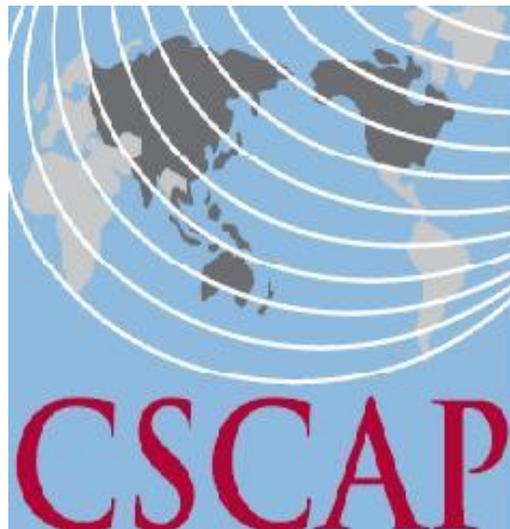# CSCAP MEMORANDUM NO. 26

Towards an Effective Regional Security Architecture for the Asia Pacific

A Memorandum from the
Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)

June 2014

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Introduction

The proliferation of multilateral security processes and institutions in the Asia Pacific in the wake of the Cold War is a testament to the region's constructive and collegial spirit toward addressing security challenges. The formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 paved the way for the region to approach security in a cooperative and inclusive manner. Although the ARF offered a novel departure from competitive security structures, and was followed by processes such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus), the US-led 'hub and spokes' system continues to be viewed by some states in the region as a stabilizing force.

In light of the scale and complexity of security challenges confronting the region, CSCAP considered it timely to review the regional security architecture and offer recommendations to strengthen and improve on the existing regional security arrangements and processes.

Regional Security Architecture in the Asia Pacific: The State of Play

The Asia Pacific is emerging from the post-Cold War transition period. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, a strong analytical consensus emerged that the region - East Asia in particular - would, in time, become a decisively important part of the global economy and, at the same time, encounter significant challenges to order and stability.

The region lived up to its fullest expectations on the economic front. On the security front, in the opinion of some states, the condition of unipolarity in the immediate post-Cold War period helped contain the associated stress on stability and order. In addition, the region, led by ASEAN, began to develop multilateral processes to widen the range of instruments available to states to preserve order and stability amidst increasingly deep and far-reaching changes in strategic weight within the region and between the region and other major centers of power.

The prevailing circumstances allowed this multilateral undertaking to be approached cautiously and without urgency. The processes that ASEAN established were allowed to evolve 'at a pace comfortable to all' and not pressed into substantive roles. As a result, they have remained relatively soft and experimental, reliant on other processes and mechanisms to sustain order and stability, and not generating clear perceptions of contributing substantively to these objectives.

CSCAP is of the view that the Asia Pacific is moving beyond the relative tranquility of this post-Cold War period. The contemporary reality holds the prospect of intensifying strategic competition amongst the larger states accompanied by accelerated modernization of military forces and a heightened risk of arms race. Further, the stress of far-reaching region-wide strategic change is beginning to expose fragilities within and among a wider group of states in the region.

The challenge to order and stability in the region is, therefore, intensifying. In spite of stabilizing roles that the existing arrangements and processes have played, there is a gathering sense that their strength and efficacy may prove inadequate. In this context, a set of robust multilateral processes that are both more influential in shaping the behaviour of states and more capable of generating effective and timely responses to developments that threaten order and stability in the region could prove to be of decisive value.

The aspiration to put in place an array of multilateral forums with the qualities of authority, responsibility and accountability, that is, processes with weight and gravitas, clearly exists. CSCAP believes that given the emerging regional environment, it is simply prudent to now resolve to address this aspiration with more determination and a greater sense of urgency.

Problems and Issues

A. The disconnect between economic and security processes

It is increasingly becoming clear that economic interdependence alone cannot ensure the peace and stability of the region. Continued economic prosperity ultimately depends on a reliably stable geopolitical order.

Hence, the Asia Pacific must now focus its endeavours on fashioning and sustaining such a geopolitical order.

B. Problems associated with existing regional security frameworks

The existing regional security architecture – the US-centered alliances, ASEAN-driven multilateral processes, and various bilateral arrangements – has worked relatively well over the past decades.

However, given the changing nature and scale of emerging challenges, we need to further enhance the capacity of regional multilateral security processes to facilitate the socialization of security issues, development of normative frameworks, and provide space for collective cooperative actions.

ASEAN has been playing a critical role in facilitating regional security dialogue and cooperation. However, there is scope for effectively strengthening ASEAN's role, particularly in the areas of connectivity and coordination amongst ASEAN-related institutions and processes, and providing greater capacity and resources.

Recommendations

CSCAP proposes the following sets of recommendation for consideration by relevant governments and institutions for aneffective regional security architecture for the Asia Pacific.

A. Strengthening ASEAN

ASEAN centrality remains an important element for regional security architecture. However, for ASEAN to remain central, it has to become more effective in playing this role. In this regard, ASEAN, with the support of others, should:

1. Continue to develop its unity and cohesion by, among other measures, implementing fully the Blueprints for the ASEAN Community in and beyond 2015,

2. Play a leading role in developing a clear vision and roadmap for an enduring rules-based regional security order, and,

3. Strengthen the capacity of the ASEAN Secretariat and other ASEAN institutions to effectively deal with issues related to ASEAN security and contribute to regional security, including by strengthening the ARF Unit within the ASEAN Secretariat and developing comparable capacities to support the EAS, ADMM Plus, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

B. Enhancing the management of multilateral processes

There is scope to enhance the management of these inter-linked processes through improving connectivity and coordination. Practical steps may include:

1. Clearly delineating the primary role and competency of each process such as to look to the EAS for strategic direction, to the ARF for structured security dialogue, and to the ADMM Plus and EAMF for practical security cooperation, and,

2. Ensuring that each process is promptly and formally advised of the outcomes in the other forums so that responses to issues can be more effectively coordinated and expedited.

C. The role of the East Asia Summit (EAS)

The East Asia Summit (EAS), because it is a leaders-led forum with a correspondingly broad remit, could be seen as the logical forum to lead the way in adopting practices and procedures intended to enhance its influence and authority on regional political and security issues. As it consists of a strong critical mass of participants with regional presence and interests, the EAS has the appropriate composition to evolve and uphold regional security principles and norms.

- Sharing Principles

The EAS, in sharing principles should attach primary importance to the following:

1. Renunciation of the use of coercive measures, most particularly, the threat or use of force in the settlement of disputes,

2. Open, inclusive, evolutionary, and dialogue-centered processes to build habits and norms of cooperation, leading to enhanced commitments to peace and stability in the long run, and,

3. Respect for the principles embedded in the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, the United Nations Charter, and international law.

- Incremental institutionalization

CSCAP further recommends that consideration be given to ways and means of adapting the present EAS format for the institutionalization of this forum. This process should include the following:

1. ASEAN should lead the development of a clear vision and roadmap for the institutionalization of the EAS,

2. Extension of this summit to ensure that leaders have a full day for substantive discussions on an agreed agenda, beyond the usual time set for bilateral and retreats,

3. Adjustment of existing procedures for agenda-setting to develop a clear and wider sense of ownership of a process directed at the challenge of preserving a stable and orderly region. In this regard, ASEAN may consider joint chairmanship of the EAS with non-ASEAN member countries, and,

4. Consideration of the establishment of an EAS secretariat capable of helping to build continuity between summits and contributing to the qualities of responsibility to implement decisions and accountability.

D. The role of CSCAP

Established as a second track process to provide research-based policy recommendations to the ARF, the role of CSCAP needs to be enhanced. It has the responsibility of maintaining and developing its capacity for identifying and prioritizing issues for consideration by Track-one institutions, including in particular engaging in the initial exploration of issues Track One may be hesitant to address. In this regard, its role can be enhanced by the:

1. Creation of substantive institutional linkages with, and support from Track-one security institutions, including the ARF, ADMM Plus, and the EAMF, and

2. Maintenance of CSCAP's Track-two character and processes including open discussions of policy relevant issues.

Concluding Remarks

CSCAP is committed to an approach to regional security architecture that consolidates existing institutions and processes rather than creating new ones. In this regard, it believes that the short- term goal should be a security framework to ensure peace and prosperity for all, while the long-term goal would be the building of a stable regional community inthe Asia Pacific.

ABOUT CSCAP

CSCAP is a non-governmental (second track) process for dialogue on security issues in the Asia Pacific. Membership in CSCAP is on an institutional basis and consists of Member Committees. Current membership comprises Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, the EU, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the USA.

The functions of CSCAP are as follows:

a. to provide an informal mechanism by which political and security issues can be discussed by scholars, officials, and others in their private capacities;
b. to encourage the participants of such individuals from countries and territories in the Asia Pacific on the basis of the principle of inclusiveness;
c. to organise various working groups to address security issues and challenges facing the region;
d. to provide policy recommendations to various intergovernmental bodies on political-security issues;
e. to convene regional and international meetings and other cooperative activities for the purpose of discussing political-security issues;
f. to establish linkages with institutions and organisations in other parts of the world to exchange information, insights and experiences in the area of regional political-security cooperation; and
g. to produce and disseminate publications relevant to the other purposes of the organisation.

Study Groups are the primary mechanism for CSCAP activity. As of June 2014, there were three CSCAP Study Groups. These are concerned with: (i) Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific. (ii) Principles for Good Order at Sea; and (iii) Regional Security Architecture.

This memorandum was produced by the CSCAP Study Group on Regional Security Architecture and was approved by the 41st CSCAP Steering Committee Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 5 June 2014.

Further information on CSCAP can be obtained from the CSCAP website at www.cscap.org or by contacting the CSCAP Secretariat:

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CSCAP Memoranda

CSCAP Memoranda are the outcome of the work of Study Groups approved by the Steering Committee and submitted for consideration by the ASEAN Regional Forum and other bodies.

- Memorandum No.25 – Maritime CBMs, Trust and Managing Incidents at Sea
  Author: Study Group on Principles for Good Order at Sea
  Date published: June 2014

- Memorandum No.24 – Safety and Security of Vital Undersea Communications Infrastructure
  Author: Experts Group on Vital Undersea Communications Infrastructure
  Date published: May 2014

- Memorandum No.23 – Enhancing Water Security in the Asia Pacific
  Author: Study Group on Water Resources Security
  Date published: January 2014

- Memorandum No.22 – Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction
  Author: Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific
  Date published: September 2012

- Memorandum No.21 – Implications of Naval Enhancement in the Asia Pacific
  Author: Study Group on Naval Enhancement in the Asia Pacific
  Date published: August 2012

- Memorandum No.20 – Ensuring A Safer Cyber Security Environment
  Author: Study Group on Cyber Security
  Date published: May 2012

- Memorandum No.19 – Reduction and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
  Author: Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific
  Date published: February 2012

- Memorandum No.18 – Implementing the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP)
  Author: Study Group on the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP)
  Date published: September 2011

- Memorandum No.17 – Promoting the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy
  Author: Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific
  Date published: June 2011

- Memorandum No.16 – Safety and Security of Offshore Oil and Gas Installations
  Author: Study Group on Safety and Security of Offshore Oil and Gas Installations
  Date published: January 2011

- Memorandum No.15 – The Security Implications of Climate Change
  Author: Study Group on the Security Implications of Climate Change
  Date published: July 2010

- Memorandum No.14 – Guidelines for Managing Trade of Strategic Goods
  Author: Export Controls Experts Group (XCXG)
  Date published: March 2009

- Memorandum No.13 – Guidelines for Maritime Cooperation in Enclosed and Semi-Enclosed Seas and Similar Sea Areas of the Asia Pacific
  Author: Study Group on Facilitating Maritime Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
  Date published: June 2008

- Memorandum No.12 – Maritime Knowledge and Awareness: Basic Foundations of Maritime Security
  Author: Study Group on Facilitating Maritime Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
  Date published: December 2007

- Memorandum No.11 – Human Trafficking
  Author: Study Group on Human Trafficking
  Date published: June 2007

- Memorandum No.10 – Enhancing Efforts to Address Factors Driving International Terrorism
  Author: Study Group on Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Campaign Against International Terrorism with Specific Reference to the Asia Pacific Region
  Date published: December 2005

- Memorandum No.9 – Trafficking of Firearms in the Asia Pacific Region
  Author: Working Group on Transnational Crime
  Date published: May 2004

- Memorandum No.8 – The Weakest Link? Seaborne Trade and the Maritime Regime in the Asia Pacific
  Author: Working Group on Maritime Cooperation
  Date published: April 2004

- Memorandum No.7 – The Relationship Between Terrorism and Transnational Crime
  Author: Working Group on Transnational Crime
  Date published: July 2003

- Memorandum No.6 – The Practice of the Law of the Sea in the Asia Pacific
  Author: Working Group on Maritime Cooperation
  Date published: December 2002

- Memorandum No.5 – Cooperation for Law and Order at Sea
  Author: Working Group on Maritime Cooperation
  Date published: February 2001

- Memorandum No.4 – Guidelines for Regional Maritime Cooperation
  Author: Working Group on Maritime Cooperation
  Date published: December 1997

- Memorandum No.3 – The Concepts of Comprehensive Security and Cooperative Security
  Author: Working Group on Comprehensive and Cooperative Security
  Date published: December 1995

- Memorandum No.2 – Asia Pacific Confidence and Security Building Measures
  Author: Working Group on Confidence and Security Building Measures
  Date published: June 1995

- Memorandum No.1 – The Security of the Asia Pacific Region
  Author: CSCAP
  Date published: April 1994