particularly the Spratly and Paracel island groups, are believed to have significant oil reserves. Estimates of oil reserves in the South China Sea range from 28 billion barrels to as high as a Chinese estimate of 213 billion barrels. These sea-lanes are a strategic part of the network of oil extraction, production, and distribution that is being consolidated by the United States linking the Caspian and Gulf regions, Asian oil and natural gas fields and markets and the US mainland. Beyond geopolitics, what is most tangibly at stake is the security of sea lines of communication, resources of the South China Sea, and who guarantees regional security.

The potential for a major conflict breaking out has also been the greatest in Asia-Pacific. Aside from the three known flashpoints – Taiwan, South China Sea, and North

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<sup>1</sup> Glossman, Brad (2005), “Traditional Security Issues With Regard to the US Role in the Asia-Pacific, The Indonesian Quarterly, Vol.33, No.1, pp 84-93

Korean Peninsula – this region is the home to largest number of territorial and maritime boundary disputes.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the region is strategically significant for the United States too. The United States maintains the largest military command in the Asia-Pacific known as US Pacific Command (PACOM). PACOM interacts with the armed forces of 14 out of Asia-Pacific's 45 countries. It participated in over 1,500 military exercises and other engagements with the region during last decade. In addition, PACOM continues to provide education and training to deepen regional security dialogue and to develop crisis action planning, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster response, and search and air rescue skills. The number of US troops on land and afloat in the region has surpassed those forward deployed in Europe: 100,000 troops are based in Japan (47,000) and South Korea (37,500), with the rest in Guam, afloat or on various attachments. The United States also sanctions about 1,200 troops each in Singapore and the Philippines. Buttressing this military presence the United States remains a major arms supplier to the region and a critical source of advanced weapons systems and arms production technology.

US security relations with Southeast Asia are centered on two treaty allies: the Philippines and Thailand. The "US–Thai Cobra Gold" exercise was the largest US exercise in Asia. The May 2006 drill featured over 7,800 troops from the United States and 4,200 from Thailand. In addition, Japan, Singapore, and Indonesia also participated. The 2006 "Balikatan" exercises with the Philippines involved approximately 5,500 US personnel and 2,800 Philippine personnel. With these exercises and others in the region, the United States improved the interoperability of its forces and those of its partners, improved joint response to emergencies, and enhanced their military capacity. The United States also has a very close security relationship with Singapore. The US–Singapore Strategic Framework Agreement covers cooperation in "areas such as counterterrorism, counter-proliferation, joint military exercises and training, policy dialogues, and defense technology."<sup>3</sup> Combined with Singapore's first-class full

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<sup>2</sup> Naidu, G.V.C (2003), "US and the Asia-Pacific: Future of the Alliance System and Regional Security, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.27, No.4, pp 516-533

<sup>3</sup> Tauzan, Bobby (2003). Current US Hegemony in Asia-Pacific, *Peace Researcher*, 21 December.

accommodation of the US Navy, the framework provides a perfect example of the "places, not bases" approach to aligning security cooperation.

In addition, the US-led alliance system continues to be the mainstay of US policy in the Asia-Pacific region. Currently the United States is bound to the Asia-Pacific by five mutual defense treaties – US-Philippines, ANZUS, US-South Korea, Southeast Asia collective defense, and US-Japan. US alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia provide a solid framework for security across East Asia and the Southwest Pacific. The US-Japan alliance is the lynchpin of US security in the region. The United States and Japan have moved actively in recent years to update the framework and structure of joint cooperation and strengthen the bilateral relationship. The US alliance relationships with Australia and Thailand are also key elements of US strategy in Asia-Pacific. Australia is the southern anchor of US shared Pacific interests, a treaty ally for 57 years who has stood with the United States in every war of the last century. US exercise and military education programs with Thailand reinforce its close security relationship. In 2002, over 22,000 US and Thai troops trained together in a variety of scenarios, including non-combatant evacuation operations, counterterrorism, and peacekeeping. The United States has also developed new strategic partnership with India and Pakistan. The United States assumes that its presence in Asia-Pacific provides the bedrock of regional peace and security in the region.

Since the 11 September 2001, Asia and Southeast Asia in particular became focus of another US concern i.e. terrorism. In the aftermath of the 9/11 incident, President George W. Bush frequently referred to Southeast Asia as “the second front in the war on terror.” According to US State Department report entitled “Patterns of Global Terrorism,<sup>4</sup>” the Asia-Pacific, primarily the Southeast Asia, became an attractive theater of support and logistics for Al-Qaeda and a theater of operations for the regional terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, acting alone or in collaboration with indigenous extremist groups. Indonesia faced major attacks including the Bali bombings of October 2002 and 2005, the 2003 bombing of the Jakarta Marriott Hotel, and the 2004 bombing of the Australian Embassy. The Philippines was fighting Jemaah Islamiyah, the Abu Sayaf terrorist group, the Moro

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<sup>4</sup> US State Department, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003, 29 April 2004.



Islamic Liberation Front, the Rajah Sulaiman Movement, and an armed communist movement. Thailand struggled to find a solution to a persistent insurgency in its far south. All these developments laid the ground for a regional military alliance or treaty for the United States in the guise of fighting against terrorism. President Bush's "war on terror" opened the scope of using the Philippines as a template for greater military presence and power projection in the region. The Philippines served as an epicentre in the new US military strategy in the circumference of the Asia-Pacific. The US military also helped the region to fight terrorism by "building and strengthening the ability of countries in the region" to resist it. During the post-9/11 era the United States increased military aid to Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other countries of the region. In addition, it provided military training and funds to support various counterterrorism measures; The United States increased "forward deployed forces" and enhanced their capability through the deployment of Special Operations Forces, covert operations, war materiel, and other equipment. In addition to its focus on counterterrorism, the US military presence in the region was considered indispensable to hedging against a burgeoning Chinese military capability.

Another important pillar of US strategy towards the Asia-Pacific is the political support for democratization, the promotion of civil and political rights, and construction of a Pacific "Community of Nations." According to the United States, democratic reform would strengthen ASEAN and facilitate its relationship with it. The United States has an abiding stake in how it develops.

However, the rivalry and competition with China is the most important reason to remain engaged in the Asia-Pacific region. China is the only power that is presently thought to be capable of becoming a peer competitor of the United States. China's emergence as the region's new power indeed raises questions about the need for the United States to remain militarily engaged in the region. The main argument in favor of the US alliances revolves around the possibility that a stronger and more powerful China could behave aggressively towards small and weaker neighbours and therefore require some power balancing. To many US policy experts the overwhelming challenge is the need to try to shape the global and regional geo-strategic and economic environments to

encourage and facilitate China's peaceful and constructive evolution as a great power. There is a concern by some that a policy towards China that assumes China would become a threat to the United States and its interests in Asia would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, even today, the United States has not decided on whether to consider China a "strategic partner" or a "strategic competitor," or whether its approach towards China should be fundamentally characterized by containment, engagement, or some kind of combination of two.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the above mentioned reasons, most of the countries of the Asia-Pacific region particularly the US allies regard the United States indispensable for the region, which is now going through a period of economic and political transformation. The US role is considered to be a critical factor in the maintaining peace and stability in the region. The United States is a Pacific power. Hawaii gives the United States a physical presence in the region. For more than a century, the United States has considered itself the dominant hegemonic Power in Asia-Pacific, having conquered American Samoa, Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines and invaded China to repress the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. There is a grudging acceptance that the United States continues to be a stabilizing factor in the Asia-Pacific region. The US political power and military presence is the key to maintaining a peaceful balance of power in the Asia-Pacific now and in the future. According to many Asian experts, only the United States has the strategic weight, economic strength, and political clout to exercise leadership in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States currently assumes unprecedented global power. The defense expenditure of the United States is more than the next nine countries put together. The dependence on the US market by the rest of the world is so great that it is one of the largest trading partners for most countries around the world. Its control over global currency and capital is unparalleled. The United States continues to be the single largest source of new technologies and no country is more attractive than the United States to attract the best and brightest from all nooks and corners of the world. As the largest Pacific economy, the dominant military power in the region, combined with its

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<sup>5</sup> Capie Friedberg Aaron L (2005), "The Future of US-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Vol.30, No.2, PP-7-45

dominance of global information and knowledge networks, the United States retains considerable structural power. By structural power is meant the capacity to initiate, promote, organize, or block changes to, the norms and rules which regulate trans-Pacific relations.

For most parts of post-World War II period, the United States emphasized bilateralism. However, it encouraged regional cooperation. After the end of the Cold War, when ASEAN took the initiative and established a broad-based regional grouping to discuss security issues, the United States did not hesitate to participate in it. This broad-based regional grouping better known as the ASEAN Regional Forum took the concrete form in 1994. Foreign ministers of the ASEAN together with other countries of Asia-Pacific created the ARF to “bring about a more predictable and constructive pattern of relations in the Asia-Pacific.” It was founded explicitly to address political and security issues and to expand the dialogue beyond Southeast Asia. Now The ARF is the principal security forum in the Asia-Pacific region and is recognized as such. Being the only super power of the twenty first century, the active involvement and participation of the United States is essential for the success of the ARF. The very cause for the formation of the ARF was seen in the context of keeping the United States within the region, trying to minimize the role of both China and Japan, and finally using the ARF as a platform to keep the relevance of the ASEAN alive in Southeast Asia and within the broader context of the Asia-Pacific region. The United States was considered to be a linchpin of the Asia-Pacific security and was expected to use its power to maintain the regional balance of power, especially since China was feared as a potential dominant and perhaps expansionist power.

From mid-1980's the economic ascendancy of East Asia, and the growing military power of China, presented an irresistible force for change to the United States in underlying structure of Asia-Pacific. Rising China became a major source of concern for the United States. Although, US formal policy towards the PRC was “engagement not confrontation” the Asia-Pacific countries saw the United States playing a long-term balancing role. However, in seeking to re-fashion the Asia-Pacific security order one key challenge facing the United States arose from its desire to ensure a regional balance of

power without at the same time appearing to be engaged in the containment of China. As the ARF is the only security forum where both the countries enjoys confidence, active cooperation and participation of the United States and China is essential for the success and relevance of the organization. In this regard, through the ARF process, ASEAN can play the role of “safe player”, the middle man, who can constructively engage China and the United States together with the rest of the other states in the region. Constructive engagement between these two powers is important not only for both the countries but also for Asia as well.<sup>6</sup>

Although we can expect a positive role the United States in the future of the Asia-Pacific regionalism and the ARF, the contradiction between multilateralism and US alliance system still exists. There are various forms of bilateralism pursued by the United States during the period of late 1990's to the present.<sup>7</sup> The United States Pacific Command (PACOM) identified the following variations of bilateralism in the period:

The Kind of bilateralism pursued during Clinton's presidency was described by PACOM as “enriched bilateralism.” According to PACOM, the enriched bilateralism enhanced policy consultation and coordination with regional allies over a “full range” of US security interest, going beyond those that affect only bilateral arrangements. Because it emphasized policy collaboration over power balancing, enriched power bilateralism contrasted sharply with the traditional realist calculus that had underwritten the San Francisco system for nearly half a century. It challenged the importance of hegemonic management of regional security as opposed to community building.

According to PACOM, in the initial phase the Bush Administration supported an alliance posture that has been characterized as “extreme bilateralism.” This posture

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<sup>6</sup> Emmers, Ralf (2003), *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and ARF*, London and New York, Routledge-Taylor& Francis Group. p 127

<sup>7</sup> Tow, William T (2004), “Convergent Security Revisited: Reconciling Bilateral and Multilateral Security Approaches,” Tan, See Sang and Acharya, Amitav (editors) *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, Armonk, New York, M.E. Sharp, pp 24-28

largely disregards multilateral security institutions and assigns decisive geopolitical weight only to great powers. Key Bush advisers dismissed the need to negotiate with other states over norms and values different from those entertained by the United States and argued that US dominance in a global balance of power was the real foreign policy choice. The extreme bilateralism assumed that US real security partners in Asia needed to be cultivated more while strategic competitors such as China and North Korea needed to be checked or deterred rather than coddled. So, bilateralism was once again postulated as a threat-oriented strategy under “extreme bilateralism.”

Although, the Bush administration embraced extreme bilateralism as a response to what it perceived to be growing regional threats, an element of ambiguity remained in its approach to Asia-Pacific security. According to PACOM, after the 9/11 incident the Bush administration changed its approach and adopted an “extended bilateralism.” It was reflected in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) released by the Bush administration in 2001-2002. Extended bilateralism envisioned bilateral alliances still playing the key role in regional security but supplemented or extended by multilateral mechanisms. The NSS and the QDR 2001 signaled an evident shift from the US hub expecting strategic compliance from regional spokes to one more sensitive to the value of allied support. Both implicitly recognized that US power and influence could be facilitated in selected instances by various forms of multilateral cooperation.

Multilateral approaches were utilized selectively by the Bush administration. Agreements such as US-ASEAN counterterrorism work plan and US offering to fund the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism were important examples of such approach. However, the Bush administration found APEC a more amenable institutional platform partly because counterterrorism initiatives could be couched in non-political, functional terms as efforts to facilitate commerce and the safe transit of people and material. But whatever initiative took by the Bush administration, its strategy to mobilize “coalition of willing” met with only token success in Southeast Asia. Overall the

contradiction between the alliance and multilateralism remained within the Bush administration.

One means by which this contradiction could be reconciled would be if the US security commitment to the Asia-Pacific were to progressively diminish. But, the US interests grew more rapidly in Asia than in any other region, and that the US led alliance system was being strengthened. Moreover, the United States was seen as a major stabilizing factor in the region's security due to its dominant position and its general reputation as being hegemon. For these reasons, the United States would likely to resist any evolution in regional multilateral institutions that appeared to threaten the alliance system.<sup>8</sup> The ARF emerged as a multilateral discussion group focusing on dialogue and confidence-building measures as a first step to cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF rejected any form of collective defense. It aimed to complement a bilateral approach, which was traditionally relied on military deterrence to preserve a stable security environment. The ARF has been the region's pioneering foray into multilateral consideration of security issues. It has become a valuable component of the region's security architecture that covers almost all the major countries of the Asia-Pacific. The ARF retains the characteristic that were necessary in the early 1990's to secure broad regional participation. Thus, more successful the ARF is in pursuing its more ambitious goals, the more tension it may generate between multilateralism and the alliance system of the United States. This can pose a major threat to the forum's success.

However, proponents and critics of the ARF describe the consultative forum as either the Asian NATO or an ineffectual talk shop. In reality, it is neither. The ARF was never intended to be an alliance, only a platform for foreign ministers to discuss regional security issues. Due to the slow progress made by the ARF, the United State considered it as an overly large underperforming talk shop that did not merit significant bolstering. However, the ARF is more than just a talk shop. It is an annual opportunity for the United States to talk to the other 25 participating foreign ministers about political and security

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<sup>8</sup> See Naidu, G.V.C (2000), "Multilateralism and Regional Security: Can the ASEAN Regional Forum Really Make a Difference?" *Analysis from the East-West Center*; No.45.

issues during one short event. As an evolving mechanism of conflict management in the region, the ARF clearly has much to offer. The ARF's social control mechanisms and its approach of ameliorating certain conflicts by improving overall relations among actors in the Asia-pacific worked slowly but successfully.<sup>9</sup> The ARF functions as an arena in which members are exposed to continuing mutual contact. The ARF code of conduct influenced its members towards constructive cooperation and encourages cooperation to secure territorial integrity, national sovereignty, transparency, and economic well-being because it provides an important channel of communication and improves mutual understanding.<sup>10</sup>

The ARF also offers an outstanding opportunity to the United States to address a variety of important political and security issues. It enables US policymakers to advance important national interests in such areas as terrorism, piracy, reform of the Indonesian military, North Korean refugees, and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. The principal players in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue -- the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) -- are members of the ARF. North Korea's pursuit of other illicit activities also poses a serious security challenge to Asia and the United States. Economic deprivation, as well as brutal political repression has caused thousands to flee North Korea and seek refuge in neighboring countries. China faces a humanitarian emergency with an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 North Korean refugees already in the border area. The ARF meeting provides a unique multilateral opportunity for the region to address these pressing issues by coordinating efforts to counter North Korea's threatening behavior and humanitarian disaster. The United States can utilize all these opportunities to play a significant role in the ARF process. While there is little likelihood that major problems would be fully resolved by the ARF, it is important that the United States has the chance to take the

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<sup>9</sup> Heller Dominick (2005), "The Relevance of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) for Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol 27, No:1

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

opportunity to assert its positions strongly, either publicly in open session or confidentially to ARF partners as appropriate.<sup>11</sup>

For many analysts the success of the ARF is still doubtful. For realist thinkers like Michael Leifer, the ARF presents an analytical challenge. According to Leifer, although the ARF engaged in confidence-building seminars and intersessional meetings, its impact on traditional security concerns has been minimal. Although this realist explanation for the ARF's modest achievement was valid up to the closing years of twentieth century, Asia's post-September 11 international context has significantly changed. At the top of the agenda since has been the need to combat terrorism and nuclear weapons proliferation – concerns that virtually all Asian states and most importantly the United States share and which require multilateral cooperation. This agenda was tailored for the kind of regional multilateral cooperation. As the ARF is the one of the most significant multilateral organization, we can expect a more positive and cooperative role of the United States in the ARF process.

Today, the United States is firmly engaged in the Asia-Pacific region to shape the course of events not only in Southeast Asia but also in the entire region. Security dialogues and confidence-building measures with the members of ASEAN and active participation in the ARF are among many ways the United States has been seeking to enhance politico-military ties with allies and friends in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF has proven to be an effective forum for dialogue on a wide range of issues and challenges. The United States believes that the ARF, along with complementary institutions, can make valuable contribution to meeting security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States has long shared with Asia-Pacific nations the objective of strengthening regional cooperation as a means to address common problems and deal with emerging issues. United States defense cooperation efforts in the region, including a variety of multilateral activities, are consistent with this long-standing objective and with ASEAN Regional Forum objectives.

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<sup>11</sup> Ilyas, Shahid (2005), "ASEAN Regional Forum," *Regional Studies*, Vol. 23, No1, Winter



As a leading security forum in the Asia-Pacific region, the ARF has contributed to the peace and stability of the region by building confidence among the participants and promoting cooperation on such vital areas as enhancing the security of Southeast Asia's strategic waterways, non-proliferation, and counterterrorism. As a leading Pacific power, the United States has an important role within the ARF itself, and developing a comprehensive enhanced partnership with that organization can lead to strengthened ties and increased cooperation between the United States and ARF member countries. The United States is pursuing cooperative relationships with ASEAN in the ARF to stabilize relations among diverse interests represented in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States is a firm advocate of political maturation and evolution of political/economic institutions in the Asia-Pacific region, and trying its best to build a sense of community in the region.

No doubt, today the ARF has emerged as the only security forum that brings together all the major powers in the region, including the United States, Japan, China and Russia and India. Advocates of the ARF expect that in the long run, the ARF would move from confidence building to preventive diplomacy and from preventive diplomacy to conflict resolution. The success of the ARF can provide an important underpinning for a stable and secure Southeast Asia. Although the United States participated actively in moving forward the ARF process its role is considered to be critical. President Bush along with ASEAN leaders issued a joint comprehensive framework for their relationship called the "ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership." in 2005. The framework supported the ARF as the "premier regional political and security forum in the Asia-Pacific region with ASEAN as the driving force" Till now United States is an enthusiastic participant. Therefore, we can assume a positive role of the United States in the ARF in the future. However, the ARF cannot be realistically expected to play a pivotal role in shaping a new regional order if it remains merely a consultative forum. According to experts, to be a credible forum, it must need to show tangible progress and begin addressing the challenges it faces. It must also be able to constructively engage other major powers. Only then we can expect that it be able to carry the process forward and rebuild faith in multilateral institutions.

## APPENDIX-I

### Asia-Pacific Region:



*Current Map of Asia-Pacific Region*

## **APPENDIX-II**

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### **CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM**

**Bangkok, 25 July 1994**

1. The First Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was held in Bangkok on 25 July 1994 in accordance with the 1992 Singapore Declaration of the Fourth ASEAN Summit, whereby the ASEAN Heads of State and Government proclaimed their intent to intensify ASEAN's external dialogues in political and security matters as a means of building cooperative ties with states in the Asia-Pacific region.
2. Attending the Meeting were the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN, ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, ASEAN's Consultative Partners, and ASEAN's Observers or their representatives.' The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, served as Chairman of the Meeting.
3. Being the first time ever that high-ranking representatives from the majority of states in the Asia-Pacific region came to specifically discuss political and security cooperation issues, the Meeting was considered a historic event for the region. More importantly, the Meeting signified the opening of a new chapter of peace, stability and cooperation for Southeast Asia.
4. The participants of the Meeting held a productive exchange of views on the current political and security situation in the Asia-Pacific region, recognizing that developments in one part of the region could have an impact on the security of the region as whole. It was agreed that, as a high-level consultative forum, the ARF had enabled the countries in the Asia-Pacific region to foster the habit of constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern. In this respect, the ARF

would be in a position to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.

5. Bearing in mind the importance of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the maintenance of international peace and security, the Meeting welcomed the continuation of US-DPRK negotiation and endorsed the early resumption of inter-Korean dialogue.

6. The Meeting agreed to:

- convene the ARF on an annual basis and hold the second meeting in Brunei Darussalam in 1995; and
- endorse the purposes and principles of ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and political and security cooperation.

7. The Meeting also agreed to entrust the next Chairman of the ARF Brunei Darussalam, working in consultation with ARF participants an appropriate, to:

- collate and study all papers and ideas raised during the ARF Senior Officials Meeting and the ARF in Bangkok for submission to the second ARF through the second ARF-SOM, both of which to be held in Brunei Darussalam. Ideas which might be the subjects of such further study including confidence and security building, nuclear non-proliferation, peacekeeping cooperation including regional peacekeeping training centre, exchanges of non classified military information, maritime security issues, and preventive diplomacy;
- study the comprehensive concept of security, including its economic and social aspects, as it pertains to the Asia-Pacific region;
- study other relevant internationally recognized norms and principles pertaining to international and regional political and security cooperation for their possible contribution to regional political and security cooperation;
- promote the eventual participation of all ARF countries in the UN Conventional Arms Register; and

- convene, if necessary, informal meetings of officials to study all relevant papers and suggestions to move the ARF process forward.

8. Recognizing the need to develop a more predictable constructive pattern of relationships for the Asia-Pacific region, the Meeting expressed its firm conviction to continue to work towards the strengths and the enhancement of political and security cooperation within the region as a means of ensuring a lasting peace, stability, and prosperity for the region and its peoples.

## APPENDIX-III

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### **The ASEAN Regional Forum: A Concept Paper**

#### **Introduction**

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

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

3. ASEAN has a pivotal role to play in the ARF. It has a demonstrable record of enhancing regional cooperation in the most diverse sub-region of the Asia-Pacific. It has also fostered habits of cooperation and provided the catalyst for encouraging regional cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific region. The annual ASEAN Ministerial Meetings have contributed significantly to the positive regional environment today. There would be great hope for the Asia-Pacific if the whole region could emulate ASEAN's record of enhancing the peace and prosperity of its participants.

4. Although ASEAN has undertaken the obligation to be the primary driving force of the ARF, a successful ARF requires the active participation and cooperation of all

participants. ASEAN must always be sensitive to and take into account the interests and concerns of all ARF participants.

### **The Challenges**

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

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

Stage I: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures

Stage II: Development of Preventive Diplomacy Mechanisms

Stage III: Development of Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms

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

## **Stage I: Promotion of Confidence-Building Measures**

8. In promoting confidence-building measures, the ARF may adopt two complementary approaches. The first approach derives from ASEAN's experience, which provides a valuable and proven guide for the ARF. ASEAN has succeeded in reducing tensions among its member states, promoting region cooperation and creating a regional climate conducive to peace and prosperity without the implementation of explicit confidence-building measures, achieving conditions approximating those envisaged in the Declaration of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The concepts of ZOPFAN and its essential component, the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANFWZ), are significantly contributing to regional peace and stability. ASEAN's well established practices of consultation and consensus (*musyawarah* and *mufakat*) have been significantly enhanced by the regular exchanges of high-level visits among ASEAN countries. This pattern of regular visits has effectively developed into a preventive diplomacy channel. In the Asian context, there is some merit to the ASEAN approach. It emphasizes the need to develop trust and confidence among neighboring states. 9. The principles of good neighborliness, which are elaborated in the concept of ZOPFAN, are enshrined in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC). One simple concrete way of expanding the ASEAN experience is to encourage the ARF participants to associate themselves with the TAC. It is significant that the first ARF meeting in Bangkok agreed to "endorse the purposes and principles of ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia as a code of conduct governing relations between states and a unique diplomatic instrument for regional confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and political and security cooperation."

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



an indicative list of other proposals which can be explored over the medium and long-term by ARF participants and also considered in the immediate future by the Track Two process. These lists include possible preventive diplomacy and other measures.

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

### **Moving Beyond Stage 1**

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

13. Over time, the ARF must develop its own mechanisms to carry preventive diplomacy and conflict-resolution. In doing so, the ARF will face unique challenges. There are no established roads or procedures for it to follow. Without a high degree of confidence among ARF participants, it is unlikely that they will agree to the establishment of mechanisms which are perceived to be intrusive and/or autonomous. This is a political reality the ARF should recognize. However, it would be useful in the initial phase for the Track Two process to consider and investigate a variety of preventive diplomacy and conflict-resolution mechanisms. A good start was made with the three workshops

organized by International Studies Centre (Thailand) and Institute of Policy Studies (Singapore) on ASEAN-UN Cooperation for Peace and Preventive Diplomacy, and the Indonesia-sponsored series of workshops on the South China Sea.

### **Stage II: Development of Preventive Diplomacy**

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

### **Stage III: Conflict Resolution**

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

### **Organization of ARF activities**

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

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

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

19. The participants of the ARF comprise the ASEAN member states, the observers, and consultative and dialogue partners of ASEAN. Applications to participate in the ARF

shall be submitted to the Chairman of the ARF who will then consult the other ARF participants.

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

21. The ARF should also progress at a pace comfortable to all participants. The ARF should not move "too fast for those who want to go slow and not too slow for those who want to go fast".

### **Conclusion**

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

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

## **ANNEX A:**

### **I. CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES**

#### **Principles**

1. The development of a set of basic principles to ensure a common understanding and approach to interstate relations in the region; and
2. Adoption of comprehensive approaches to security.

#### **Transparency**

3. Dialogue on security perceptions, including voluntary statements defense policy positions;
4. Defense Publications such as Defense White Papers or equivalent documents as considered necessary by respective governments;
5. Participation in UN Conventional Arms Register;
6. Enhanced contacts, including, high level visits and recreational activities;
7. Exchanges between military academies, staff colleges and training;
8. Observers at military exercises, on a voluntary basis; and
9. Annual seminar for defense officials and military officers on selected international security issues.

### **II. PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**

1. Develop a set of guidelines for the peaceful settlement of disputes, taking into account the principles in the UN Charter and the TAC;

2. Promote the recognition acceptance of the purposes and principles of the TAC and its provisions for the Pacific settlement of disputes, as endorsed by the UNGA in Resolution 47/53 (B) on 9 December 1992; and

3. Seek the endorsement of other countries for the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea in order to strengthen its political and moral effect (as endorsed by the Programme of Action for ZOPFAN).

### **III. NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL**

1. Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

### **IV. PEACEKEEPING**

1. Seminars/Workshops on peacekeeping issues; and

2. Exchange of information and experience relating to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

### **V. MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION**

1. Disaster Prevention

### **ANNEX B:**

#### **I. CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES**

1. Further exploration of a Regional Arms Register;

2. Regional security studies centre/ coordination of existing security studies activities;

3. Maritime information data bases;

4. Cooperative approaches to sea lines of communication, beginning with exchanges of information and training in such areas as search and rescue, piracy and drug, control;

5. Mechanism to mobilize relief assistance in the event of natural disasters;

6. Establishment of zones of cooperation in areas such as the South China Sea;
7. Systems of prior notification of major military deployments that have region-wide application; and
8. Encourage arms manufacturers and suppliers to disclose the destination of their arms exports.

## **II. PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY**

1. Explore and devise ways and means to prevent conflict;
2. Explore the idea of appointing Special Representatives, in consultation with ARF members, to undertake fact-finding missions, at the request of the parties involved to an issue, and to offer their good offices, as necessary; and
3. Explore the idea of establishing, a Regional Risk Reduction Centre as suggested by the UN Secretary-General in his Agenda For Peace and as commended by UNGA Resolution 47/120 (see section IV, operative para 4). Such a centre could serve as a data base for the exchange of information.

## **III. NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL**

1. A regional or sub-regional arrangement agreeing not to acquire or deploy ballistic missiles.

## **IV. PEACEKEEPING**

1. Explore the possibility of establishing a peacekeeping centre.

## **V. MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION**

1. A multilateral agreement on the avoidance of naval incidents that apply to both local and external navies;

2. Sea Level/Climate Monitoring System;
3. Establishment of an ASEAN Relief and Assistance Force and a Maritime Safety (or Surveillance) Unit to look after the safety of the waters in the region;
4. Conventions on the Marine Environment
  - Dumping of Toxic Wastes and
  - Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution;
5. Maritime surveillance; and
6. Explore the idea of joint marine scientific research.

(Source: [www.aseanregionalforum.org/libary](http://www.aseanregionalforum.org/libary) )

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