Chapter IV

ASEAN Attempts at Enhancing Security

As discussed in the earlier chapter, in Southeast Asia, the path of progress has been through the strengthening, expansion, and, gradual multilateralisation of the system of bilateral arrangements, and the adaptation and expansion of existing process of regional dialogue to include security matters. Patterns of relationship between regional countries and major powers have been the main issue in discussions on security. Building regional security cooperation in order to reduce conflict and mutual suspicion has emerged as a major issue.

Although the Cold War was over, the problems of security in the region remained complex and multidimensional and countries in the region tried to resolve them through peaceful means and mechanisms. The end of the Cold War created the necessity for a new regional order and structure for the region. Amidst increasing uncertainty countries in the region sought to make efforts to underline the need for ensuring peace and stability in the region. These efforts could materialize into regional security cooperation through various ways and means by conducting preventive diplomacy.

Consequently, a regional consensus on security cooperation is necessary in the long run although at present they are far removed from concerns about security. This could offer a way of avoiding conflict and reducing tension within the region. A security cooperation approach would also encompass some or all of the many proposals advanced in recent years with a view to consolidating international and regional security in the aftermath of the Cold War. Apart from that regional cooperation would serve as an umbrella that would ensure the maintenance of bilateral relations and cooperation, often dampening
existing conflicts or differences in bilateral relationships of any two nations involved in regional cooperation as in the past.

Therefore the need for security cooperation in the region is essential for three reasons:

i. to ensure that there is no war in the region in future

ii. to ensure economic growth which has been strangled by the recent economic crisis

iii. the region is by no means free of tension and anxiety of potential conflict, chronic instability and armed contention among rival powers although these have receded to the background at the moment with most of these countries trying to revive their struggling economies. To ensure that these do not flare up into open hostilities in the future it is essential to develop security cooperation.

Without regional cooperation, some of the existing disputes would have readily surfaced into the open, and some may even have developed into armed conflicts. At least pending a final settlement of disputes by peaceful means, regional cooperation may help to sweep them under the carpet.

In the Southeast Asia perspective, the form of security cooperation, particularly in the military field which was pertinent to the Cold War with the backing of a Super Power and directed more or less towards a well-defined external enemy is definitely no longer relevant. In search of an appropriate form of security cooperation in view of the actual potential conflicts, ill-defined security concerns and perceptions, mutual suspicions and other forms of uncertainty, preventive diplomacy was perceived by ASEAN as the most appropriate form of security cooperation, as a mode of confidence building.

Stressing the need for security cooperation, the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Alatas remarked, “in view of the trend towards regional cooperation in various fields and
the contribution of regional organizations to the cause of peace and security, there is no doubt that states and especially developing countries will increasingly turn towards regional arrangements as a means of overcoming their security problems, both real and perceived. This is possible because the strategy of seeking security through military alliances with major powers has long been proved to be counter productive and will indeed become increasingly irrelevant.”

In facing these challenges and concerns, the establishment of a regional security cooperation is significantly required, so that, through dialogue and concentration, strategic changes in the region could be managed in such a way. Efforts to develop regional cooperation for peace is a concrete example of the striving of countries in the region to ensure security through multilateral dialogue, consultation and peaceful means. Security cooperation can receive a boost through political dialogue and information exchange which can be both bilateral and multilateral.

It is generally accepted that the most fundamental building block for regional security and cooperation is the institutionalization of regional security dialogue. Such dialogue should lead to better appreciation of the concerns, interests and perceptions of the participating countries, enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and preventing misinterpretation, misunderstanding and suspicions likely to cause tension and even conflict. More generally institutionalised dialogue would serve as a mechanism for

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managing some of the uncertainty which presently confounds regional security planners and analysts.²

ASEAN has had a long history of intermittent strife, chronic instability and frequent interference of rival external powers. This is hardly surprising, considering that it is part of a region where both the physical presence and the larger interests of major powers converge. The integrity and frequency of policy interactions among these major powers, as well as the influence they exert on the smaller countries of the region, have always had and will continue to have a direct bearing on the political and security realities in the area.

ASEAN countries are aware of the fact that the policies and perceptions of the major powers on their interests and their roles in the region will inevitably determine the dimension of any geopolitical configuration in this part of the world. Thus, it is from the dynamics of the major power relationships, from its stability or instability, from the tensions, convergences or realignments that occur within it, and their implications for the rest of the region, that much of the substance of the security environment of Southeast Asia will be derived.

In the light of the possible shifts in the security equations in the region, major powers as well as the regional countries will have to make necessary adjustments in their policies. There will be a clearly felt need for a mechanism for continuous dialogues and consultations among these countries to anticipate and resolve problems before they reach a crisis level. Eventually these mechanisms may evolve into more institutionalized regional and international structures. It is with this end in view that ASEAN countries

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² Desmond Ball, *Northeast Asia and Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1996, p.6
began the process of internal as well as external dialogues on regional security issues. One of the most important development in this respect is the establishment of the ARF. Since the launching of the ARF in 1994, it has concentrated its efforts on confidence building measures but now it has begun putting into place aspects of preventive diplomacy that can be combined with confidence building measures. Another important development that encourages the aspect of preventive diplomacy is the Indonesian government’s initiative in the form of regional workshops on managing potential conflicts in the South China Sea. Another important explanation on the development of preventive diplomacy is the efforts of ASEAN countries to make the “Treaty of Amity and Cooperation” in Southeast Asia as a code of conduct for interstate relations in the region.

Without any doubt, ASEAN as a regional grouping in the Southeast Asian region has successfully launched a number of mutually reinforcing initiatives for maintaining peace and security. Without neglecting the political and security fields where ASEAN has built a reputation as a force of dialogue and building of mutual trust, ASEAN intends to remain as the driving force of this sole vehicle for consultations on security matters and for building up of mutual trust and transparency among the Asia-Pacific countries. ASEAN has served as a consistent promoter of self-restraint and as a driving force for dialogue, consultation and cooperation, thereby contributing substantially to the achievement and maintenance of peace not only in Southeast Asia but also in the greater Asia-Pacific region.

Preventive diplomacy to some extent depends on consensus among the parties involved. However, it is not the same as crisis management. As concluded in the “Chairman’s
Summary of Seminar on Preventive Diplomacy" held in Seoul in May 1995 it is expressed that efforts at preventive diplomacy remain focused where they will likely prove most effective on the prevention of latent conflicts must develop its own mechanism to carry out preventive diplomacy.³

i. Develop a set of guidelines for the peaceful settlement of disputes taking into account the principles of the UN Charter and the TAC.

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

iii. 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).

iv. Explore ways and means to prevent conflict.

v. Explore the idea of appointing Special Representatives, in consultation with ARF members, to undertake fact-finding missions, at the request of the parties involved in an issue, and to offer their good offices as necessary.

vi. Explore the idea of establishing a Regional Risk Centre, as suggested by the U.N. Secretary General in his Agenda for Peace and as commended by the UNGA Resolution 47/120 (see Section IV, operative paragraph).

vii. Such a centre could serve as a database for the exchange of information.

Preventive diplomacy as a follow-up of confidence building measures may encompass both military and non-military matters, including political, economic and social matters.

³ ibid, pp. 46-48
Three major regional arrangements may be regarded as illustrations of the implementation of preventive diplomacy in Southeast Asia. They have given positive contribution to the development of regional security cooperation, namely the TAC; the ARF and the Regional Workshop on South China Sea.

1) The Treaty of Amity Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) — The success of ASEAN for more than 30 years to maintain its survival is noteworthy especially in view of its challenges. Till date the existent framework has been able to prevent the rise of conflicts and to some extent to maintain peace and security in Southeast Asia. Basically the idea of signing the TAC could not be separated from the efforts of ASEAN to maintain peace and stability in Southeast Asia as called upon, by the Bangkok Declaration and the principle of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. TAC covers two issues:
Internal relations between ASEAN states through cooperation among countries of the region by stressing the significance of each other's economic, social and cultural development as a foundation to build regional security in Southeast Asia.

As regards relations between Southeast Asian countries and external powers, ASEAN expressed its will to refrain from involving itself in the competitive conflict of countries outside the region.

As mentioned in TAC, the purpose of the treaty is to promote peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among their people which would contribute to their strength, solidarity and closer relationship. In order to accomplish the purpose of this treaty relations between countries of the region shall be guided by fundamental principles. In pursuance of this treaty, the contracting parties shall endeavour to strengthen their respective national resilience in their political, economic, socio-cultural as well as security fields in
conformity with their respective ideals and aspirations, free from external interference as well as internal subversive activities in order to preserve respective national identities.

The purpose and principles of the TAC have given significant foundation to establishment of regional cooperation in the region. To some extent it is in line with the principles of confidence building and preventive diplomacy. In Chapter IV, Article 13 of this treaty regarding “Pacific Settlement of Disputes”, it is said that the contracting parties shall have the determination and good faith to prevent disputes from arising. In case disputes on matters directly affecting them should arise, especially disputes likely to disturb regional peace and harmony, they shall refrain from the threat or use of force and shall at all times settle such disputes among themselves through friendly negotiations.⁴

Initially the TAC aimed at finding a peaceful solution. However, so far it has been able to function only as a body of conflict avoidance. It is still unable to settle numerous conflicts and disputes. The settlement of a conflict becomes more complicated because of the involvement of a diversity of interests in its economy, polity and security.

Though the provisions of TAC regarding peaceful conflict resolution through High Council has never been applied, it reflects the success of ASEAN in preventing the rise of serious conflict among Southeast Asian countries. In other words, TAC has played a role as an instrument of preventive diplomacy rather than as an instrument of conflict resolution.

2) The ARF — Due to the changing security environment after the end of the Cold War, ASEAN was forced to reconsider its regional role. ASEAN has consistently shied away from any suggestion of collective or common security. In response to this, it has chosen

⁴ ASEAN Secretariat, “Handbook on Selected ASEAN Political Documents,” Jakarta, 1998, p. 25
the “ASEAN way” as its mechanism for conflict management or “preventive diplomacy.”

A major initiative was taken by ASEAN in the direction of creating peace and stability with the establishment of ARF to serve as a vehicle for promoting political and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. This initiative was launched as the realization of the 1992 ASEAN Summit Declaration that underlined the importance of enhancing political and security cooperation. With the setting up of the ARF, ASEAN reached a new high in regional as well as global politics. ARF was born as a logical implication of the end of the bipolar system in the Asia-Pacific. Therefore ARF has functioned as the first multilateral forum in the region to discuss security issues which involved all major powers in the region including the US, Russia, China and Japan.

Although the ARF was established during the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Singapore in July 1993, initially the Forum was officially declared during its inaugural meeting in Bangkok in July 1994. Since then it has performed as a high level consultative forum which 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.

Doubts were initially expressed on the need or viability of such a security forum in Southeast Asia for three reasons:

i. Firstly, this was because the region was not known to have developed a uniform outlook or a common threat perception.

ii. Secondly, the region had not witnessed the organic growth of a security structure on its soil.
iii. Thirdly, it was feared that even if such a forum took shape it would be slow moving due to the Southeast Asian habit of consensus building.  

In order to enhance the peace and prosperity of the region, the ARF must dispassionately analyze the key challenges facing the region. There are a residue of unresolved territorial and other differences. Any of these could spark a conflagration that could undermine the peace and prosperity of the region and the ARF will have to gradually defuse these potential problems.

The ARF has two additional mechanisms, namely, ISG — Inter Sessional Group and ISM — Inter Sessional Meeting. These mechanisms work to discuss more details on some issues such as ISG on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy and ISM on Disaster Relief and Cooperative Activities.

Apart from these, taking into account the usefulness of Track Two contributions — through the CSCAP or Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific and the Northeast Asia Cooperative Dialogue (NEACD) — to the ARF process, the ISG and ISM meetings also discuss ways of drawing upon the contributions to advance ARF consideration of the approaches towards the overlap between Confidence Building measures and Preventive Diplomacy.

In view of avoiding an overlap between the CBMs and preventive diplomacy, the ARF through its ISG considered and proposed four proposals namely, (1) an enhanced role for the ARF Chairman, particularly the idea of a good office’s role, liaising role with external parties, role in enhancing interaction between Track I and Track II and coordinating role

in between ARF meetings, (2) development of a register of experts/eminent persons and (3) annual security outlook (ASO – Co-Chairman’s Summary Report of the meetings of the ARF-ISG on CBMs in Honolulu, 4-6 November 1998 and in Bangkok, 3-5 March 1999). At the last ARF Ministerial meeting in Manila on July 1998, it was recognized that the ARF has made significant contribution towards establishing a strong foundation of trust and confidence among its participants, which would be essential in confronting the existing uncertainties in the Asia-Pacific Region. It was also agreed that the ARF would continue its steady progress to successfully carry through its goals in the face of even greater challenges in the future.

The commitments and agreements reached in every ARF meeting and activity provides guidelines to the way in which this forum will develop in an evolutionary three staged process, namely — promoting confidence building measures, developing preventive diplomacy and in the long run, developing conflict resolution.

At the last ARF meeting, the future direction of ARF process was thoroughly discussed and overviewed. The ministers agreed that the evolutionary approach to the development of ARF process would be maintained. It also stressed the importance in development of the ARF from confidence building to preventive diplomacy to elaboration of approaches to conflict, in an incremental and step-by-step manner. Besides, the Minister affirmed the approach to decision-making by consensus while taking into consideration the interests and comfort level of all ARF participants. 7

Although to some extent the ARF has performed productive outputs, in the coming years, the ARF should continue to develop along the evolutionary path as it was laid out in

7 Chairman’s Statement at the Fifth ASEAN Regional Forum, Manila, July 27, 1998, p. 11
1995, that is, from confidence building to preventive diplomacy to an active role in resolving conflicts. By keeping this path on track, it is necessary for the participating countries of the ARF to recognize the great potential and important role of the ARF in further strengthening the foundation of regional peace and stability.

With regard to the progress of ARF, a senior Indonesian diplomat said about the traditional wisdom of ARF that the development of conflict resolution mechanism is not something for the immediate future, although it is the eventual goal of the ARF. Besides, the ARF is stuck with the principles of “graduality,” “evolutionary” and at “a pace comfortable to all participants.” This is a cautious attitude and may be a wise one up to this point. In fact, history is full of examples that being too wise and too cautious may, in the end be too late to avert any potential conflict from worsening and erupting into unmanageable proportion. 8

3) Regional Workshop on the South China Sea: ASEAN’s multilateral security efforts were evident from the ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality) Declaration in November 1971, the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the ASEAN Concord in February 1976 as well as the decision in the Manila Summit in 1988 to work towards a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. The ASEAN Regional Forum and the various officials meetings (SOMs) have developed as an integral part of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) process. The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific was founded on the strong institutional links forged between the established strategic studies centers throughout the Asia Pacific region.

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8 See Hasjim Djalal, “Preventive Diplomacy in Asia Pacific,” The Jakarta Post, August 27, 1998
The robust development of cooperative activities between the Southeast Asian countries in the security and defence fields over the Eighties and early Nineties exemplified in important respects the obstacles that they have overcome in their mutual relations. "It also provides valuable insights into the practicalities of enhancing regional security cooperation — the virtue of patience and modesty, the value of beginning with extant bilateral relations, and the importance of realistic appreciation of the practical constraints on security cooperation." 9

Bilateral cooperation such as sharing of intelligence information, reciprocal high level visits, joint exercises and joint training programmes were extremely important in the development of the mutual trust and understanding that is crucial for effective multilateral activities. Moreover, the thinking then was that "the institutionalisation of a myriad of bilateral arrangements involving a broad spectrum of activities and linking every (or as many as practicable) national defence and security establishment in the region is likely to evolve naturally into multilateral arrangements and processes." 10

A notable feature of the ASEAN states' efforts to ensure domestic stability involved security arrangements designed to combat the threats of insurgency and subversion. These arrangements resulted from an implicit consensus among ASEAN states to prevent the kind of radical internal change in their societies that has occurred in the Indochinese region. Bilateral counter-insurgency cooperation against border-region insurgencies evolved in spite of ASEAN's refusal to adopt a military profile. However, "there was no

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10 Ibid, p.234
talk of security alliance or of multilateral security cooperation. Each ASEAN state continued to try and organise its security on a national basis.”\textsuperscript{11}

The very idea of an ASEAN ‘defence community’ implying the need of some sort of trilateral or multilateral military arrangement within the grouping constituted a markedly different goal than the idea of ‘security community’\textsuperscript{12} which is focused on cooperation for the resolution of disputes and conflicts within ASEAN member states.

This, despite the fact that a discussion between the ASEAN leaders calling for a ‘defence community’ in the first ASEAN summit in Bali in 1976 was summarily rejected by them for obvious reasons.

However, existing bilateral ties were endorsed by the Declaration of the ASEAN Concord.

Over the years there was a mutual understanding among the ASEAN states for the continuation of cooperation on a non-ASEAN basis between member-states in security matters in accordance with their mutual needs and interests.

Going by the present perspective, there are bilateral or trilateral arrangements between ASEAN member states as regards defence cooperation. At all events it was to be promoted outside the ASEAN framework. All member states however, are not part of the bilateral or trilateral security cooperation. This is particularly true in the case of Malaysia and Philippines mainly due to their continued dispute over Sabah. However, despite similar disputes between Malaysia and Singapore and between Malaysia and Indonesia, there exist bilateral and sometimes even trilateral arrangements between these states,

\textsuperscript{11} Renate Strassner, “ASEAN Motor for a New Security System,” \textit{Aussen Politik}, vol. 4, 3rd Quarter, 1994, p.290

\textsuperscript{12} Amitava Acharya, “The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Security Community or Defence Community,” \textit{Pacific Affairs}, vol. LXIV, no. 2, Summer 1991, p.159
especially in the form of joint military exercises. But as mentioned earlier there has been a decline in this kind of cooperation especially in the period following the economic crash of 1997.

The emergence of the ARF in July 1994 was a response to changes in the security context in Southeast Asia following the end of the Cold War. After the Seventies, strategic priorities of both China and the US converged, as a result of which Southeast Asia was concerned mainly with the aim of containing the Soviet Union’s growing influence in the region. This convergence of the Sino-US interests helped to mitigate the strategic consequences that the end of the Vietnam War would otherwise have had for the US and its partners. Although some ASEAN members were not supportive of this new pattern of power, they gained form from it, especially from China’s decision to abandon its support for revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia.

The new pattern of regional power that emerged had one notable feature. Indochina remained the centre of global rivalry. During the first phase of the Cold War, the US regarded the Indochina conflict from a strategic perspective. The US thinking was that China would be guided by its expansionist policy as well as its Communist goals. China’s support for the Communist insurgency in Vietnam confirmed this belief of the US. It was mainly as a result of this belief that the US carried out its ill-fated military intervention in Vietnam. Indochina, which had become completely subject to revolutionary Communism by the end of 1975, remained nonetheless a focus of conflict and a critical geographic point of reference for both regional and global rivalries.¹³

Despite its polarising political effect, within Southeast Asia and beyond, the Indochina issue became the main focus. A number of other regional receded to the background including the territorial disputes and disputes over maritime jurisdiction in the South China Sea in which China also staked a claim. Paradoxically, the resolution of the Indochina problem not only removed a common focus of conflict for the states which had united as a common front against Vietnam and the Soviet Union, but it also undermined a structure of constraint. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 hastened the demise of a long-standing strategic rationale for a major US deployment in the region. The failure of the US' attempts to negotiate terms to extend the leases to its military bases in the Philippines had resulted in complete US withdrawal by November 1992. As a result of this development the US was forced to withdraw its forward military presence back to Japan. This despite the fact that relations with Japan had become strained because of economic tensions.

A Memorandum of Understanding concluded with Singapore in November 1990 alleviated to a great extent the consequences of the US military withdrawal from its bases in the Philippines. This agreement allowed US naval vessels and aircraft to make greater use of Singapore's military facilities. In January 1992, there was another understanding between the two countries which permitted a US military logistics facility to relocate from the Philippines to Singapore.

A number of similar agreements giving limited US naval access to Indonesian and Malaysian ports proved ASEAN's concern at the pace at which the regional distribution of power was undergoing change in the post-Cold war period. Despite the fact that a common strategic perspective was never conceived by the ASEAN states as a basis for
defence cooperation, they did share the view that a sustained US forward military deployment would have a stabilising effect on the region. Reactions to this development were mixed as proved thereafter. Thailand, with Malaysian and Indonesian approval, rejected the US plan to preposition military supply ships in the Gulf of Thailand. Singapore’s 1990 Memorandum of Understanding with the US was one attempt to come to terms with the post-Cold War security scenario. At the same time Indonesia played the leading role in to private discussions within ASEAN to promote a wider framework of security dialogue beyond the limited bounds of the association itself.

There was no consensus between the ASEAN countries regarding an alternative security arrangement based on collective defence mainly because the member states shared the view that attempting to confront China would prove to be futile. Thailand was supportive of the concept of an extended security dialogue immediately after the end of the Cambodian conflict since it realised that it was in accordance with its security interests.

Consequently, at the ASEAN heads of government fourth summit meet at Singapore in January 1992, an extended structure to cope with the post-Cold War security was the main focus of discussion. This agenda received whole-hearted support from most of the members.

ARF was the result of this meet since the participants thought it necessary to look beyond Southeast Asia to cope with the new regional security challenges.

There was “no talk of a security alliance or of a multilateral security cooperation. Each ASEAN state continued to try and organize its security on a national basis.” There was a suggestion that the ASEAN should develop some form of military role that is associated to the concept of a “defence community.” There were also suggestions to the effect that
the ASEAN security organisation needed to be strengthened and secured against a host of potential intra-ASEAN conflicts, as well as broadened, by bringing into its fold, the Indochinese states, and, developing a plan of action for regional reconciliation between the Communist and non-Communist segments of Southeast Asia.

Over and above the regular dialogues on defence and security issues, the current level of security arrangements between the ASEAN states are all regarded by most political analysts as a precursor to a new pattern of security relationships which make the Asia Pacific region more strategically self-contained. This new relationship is a consequence of a number of new trends.

In the recent past there have been a number of new developments: the region has been hit with a series of bouts of turbulence as power begins to shift in an incommodious manner, namely, the recent elections and the subsequent tussle for power in Cambodia, the stalemate in Burma and the instability on the Korean Peninsula, the squabble between China and the Philippines over the Mischief Reef in the South China Sea, as well as the China-Taiwan imbroglio. As Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong noted during the meeting of ASEAN leaders in Bangkok, “the general mood of optimism in the Asia-Pacific has been clouded by the downturn in Sino-US relations, the deterioration in China-Taiwan ties, the increasing difficulties in the US-Japan relationship and the rival claims over the Spratlys Islands." Such drastic shifts in power and political realignments have made the region less predictable for security planners. Greater economic strength gave regional countries a wider range of military capabilities and introduced the prospect that conflicts could occur more quickly and at higher levels of intensity. The most interesting dimension of

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these security aspects was the fact that they are an indication that there was a revolution in defence thinking after the end of the Cold War. Security took on a wider and deeper meaning. The new security dialogues stressed upon confidence and trust-building measures rather than the promotion of security through manufacture and acquisition of arms and arsenal.

These security arrangements were a statement of the art of the possible cooperation between leaders of vastly different cultures. Slowly but surely, countries in the region will have to accept that they cannot choose their neighbours. The mixed record of the Cold War multilateral security arrangements in the Asia-Pacific helps to understand why extending ASEAN's model was the preferred option for post-Cold War regional security. ASEAN is different from previous approaches to multilateralism like the Manila Pact and the AMDA. It also lacks any formal military dimension. ASEAN's practice of consultation and cooperation consciously avoided formal multilateralism in favour of informal private bilateral arrangements in order to address particular tensions between the countries of the region. Although the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation made provisions

15 The Collective Defence Treaty or Manila Pact was a military alliance that initially comprised the US, UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines. Neither the Manila Pact nor SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organisation) demonstrated a viable political purpose or a military function. The Manila Pact's multilateral utility was compromised in March '62 when a joint statement by the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman asserted that the treaty obligations did not depend on the prior agreement of all parties because the obligations were individual as well as collective. The US did not invoke the Collective Defence Treaty to support its military intervention during the Vietnam War. For details see Leifer, n.13

16 The Anglo-Malay Defence Agreement of August 1959 with which Australia and New Zealand also became associated in 1959 was extended to the newly-formed Federation of Malaysia in September 1963 and then modified again when Singapore gained independence on expulsion from the Federation in August 1965. This agreement proved its worth as an instrument of collective defence during Indonesia's abortive 'Confrontation' of Malaysia in 1963-66. In the late Sixties the firm commitment of the 1957 Defence Agreement gave way in November 1971 to consultative Five Power Defence Arrangements with the same membership. For details see Leifer, n.13
to establish formal mechanisms for settling disputes, (for example, the High Council) it was never invoked for that purpose.

Tan Shri Ghazali Shafi, a former foreign minister of Malaysia, who as a senior official was present at ASEAN’s Bandung Conference in August 1967, indicated in 1992 the nature of the understanding that ASEAN’s member governments had entered into at the outset. In the mid-Sixties, he along with his Indonesian counterpart, General Ali Moertapo, had been charged with promoting reconciliation between Malaysia and Indonesia within the framework of wider regional cooperation in spite of the fact that neither country could see eye-to-eye with each other. They recommended in particular that “inter-state problems should not be aired openly no matter how small.”

With the aim of overcoming the mutual hostility created by Indonesia’s practice of Konfrontasi, neither of the two leaders took recourse to any explicit Western notion about cooperative security. If ASEAN as a new venture in multilateralism was based on a historical model, it was neither openly declared nor conspicuously apparent.

Since its very inception, ASEAN comprised of states, varied in all respects, and, at the same time, suffering from a variety of bilateral tensions. These tensions have arisen mainly from disputes over the territorial legacies of colonialism. “Ties with ASEAN have been tested by the allure of separatism and irredentism where the colonial and political boundaries of successor states have cut across zones of cultural homogeneity, as well as by conflict over offshore islands valued partly for their access to maritime space and resources under the Law of the Sea. Malaysia is the extreme example of such bilateral tensions. With two wings — in the Malay Peninsula and north Borneo — Malaysia

shares maritime borders with every other ASEAN state including Vietnam. Bilateral tensions have been aggravated in some cases by personality clashes between political leaders, they were most pronounced in the case of Indonesia and Malaysia. These bilateral tensions have continued over the years and remained as a stumbling block to cordial relations between the two states. Nonetheless, the ASEAN governments have been determined not to allow such tensions to threaten their common goals of state building and maintenance based on economic development.

Within ASEAN security has always been addressed through conventional collective security and formal mechanisms for settling disputes. This is the essence of the so-called ASEAN model to which Indonesia made a major conceptual contribution in pioneering and promoting "national resilience" with security conceived of in non-military terms. ASEAN's operational doctrine subsequently was to address security through a presumed bond between national and regional resilience. At the same time it repudiated both collective defence and conventional collective security. As a result of this individual states continued to maintain their security links with extra-regional powers that had been established prior to membership in ASEAN, with the notable exception of Indonesia. Uncertainty about future US military deployments and intentions in the region after the end of the Cold War forced ASEAN governments to regard security in a wider regional context.

Over time it became clear that ASEAN was not about formal dispute settlement or conflict resolution per-se, but rather about creating a regional milieu in which such problems either did not exist or could be readily managed or contained. The need for carefully coordinated diplomatic responses to the Cambodian conflict from 1978

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18 Leifer, n.13, p.15
enhanced ASEAN’s military ability to create a climate of mutual confidence among its members so as to cope with bilateral tensions effectively. As a result of the fact that ASEAN created a diplomatic community member countries learnt to speak in a single voice on matters of regional impact. The Cambodian conflict bestowed on ASEAN a unique regional and international role. The primary role in resolving the Cambodian conflict was assumed by the members of the UN Security Council, thus exposing ASEAN’s diplomatic limitations.

Due to conflicting claims over the Spratlys, China and Vietnam were involved in bitter conflict. Because the pattern of regional alignments had changed following the Cold War and the settlement of the Cambodian conflict, ASEAN and China were no longer in tacit alliance confronting Vietnam. US support was no longer as readily available as its impending departure from its military bases in the Philippines demonstrated, while China’s growing military power could well be deployed against the interests of one or more ASEAN states. This apprehension was reinforced in February 1995 when it was revealed that Chinese naval forces had seized the unoccupied Mischief Reef in the Spratlys Islands, claimed also by the Philippines, some 130 miles off the coast of the Philippines island of Palawan.\textsuperscript{19}

ASEAN had limited options so far as this conflict was concerned. Even if the association had overcome its institutional reluctance to collective defence arrangements, the combined military capabilities of its member states would not have succeeded in containing China’s intrusive presence in the South China Sea. More fundamentally, ASEAN strongly resisted any confrontation with not only because of the impact it would

\textsuperscript{19} Leifer, n.13, p.17
have on the security of the region but also due to its probable effect on the economy of the region. Indeed, access to a burgeoning Chinese market and investment opportunities have persistently constrained any aggressive stance against China.

Despite this changed environment, the rising tensions over the South China Sea made some ASEAN members keen to register the association's continuing prerogative role in the region. In reaction to China's announcement of its law on territorial waters in February 1992, and to its grant the following May of an oil exploration concession in the South China Sea to the US Crestone Corporation, ASEAN's foreign ministers at the initiative of the Philippines, issued a Declaration on the South China Sea at the annual meeting in Manila in July 1992. The Declaration called on claimants to refrain from using force and to settle contending jurisdictions peacefully. For this purpose the focus was ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. ASEAN aimed at maintaining its role in shaping regional order, but its diplomatic impact was far less than registered during the Cambodian conflict. This amply proved the need for an additional framework to address regional problems.

Thus, in a transformed security context, ASEAN embarked on a wider venture in multilateralism based on its own experience and track record. However, this was a calculated risk of prejudicing ASEAN's identity and prerogative place within Southeast Asia. "Despite the fact that ASEAN offered its own model of cooperative security as the framework of an extended multilateral structure, its main aim was to create viable conditions for a stable balance or distribution of power among the major Asia-Pacific states — China, Japan, and the US — that would benefit regional order."²⁰

²⁰ ibid
A constructive regional order for ASEAN would ideally be based on the balancing military engagement of the US. Japan would stand to gain from this i.e., it would be able to continue its limited security policy which in turn would be critical in encouraging China to conduct its regional relations according to those norms that had served the general interests of the ASEAN states as well.

ASEAN’s security culture was not different from the policy of balance of power. However, the primary collective goal was to promote a balance or distribution of power that would enable the association to maintain its operational security doctrine without provision for collective defence.

A beginning in this direction was made in May 1993 in Singapore. ASEAN’s senior ministers took the decision to convene such a meeting and the decision was endorsed by the Standing Committee. The Committee organises the Annual Ministerial Meeting and any other inter-sessional activities, especially meetings of senior officials. Until January 1992, the formal process of ASEAN-PMC dialogue had been confined to matters of economic cooperation. The fourth meeting of ASEAN’s heads of government held in Singapore in January 1992 and presided over by Singapore’s Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong took the landmark decision to address security cooperation openly through "external dialogue." It recommended that "ASEAN should intensify its external dialogues in political and security matters by using the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences."

At the meeting of ASEAN and ASEAN-PMC senior officials in May 1993, Singapore with a lot of support from Australia and the US went further and recommended

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expanding the existing ASEAN-PMC dialogue structure. Indonesia, Thailand and Japan offered some amount of resistance since they had reservations about moving beyond the familiar context of the Western-aligned ASEAN-PMC. In the event the meeting recommended additional membership of China and Russia, with which ASEAN had begun to develop consultative partner relationships in July 1991, and of Vietnam and Laos. At the conclusion of their meeting, senior officials agreed “that there was a window of opportunity for countries in the region to strengthen and promote political and security conditions for economic growth and development.” This record also echoed the logic of ASEAN’s operational security doctrine. Thus began a novel experiment in multilateral security dialogue whose declared objective was to “develop a predictable and constructive pattern of relationships in the Asia-Pacific.”

The landmark decision taken at the ASEAN heads of government meeting in January 1992 reflected a growing regional consensus over the merits of expanding the limits of cooperative security. The US-Bush administration was deeply suspicious of any prospective multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific that might undermine the utility and credibility of existing bilateral arrangements to which the US was committed. Then US Secretary of State, James Baker proposed moving beyond a “hub and spokes” model of regional security and his view prevailed.

In endorsing a new multilateral process of cooperative security, the ASEAN-PMC senior officials’ meeting in May 1993 had addressed non-military measures only. They discuss preventive diplomacy and conflict management, non-proliferation — both nuclear and non-nuclear and confidence building measures. As the Chairman’s statement indicated,

22 Leifer, n.13, p.22
“there was a convergence of views on the need to find means for consultations on regional, political and security issues.”

Although ASEAN had been founded without an explicit security agenda beyond the generalisation in the Preamble of its founding declaration, it functioned as a vehicle for confidence-building and preventive diplomacy over the years, according to international principles of common and cooperative security, and thus effectively played the role of a manager of regional security. In facing up to the realities of the new post-Cold War security context, ASEAN sought to exploit its unique advantage by taking the formal political initiative to advocate its own model of multilateralism. Canada and Australia were the first to pledge support, followed by Japan in this new venture in multilateralism. By January 1993 the US had become much more sympathetic to the idea of exploring multilateral arrangements for regional security as a supplement rather than as an alternative to its long standing bilateral arrangements. Whatever its reservations about being drawn into a potentially constraining multilateral structure, China had sufficient reasons to become a party to the new venture. Within the Asia-Pacific region, there is no other example of a group of lesser states assuming such a diplomatic centrality in fostering a multilateral security arrangement that involved all major regional powers. Although bilateral military exercises beyond the confines of the association had partly been undertaken for promotion of confidence building, ASEAN had never ventured formally into this sphere. The formal provisions made for confidence-building measures in the ARF indicated that the ASEAN states had decided to take on a much larger role as compared to their limited experience of security cooperation. The Chairman’s statement only referred to confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in general terms. Within
the closed session the issues of Cambodia and the South China Sea were also addressed, but the latter only very briefly. China did not raise any objections to this, but at the same time it ruled out any negotiation on the matter within the ARF. However this issue of contention did not mar the ARF’s first working session which was primarily concerned with launching the multilateral undertaking. ASEAN’s prerogative role was registered by the ARF’s agreement to endorse the aims and principles of the Association’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation “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.” In seeking to enthrone the treaty as a working document of the forum, a tension was created between ASEAN’s exclusive security doctrine within Southeast Asia and the need to widen the structure of security dialogue within the region. Apart from China, Indonesia among the ASEAN countries, was reluctant for one of the association’s diplomatic possessions to be shared in a way that might blur the boundaries between Northeast and Southeast Asia and thus undermine the ASEAN’s role as the manager of Southeast Asian affairs. For this reason, ASEAN subsequently attempted to differentiate the mood of adherence to the treaty between Southeast Asia and other member-states.

No disruptive diplomatic incident marred the first working session of the ARF. The ARF tried to create a tangible, internal dimension to the new structure of relations. For achieving this objective, three innovative strategies were undertaken:

i. a seminar on building confidence and trust was held in Canberra in November 1994,

ii. a seminar on peace keeping was held in Bandar Seri Bagawan in March 1995, and

iii. a seminar on preventive diplomacy took place in Seoul in May 1995.

23 ibid, p.35
The proceedings of these seminars were discussed in the second working session of the ARF which convened in Brunei in August 1995. At that point of time, inter-sessional events were stepping stones for the distance which the ARF had yet to travel in influencing the climate of regional relations.

China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen had indicated his government's displeasure at the first working session of the ARF in 1994 over the issue of contending jurisdictions in the Spratlys Islands being discussed within a multilateral forum.

In March 1995, a meeting of ASEAN senior officials in Singapore to discuss plans for an inaugural Asia-Europe summit conference in Bangkok the following year proved an opportune occasion for the association to reaffirm its commitment to its Declaration on the South China Sea which had called on claimant states, including China, to resolve their differences over jurisdiction peacefully. Subsequently, there was a high level, pre-planned security dialogue between ASEAN and China which convened in Hangzhou in April. The ASEAN delegation chose this meeting to demonstrate its solidarity over the South China Sea issue. The Hangzhou security dialogue was also significant in providing an opportunity for the ASEAN delegation to explain the association's role and intentions as well as its corporate interest in promoting the ARF. In July 1995 Vietnam was included within the ranks of ASEAN. The previous February Cambodia had acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and was accorded observer status within ASEAN as well as the membership of the ARF. Myanmar also acceded to the treaty but was not immediately granted either observer status within ASEAN or membership of the ARF.

The second working session of the ARF was guided by a Concept Paper which although approved in advance through consultation, had effectively been drafted in Singapore's
ministry of foreign affairs. The Paper identified norms by which the ARF would function. At the same time it outlined its evolution in three stages: from initial confidence building, through preventive diplomacy, to ultimate conflict resolution mechanisms. The paper stressed the need for a gradual, evolutionary approach to managing security and recommended two complementary approaches. The first drew explicitly on ASEAN’s experience in reducing tensions and promoting regional cooperation through informal processes “without the implementation of explicit confidence building measures.” It also stressed on the well-established practice of consultation and consensus (known in Malay –Indonesian as Musyawarah-Mufakat), enhanced by regular high-level visits among ASEAN countries. The second approach was based on implementing concrete confidence building measures. Two lists of proposals were identified: measures that could be explored over the medium and long term. It was decided that these would be best addressed by non-governmental groups such as the ASEAN-ISIS linked to the academic driven Council for Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). CSCAP had been established in June 1993 as the culmination of a proliferation of regional security seminars and conferences that began in the late Eighties. These two sets of groups were known respectively as “track one” and “track two.” In preparing the Paper, attention had been given to the experience of the CSCE and Western academic writings or alternative forms of security cooperation to military arrangements.

Regional dialogues on security issues under the auspices of ASEAN were initially greeted with considerable skepticism and ambivalence. Hence ASEAN leaders argued that the Asia-Pacific was too complex and diverse a region for CSCE-type arrangements. They proposed instead, the use of looser and more consultative mechanisms for
promoting an exchange of views within the region on security issues. At the same time it is to be noted that “the ARF is supported by a region-wide network of intellectual institutions for unofficial dialogue and consultation. These “track two” institutions comprise national security “think tanks” whose policy perspectives are passed on to ASEAN leaders through their senior diplomats.”24

Apart from these attempts at developing a multilateral security structure like the ARF, ASEAN countries continued to seek ways to enhance their security in the region. Although the engine of cooperation was intra-regional, ASEAN leaders regarded the US as an important pillar for their internationalist strategy, in both economy and security, and sought to strengthen their bilateral ties with it in order to alleviate concerns with its military exit from the Philippines.

Another interesting development has been the realisation among some of these states that ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality)25 may be undesirable, or even detrimental, to ASEAN’s security interests.

In 1989 Singapore announced an offer to provide military facilities to the US, probably in response to the call by the Philippines for greater burden sharing within ASEAN to ensure the continued forward deployment of US forces. Undeterred by criticisms from sections within Malaysia that such a move would contradict the spirit of ZOPFAN, Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the US, in November 1990 which provided for the deployment of American aircraft and military personnel in Singapore.

25 ZOPFAN was advocated in 1971. It excluded any important role for the major powers in the region, and at the same time avoided rigorous stands like neutralization.
Attempts have also been made to strengthen the largest multilateral alliance framework within the region, involving Malaysia, Singapore, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Although the FPDA's credibility as a deterrent to aggression is somewhat weak, it has contributed to the air defence of Singapore and Malaysia through the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS). It is an acknowledged fact that the FPDA has been useful to the sharing of doctrine and experience by means of regular dialogue at policy-making and operational levels. Despite the existent political problems between Singapore and Malaysia, the FPDA serves as a useful confidence-building mechanism and enables them to hold joint military exercises and training with alliance partners. Therefore Malaysia and Singapore would like to see the FPDA strengthened and expanded. Singapore supports a contingency command mechanism within the FPDA which will enable FPDA forces to work together, so that should the need ever arise, and should the political will ever direct, the members countries can combine their military forces together to deal with any threat. The scope of the FPDA’s IADS has been expanded so that it also includes the air space in Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. Brunei must also be included (since it has already been invited as an observer to FPDA chief-of staff meetings) as a new alliance member. Indonesia is opposed to any new major role for the FPDA. It resents the fact that the alliance was conceived as a deterrent to Indonesia’s regional ambitions and sees little need for it in the context of an altered security environment. While ASEAN’s role in promoting a security dialogue at the Asia-Pacific level has attracted a good deal of publicity, at the intra-ASEAN level it is equally crucial to the prospects of regional order in the post-Cold War Southeast Asia. The intra-ASEAN
security consultations sanctioned by the Singapore summit may be regarded as the first step towards a more comprehensive security role for the grouping. But such a role would have to include more concrete and specific measures for greater security and defence cooperation within the grouping, as has been advocated during recent regional security debates.

ASEAN states do not view defence cooperation as a necessary condition for regional order. Prospects for intra-ASEAN military competition have increased due to a major increase in defence spending and force modernization efforts by the countries in this region.

At the moment however, ASEAN states are concentrating more on reviving their economies rather than increasing their defence spending. The role which multilateral institutions like the ARF should play in regional security is quite difficult. The ARF’s reaction to the economic crisis has not been very effective. An effective region-wide grouping could do a lot to reassure ASEAN states about their strategic environment. This would in turn contribute to investor confidence about the region’s stability.

The ARF has however been restrained by ASEAN’s belief that meetings are an end in themselves. But this is not true for multilateral gatherings like the ARF. If the ARF is to play a meaningful role in regional security, it must contribute to resolving actual security problems. It would be a major step forward for the ARF if, it could play a role in issues of conflict. To quote Rizal Sukma, “Despite some initial downs the ARF has so far functioned as a vehicle that (a)introduces the multilateralisation of security within the framework of common and cooperative security — an attempt to seek security with other states rather than against them in which major and lesser powers come together and
discuss security issues of common concern and interest; (b) lays a foundation and road map for a gradual budgetary progress in the undertaking; (c) familiarizes the habit of dialogue and consultation as a distinct approach to security as opposed to balance of power practice; and (d) contributes to the process of identity-building among its diverse members. These achievements, still an ongoing process indicate a degree of success of the extension of ASEAN approach to security into the wider Asia-Pacific region.  