



Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific

MEMORANDUM 3

THE CONCEPTS OF COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY AND COOPERATIVE SECURITY

Introduction

The Asia Pacific is in the throes of unprecedented and unparalleled change. The end of the Cold War, accelerated growth in many developing economies, structural economic reforms in some countries, and the increasing economic linkages among states in particular are radically altering the domestic and international strategic environment in the region.

The profound changes in the strategic scene are prompting the re-examination of security concepts and policies adopted in the past. The prevailing strategic outlook offers a window of opportunity for the review and development of fresh approaches and concepts. In particular, security is being perceived by an increasing number of states not in military terms alone but in wider, more comprehensive terms. In a highly interdependent world, states are also realising that security is best achieved through cooperation rather than aggressive confrontation.

Cognisant of these, the Council on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) established a Working Group to examine the concepts of comprehensive security and cooperative security.

With these considerations in mind also, the first meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum on 25 July, 1994 agreed to study “the comprehensive concept of security”. At its second meeting on 1 August, 1995 it referred specifically to the notion of “comprehensive security”, and noted in the Chairman’s Statement that “the ARF recognises that the concept of comprehensive security includes not only military aspects but also political, economic, social and other issues”.

Aim

The aim of this memorandum is to set out an over-arching organising concept for the management of security in the region which might be agreeable to states in the Asia Pacific region as they come together in a common endeavour to promote security in the region. This organising concept is referred to as the concept of comprehensive security.

Key considerations

In formulating this organising concept, enunciated in the form of a set of principles, the following are some of the key considerations that have been taken into account:

1. The ongoing efforts to develop region-wide collaborative processes, in particular the establishment of the ARF and CSCAP, have made such a concept desirable, even necessary. The concept would greatly facilitate consensus building and the formulation of strategies, processes, institutions and measures to manage security.
2. The Asia Pacific region is large and extremely diverse in terms of domestic and external security concerns; actors (states, non-governmental organisations, multinational enterprises and bilateral as well as multilateral institutions); political and social systems; and cultures. The organising concept must therefore:
 - be of an 'overarching' variety, adaptable enough to accommodate the diverse security concerns of all regional states. While identifying themselves with the broad outlines of the concept, states should be free to emphasise different aspects of the concept pertinent to their special security requirements;
 - focus sufficiently on common concerns and shared interests in national policy approaches relevant for regional collaboration; and
 - not endeavour to be too ambitious in scope and content, to the extent where individual states come to find the entire concept unacceptable.
3. Asia Pacific security cannot be entirely divorced from global security. This factor has to be borne in mind when developing regional strategies.
4. The security concerns of states in the Asia Pacific region are not confined to the external sphere alone. Pressing and enormous domestic challenges with security consequences confront many societies, in particular the developing countries of the region.
5. Many states have shifted defence strategy and planning from threat-based premises to interest-based calculations with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of traditional enemies. The shift is of course not complete; threat perceptions, even of an uncertain and ill-defined character, still feature in the defence plans of many countries.
6. As power becomes more diffused in the Asia Pacific region and the more multipolar or pluralistic power structure emerges, unilateralism cannot be a sustainable option for settling disputes among states. Building upon and complementing the normal bilateral ties between states, sub-regionalism and regionalism will become more credible and productive options.
7. Neither collective security nor balance of power approaches are of themselves adequate organising principles for the region because security of vital interests and core values extends beyond the military sphere and comprehensive security can only be attained through cooperation based on common interests. Collective security and balance of power therefore need to be complemented, or at times superseded, but comprehensive security approaches.

The concept of comprehensive security

Comprehensive security is the pursuit of sustainable security in all fields (personal, political, economic, social, cultural, military, environmental) in both the domestic and external spheres, essentially through cooperative means.

The concept of comprehensive security, as advocated here, contains elements that have been identified with the concept of comprehensive security articulated by Japan, the concept of comprehensive security espoused and practised by ASEAN, the concept of cooperative security, and the concept of common security. The concept outlined here is termed "comprehensive security" because a key defining element of the concept is the comprehensive nature in which security is viewed. The vital interests or core values of states are varied and comprehensive, as are the instruments and processes used to protect them and the capabilities required to assure them. The term "comprehensive security" is also used

because that term has been recognised by the ARF. The distinctive features of the organising concept are briefly articulated below.

The principle of comprehensiveness

Comprehensive security posits that security of person, community and state is multifaceted and multidimensional in character. Ultimately security encompasses the security of all the fundamental needs, core values and vital interests of the individual and society in every field – economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and military. Any significant threat to the comprehensive well-being of man, society and state, whether emanating from external sources or from within a state, is deemed a threat to security.

Hence denial of legitimate access to vital fuel resources from abroad or import of food, actions which severely affect a nation's export earnings, and conditions and demands which seriously erode an economy's competitiveness and viability, can be threats to security in the economic sphere.

Economic issues have risen to the top of the agenda in virtually all regional states, and economic security concerns have followed suit despite rising prosperity in many previously poorer East Asian states. The primary economic security-related issues include poverty (which afflicts many hundred millions in East Asia), unemployment, severe dislocations caused by structural reform in reforming economies, apprehensions regarding loss of economic primacy, fears of the decline of competitive capability, dependence upon external aid, heavy debt burdens, food and energy sufficiency, and the threat of economic sanctions.

Rampant drug abuse, disruptive social consequences of mass migrations, epidemics and a severe decline in ethical standards (as evidenced from growing corruption for instance) can constitute threats to security in the social sphere.

The political dimension would include among others threats or challenges to the body politic from subversion, insurgency, civil strife, irredentism and ethnic or religious extremism and unrest. It would also include threats to life and personal liberties (as defined in the Bill of Rights and endorsed by the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action).

Environmental challenges to security would include global warming, threats to biodiversity, cross-border flows and spillovers of atmospheric pollution, unsustainable resource utilisation, land and maritime pollution and severe environmental damage leading to repercussions on human and economic welfare.

Military and physical security issues would include threats of external aggression, protection of resources in exclusive economic zones, disputes over territory, the security of sea-lanes, proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and enhancement of military power.

The limits to the principle of comprehensiveness

If security is comprehensive, where do we draw the line? When say, does an economic issue become a security problem and when does it not? These questions have always confronted comprehensive security advocates, theorists and practitioners.

It is suggested that a problem may be regarded as a comprehensive security problem when it is perceived as threatening, or as having the clear potential to threaten, the security of the vital interests or core values of the person, the community or the state. Thus extreme and widespread poverty which is assessed to have the real prospect of causing famine, death, civil strife and serious instability would be a comprehensive security problem. Limited poverty is not.

Obviously, such a criterion carries with it a degree of subjectivity. This however is unavoidable. Indeed a certain degree of subjectivity must be accommodated, since tolerance

thresholds for security can differ between states. Subjectivities have also characterised conventional (military-related) notions of security though perhaps in different ways.

Further, perceiving a problem as a comprehensive security issue does not preclude it from being addressed as a non-security problem as well. Widespread drug abuse threatening the health of the individual and the community can be treated as both a security and social problem simultaneously.

The principle of mutual interdependence

Comprehensive security also denotes a mutuality and interdependence between the various dimensions of security. Political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and physical security are all mutually supportive and reinforcing, and the security of a state is not assured until it is secure in every dimension. Domestic peace and political stability cannot be sustained without shared economic prosperity; economic development cannot be pursued over the longer term if the environment is degraded substantially; social ills undermine economic vitality and defence capacity; and a militarily weak state will find it difficult to protect its territorial, political and economic interests in the face of physical intimidation.

The principle of cooperative peace and shared security

Cooperation is a defining element of comprehensive security, especially in the external sphere. Perceiving security in cooperative terms is especially pertinent as states and communities become more and more interdependent and linked by technology, communications, interstate production networks and trade and investment flows.

While comprehensive security does not ignore asymmetries in the distribution of power egalitarianism is also implied in the notion of cooperation. To be durable and productive cooperation must proceed on the basis of accepted norms and principles including equality and mutual respect. Cooperative processes must accommodate and balance the interests of all parties, and avoid asserting the agenda of a state or group of states to the detriment of others.

The principle of self-reliance

While non-threatening, mutually beneficial defence cooperation among states may comprise a relevant ingredient of comprehensive security, the principle of self-reliance in defence matters also befits a post Cold War situation where perceived military threats have declined.

The principle of inclusiveness

Inclusive collaborative processes and engagement are of critical importance in comprehensive security applied through cooperative means. Exclusion of any country, prepared to be involved, should be avoided, if the creation of conflictual situations is to be prevented. Regional cooperation for security should not be directed against any country. In this regard alliance systems, including those which, since the end of the Cold War, have no clearly defined adversary, are a diminished option for comprehensive security management in the region.

The principle of peaceful engagement

Comprehensive security, in common with cooperative security, emphasises non-military approaches to protect core values and vital interests. Many of these vital interests are in any case non-military in nature (such as environmental security issues in general) and in such instances military approaches are inappropriate except in exceptional circumstances.

Comprehensive security stresses instead confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts and differences. Military capabilities should as far as possible

be 'defensive' and non-threatening in nature, and arms control and transparency measures are an important element of comprehensive security.

The principle of good citizenship

The concept of comprehensive security calls upon all regional states to be good citizens of a regional and global order of shared peace and prosperity. Good neighbourliness and all the accepted norms and principles of peaceful and responsible international behaviour should govern comprehensive security relations among states.

Implementing comprehensive security: the mechanisms

Comprehensive security cannot be implemented by a single process either regionally or domestically. Its comprehensive nature suggests a multiplicity of broadly complementary processes (including 'track two' processes) and mechanisms addressing specific areas. This however does not preclude institutions and processes for overall coordination and direction both at the national (for example a National Security Council) and regional levels (for example the ASEAN Regional Forum).

Comprehensive security issues also need not be addressed in ostensibly 'security' processes alone. They can be handled in forums such as APEC, or in bilateral and sub-regional economic cooperation processes when consistent with their basic purposes.

For comprehensive security issues to be addressed more satisfactorily and effectively at the regional level, the ASEAN Regional Forum process in particular will have to be strengthened incrementally. Its agenda too will have to be broadened, to give greater room to non-military issues.

Conclusion

Much work remains to be done to refine and articulate in depth the concept of comprehensive security in all its dimensions. What the outline above does is merely to highlight its key characteristics, sufficient to provide the basis for an overarching and common approach towards organising security in the Asia Pacific region.