

Asia–Pacific Confidence-Building Measures for Regional Security

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During the Cold War, a broad variety of confidence-building measures (CBMs) were tried in a number of places, many successfully. The majority were aimed at managing the bi-polar contest between East and West and, when not negotiated between the United States and the former Soviet Union, normally focused on the European region or, secondarily, on the Middle East. Most policy-makers in the Asia–Pacific region viewed multilateral security dialogue mechanisms with a great deal of apprehension and suspicion during this period. As recently as 1991, when then Japanese foreign minister Taro Nakayama suggested at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Post–Ministerial Conference (PMC) gathering that a forum be established to discuss regional security issues, his remarks were not well-received.

There were many reasons for apprehension. Many of the Southeast Asian nations, while increasingly confident of their ability to interact with one another, still felt uncomfortable in larger multilateral settings, especially those involving former colonial powers. Fear of being drawn into the Cold War ‘zero sum’ game was also a factor. There was also the concern, especially among the United States and some of its closest allies (like Japan and Australia), that such regimes would be aimed at limiting or eliminating Western influence in the region—especially since some early proposals emanated from the Soviet Union.

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Since the end of the Cold War, however, there has been a decided shift in regional attitudes toward multilateral security initiatives in Asia. One early instance occurred at the 1992 ASEAN PMC in Manila when a joint statement was issued calling for the peaceful settlement of South China Sea territorial disputes. At the same time, regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were also calling for greater multilateral security dialogue, both at the official and at the nongovernmental or so-called Track Two levels.¹

¹ “Track Two” refers to unofficial meetings, normally hosted by independent research institutes, that bring independent scholars and security specialists together with former and current defense and foreign ministry officials, with serving officials participating in their ‘private capacities.’

The change in attitude among regional governments in favor of multilateral dialogue was solidified at the 1993 ASEAN PMC meeting when foreign ministers from throughout the region met informally over lunch specifically to talk about security matters. The group decided that they would reconvene the following year in the precedent-setting ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), in which the region's foreign ministers would formally discuss regional security issues.

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The end of the Cold War was, of course, a major factor in this change of attitude. So, too, was increasing ASEAN self-confidence and the desire of these Southeast Asian states to keep the US involved in the region while also developing a vehicle for constructively engaging China. The 1992 US presidential elections, which brought with it President Bill Clinton's promotion of a "new Pacific community" with expanded multilateral dialogue as one of its core principles, was another major contributing factor.

Efforts are now being made both at the governmental and Track Two levels to see if and how multilateral cooperative measures can be applied in the Asia–Pacific region. Before reviewing these efforts, however, it may be useful to review briefly some of the regional security concerns for which CBMs might be applied.

Regional Security Concerns

The end of the Cold War coincided with the dawning of a new, more peaceful and prosperous era in Asia, characterized by growing political and economic cooperation and interdependence, even among traditional rivals. Just beneath the surface, however, a great deal of uncertainty remains about what the future will bring. While the prospects for conflict seem low in the near term, the potential for conflict remains and could grow.

It is important to note that many of the region's enmities pre-date the Cold War and, in one key region—the Korean Peninsula—the Cold War has not yet ended. In addition, the end of the Cold War has virtually eliminated one of the major strategic rationales for close cooperation between China and Japan—mutual fear and suspicion of the Soviet Union. Of course, the so-called 'China card' was a major factor in Sino–US Cold War relations, as well.

As one examines current trends and developments in Asia, numerous security questions and concerns arise. Some of the most prominent are:

- Territorial disputes between China and Vietnam, China and Russia, China and Japan, Japan and South Korea, Russia and Japan, and among several of the ASEAN states, both over land borders and contested islands, especially in the South China Sea;
- A growing independence movement on Taiwan which threatens to disturb the careful equilibrium provided by the current “one country, two systems” formula;
- Wide-ranging disputes between the United States and China over trade, human rights, and proliferation issues, which often lead to Chinese counter-charges that the US is attempting to hold back or contain China;
- Uncertainty regarding the on-going political transition in Beijing and China’s growing military capability;
- Concerns about potential remilitarization in Japan fed, in part, by misinterpretation of the April 1996 Joint Declaration between US president Bill Clinton and Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto aimed at reaffirming the US–Japan security alliance;²
- Instability and uncertainty surrounding Russia’s still-tentative emergence as a democratic free-market society, especially given President Boris Yeltsin’s poor health;
- North Korea’s formidable conventional and suspected unconventional military threat and its potentially dangerous economic and leadership crises which could lead to economic or political implosion or to a devastating military explosion;
- Pending leadership transitions throughout Asia, but particularly in Southeast Asia, where a new generation of leaders waits impatiently in the wings;
- Unprecedented economic growth that, while benefitting many, is creating broad ‘have versus have-not’ gaps between and within nations;
- The negative effects of ongoing economic growth, such as increased migration (much of it illegal), air pollution and acid rain, and increased competition for resources (particularly energy), which have the potential to resurrect historic rivalries;
- Potential future threats to the sea lanes that link the vibrant economies of Asia to one another and to the world at large, including piracy and unilateral or multilateral attempts to control or prevent transit through international straits; and
- Arms modernization efforts that add a new dimension to historic concerns over maritime passage and the security of strategic straits. Modernization could prompt arms races as domestic economies permit, especially if the pace of modernization accelerates or tensions in the South China Sea increase.

In short, the end of the Cold War has not brought with it an end to security challenges in the Asia–Pacific region. Awareness of these current and potential future challenges—and recognition that a renewed Asian economic ‘miracle’ depends on their successful

² For more details, see Ralph A. Cossa, “Restructured Japan–US alliance is not a threat,” *The Daily Yomiuri* (Japan), 23 January 1997, 6.

management—lies at the heart of the willingness of the nations of the region to seek multilateral (as well as unilateral and bilateral) solutions.

This essay provides some background on the establishment of the various dialogue mechanisms (official and nongovernmental) and then briefly summarizes their respective confidence-building efforts.³ It also documents how various multilateral dialogue mechanisms can serve as confidence-building measures in their own right, even while providing a forum for development of more formalized initiatives. This is by no means an exhaustive review; the author recognizes that there are many other dialogue mechanisms and initiatives in Asia that also promote greater confidence and understanding.⁴

Governmental Initiatives

As noted earlier, there has been a decided shift in regional attitudes toward multinational security initiatives in Asia since the early 1990s. For countries such as the United States and Japan, multilateral cooperation was seen as another vehicle for promoting regional stability, provided it was built upon, and did not threaten or try to replace, existing bilateral security ties. Most other states in the region also see the US–Japan alliance as a foundation or building block of regional security and do not approach multilateralism and bilateralism as an either/or proposition.⁵

³ This essay builds upon a presentation by the author on “Enhancing Confidence and Security Building Measures: Priorities and Prospects” presented at the Tenth Asia–Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur, 5–8 June 1996.

⁴ Many are documented in: *Dialogue Monitor: Inventory of Multilateral Meetings on Asia–Pacific Security Issues* (Toronto: University of Toronto in association with York University, Joint Centre for Asia–Pacific Studies, n.d.) and the yearly *Regional Security Dialogue: A Calendar of Asia–Pacific Events*, compiled by the Regional Security Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Strategic And Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University (Canberra, Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997). For a listing of more permanent, recurring political, economic, and military-security related East Asia gatherings, also see RADM Larry Vogt, USN, (Ret.) and Margo Cooper, “Appendix C: Compendium of Multinational Activities in East Asia,” in Ralph A. Cossa, *The Japan–US Alliance and Security Regimes in East Asia: A Workshop Report* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Policy Studies (Japan) and the Center for Naval Analyses (United States), January 1995): C1–C9.

⁵ For more information on national attitudes and objectives regarding multilateral confidence-building initiatives, also see Ralph A. Cossa, “Multilateralism, Regional Security, and the Prospects for Track II in East Asia” in *Multilateralism and National Security in Northeast Asia*, NBR Analysis 7, no. 5 (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, December 1996).

China, like its neighbors, is dedicated, first and foremost, to developing its economy and recognizes that regional stability is essential to accomplishment of this goal. As a result, Beijing has entered into a series of bilateral confidence-building measures in recent years, most notably with Russia and India, over lingering border disputes and other issues, and with Vietnam and the Philippines over South China Sea territorial issues.⁶ China has also pursued multilateral confidence-building with

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Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union that share borders with China. In addition, China has participated in an Indonesian-hosted series of Track Two South China Sea Workshops aimed at further defusing tensions among the various claimants to the Spratly Islands.⁷ There is growing concern, however, that China—unlike most of its neighbors—sees multilateral mechanisms not as a supplement to bilateral security arrangements but as a potential long-term substitute.⁸ If so, this could put Beijing on a collision course with Washington over time.

China's willingness to promote and pursue specific confidence-building initiatives also remains somewhat in question. Chinese participants have been reluctant in governmental forums like the ARF (and even in most unofficial settings) to discuss security issues directly involving China (such as overlapping claims in the South China Sea or China–Taiwan cross-strait relations), and have exerted considerable effort (usually successfully) in keeping such topics off the agenda, citing “national sovereignty” concerns. China has also been extremely reluctant to move discussions on military transparency from the theoretical (discussions of security perceptions or basic principles) to the practical level, again, deferring to “national security” concerns. As a result, progress in such areas as defense information sharing or dialogue on military strategy, tactics, or capabilities has been virtually nonexistent. In fairness, however, it should be noted that China is not alone in its concerns about doing ‘too much, too soon’ where military transparency issues are concerned.

⁶ These Chinese initiatives have been aimed at defusing or setting aside these territorial issues. They have not resulted in much progress toward finding a solution, however.

⁷ Beijing has resisted attempts by the ASEAN states to elevate these talks to the governmental level, no doubt in part due to Taiwan's participation in the dialogue.

⁸ Based on the author's private conversations with US and Asian security officials, many are beginning to suspect that China sees organizations such as the ARF as vehicles for reducing or eliminating US bilateral alliances that appear potentially threatening to Beijing, the US–Japan alliance being the most prominent case in point.

China’s Transparency Measures: First Steps

- Publication of government White Paper on Arms Control and Disarmament **November 1995**
- Visit by NGO and foreign government representatives to Chinese nuclear weapon laboratories in Mianyang, Sichuan Province **November 1997**
- Tour of Air Defense Command Center outside Beijing by US secretary of defense William Cohen **January 1998**

Nonetheless, examples of positive cooperation abound. For example, the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping of regional economies, in existence since 1989, has become increasingly significant, in part due to the annual Leaders’ Meeting, established by the United States in 1993 when it hosted the APEC ministerial.⁹ The Leaders’ Meeting has become an important vehicle for fostering political relations in addition to raising the level of economic dialogue, providing a vehicle for the region’s leaders (and especially the host state) to move the process forward.

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam joined ASEAN and the ARF in 1995, and Laos and Burma (Myanmar) were inducted as members of ASEAN in 1997.¹⁰ Following political developments in Cambodia in July 1997, ASEAN delayed the expected admission of Cambodia until a later date.

In Northeast Asia, Japan has demonstrated an increased willingness and capability to take a more active leadership role in multilateral forums, hosting the 1995 APEC conference and Leader’s Meeting, and (as will be discussed below) co-chairing the ARF’s initial confidence-building measures efforts.

Meanwhile, Russia is seeking to play a positive role in the ARF, hosting an April 1996 ARF Track Two conference in Moscow aimed at developing a Statement of Basic Principles for Security and Stability. Moscow is also politely knocking on APEC’s door and is seeking to play a more active, positive role in the Korean Peninsula peace process.

Perhaps most significantly, given the high potential for conflict on the Korean Peninsula, cooperation among the United States, South Korea, and China in offering to engage North Korea in four-party talks aimed at replacing the current armistice with a

⁹ APEC is referred to as a gathering of economies rather than a gathering of nations or states due to the presence in its ranks of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Taiwan’s head of state is specifically not invited to attend the annual Leaders’ Meeting.

¹⁰ Both were already members of ARF.

permanent peace treaty also holds out promise for future progress, after the turmoil created by the 1996 North Korean submarine incident.¹¹

In addition, a new governmental multilateral mechanism, the Korean Peninsula Economic Development Organization (KEDO) has been established to implement the Agreed Framework between the United States and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) in order to more closely involve the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan (among others) in the process. Such initiatives complement the efforts of the ARF, which in turn, has voiced its own support for such parallel efforts.

ASEAN Regional Forum

Leading the multilateral confidence-building effort at the governmental level is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). At ARF’s inaugural meeting in July 1994, eighteen ministers from the ASEAN states (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), their dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, Japan, South

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Korea, New Zealand, the United States, and the European Community), and other key regional players (China, Russia, and Vietnam, plus Papua New Guinea and Laos) met in Bangkok to discuss regional security issues. The group has since grown to twenty-one with the addition of Cambodia in 1995 and both India and Burma (Myanmar) in 1996.¹²

The Chairman’s Statement issued at the end of the Bangkok meeting underscored the participant nations’ commitment “to foster the habit of constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern” in order to make “significant efforts toward confidence building and security cooperation in the Asia–Pacific region.”¹³

¹¹ A North Korean infiltration submarine with commandos on board was discovered after mechanical difficulties caused it to be grounded on South Korea’s coast. After much negotiation and delay, the DPRK issued an unprecedented “statement of regret” which the ROK graciously accepted as an official apology.

¹² Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995. At the time of the first ARF meeting, it was an ASEAN observer. China and Russia became dialogue partners in 1996, as did India.

¹³ For the complete text of the Chairman’s Statement and a review of the proceedings by the Thai Foreign Ministry’s ARF coordinator, see Sarasin Viraphol, “ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF),” *PacNet*, no. 33–94, 14 October 1994. Of particular note was the ARF’s willingness to look beyond the immediate ASEAN neighborhood and address broader regional concerns. The foreign ministers unanimously endorsed the early resumption of inter-Korean dialogue and welcomed the continuation of then on-going US–DPRK negotiations. They also encouraged the “eventual participation” of all ARF countries in the UN Register of Conventional Arms as a regional confidence-building measure.

ARF participants have since agreed that the ARF would “move at a pace comfortable to all participants.”¹⁴ This was further defined as being an “evolutionary” approach, beginning with the promotion of confidence-building measures, with the “elaboration of approaches to conflict” as an eventual goal. To this end, they established an Inter-sessional Support Group (ISG) on Confidence-Building Measures with an initial focus on promoting dialogue on security perceptions and defense policy papers.

ISG on Confidence-Building Measures. The ISG, under the initial co-chairmanship of Indonesia and Japan, has recommended, and the ARF ministers have endorsed, the following measures:¹⁵

- Continued information sharing and dialogue on security perceptions;
- Annual voluntary submission of defense policy statements to the ARF Senior Officials’ Meeting;
- Greater participation by defense representatives in ARF inter-sessional activities;
- Enhanced high-level defense contacts, and exchanges among Defense Staff Colleges and training;¹⁶
- Voluntary circulation among ARF members of the data submitted to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms;
- Exchange of information on the role of defense authorities in disaster relief;
- Voluntary exchange of information on on-going observer participation in, and notification of, military exercises;¹⁷ and
- Support for global arms control and disarmament agreements.

China and the Philippines co-chaired the 1996–97 effort, which consisted of a single meeting in Beijing in March 1997. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to

¹⁴ See “Chairman’s Statement of the Second ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 1 August 1995, Bandar Seri Begawan,” *PacNet*, no. 29–95, 18 August 1995. For an analysis of the meeting, see also Jusuf Wanandi, “Dialogue on Security Gains Momentum,” *PacNet*, no. 31–95, 1 September 1995.

¹⁵ For the complete text of the reports from the various ISG’s and Inter-sessional Meetings, see “Chairman’s Statement, the Third Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum, Jakarta, 23 July 1996—Summary Report,” *PacNet*, no. 30/30A-96, 26 July 1997. A condensed version of the CBM ISG is also presented here.

¹⁶ “Enhanced high-level defense contacts” refers to increased visits by high ranking defense/military officials; “Exchange among Defense Staff Colleges and training” is intended as an exchange between both faculty and students between various national defense colleges, to include participation in one another’s training programs.

¹⁷ This clause entails exchanging information about what exercises are open to outside observers and who, if anyone, has participated in them.

exchange information in accordance with the above recommendations and also explore new avenues for confidence-building in the region.

General Observations. The ARF seems particularly well-suited to serve as the consolidating and validating instrument behind many security initiatives and confidence-building measures proposed by governments and NGO gatherings in recent years. Its support of such ideas as the United Nations (UN) arms register, exchanges of unclassified military information, maritime security cooperation, preventive diplomacy, and regional peacekeeping should generate greater support for efforts at both the official and nongovernmental levels to develop innovative new measures for dealing with potentially sensitive regional security issues.

Track Two approaches complement official efforts and permit the exploration of new or potentially sensitive options without necessarily locking participants into established, rigid governmental positions.

ARF ministers have already surprised many security analysts by dealing with substantive, even contentious issues in a fairly direct manner. Nevertheless, there are few illusions regarding the speed with which the ARF will move. The agreement to “move at a pace comfortable to all participants” was aimed at tempering the desire of Western members (particularly the United States, Canada, and Australia) for immediate results in favor of the “evolutionary” approach favored by the ASEAN states, which see the process as being as important as its eventual substantive products. The need for consensus assures that the ARF will move ahead only as fast as its most cautious members desire or permit.

Nongovernmental Initiatives

Track Two approaches complement official efforts and permit the exploration of new or potentially sensitive options without necessarily locking participants into established, rigid governmental positions.¹⁸ They are both a sounding board for potential government initiatives and a vehicle through which nongovernmental security specialists and academics can expose officials to new ideas or approaches.

¹⁸ As noted earlier, Track Two does not mean the absence of government officials. Most Track Two meetings include active participation by foreign ministry and defense (including uniformed military) officials acting not as official representatives but in their “private capacities.” This helps ensure a more informed debate while allowing new ideas to be explored without being interpreted as government policy.

From the onset, the potential importance of Track Two activities was fully recognized by the ARF ministers and cooperation between official and nongovernmental efforts has been sanctioned and encouraged. The ARF has even conducted its own Track Two meetings. For example, a Track Two seminar on the “Building of Confidence and Trust in the Asia-Pacific” was held under the ARF’s auspices in Canberra, Australia in November 1994. Its results were incorporated into an ASEAN Regional Forum Concept Paper prepared in advance of the second ARF and subsequently included as an attachment to the 1995 Chairman’s Statement.

Annex A of the Concept Paper detailed confidence-building measures that could be explored and implemented by ARF participants in the immediate future. Annex B provided an indicative list of medium- to long-term proposals that could become the focus, in the immediate future, of Track Two efforts. For example, participation in the UN Register of Conventional Arms was in Annex A while the “further exploration of a Regional Arms Register” was at the top of the list of potential confidence-building measures in Annex B.¹⁹

The United Nations has also become involved in Track Two activities. Each year, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific sponsors an annual “unofficial” meeting in which regional scholars and government officials acting in their private capacities gather in Kathmandu, Nepal to discuss various multilateral disarmament issues. This so-called “Kathmandu process” is made possible through voluntary contributions, largely from the Japanese government. Although the UN Regional Centre’s focus is on broader regional/global issues, all the major Asian states, South and North Korea, and India and Pakistan, normally participate. This provides a rare venue in which all can discuss, at least informally, issues of mutual concern.

Several NGOs have also taken up the challenge of promoting regional confidence-building. Among the most prominent and all-inclusive is the region-wide Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), a Track Two multilateral grouping of regional research institutes, security specialists, and former and current government officials. CSCAP’s work in this area is accomplished through its own International Working Group on Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMS). A second subregional NGO, the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), has also examined how confidence-building (or mutual reassurance) measures might be employed to promote greater trust and dialogue in the more sensitive, politically-charged Northeast Asian environment.

¹⁹ In the fall of 1996, the ARF sponsored Track Two meetings on preventive diplomacy and on nonproliferation.

The following sections provide some background on the establishment of the NEACD and CSCAP and briefly summarize their respective confidence-building efforts.²⁰ Particular attention is paid to the efforts of the CSCAP CSBM Working Group since it has the most ambitious agenda and has progressed the farthest in examining and promoting regional confidence-building measures.

Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue

The most prominent of the formalized subregional Track Two dialogue mechanisms is the NEACD sponsored by the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC). Its purpose is to enhance mutual understanding, confidence, and cooperation through meaningful but unofficial dialogue among China, Japan, Russia, the United States, and both Koreas.²¹ While the DPRK attended a preparatory meeting in July 1993, it has not participated in any of the formal meetings held through mid-1997.²²

NEACD brings together fairly senior government officials (normally at the Deputy Assistant Secretary level) from the foreign and defense ministries and private individuals (normally noted academics or security policy specialists) from each country for dialogue on political, security, and economic issues of concern to all parties. The group has initiated several study projects, including one to examine mutual reassurance measures.

Mutual Reassurance Measures. Like CBMs, mutual reassurance measures (MRMs) are aimed at promoting greater trust and understanding, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict.²³ The NEACD study project agreed to the following general approach for MRMs in Northeast Asia:

- MRMs must be broad and comprehensive in concept, but focused in application;

²⁰ This discussion builds upon a presentation by the author on “Enhancing Confidence and Security Building Measures: Priorities and Prospects” presented at the Tenth Asia–Pacific Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur, 5–8 June 1996.

²¹ For background information, see Susan Shirk and Christopher Twomey, “Beginning Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia: A report on the first meeting of the Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation’s Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue,” *PacNet*, no. 33, 5 November 1993.

²² The DPRK has expressed discomfort with NEACD’s “four plus two” format since it has never trusted the United States or Japan, is becoming increasingly suspicious of China (given China’s improved relations with the ROK), and has written off Russia as generally unreliable. As a result, Pyongyang feels somewhat isolated; it tends to see “four plus two” as “four or five versus one.”

²³ While definitions of CBMS, MRMS, and related phrases may differ slightly, the intent is still generally the same.

- Discussions should involve civilian as well as military representatives and include non-security as well as security issues;
- MRMs should be aimed at improving state-to-state relations and at expanding security and economic cooperation;
- MRMs should be focused on increasing exchanges, promoting understanding, and eliminating misperceptions and hostilities; and
- A step-by-step approach is best, beginning with easier, less contention, or less sensitive issues.²⁴

The MRM study project continues with ongoing discussion of individual national security perspectives, focusing primarily on military exchanges and cooperation. The NEACD has also conducted workshops focusing on Northeast Asia’s energy problems and their security implications, and on maritime cooperation.

Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia–Pacific

CSCAP links regional security-oriented institutes and, through them, broad-based member committees comprised of academicians, security specialists, and former and current foreign ministry and defense officials.

The CSCAP is comprised of member committees from Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, South and North Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam. A European Community (EU) consortium and an Indian institute have joined as associate members, and the directors of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and the UN Department of Political Affairs’ East Asia and the Pacific Division enjoy affiliate/observer status. Scholars and security specialists from Taiwan are invited to participate in CSCAP working group meetings “in their private capacities,” making this one of the rare venues where Chinese scholars from Taiwan and the mainland sit down to discuss security issues together.

CSCAP, while predating the ARF, is now focusing its efforts on providing direct support to this governmental forum while also pursuing other Track Two diplomacy efforts. Several CSCAP issue-oriented international working groups (IWGs) are focusing on specific topics outlined in the 1995 ARF final communique. These include IWGs on Comprehensive and Cooperative Security and on Maritime Cooperation, plus a North Pacific Working Group geared toward the establishment of frameworks for Northeast Asia security cooperation. Of

²⁴ Extrapolated from the “Chair’s Summary: Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue IV, Beijing, China, 8–10 January 1996,” available from the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation.

particular note is the previously mentioned IWG established to address confidence and security building measures in Asia.²⁵

CSCAP CSBM International Working Group

The United States, Singapore, and Republic of Korea CSCAP member committees co-chair the International Working Group on Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Asia–Pacific.²⁶ One of its first orders of business was agreement on definitions.

Defining CBMs. Definitions of CBMs vary, ranging from the very narrow (looking almost exclusively at military measures) to much broader interpretations encompassing almost anything that builds confidence. The IWG uses an expansive definition of CBMs—namely CSBMs—including formal and informal measures, whether unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral, that address, prevent, or resolve uncertainties among states, including military and political elements. Such measures contribute to a reduction of uncertainty, misperception, and suspicion and thus help to reduce the possibility of incidental or accidental war. Many different terms have been used to describe this topic. For the IWG’s purposes, the term CSBMs is seen as encompassing or embracing the spirit and intent of proposals calling for trust confidence-building measures, mutual assurance (or reassurance) measures, community-building measures, and other related confidence-building concepts.

Definitions of CBMs vary, ranging from the very narrow to much broader interpretations encompassing almost anything that builds confidence.

Common Denominators. The IWG’s initial three-pronged research effort was aimed at answering the question, “Are CSBMs appropriate for Asia and, if so, what type of measures might apply?”²⁷ This included an analysis of common denominators that have led to success or failure in the past, providing potential lessons for the future and underscoring potential

²⁵ The other IWGs also deal with confidence-building to a certain degree, with the Maritime Cooperation Group looking at maritime CBMs and the North Pacific Working Group investigating how some of the steps identified by the CSBM IWG may or may not apply to Northeast Asia.

²⁶ This was the first IWG established by CSCAP, in June 1994. It is the author’s distinct honor to chair this effort from the American side.

²⁷ For a summary of the Working Group’s discussions, see Ralph A. Cossa, “Confidence and Security Building Measures: Are They Appropriate for Asia?” Pacific Forum CSIS Policy Report (Honolulu, Hawaii, January 1995).

cautions to be kept in mind as multilateral efforts proceed.²⁸ As summarized below in the accompanying chart, the IWG concluded that:

- CSBMs cannot work in the absence of a desire on the part of participants to cooperate. There must be a general awareness among participants that the benefits to be gained outweigh both the risks associated with cooperation or the unilateral advantages to be gained by not cooperating. CSBMs must be viewed in ‘win-win,’ not ‘win-lose’ terms;
- CSBMs are most effective if they build upon or are guided by regional (and global) norms. They must be suited to prevailing strategic realities and cultures and in tune with the underlying political, economic, and cultural dynamism of the region in which they are being applied;
- Foreign models do not necessarily apply. Most measures are highly situation dependent and require extensive tailoring. Even widely tested “universal” models may prove unworkable, if an attempt is made to impose them from outside;
- CSBMs are stepping stones or building blocks, not institutions. They represent means toward an end. By helping lay the groundwork, however, they may serve as useful preconditions for effective institution building;
- CSBMs should have realistic, pragmatic, clearly-defined objectives. Objectives should be measurable and there should be common agreement as to what constitutes compliance and progress. Measures that overreach the political willingness of the states to implement them can become sources of contention rather than accommodation;
- Gradual, methodical, incremental approaches seem to work best. Long-term approaches provide greater opportunity for consensus building. Attempts to leapfrog over interim steps are generally ill-advised; and
- The process, in many instances, may be as (or more) important than the product. Nonetheless, while the process of instilling habits of cooperation, in and of itself, may initially result in greater levels of trust and understanding over time, some progress on substantive issues must ultimately occur. Dialogue without a defined purpose can be difficult to sustain.

Asia–Pacific CBMs: General Observations

- CBMs cannot work in the absence of a desire to cooperate
- CBMs must be viewed in ‘win-win’ not ‘win-lose’ terms

²⁸ For an edited volume containing all seminar papers, please see Ralph A. Cossa, ed., *Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Asia–Pacific*, CSIS Significant Issues Series, vol. XVII, no 3 (Washington D.C., 1995).

- CBMs are most effective if they build upon regional/global norms
- Foreign models do not necessarily apply
- CBMs are stepping stones or building blocks, not institutions
- CBMs should have realistic, pragmatic, clearly-defined objectives
- Gradual, methodical, incremental approaches work best
- Unilateral and bilateral approaches can serve as useful models
- The process may be as (or more) important than the product
- As regards Asia–Pacific CBMs in particular, remember that:
 - the Asia–Pacific region is not homogeneous
 - there is a preference for informal structures
 - consensus building is a key prerequisite
 - there is a general distrust of outside “solutions”
 - there is a genuine commitment to the principle of non-interference in one another’s internal affairs²⁹

Within the Asia–Pacific region, preference is generally given to measures that address specific security problems, that take into account the unique geostrategic character and cultures of the region/subregions, that are relevant to the prevailing stage of political accommodation among all participating states, and that build upon historical and institutional experiences in the region. Several additional observations also appear in order when specifically discussing this region:

- The Asia–Pacific region is not homogeneous, but rather consists of several subregions (and sub-subregions) that are unique in many aspects;
- Within the various Asian subregions there is a general preference for informal structures and a tendency to place greater emphasis on personal relationships rather than on formal structures. Consensus building is a key prerequisite. There is also a general distrust of Western (especially European) ‘solutions;’ and
- A genuine commitment exists among Asian nations to the principle of non-interference in a state’s internal affairs. Western nations are often too quick to dismiss such statements or arguments as simply means of avoiding international obligations or deflecting inquiries

²⁹ From Cossa, *Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Asia–Pacific*, 14.

into, or criticisms of, domestic practices (such as violations of human rights). While the principle and commitment to non-interference should not be casually dismissed, however, Asian leaders should also not be allowed to use the non-interference argument as an excuse or shield against valid international criticisms or to limit the role of outside parties when international events or issues warrant it.

It is also recognized that in a more interconnected world, a nation’s internal developments can have broader regional, and even international ramifications. Differences in interpretation over the external implications of internal events, and over approaches aimed at achieving, measuring, or guaranteeing universal basic rights persist, both between and within Asia–Pacific subregions.³⁰

Policy Recommendations

A series of policy recommendations have emerged from the CSBM Working Group under four general headings: expansion of transparency measures, support of global treaty regimes, building on existing cooperation, and developing new multilateral approaches.³¹

CSBM Policy Recommendations

□ Expand Transparency Measures

- **Broadly apply existing military transparency measures**
- **Produce standardized defense policy papers (white papers)**
- **Promote greater dialogue among the region’s militaries**
- **Establish an Asian arms register**

□ Support Global CSBMs

- **Strengthen NPT/IAEA safeguards**
- **Implement the Chemical/Biological Weapons Conventions**

³⁰ For more details on these general and Asia-specific observations, please see Ralph A. Cossa, “Asia–Pacific Confidence and Security Building Measures,” in Cossa, *Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Asia–Pacific*: 1–18.

³¹ For more specific details on the four categories of recommendations, see Brad Roberts and Robert Ross, “Confidence and Security Building Measures: A USCSCAP Task Force Report,” in Cossa, *Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Asia–Pacific*: 137–160. For more information on the recommendations, see *CSCAP Memorandum No. 2, Asia–Pacific Confidence and Security Building Measures*, June 1995, produced by the CSCAP Secretariat, Kuala Lumpur, which spells out these policy recommendations for regional governments and multilateral organizations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum.

CSBM Policy Recommendations

- **Expand the MTCR into a global treaty**
- **Support a CTBT and no-first-use principles**
- **Build on Existing Cooperation**
 - **Establish a maritime safety and security regime**
 - **Establish nuclear weapons-free zones**
 - **Expand cooperation on nuclear safety and security regimes**
 - **Explore dual-use technology export control regimes**
- **Develop New Multilateral Approaches**
 - **Formalize Indonesia’s Spratly Islands initiative**
 - **Establish Northeast Asia dialogue mechanisms**
 - **Promote dialogues on effective governance**
 - **Recognize that a CSCE-type structure is neither appropriate nor feasible in Asia**

The remainder of this section will focus on two of the most promising transparency mechanisms for the Asia–Pacific region—defense policy papers and arms registers—while also briefly discussing CSCAP’s preliminary investigation into the feasibility of establishing an Asian or Pacific Atomic Energy Commission (PACATOM). It should be noted, as implied above, that transparency is not a cure-all. Some forms of transparency may create feelings of vulnerability, and no nation will voluntarily place its legitimate security concerns at risk.³² Nonetheless, transparency in general, and defense policy papers and the UN Register in particular, have been endorsed by the ARF.³³ CSCAP, in its memorandum on *Asia–Pacific Confidence and Security Building Measures*, notes the pros and cons and concludes that:

Transparency measures represent convenient, low-risk methods for promoting confidence in the near term while laying the foundation for more ambitious programs to follow.

³² Ironically, in many instances, a basic level of trust is needed to permit nations to feel secure enough to become more transparent.

³³ The ARF has acknowledged and endorsed a wide variety of military transparency measures, including direct military-to-military contacts, visits by military delegations, military personnel exchange programs, intelligence exchanges, prior notification of military exercises, the opening of military exercises to international observers, greater openness regarding military budgets and defense planning and procurement, and the preparation of defense white papers or policy papers.

Although transparency could in some circumstances contribute to instability, in general, greater transparency about military doctrine, capabilities, and intentions can provide reassurance and help build trust and confidence.³⁴

Defense Policy Papers

A growing number of Asia–Pacific countries are now producing defense policy papers, but the quantity and quality of information provided in these papers varies widely. The value of such reports would be enhanced if their presentation could be standardized, thus enabling comparisons to be made about defense policies and the armed forces they described.³⁵ As a CSCAP Memorandum notes:

the development both of minimum standards of openness and of common definitions or uniform outlines for defense policy white papers, arms registries, statements of defense expenditures, and other transparency measures would enhance military transparency efforts.³⁶

The CSBM Working Group’s investigation to date has revealed that individual defense policy reports are the products of diverse policy formulation processes, reflecting different policy priorities and concerns.³⁷ This means that it will not be easy to reach agreement on the types and levels of detail to be included in such papers, especially as regards figures on defense expenditures, because such figures reflect different national budgeting systems and accounting practices. More significantly, defense policy papers are produced for quite different purposes. Some are primarily aimed at addressing domestic audiences; others are more focused on foreign audiences, aimed at reassuring allies and friends abroad and/or deterring potential adversaries. Despite these differences, defense policy reports have common elements, including military threat assessments and the identification of national

³⁴ CSCAP Memorandum No. 2, 4.

³⁵ For details relating to the IWG’s efforts on this subject, see Ralph A. Cossa and Kwa Chong Guan, “CSBM Working Group Endorses Military Transparency Measures” *PacNet*, no. 20-95, 9 June 1995, and Ralph A. Cossa, *Toward a Regional Arms Register in the Asia–Pacific*, Pacific Forum CSIS Occasional Paper (Honolulu, Hawaii: CSIS) .

³⁶ CSCAP Memorandum No 2, 4.

³⁷ See Ralph A. Cossa, ed., *Promoting Regional Transparency: Defense Policy Papers and the UN Register of Conventional Arms* (Pacific Forum CSIS Occasional Paper, July 1996) for details of this analysis. This report also contains outlines of the various referenced national defense policy papers, along with a case study comparing and contrasting the two editions of Thailand’s White Paper.

security objectives and goals. Reports differ in the extent of information provided on defense posture and management.³⁸

In addition, as each society becomes more open, democratized, and self-confident, its defense policy paper is likely to become more sophisticated and available, and to contain more reliable and precise information. Therefore, publication of defense papers can be regarded as an expression of self-confidence, especially when the contents are reliable and precise.

The IWG has prepared an outline for a generic defense policy paper with a standardized table of contents, common definitions, and units of measurement for regional states to consider when developing and revising their defense policy papers. The model is provided in the hope that it can increase the utility of such documents, when and if developed. The generic model may also serve to guide the efforts of nations contemplating development of a defense policy paper for the first time.

Arms Register

Strict adherence to the reporting requirements of the UN Register of Conventional Arms would increase regional trust and transparency. As a result, the CSBM IWG has conducted an examination of how best to utilize the UN Register to increase the utility of this annually reported data as a regional transparency measure. The development of an Asia–Pacific Arms Register that would expand upon the UN Register has also been considered, but a general consensus emerged that its development was somewhat premature. Many felt that the UN Arms Register must first be fully implemented and studied for its

³⁸ These observations were first made by Dr. Kang Choi in his comparison study for the CSCAP Working Group. For more details, see Kang Choi, “Defense Policy Papers: A Generic Model,” in Cossa, *Promoting Regional Transparency*, 14.

Generic Defense Policy Paper

Part I: Threat Perception and Analysis of Security Environment

- International
- Regional
- National

Part II: National Security Goals and Objectives

- Strategic
- Tactical

Part III: General Defense Policy Lines

- Strategic
- Tactical

Part IV: Major Areas of Concern

- International
- Regional
- National

Part V: Current Defense Posture

- Size of Force
- Structure of Force
- Military Holdings
- Strategic Weapons
- Major Offensive Conventional Weapons

Part VI: Defense Management

- Defense Budget
- Organization

Part VII: Conclusion (or Overall Evaluation)

Appendices:

- Reference Material and Statistical Data
- Record of Compliance with and Participation in U.N. Activities

relevance as a potential confidence-building measure, as a logical and necessary prerequisite for the development of a more specific and all-encompassing Asia–Pacific Register.

Participating states should make the UN Register more relevant if they improved the quality of their responses. This could be accomplished by providing more concise explanations, including descriptions of the types of equipment transferred, and by providing information on holdings and procurement through national production.³⁹ Regional states are encouraged to

³⁹ Cossa, *Promoting Regional Transparency*, provides additional details regarding ways to improve the relevancy of the current Register, along with specific details regarding then-current regional participation in this United Nations transparency effort.

take steps to disseminate more broadly the information contained in the Register and consider holding working sessions aimed at further explaining states' intentions and concerns. Other suggested improvements include:

- an expansion of the categories of weapons covered by the Register;
- the addition of more qualitative data;
- the possible inclusion of national production and/or national holdings in the annual reports to make them more meaningful; and
- the establishment of consultative mechanisms which would provide a vehicle for answering questions and explaining conflicting national reports.

IWG members support both the inclusion of Register information in defense policy papers and including defense policy papers as part of each nation's submissions to the Register, thus making the information more available and further promoting both vehicles.

Nuclear Safety and Nonproliferation

The prospects of a rapid increase in energy demand in the Asia–Pacific region have driven many countries to develop or at least contemplate future use of nuclear energy. This has raised new concerns about nuclear safety and proliferation in the region. In order to address rising concerns about plutonium stockpiles, reprocessing, and other nuclear safety and security issues, the IWG conducted a preliminary investigation of the feasibility of developing multilateral approaches toward ensuring the peaceful, safe use of nuclear energy.

The IWG study examined ways to increase nuclear transparency and promote greater understanding and confidence among Asia–Pacific nations, while providing greater insight into regional nuclear-related concerns and acceptable solutions. The study concluded that multilateral confidence-building measures aimed at increasing transparency and enhancing safeguards and individual assurances, if introduced at an early stage in the process, could help insure that the expanded regional use of nuclear energy does not contribute to misunderstandings about the nuclear intentions of individual nations, while also promoting nuclear safety and nuclear non-proliferation goals. Such a research effort could possibly lead to the establishment of a PACATOM to facilitate functional cooperation in areas of mutual interest and concern.

CSCAP is committed to pursuing this research effort, which will involve a comprehensive investigation of nuclear-related concerns in order to test the feasibility of—and, if appropriate, help set the stage for—a more comprehensive effort to establish a formal PACATOM mechanism to deal with nuclear safety/nonproliferation issues in a constructive, highly transparent manner.

Additional Transparency Measures

During its initial review of confidence-building measures, the US Committee of CSCAP also put forth a series of recommendations to “Expand Transparency Measures Related to Politico-Military Affairs” which remain largely relevant and are briefly summarized below:⁴⁰

- Existing military-to-military contacts should be expanded;
- States should agree to minimum standards of openness with regard to national security policy;
- States should offer unilateral commitments to open up their military establishments while pressing others in the region to do the same;
- States should add questions of defense strategy and weapons procurement to the list of topics for discussion among government representatives in non-public venues;⁴¹
- The region should create a regional arms register that goes beyond what is possible in the UN context; and,
- Both governmental and nongovernmental organizations should encourage and facilitate informed public debate on security issues.

While much has been accomplished in the area of greater openness and transparency in military matters in the Asia–Pacific region, much remains to be done. Unilateral as well as multilateral efforts are needed, with the understanding that, as trust and confidence grows, the willingness of regional states to participate in transparency efforts grows. At the nongovernmental level, CSCAP intends to play a leading role in developing and promoting regional transparency. Since CSCAP’s efforts and analysis are intended to support and enhance the initiatives of the ASEAN Regional Forum, the CSBM Working Group plans to closely monitor and coordinate its own research with the efforts of the ARF’s Inter-sessional Support Group on Confidence-building Measures in order to ensure that its own Track Two, nongovernmental initiatives complement official governmental efforts.

Multilateral Forums as CBMs

Governmental and Track Two multilateral security mechanisms, in addition to providing a forum in which to develop and promote CBMs, serve as confidence-building measures in and of themselves. Their existence can promote greater trust and understanding in the region. In fact, institutionalized multilateral forums are most valuable, and stand the greatest chance of success, when they serve as confidence-building measures aimed at avoiding, rather than reacting to, crises or aggression.

⁴⁰ For a complete listing of these recommendations, please see Roberts and Ross, “Confidence and Security Building,” 137–160.

⁴¹ Making defense information more readily available on the Internet would also be a positive step toward greater openness and transparency.

Multilateral Forums as CBMs

Multilateral security forums:

- support and encourage confidence-building measures
- serve as confidence-building measures in their own right
- assist Japan in becoming a more “normal” nation
- facilitate greater regional integration of the PRC
- allow Russia to play a constructive security role
- help promote peace on the Korean peninsula
- build trust among the region’s militaries
- assure that other regional voices are heard
- provide governments with a venue to test new ideas
- promote a sense of regional identity
- promote regional cooperation

Multilateral security forums offer a particularly effective means for Japan to become more actively involved in regional security matters. It is an unfortunate fact that many of Japan’s neighbors remain uncomfortable about Japan playing a larger security role in Asia. Active participation in the ARF and other similar settings provides a means for Japan to cautiously exert a greater leadership role in international security affairs in a manner that is non-threatening to neighboring countries.

Multilateral mechanisms also provide a useful vehicle for greater interaction between China and its neighbors. Active Chinese participation in a broad range of security-oriented forums could also promote greater transparency regarding Chinese military capabilities and intentions, a clear contribution to regional stability.

Multilateral forums provide Russia the same opportunities for greater regional integration. For its part, the Kremlin has signaled its desire to become more directly involved in multilateral security dialogue in Asia. Russian involvement in Asian security dialogues promotes a degree of familiarity and respectability that also bolsters those in the Kremlin most committed to reform and international cooperation.

Organizations such as the ARF also provide a framework for continued direct US involvement in Asian security issues and affairs. US support for multilateralism has, however, raised some concern among those in Asia who are skeptical regarding America's long-term commitment to the region. As a result, it remains incumbent on the United States to stress, and to demonstrate, that its involvement in multilateral activities is aimed at providing additional means of engagement, rather than at providing an excuse for a significant reduction in America's military presence in Asia.

Multilateral security-oriented forums—particularly at the Track Two level—can provide a venue for bringing North Korean security specialists and government officials into direct contact with their southern counterparts in a less confrontational atmosphere, while also helping expose them to broader regional realities.⁴²

Forums like the ARF and CSCAP have also encouraged greater dialogue on security issues both among the region's uniformed militaries and between the military and civilian communities. Greater uniformed military participation in security-oriented dialogue facilitates more informed debate and enhances the relevancy of end products, while also increasing the level of understanding between military officers and their civilian counterparts. The region's military establishments must be encouraged to become full partners in the process.

Multilateral forums also provide a venue for other regional actors to be heard on security issues that affect them all. Track Two organizations such as CSCAP can provide "benign cover" for governments to vet new policies and strategies in a more academic setting before adopting formal proposals. Nongovernmental organizations can also provide a voice to nations, territories, and regional groupings that, for a variety of reasons, might be excluded from official gatherings.⁴³ In addition, nations or entities that might find it uncomfortable or politically unacceptable to engage in bilateral dialogue can still effectively interact at the multinational level, particularly in NGO forums.⁴⁴ Asian multinational gatherings also

⁴² CSCAP is one of the few organizations to which both North and South Korea belong. DPRK representatives have traditionally attended CSBM Working Group meetings and, in January 1997, participated for the first time in a North Pacific Working Group meeting. This involvement was one of the rare instances where representatives from both nations sat down and openly discussed Korean Peninsula security issues.

⁴³ CSCAP is one of the few organizations in which PRC specialists will discuss security matters with Taiwanese scholars and experts although, at Beijing's insistence, cross-strait issues are specifically not discussed. Taiwan is not a member of CSCAP but its security specialists are invited to working group meetings "in their private capacities."

⁴⁴ For example, the APEC Leaders' Meetings have made it possible for President Clinton to engage in direct discussions with Chinese president Jiang Zemin when bilateral summit meetings would have been politically impossible otherwise to arrange. Likewise, the 1996 G7 Nuclear Safety Summit provided the first opportunity in 11 years for a Japanese prime minister to visit Moscow.

contribute to a sense of regional identity and cooperation that can spill over into the political and economic spheres, just as growing political and economic cooperation has helped set the stage for expanded security dialogue.

Conclusions

Multilateral dialogue mechanisms such as the ARF, NEACD, and CSCAP, like ASEAN itself before them, serve as true confidence and security building measures in their own right. They also provide an invaluable forum for the further investigation and development of more structured measures that may be applied either region-wide or on a more selective, subregional basis. Useful efforts are underway within Tracks One and Two to develop and to promote regional confidence. In order to maximize their effectiveness, close coordination and cooperation between Track One and Track Two efforts are essential, as is the integration of these regional initiatives with global efforts.

As regards confidence-building measures in the Asia–Pacific region, experience to date reveals that the best approach appears to be as follows: start small; take a gradual, incremental, building block approach; recognize that European models are generally not transferable to Asia and that subregional differences exist within the Asia–Pacific region; apply individual measures only where they fit; do not overformalize the process; and do not neglect the importance of unilateral and bilateral measures as stepping stones toward multilateral confidence building. There is a need to proceed slowly and carefully, but definitely a need to proceed. The ARF, NEACD, and CSCAP have demonstrated their intention to proceed with the task of building greater trust and confidence among the nations of the Asia–Pacific region.

