Managing Security Challenges in Southeast Asia

Essays by Sheldon W. Simon

The ASEAN Regional Forum Views the Councils for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific: How Track II Assists Track I

Southeast Asia and the U.S. War on Terrorism
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Foreword

The differences and lingering suspicions among the states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) make cooperative approaches to security in the region difficult. Faced with a myriad of destabilizing factors, including economic difficulties, indigenous radical Muslim groups, communal violence, and drug and arms trafficking, the Southeast Asian states must find effective ways to manage security concerns. In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Southeast Asia has become a “second front” in the war on terrorism, and multilateral coordination among the ASEAN states, and throughout the Asia Pacific more broadly, will be essential to maintaining peace and stability in the region. In this issue of the *NBR Analysis*, Sheldon W. Simon, professor of political science at Arizona State University and director of NBR’s Southeast Asia Program, explores the official and unofficial efforts among the ASEAN states to address security challenges in the region.

In his first article, Dr. Simon examines Track II diplomacy and the relationship between the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Councils for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). Emerging from the alliances of the Cold War, the ARF and CSCAP, the ARF’s Track II counterpart, were created to encourage transparency and confidence-building on nonmilitary security matters, such as transnational crime, environmental hazards, and illegal migration, and to develop links among the Southeast Asian states and the countries of Northeast Asia and the United States. Although China and the United States were initially wary of joining such multilateral security dialogues for fear of compromising national sovereignty and traditional bilateral ties, the ARF has grown into the world’s most complicated security forum and CSCAP constitutes the broadest Track II security organization in the world.

Because the CSCAP delegations are future-oriented and less involved in immediate security concerns, Dr. Simon argues, their work is often considered of lower priority by government officials who are more concerned with protecting sovereignty than “solving international problems through cooperative security.” Nevertheless, in interviews conducted with leaders of ASEAN states, Dr. Simon discovered that government officials were remarkably positive about interactions with CSCAP delegations and spoke favorably about CSCAP’s ability to allay suspicions among neighbors, assist preventive diplomacy by thinking ahead of the ARF, and suggest new ways of conceptualizing and resolving regional security issues. Dr. Simon concludes that if the ARF and CSCAP are to continue as (or, as some would argue, become) significant organizations in managing Asian security, all the members must accept that
Asia’s future is integrated among the subregions of the Northeast, Southeast, and South, modify the noninterference norm, and adopt consensus-based decision-making.

In his second article, Dr. Simon addresses Southeast Asia’s response to the war on terrorism, including the prospects for multilateral cooperation. Most regional leaders condemn the September 11 attacks on the United States, but, due to their politically significant domestic Muslim populations, they caution that Washington not target Islam generally. At the same time, several regional leaders are seizing upon terrorism to weaken opposition groups challenging their regimes. According to Dr. Simon, the region’s terrorist groups are primarily indigenous and do not currently have the ability or resources to extend their operations beyond Southeast Asia, much less into the United States. Of particular concern, however, are the explicit and implicit ties to Al Qaeda that have developed throughout Southeast Asia and the cross-border communication among radical terrorist cells. A large number of Southeast Asian Muslims have trained under hard-line Islamic teachers in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In addition, Al Qaeda members have made regular visits to Southeast Asia—particularly Indonesia—over the past decade and have probably developed financial ties with radical Islamic groups in the region. To date, however, most Muslim militancy in Southeast Asia is focused on local issues.

Dr. Simon identifies multilateral cooperation as the key to disrupting the ties among the region’s terrorist cells and, over the longer term, changing the political, social, and economic conditions that breed terrorists in the region. Although ASEAN has made modest moves toward regional anti-terrorist cooperation, most efforts have taken place on a bilateral basis—especially with the United States. For now, U.S. military presence in the region is welcome for the enhanced security it brings, and also for the accompanying economic assistance and infrastructure development. Moreover, the United States is enhancing collaborative security in the region through initiatives like the Cobra Gold joint military exercises involving Thailand, Singapore, and the United States, with observers from China and other countries.

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The ASEAN Regional Forum Views the Councils for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific: How Track II Assists Track I

Sheldon W. Simon

The development of a limited Asian security community based upon the political framework of ASEAN dates from the end of the Cold War. With the Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and the subsequent creation of Councils for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), two fora now exist to further security transparency, build confidence, and address such common regional problems as drug and arms trafficking, communal violence, and maritime piracy. Both organizations, however, have focused on reassurance and transparency at the expense of preventive diplomacy and the real gains resulting from transnational cooperation. As a non-governmental advisory group, CSCAP enhances the intergovernmental ties between ARF states and augments the diplomatic resources available to ARF. Yet it is not clear the extent to which ARF member states are able to reconcile consensus-based decision-making and the doctrine of noninterference with the region’s changing strategic, economic, and political environment.

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Multilateral security organizations abound in international politics. They range from the highly institutionalized with political and military structures on one extreme (NATO) to those with important political authority but no military capabilities (the UN Security Council) to those whose role is confined to discussing mutual security concerns without necessarily resolving them (the ASEAN Regional Forum). NATO and the UN Security Council are examples of security organizations designed to respond directly to security threats—the former to its members, the latter to global peace. They have the authority to invoke the use of force. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is a different creature entirely. Neither an alliance such as NATO nor a collective security body such as the UN Security Council, the ARF may best be described as an elaborate exercise in confidence building among states that must get along to prosper but that have a history of mutual suspicion and, in some cases, hostilities.¹

The ARF emerged from ASEAN in the 1990s. The end of the Cold War left the Asia Pacific searching for a new organizing principle for security.² While traditional alliances remained, including bilateral treaties with the United States and the Five Power Defense Arrangement—a multilateral agreement among Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore—these seemed inadequate to deal with security matters of a nonmilitary nature such as transnational crime, environmental hazards, and illegal population movements.³ Moreover, “traditional” security issues persisted in the form of unresolved territorial disputes, divided states, nuclear weapons proliferation, and conflicting maritime jurisdictions resulting from the 1982 UN Law of the Sea, which have been addressed in discussions but not resolved.

Some kind of cooperative security enterprise linking the region to its major partners in Northeast Asia and North America was needed to fill the gap. Through the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, ASEAN members had already pledged among themselves to resolve intra-ASEAN disputes peacefully (or postpone their resolution). Underlying the vision of a larger security order was the hope that the treaty’s peaceful resolution commitment could be extended to other states. This practice would constitute a kind of minimal diffuse reciprocity.

¹ While a number of articles and books have been written about the ARF and its annual meetings well documented, the classic study of the Forum’s structure, successes, and failures remains Michael Leifer’s The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN’s Model of Regional Security (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996).
That is, while ASEAN would not expect outsiders automatically to come to members’ aid in times of crisis or leap to their defense if attacked, at least outside countries could be asked to renounce the use of force in settling any conflicts they might have with the Association’s members. The unstated object of these concerns, of course, is China—the only “extraregional” state with territorial claims in Southeast Asia. This is essentially a realist vision of the ARF. If successful, it would encourage the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to explain and clarify its security policy and planning. China’s neighbors, through the ARF, could then respond with their concerns about the PRC’s policy in hopes of modifying it and thus enhancing regional stability. In exchange for PRC transparency, other ARF members would reciprocate. For Beijing, the payoff would not primarily be access to ASEAN defense plans but rather to those of other members such as Japan and the United States.

Liberal theorists hope that the ARF can go beyond realism to shape cooperation. If the ARF can devise joint cooperative military actions such as multinational maritime patrols, search and rescue operations, antipiracy activities, and oceanic environment monitoring, then cooperative security can be launched. To date, however, these hopes remain for the most part unrealized. Nevertheless, the transparency measures that have begun are a first step in the liberal direction insofar as they help to create mutual confidence.

The ARF’s origins can be traced to a realization in the early 1990s that ASEAN by itself would be unable to dominate political-security discussions across the entire Asia Pacific rim. The region’s two indigenous great powers—Japan and China—are in Northeast Asia. The two remaining potential conflict flashpoints—Korea and Taiwan—are also outside ASEAN’s spatial realm. Moreover, the United States, as the sole remaining superpower, concentrates its forward-deployed Asian forces in Northeast Asia. In the post-Cold War era, therefore, Southeast Asia feared that it would once again become marginalized in Asia Pacific regional security.

Fortunately for ASEAN, however, no exclusive Northeast Asian efforts were made to create a subregional counterpart to ASEAN. China remained wary of security multilateralism as a device to constrain its regional ambitions. Japan was still viewed with suspicion by the rest of Northeast Asia as unrepentant for its World War II brutalities, and the Koreas were understandably focused on their forty-year military stalemate at the 38th parallel. In effect, ASEAN

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4 Curiously, Southeast Asian states do not mention Taiwan in their concerns about China’s claims to the Spratly Islands, even though China’s and Taiwan’s claims are exactly the same.
was able to fill this vacuum by offering to create a new region-wide entity modeled on the Association’s process of consultation and dialogue. Because this approach fell well short of collective defense, it was not threatening to any potential adherent. Nor would a new regional forum interfere with individual states’ security links to outsiders.

Purposefully imitative of the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC), the ARF objective was to develop a predictable and constructive pattern of relationships in the Asia Pacific. In sum, the ARF would be a transparency and reassurance mechanism for the Asia Pacific, providing the whole region with opportunities for ASEAN-style dialogue. By themselves, the PMCs were viewed by Northeast Asians as insufficient for broad discussion of their subregion’s concerns on such region-wide issues as competitive arming, maritime exclusive economic zone rules, and the roles of China and Japan. Although ASEAN understood that these issues needed to be addressed along with the exclusively Northeast Asian concerns mentioned above, the Association also desired to create a body that would acknowledge ASEAN’s institutional status as *primus inter pares*. The ARF achieved this goal by ensuring that ASEAN states would be the venue for the ARF’s annual meetings; that ASEAN would dominate the agenda; that intersession study groups, each composed of two states, would always include an ASEAN member; and that the ASEAN consensus principle would prevail in ARF decisions.

Still, Washington, Tokyo, and Beijing had to be persuaded that such security multilateralism was in their interests. The first Bush administration opposed the idea, fearing that a multilateral security body would somehow weaken traditional bilateral U.S. ties in the region. President Bill Clinton had no such qualms, however. Indeed, the Clinton administration’s early foreign policy viewed multilateral diplomacy as a device for spreading the costs of common security among friends. Nor was Clinton concerned that a Pacific security forum would undermine traditional U.S. alliances, which could be sustained as bedrock guarantees, while a new body discussed post-Cold War security. For Japan, the ARF provided an opportunity gradually to legitimize its voice in regional security affairs independent of the United States.
Convincing China of the ARF’s utility was more complicated. The PRC is suspicious of any institutionalized multilateral security organization. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) particularly resists attempts to probe its doctrine and order of battle, while the Chinese leadership generally is apprehensive that an Asian international security organization might become involved in the Taiwan issue. Nevertheless, if an Asia Pacific security organization was inevitable, then the ASEAN concept was acceptable, mainly because it ensured that neither Tokyo nor Washington could dominate. Moreover, China could not afford to be excluded from such a group for fear of isolation in regional security affairs.

The process of regular regional security discussions only began with the 1992 ASEAN summit, which decided to extend the annual post-ministerial discussions with dialogue partners to cover security. The motivating factor was the strategic uncertainty created by the end of the Cold War. By 1994, the PMC talks had led to the ARF’s creation. In fact, the ARF is the most comprehensive security forum in the world with 23 members including the 10 ASEAN states, ASEAN’s dialogue partners (Australia, Canada, the United States, Japan, New Zealand, South and North Korea, the European Union, Mongolia, China, Russia, and India), and an ASEAN observer—as of 1997—Papua New Guinea. (East Timor’s relationship to ASEAN and the ARF is yet to be determined.)

Concerned that international security discussions unduly pressure states to change their policies, the members agreed there would be no ARF secretariat or formal report of its annual meetings. Only the Chairman’s Record of the Proceedings was accepted. As in ASEAN, decisions are based on consensus, and any ARF agreements are implemented on a voluntary basis. No sanctions can be imposed on members; nor are there provisions for suspending or expelling members whose actions may be deemed in violation of ARF decisions.5

By its second meeting, the ARF agreed on a three-stage progression toward comprehensive security for Asia, which would move from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy, and finally on to the development of mechanisms for conflict resolution. The development of these mechanisms was subsequently renamed “elaboration of approaches to conflict” out of deference to China’s concern that conflict resolution could be interpreted as justifying the ARF’s interference in members’ internal affairs.6

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5 This description of the ARF’s circumscribed nature is found in M.C. Abad, Jr., “Confidence Building in the Asia-Pacific: The Role of the ASEAN and the ARF,” paper presented to the Indonesian Air Force Command and Staff College, Bandung, February 2, 2000.

By 1997, the ARF had formed three working groups (known as intersessional groups or ISGs), which meet between the annual meetings. These groups address the issues of confidence building, peacekeeping operations, and maritime search and rescue. A subsequent ISG on transnational crime was added by the end of the decade. All of these could be called confidence building measures (CBMs), and they are useful in generating a degree of trust among countries that have a history of mutual suspicion. The basic question, however, is whether the ARF will develop the capacity to go beyond confidence building to preventive diplomacy.

At the initiative of Thailand’s Foreign Ministry, and with UN support, three ASEAN-UN workshops on preventive diplomacy were held in Bangkok in 1993 and 1994. The most interesting outcomes from these meetings were an examination of ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) as a model for conflict resolution and the possibility of a peacekeeping training center for Southeast Asia. Although the Bangkok workshops and their Indonesian counterparts on the South China Sea disputes are useful gatherings to give all sides an opportunity to air their views or perhaps create sufficient synergy to come up with innovative proposals, such as a regional peacekeeping center, there are stringent limits on ASEAN and ARF accomplishments. Neither body has dealt with the ubiquitous bilateral border and territorial disputes among all ASEAN members. Nor have they arrived at solutions to persistent problems of smuggling, piracy, and the illegal movements of people across borders. These regional issues are still handled, for the most part, bilaterally.

Nevertheless, ASEAN PMCs, senior officers’ meetings (SOMs), and ARF workshops have generated a cornucopia of transparency possibilities—that is, the discussion of security intentions. Both ASEAN and the ARF agree that security transparency is a prerequisite for more sophisticated preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. Thus, in 1993, Malaysia hosted a defense dialogue forum for ASEAN and several of its dialogue partners to discuss threat assessment, doctrine, and arms acquisitions. Other CBMs that have been raised in ASEAN-related gatherings include advance notification of military exercises, hot lines among political and military leaders, extension of the Russian-U.S. incidents-at-sea agreement to the entire Asia Pacific, and a regional maritime, air surveillance, and safety regime. These all fall within the trust and confidence building category as defined by the ARF and CSCAP.7

A reexamination of the ARF’s brief history reveals a division on security issues comparable to APEC’s split on economic matters. ASEAN and China prefer to keep discussions

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general to avoid disagreements, while the United States, Australia, Canada, and Japan seek to
device practical CBMs capable of early implementation. Although the 1995 ARF meeting
succeeded in raising the Spratlys issue and eliciting a vague Chinese agreement to future min-
isterial discussions, there has been no change in Beijing’s insistence that it will only discuss the
Spratlys with other claimants bilaterally, will not accept third-party mediation, and will con-
sider joint development activities only when its sovereignty is acknowledged. This continued
hard line coupled with Beijing’s growing naval activities in Southeast Asia form the basis for the
perception of a “China threat.” The ARF’s efforts to convince its members to publish and
exchange information on strategic doctrines, orders of battle, and arms acquisition plans com-
prise the region’s attempt to engage China in collaborative security transparency. So far, such
efforts have been unavailing, although China’s three Defense White Papers have increasingly
discussed the PLA’s military doctrine.

The ARF’s New Agenda and Relations with CSCAP

While the ARF’s record in coping with traditional security concerns such as territorial
disputes and competitive arms buildups is modest at best, a new security agenda that may
be more amenable to multinational approaches emerged in the second half of the 1990s.
This new agenda covers a plethora of concerns, all of which impact several countries simul-
taneously. They include the regional haze caused by forest fires in Indonesia, narcotics traf-
ficking and the illegal trade in small arms, the smuggling of people across national borders,
maritime piracy, and the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. These concerns have been
highlighted in recent ARF Chairman’s Statements both in 2000 and 2001. Moreover, unlike
core security issues that reflect realist visions of international politics where one country’s
gain is frequently obtained at another’s expense, the new security agenda provides neo-
liberal solutions. That is, resolving the issues enumerated above benefits virtually all of the
countries involved. For example, collaborative measures to reduce piracy foster greater
maritime trade, reduce ship and cargo insurance rates, and lower the risk of ocean pollution
caused by the hijacking of oil tankers.

Unfortunately, an examination of core security issues does not reveal this kind of suc-
cess. The 1997–98 financial crisis could have provided an opportunity for Asian states to
rationalize the purchase of conventional weapons via the ARF. Instead, leaders preferred to
focus on transparency in arms acquisitions as a CBM. The opportunity to mutually reduce
arms purchases as an economic measure was missed. As John Garfano put it: “Because there are several very different reasons for weapons acquisition, including government prestige, concern with long-term Chinese capabilities, and professionalizing the military, it is unlikely that mere transparency will get to the heart of the problem.” Garfano pointedly concludes: “CBMs have not yet accomplished anything that would prevent or even deter such acquisitions.”

The ARF’s new security agenda has been informed by deliberations and studies from its Track II counterpart, the Councils for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP). The origins of CSCAP may be traced to the early collaboration of the ASEAN Institutes of Security and International Studies (ISIS), which were founded for the most part in the 1980s. The original ASEAN Five (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) all housed Track II security institutions consisting of academics, journalists, former government officials, and other specialists on Asian economic and political-security issues. In 1984, these institutes inaugurated regular meetings and collaborative efforts. In due course, the ASEAN-ISIS sponsored the annual Kuala Lumpur Roundtable each June or July, which became the forum for all CSCAPs to meet and discuss their activities. The underlying goal enunciated by the ASEAN-ISIS founders of CSCAP was to create an alternative conception of security in the Asia Pacific based on cooperation rather than military balances. This did not mean that neo-liberal proposals were supposed to supercede military-security arrangements as the foundation for international security. Rather, cooperative security was seen as a supplement to the existence of armed forces and a mechanism through which potential rivals could find common ground for cooperation and, therefore, reassurance.

Based on the ASEAN-ISIS experience, CSCAP was formed in June 1993, bringing together institutional counterparts to the ISIS from throughout the Asia Pacific. With 20 member countries and regions, CSCAP constitutes the broadest Track II security organization

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in the world. CSCAP’s institutional design of member committees, a steering committee comprised of member committee representatives, a limited secretariat (located in Malaysia’s ISIS), and working groups (WGs) is similar to the pattern established in regional Track II economic cooperation. As the Track II counterpart to the ARF, CSCAP debates the extent to which its agenda should either “follow” or “lead” that of the ARF as well as the balance CSCAP should strike among conceptual and abstract analysis—dear to academics—and scenario generation and policy research of greater relevance to policymakers.

As in the formation of the ARF, the ASEAN states took the lead in the CSCAP. And also as in the ARF, the continued viability of ASEAN’s leadership is in question in the aftermath of the region’s 1997–98 economic crisis. Political and economic instability in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and most especially Indonesia have forced these states to focus inward; and both the CSCAP and the ARF are loath to deal with members’ domestic difficulties. Indeed, the international spillover of such “domestic” security concerns as communal violence, money laundering, drug trafficking, and financial due diligence are high on Asia’s new security agenda. Whether CSCAP and the ARF are able to deal with them remains to be seen. If not, then the current CSCAP co-chair arrangement with one of the two co-chairs of the steering committee as well as the working and study groups always selected from an ASEAN state may no longer be viable.

CSCAP delegations are frequently eclectic. As Paul Evans notes, they balance “insiders and outsiders, generalists and specialists, those close to government, and those more independent in their orientation…. “ Since CSCAP meetings are based on national delegations, there is no guarantee of continuity. Member attendance depends on funding availability.
and interest in the subject matter under discussion. Beyond a common commitment to promoting multilateral security dialogue and a preference for peaceful resolution of disputes, there are more differences than similarities among the participants. Unsurprisingly, then, CSCAP memoranda display a blend of “lowest common denominator statements and some creative efforts to move beyond existing national positions.” These latter statements are frequently critical of government policy or at least attempt to challenge the status quo by suggesting new ways of conceptualizing and resolving regional security issues.

In the case of the ASEAN-ISIS—CSCAP’s founders—access to governmental counterparts has been institutionalized since 1993 with annual foreign ministry consultations during ASEAN SOMs. No national CSCAP has this kind of regular access except perhaps those in communist states (China, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam) where the public-private distinction is problematic. Moreover, the ASEAN-ISIS seem to be involved more directly in the current security concerns of their governments than the CSCAPs as a whole. For example, in recent years, the Philippine Institute for Security and Defense Studies drafted memoranda on Cambodia, the South China Sea, the admission of Vietnam and Burma to ASEAN, as well as criteria for China-ASEAN relations, all of which were submitted to the Philippine government.

By contrast, CSCAP WGs are more functional and long range in nature. Currently, five WGs report annually to CSCAP in Kuala Lumpur. They comprise (1) confidence and security building measures (CSBM), which are defined to include nuclear safety; (2) comprehensive security, which covers economic issues; (3) maritime security, in recognition of the fact that the Asia Pacific encompasses significant sea space; (4) the North Pacific security dialogue, the only WG not co-chaired by an ASEAN member; and (5) transnational crime, CSCAP’s newest endeavor.

Emerging from WG activities are papers, memoranda, and even symposia books. Much of this work is thorough and future-oriented. As a matter of course, the studies are provided to CSCAP members and the ARF. According to Carolina Hernandez, chair of the Philippine CSCAP, many of the ideas and recommendations find their way into ARF delibera-

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16 Hernandez, “Philippine Participation in Track II Activities,” p. 15.
tions through member committees.\textsuperscript{17} By networking with their own foreign ministries, CSCAP’s input has been effective in several areas, most particularly preventive diplomacy (discussed below). However, it should be noted that CSCAP dialogues may be less important for the recommendations they generate, which after all depend on governments for implementation, than for the suspicions they allay and the norms they reinforce.

**ARF Assessments of CSCAP**

For the most part, the government officials interviewed for this study were remarkably positive about their interactions with CSCAP delegations both from their own countries and in multilateral settings.\textsuperscript{18} In the latter, joint meetings between ARF ISGs and CSCAP WGs seemed particularly effective. For example, in 1999, the United States and Thailand chaired an ARF ISG on confidence building. When the discussion turned to preventive diplomacy, China balked, insisting that the discussion of CBMs had not yet been exhausted. Ralph Cossa of the U.S. CSCAP suggested to the U.S. ARF delegation that CSCAP could assist by convening a workshop to which the ARF ISG on CBMs would be invited.\textsuperscript{19} Focusing on developing a working definition of preventive diplomacy, the workshop concentrated on the qualities that would make it work in Asia. Led by Australian and Chinese delegates, the workshop came up with a definition and operating principles, which were subsequently used by the ARF co-chairs in their ISG. At the seventh ARF Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in July 2000, the CSCAP preventive diplomacy workshop’s report was specifically acknowledged to have advanced the ARF’s dialogue on the topic.\textsuperscript{20}

The operative concept is stated as follows: “We can view preventive diplomacy along a time-line in keeping with the objectives: to prevent disputes/conflicts between states from emerging, to prevent such disputes/conflicts from escalating into armed confrontations, and to prevent such disputes and conflicts from spreading.”\textsuperscript{21} As a follow-on to ARF’s CSCAP-

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Government officials interviewed for this study and involved in the ARF included representatives from Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States, as well as the ASEAN Secretary General, Rudolph Servino. These interviews took place in 2000.
\textsuperscript{19} This discussion of the Preventive Diplomacy Workshop is drawn from the author’s interview with Ralph Cossa, Executive Director of the U.S. CSCAP, Honolulu, March 27, 2000.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 2.
CSCAP working groups have begun to address issues that are too sensitive for inclusion in the full ARF agenda.

Indeed, preventive diplomacy—ARF’s second stage—is still perceived by most governments as an extension of confidence building. Because the ISGs on confidence building have met twice a year for the past seven years, with many of the same personnel over that time span, personal comfort levels have built a degree of trust. Thus, the ISGs have even discussed the South China Sea and nuclear proliferation as CBM problems, though these controversies have not found their way to the full ARF agenda. ARF members have also discussed the possibility of voluntary briefings about conflict problems as a reassurance mechanism by which the states involved could explain their concerns to ARF members.

The importance of specific individuals for ARF-CSCAP relations is illustrated by the efforts of former Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan. He, more than any other ARF delegate, lobbied assiduously to regularize ARF-CSCAP links so that all CSCAP recommendations would be passed on to the ARF for its consideration. From Thailand’s perspective, these recommendations would give ARF governments another interpretation of issues that are debated more frankly at the Track II level while still offering differing national viewpoints. In sum, because many national CSCAPs are very close to their governments,

22 Author’s interview with Ralph Cossa, Honolulu, March 20, 2000.
24 Concept and Principles of Preventive Diplomacy, p. 3.
25 Author’s interview with a U.S. diplomat who has long been involved in ARF meetings, Washington, DC, April 11, 2000.
26 Ibid.
27 Author’s interview with Thai Ambassador Arun Panupong, Director of the International Studies Center, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok, June 13, 2000.
CSCAP recommendations could provide added dimensions to the official government views, which regularly characterize ARF debates. An example of CSCAP expert input was the U.S. State Department’s contract with Stanley Weeks, a U.S. CSCAP member and oceans expert, to prepare a preliminary report after the ARF tasked the United States with examining maritime CBMs.28 These requests from governments to CSCAP experts for preliminary studies of issues occur in several ARF countries. This has been particularly true of the most recent ARF WGs on maritime concerns and transnational crime. CSCAP working groups operate parallel to the ARF Intersessional Groups. The Transnational Crime WG is often tasked by its ARF counterpart.

Under the leadership initially of John McFarland and subsequently Sandy Gordon of Australia, the Transnational Crime WG has proposed a number of studies to which the ARF has responded ambivalently. The WG wanted to look at corruption, an issue that clearly would involve examination of the internal politics of many states. A number of ARF members balked at the prospect. Additionally, the CSCAP WG discussed human trafficking. While political sensitivity seemed less of an obstacle for the ARF on this latter topic, many governments did not see it as sufficiently important to add to the ARF agenda. Within the last two years, however, the Forum has taken a new interest in illegal population movements, public health, and AIDS under the rubric human security.29 While the Transnational Crime WG was inaugurated by CSCAP, its impetus can be traced to the ARF, which in 1996 asked the CSCAP to look at drug trafficking. Now, CSCAP’s Transnational Crime group has taken on a life of its own and is prodding the ARF to move more vigorously into the new security agenda.

In conjunction with Australia, the co-chair of the Transnational Crime WG is Singapore, whose CSCAP overlaps into government. Housed in the Defense Ministry’s Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore’s CSCAP is, in fact, semi-official. Nevertheless, Singapore does not seem to give CSCAP high priority. Because the latter focuses on nontraditional approaches to security, Singapore officials see little relevance for the government’s more realist approach to international politics. Thus, when Singapore’s CSCAP was approached by Australia to co-chair Transnational Crime, the former initially demurred because

28 Interview with a U.S. diplomat who has long been involved in ARF meetings, Washington, D.C., April 11, 2000.
IDSS officials believed the government would not be interested. Nevertheless, to promote CSCAP collegiality, the IDSS agreed, and Singapore continues as co-director of the WG despite the government’s skepticism about the categorization of issues such as “document fraud” as serious international security problems. By contrast, Singapore CSCAP and the government are keenly interested in preventive diplomacy, which fits the government’s realist orientation to international politics. Singapore has served as host for both CSCAP and ARF meetings on the topic, and Amitav Acharya, a prominent scholar in residence at IDSS, produced a comprehensive study on preventive diplomacy, which was shared with the ARF.

Funding for Singapore’s CSCAP comes indirectly from the government via IDSS, and when a CSCAP agenda topic is of interest to the government, the latter will fund a study. Subsequently, all Singapore CSCAP work is routinely shared with the government; and government representatives who attend Singapore CSCAP meetings file their own independent reports to their agencies. At least one Singapore government official stated that he feels free to go beyond official policy positions when attending CSCAP meetings in his “private capacity” and that these experiences have helped him reconceptualize some problems. However, this same official acknowledged that other government representatives tend to parrot the official line at these meetings.

According to a Singaporean Foreign Ministry official familiar with ARF deliberations, CSCAP has been instrumental in urging governments to broaden their security agendas to include transnational issues such as the financial crisis, crime, population movements, and humanitarian intervention. The ARF has begun to address them, but a number of governments are reticent both because of the fear that domestic politics will become part of the ARF’s agenda and because bureaucracies beyond foreign ministries will become involved, further complicating ARF decision-making. Moreover, humanitarian intervention is seen by the ARF as a Pandora’s box of conflicting concepts over human rights, as well as when and how intervention should occur. The CSCAP began to deal with these issues in its Seoul seminar, but little consensus has yet occurred.

30 Author’s interview with Kwa Chuan Gwan, head of Singaporean CSCAP, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, Singapore, May 29, 2000.
31 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
The Thai foreign ministry has asked Thailand’s CSCAP to examine the Indian Ocean as a security concern in addition to India’s nuclear weapons program.34 Thailand’s foreign ministry does not see CSCAP as a way of testing expert reactions to current policies but rather as an early warning system to identify problems that may come on to the region’s security agenda in the future. However, CSCAP’s future-oriented work also means it has relatively low priority in a foreign ministry confronting an array of current problems such as the Thai economy, border conflicts with neighbors, and the narcotics menace.

Thai armed forces’ officers believe that ARF’s ISGs do not sufficiently utilize CSCAP expertise because governments are less concerned with solving international problems through cooperative security than protecting sovereignty (national practices) from ARF intervention. The ARF’s inability to deal with East Timor because of ASEAN’s nonintervention principle is a case in point.35 Thai military officers involved in strategic planning agreed that CSCAP could perform a useful role by providing an opportunity for the region’s militaries to meet regularly as a confidence building measure. The CSCAP could offer a venue that would be less competitive than Track I meetings, where representatives of the armed forces tend to be more suspicious of each other.36 CSCAP might generate greater trust and learning since current policy positions would not be emphasized; rather, CSCAP focuses on forward-looking examination of the region’s future environment. For example, the issue of illegal immigration could be explored by CSCAP, combined with expert assessments of demographics and the ways in which neighboring armed forces could cooperate in border security without alienating each other.

Ironically, CSCAP’s success in generating extensive research on a variety of security-related topics may be overwhelming the ARF. In order to establish agreement on common interests, the ASEAN ISIS representing Track II and government officials from ASEAN (SOMs) representing Track I began meeting in 1996 before each ASEAN and ARF annual gathering. One aim of these meetings is to see whether and how Track II activities meshed with

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34 Author’s interview with Ambassador Arun Panupong, Bangkok, June 13, 2000.
35 Author’s interview with Thai armed forces’ officers at the Strategic Studies Research Institute, Bangkok, June 14, 2000.
36 Ibid.
Track I interests. These ASEAN SOMs meetings also provided ASEAN governments with some ideas they could raise in the ARF for both short- and long-term consideration. Thus, CSCAP has pushed for Defense White Papers as a transparency CBM in the short term and has also laid the ground work for preventive diplomacy further in the future by detailed discussions of preventive diplomacy’s definition and methods of implementation. One of these—the publication by governments of *Annual Security Outlooks* on a voluntary basis since 2000—seems to bridge the gap between confidence building and preventive diplomacy by providing a series of national threat assessments.

One of the closest Track I-Track II relationships is in the Philippines. The Philippine CSCAP sponsors conferences to coincide with ISG meetings on the same topic, thus insuring the relevance of Track II deliberations. Moreover, Philippine CSCAP experts have the time to write the in-depth studies that officials cannot undertake. As an archipelago state, the Philippine government hopes to see the ARF become more involved in maritime issues and has urged the CSCAP Maritime WG to assist the ARF with studies that could be used as jumping-off points for ARF deliberations. The Philippine Track I-Track II symbiosis illustrates a larger point emphasized by ASEAN’s Secretary General Rudolfo Severino: CSCAP is most effective at the national level where a country’s own nongovernmental experts can assist their governments in developing policy positions. This relationship has been particularly useful in CSCAP-ARF discussions on maritime issues in general and the South China Sea in particular.

**Conclusion**

Over the past two years, the ARF has formally acknowledged CSCAP’s inputs for a number of ARF activities, among them the conceptualization of preventive diplomacy; a registry of experts who can provide good offices in mediating conflicts; and annual security outlooks from each member country. Thai Foreign Minister Pitsuwan, ARF chair in 2000, offered the services of the chair as a channel for CSCAP recommendations to ARF members. In 2001, however, the ARF annual chair’s report had little to say about CSCAP, focusing instead

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37 Author’s interview with Panitan Watanayakorn, national security advisor to former Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, Pattani, Thailand, June 16, 2000.
38 Author’s interview with Robespierre Bolivar, Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, June 23, 2000.
39 Author’s interview with the ASEAN Secretary General Rudolph Servino, Jakarta, June 30, 2000.
on North Korea’s new membership and reiterating the noninterference principle. While the report “welcomed the progress in consultations between ASEAN and China to develop a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea,” it was silent on China’s insistence that the topic not appear on ARF’s agenda.  

Indeed, the South China Sea issue could be a test of the utility of both CSCAP and the ARF with respect to resolving a protracted regional security issue. China has obstructed serious discussion of the future of the Spratly Islands and overlapping exclusive economic zones in both fora. Moreover, Taiwan—a key actor in any South China Sea settlement—is not even a member of the ARF, although Taiwan specialists may participate in CSCAP deliberations. Taiwan’s contribution to discussions of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea could best occur, then, in a CSCAP context, possibly through the CBM WG. To effect this change, however, the PRC must relent in its refusal to permit CSCAP to place the Code of Conduct on its agenda.  

If the ARF and CSCAP are to continue as (or become) significant organizations in the quest for Asian security, at least three considerations must be addressed. The first is an acceptance by all members that Asia’s future is integrated among its three subregions (Northeast, Southeast, and South). The economic, political, and strategic developments in any one of these can significantly affect the others. This principle is already evident in the contagion effect of the 1997–98 financial crisis, particularly in Northeast and Southeast Asia. Other security issue areas where the three are intertwined include illegal population movements, narcotics trafficking, illegal arms transfers, ocean pollution, piracy, and transnational terrorism.

Second, if these issues are to be openly aired, then the noninterference norm must be modified so that the narcotics concerns, internal social and political reasons for illegal migration, transnational terrorism, and domestic causes of transnational environmental degradation can be addressed.

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40 “ARF’s Chairman’s Statement,” PacNet, no. 37, September 14, 2001.
Finally, the CSCAP and the ARF should consider adopting the “n minus 1” approach to decisions, which provides a way around the unanimity principle. If most members agree on a policy recommendation with a small minority demurring, then that recommendation can become a CSCAP or ARF position. Those delegations with reservations can choose to abstain without blocking the whole process.

Process changes along the lines suggested above will still not guarantee that either CSCAP or the ARF will grapple with core concerns such as territorial disputes, alter attitudes toward the utility of force, or engage in conventional arms limitations. Nor has the ARF moved into peace management, even though the East Timor crisis in 1999 provided a golden opportunity. Moreover, although the ARF has made progress on defining preventive diplomacy, there is no guarantee that the Forum will be able to practice it, particularly if a country believes its core security interests are at stake. This is where CSCAP may be of assistance, by thinking ahead of the ARF and spelling out the conditions under which intervention in countries enmeshed in security disputes might occur and who would be involved in the intervention.

As John Garfano has critically remarked: “...the ARF has not stated the principles to which it shall adhere in the event of another international environmental disaster, or major refugee problem, or insurgency problem, or conventional war.” If the Forum is truly to become involved in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, these issues must be addressed. Yet ironically, the ARF’s breadth of membership, which includes China and the United States, inhibits the advances listed above. Neither Beijing nor Washington, not to mention a number of other members, is willing to cede in advance its individual decision-making authority with respect to Asian crises. At best then, the ARF will continue to provide a forum for coordination when regional crises occur and a setting for early warnings of problems on the horizon.

Is the bottom line, then, disappointment and abandonment for the ARF and CSCAP? Not at all. One of their most useful roles has been to keep China and the United States inside a large regional security context, helping to soften the edges of their bilateral differences over

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43 Ibid., p. 22.
44 John Garfano, “Can Security Communities be Constructed? Would They Help? The ARF as a Test Case,” unpublished paper presented to the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, June 2001, see especially the conclusion.
Taiwan’s future, China’s arms modernization, and U.S. missile defense plans. While neither the ARF nor CSCAP can resolve these bilateral differences, the Forum offers an ongoing series of opportunities to discuss them multilaterally and perhaps some innovative ways of examining old problems.

With respect to the post-September 11 war on terrorism, the ARF convened a Workshop on Financial Measures Against Terrorism in Honolulu on March 24–26, 2002. The Workshop urged ARF members to follow UN guidelines on blocking terrorists’ access to national financial systems and to freeze terrorists’ assets as well as to exchange data on terrorists’ financial movements and money-laundering efforts. Of course, all of these recommendations remain entirely dependent on voluntary national compliance. At minimum, the ARF has acknowledged the importance of countering terrorism and is adding its contribution to other global efforts.45

45 For a discussion of Southeast Asia’s responses to the global war on terrorism, see accompanying article in this issue of the NBR Analysis.
Southeast Asia and the U.S. War on Terrorism

Sheldon W. Simon

The reaction by Southeast Asian states to the U.S. war on terrorism ranges from enthusiastic endorsement to quiet backing. Amidst concern over the domestic political sensibilities of the Muslim members of their populations, Malaysia and Indonesia are hesitant to unequivocally back U.S. efforts. The support of Southeast Asia is complicated by the quid pro quo terms under which U.S. activities are often structured, as well as the inability of ASEAN to function as an effective body to facilitate counter-terrorist efforts. Fortunately for the United States, terrorists in Southeast Asia are largely homegrown, with few concerns beyond their own national borders and limited resources with which to achieve their aims. Despite some ties to Al Qaeda, terrorist groups are not operating in a coordinated fashion in the region as they are elsewhere in the world. The challenge for Washington will be to operate effectively in a region where some states do not want the United States to cast too long of a shadow, while not compromising U.S. foreign policy stances on human rights and appropriate standards of democratic governance. Ultimately the U.S. war on terrorism attacks only the symptoms of a much larger disease. Regional governments must do more to combat the economic and social conditions that give rise to terrorism in the first place.

This paper was prepared for the twenty-third annual National Defense University Pacific Symposium, Washington, DC, February 21–22, 2002.
Southeast Asia’s political and economic variety covers the gamut from powerful and effective governments (Singapore) to the early stages of state-building, national identity, and cohesiveness (East Timor, Laos, and Cambodia) and points in between where political pluralism is still fragile (the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia). Although ten of Southeast Asia’s eleven members form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), this organization has been of limited utility in recent regional crises such as the 1997–98 financial crisis, the 1999 secession of East Timor from Indonesia, and the current U.S. war on terrorism in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States. (East Timor only achieved formal independence in May 2002, emerging from a UN Protectorate and has not yet affiliated with ASEAN.)

Southeast Asian states have displayed a range of reactions to U.S. President George W. Bush’s call for international support for the war on terrorism. Enthusiastic endorsement characterized the Philippine response as well as a more quiet backing from Singapore. Thailand’s support was slower and more tentative. Both Indonesia and Malaysia, while deploiring the September 11 attacks on the United States, tempered their sympathy with warnings that the United States not target Islam generally. Most of these reactions can be explained by the domestic politics of each state and the Muslim proportions of their respective populations.

While the Southeast Asian states declared their sympathy for the United States in the wake of the September 11 attacks, their willingness to become a part of the U.S.-initiated global war on terrorism varied. The strongest response came from Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who fully backed the United States with the offer of Philippine air bases and troops. She also accepted U.S. advisors to assist the Philippine military in its hunt for the Abu Sayyaf kidnapper terrorists on the southern Philippine island of Basilan. President Macapagal-Arroyo undoubtedly hoped that her enthusiastic support would lead to substantial new U.S. military and economic aid. She has not been disappointed.

At the other extreme are Indonesia and Malaysia, both with predominantly Muslim populations. Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, on a visit to the United States one week after the atrocities, denounced the attacks in the strongest possible terms. Back home, however, she tempered her remarks by warning that the U.S. war on terrorism did not give one country the right to attack another. The Indonesian president was repositioning herself to take account of the strong Muslim parties in parliament and more general Islamic opposition to the U.S. attacks on Afghanistan.
In late August 2001, before the terrorist attacks on the United States, the heads of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore held a series of meetings on how to deal with Islamic extremists. Of particular concern is the large number of Malaysian, Indonesian, and Filipino Muslim students who have been going to overseas Islamic religious schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan under the Taliban, where they come under the influence of hard-line Islamic teachers. The attacks on the United States have accelerated efforts by the ASEAN members listed above to reduce the number of young men going abroad for religious study as well as to share intelligence on the activities of Islamists in their countries. These efforts are being undertaken independently of the U.S.-led global coalition so that Malaysia and Indonesia can participate without appearing to be under a U.S. umbrella.

While ASEAN leaders in Brunei signed a declaration on joint action to counter terrorism at the seventh summit in early November 2001, the declaration calls for little more than the exchange of information on terrorist activities. No operational coordination to seek out and hunt down terrorists operating cross-nationally was discussed, revealing once again ASEAN’s limitations as a security mechanism.1

The Current Situation

As the war on Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan moved to a “mopping up” stage, the United States has turned its attention to terrorist activities in other parts of the world, determined in part by documents and video tapes found in Al Qaeda residences in Afghanistan. Southeast Asia has been a prominent location for these efforts. Within Southeast Asia, the United States is concentrating its military efforts in the southern Philippines with the dispatch of 660 military advisors to Mindanao to assist Philippine forces in the defeat of the Abu Sayyaf. In other Southeast Asian states, Washington has focused on intelligence exchange and the apprehension of suspected Islamic radicals who have targeted Americans and

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U.S. institutions in their countries. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are the most prominent. Cooperation from these countries has varied, and there is considerable sensitivity, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, that overt assistance for the U.S. war on terrorism can be used by Islamic groups and political parties to undermine the governments in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur.

The remainder of this article will examine some of the characteristics of radical Islam in Southeast Asia, the goals and difficulties of U.S. involvement in the southern Philippines, and prospects for multilateral cooperation in dealing with terrorism.

**Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia**

Underlying any discussion of Islamic radicalism in Southeast Asia is the fact that in the two predominantly Islamic countries—Indonesia and Malaysia—Islam has been essentially moderate and tolerant; and governmental leaders fit the same category. The bedrock of Islam in Indonesia consists of a pair of moderate, broadly based organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, which claim memberships that total one-fourth of the population. They advocate the maintenance of a clear boundary between politics and religion and in early November 2001 discussed the development of a joint strategy to counter small militant religious groups. One of its leaders, the rector of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Institute of Islamic Studies, stated that demonstrations by radicals against the United States and its western allies tarnished the image of Islam in Indonesia as a tolerant and moderate religion that emphasized peace and harmony.

Since September 11, U.S. media reported that Malaysia was one of the countries the FBI asked to hand over suspected terrorists. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad responded by saying, according to the New Straits Times, that although extremist groups exist in Malaysia, they “are directing their attacks at us, and we can take care of them. They are not attacking the United States.” Mahathir is also concerned that the U.S. war in Afghanistan could destabilize the Islamic world and, by implication, make it harder for moderates such as himself to rule. To the contrary, however, the fundamentalism of the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), Malaysia’s primary opposition party, has fragmented the other members of the opposition coalition leading to its virtual disintegration and thus strengthening the ruling Barisan Nasional. More moderate Malays, who had been attracted to the opposition coalition, have become alienated by PAS’s vitriolic anti-U.S. rhetoric and demonstrations in front of the U.S. Embassy. Moreover,
Mahathir has seized upon terrorism as an opportunity to detain PAS militants and weaken the ruling coalition’s main opposition.

Malaysia has protested, as has Indonesia, against the U.S. State Department’s November 2001 decision to place more stringent visa application procedures on Muslim men from Malaysia and 24 other countries, though the Malaysian press noted Secretary of State Colin Powell’s statement that the new restrictions would be temporary. Even the head of Malaysia’s opposition Chinese party, the Democratic Action Party, warned that the new visa restrictions would only strengthen the impression that the United States is waging war on Islam.

As for ASEAN, Mahathir opposed any resolution backing U.S. military action and argued that the group should only endorse a UN General Assembly resolution condemning terrorism. At its early November 2001 leaders’ meeting, however, ASEAN rejected Mahathir’s attempt to go on record against U.S. actions in Afghanistan and instead issued a statement condemning terrorism and the attacks on the United States as “an attack against humanity and an assault on all of us.”

Within Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines, radical Islamic groups exist. Their strength varies from country to country, and their ability to extend their operations beyond Southeast Asia, much less into the United States, is minimal. That said, however, a number of these groups such as the Indonesian Islamic Defenders Front (IDF) have threatened U.S. installations and westerners in Indonesia. The IDF and the militant Laskar Jihad, which has fought Christian Indonesians in the Moluccas, may have received some financial support from Osama bin Laden, though both groups deny links to Al Qaeda. Indeed, while these groups “talk the talk” of jihad, their activities are more akin to local terrorizing. The IDF ran protection rackets in Jakarta, while Laskar Jihad has directed its militance entirely against the Christians of eastern Indonesia.

Similarly, the 15 suspected terrorists arrested in Singapore in January 2002 were said to be part of a clandestine organization, Jemaah Islamiya, which was created in Malaysia in the mid-1990s. Its rather grandiose goal was to overthrow the secular governments in the region

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Southeast Asia’s radical Islamic groups cannot extend their operations into the United States.

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2 Simon, “Mixed Reactions in Southeast Asia.”
and establish an Islamic state linking Malaysia, Indonesia, and the southern Philippines. Some linkage to the Al Qaeda network exists, probably financial. Jemaah Islamiya and a Malaysian counterpart, KMM, had individual members who were trained in Afghanistan, and while linkages to Al Qaeda probably exist as yet no institutional linkages have been established. And, in the Philippines (discussed in more detail below) while there may have been some contacts with Al Qaeda in the mid-1990s, the Abu Sayyaf is viewed by most knowledgeable observers to be little more than a group of bandits and thugs who murder and kidnap for ransom.

In much of Southeast Asia, most Islamic activism is associated with local issues, particularly separatism: the Achenese in Indonesia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines. When the Philippine, Indonesian, and Malaysian governments express support—however limited—for U.S. initiatives, there is frequently a quid pro quo. That is, the United States must include each country’s particular national terrorist challenge under the U.S. rubric of global terrorism. Thus, for example, Malaysia’s Mahathir can paint PAS with a terrorist brush for his own domestic political reasons in exchange for not having to worry about U.S. human rights sensibilities.

Nonetheless, Al Qaeda members have moved in and out of Indonesia regularly over the past decade and have purveyed millions of dollars to radical Islamic groups there. Moreover, militants in Indonesia are found in both the police and military. To make matters worse, unlike Singapore and Malaysia, where the authorities are searching out and disrupting terrorist cells, Indonesia has chosen to deport rather than incarcerate suspects and, until spring 2002, had also declined to look for bank accounts linked to terror groups.

When, in December 2001, the director of Indonesia’s intelligence agency announced that Al Qaeda had set up terrorist training camps in the country in an effort to persuade the government to become more active in the war on terrorism, several Islamic organizations denounced him, and the government backed off, probably fearing a nationwide backlash. Still, the United States continues to invite Indonesia’s participation in an anti-terrorist coalition, offering to provide helicopters and communications gear. The Bush administration has also

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approved a plan to help Indonesia create an elite counterterrorism police unit. By aiding the police, the U.S. government can bypass the congressional Leahy Amendment forbidding such relations with Indonesia’s military because of the latter’s human rights violations in Timor.9

Even when fellow ASEAN members Singapore and Malaysia asked Indonesia to detain Abu Bakar Baasyir, an Indonesian cleric allegedly linked to the Jemaah Islamiya that was planning attacks in the island city-state, Jakarta demurred saying it had no evidence Baasyir had committed any crime.10 Mr. Baasyir, founder of a radical boys boarding school in Java where many of the 28 arrested Singaporeans and Malaysians had studied, stands apart from the mainstream of moderate Islam in Indonesia. Baasyir’s school became a funnel for radical Islam in Java, including Laskar Jihad.11

The most surprising terrorist development in Southeast Asia was the discovery of an elaborate Islamist group in Singapore, plotting to bomb western embassies and U.S. military personnel on the island. Of the 15 arrested, all but one was Singaporean. Given the city-state’s tight internal security, it is remarkable that such a large group had gone undetected for so long, though local officials claimed they had been monitoring the group for some time. Interrogation revealed that although the members of the cell had contacted Al Qaeda about funding their plan, bin Laden’s organization did not follow up. In addition to evidence of the cell’s plans in Singapore, information about its plans was found in Afghanistan at the homes and offices of Al Qaeda operatives who fled. Officials in Malaysia and Singapore agreed that the cells disrupted in their respective countries had been part of a network that included Indonesia and the Philippines.12

These Southeast Asian “sleeper” groups had been organized in the early 1990s and were activated after the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan, possibly on orders from Al Qaeda leaders. Several of the Malaysian militants had been trained by Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, repatriated, and told to avoid contact with Islamic organizations to prevent official suspicions. As one western diplomat put it in referring to the Southeast Asian network: “These guys were not a rogue group. There was a management hierarchy and a functional breakdown. It was like a

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10 Bonner and Perlez, “Al Qaeda Moving into Indonesia, Officials Fear.”
KGB cell.”13 Singaporean authorities believe these cells are instruments of Al Qaeda. Others are not so sure, although they acknowledge Al Qaeda contacts with some members of the cells. Malaysia seemed to be the center for Southeast Asian militants because Kuala Lumpur does not require visas for citizens from Muslim countries.

Subsequent investigations and arrests in Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines have reinforced the conclusion that at least two of the September 11 hijackers had met in Malaysia and received cash from a Malaysian cell member. The United States has been negotiating with Malaysia for the extradition of the Malaysian army captain who allegedly served as a paymaster for the September 11 hijackers, but Prime Minister Mahathir publicly rejects the suggestion that his country could have been used as a staging area.14 While Malaysian authorities have shared the results of their interrogations of arrested militants with the United States, they resist extraditing them.

Indeed, as stated above, Prime Minister Mahathir has used the discovery of terrorist cells in his country to his political advantage. By painting his opposition, PAS, with the brush of radicalism, Mahathir has brought Muslim voters back to his party, UMNO. Chinese and Indian voters, too, previously alienated by the prime minister’s highhanded politics, are returning to the ruling coalition because they fear that PAS is bent on creating a theocracy.

**U.S. Operations in the Philippines**

In late January 2002, the United States began to deploy some 660 U.S. soldiers, including Special Forces, to the southern Philippines where Muslim resentment against the Christian central government is as old as the Philippines itself. At the invitation of President Macapagal-Arroyo, the U.S. contingent is participating in *Balikatan 02*, a joint training exercise whose predecessors always took place in Luzon or the Visayas out of harm’s way. This time, however, the exercise will be carried out at least partly on the island of Basilan where a small militant group, Abu Sayyaf, is holding two Americans and a Filipino hostage.

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From a professional military perspective, *Balikatan 02* offers U.S. anti-terrorist training, particularly in the use of up-to-date equipment, including night vision capability and state-of-the-art communications. Small numbers of Americans are assigned to Philippine forces as advisors but not as combatants. They have been advising, at the battalion level, in Zamboanga but not at the company level in Basilan, where the action occurs. In June 2002 the Bush administration approved moving U.S. force advisors to the Philippine company level; however, the Philippine government must still authorize the change.\(^{15}\)

President Arroyo’s invitation has led to considerable controversy within the Philippine Congress and vocal opposition from the country’s political left, though it has elicited support from the country’s Catholic Bishops Conference, which, in the early 1990s, had been strongly opposed to a U.S. military presence in the Philippines. The Philippine president has calculated that the political fallout is more than compensated by U.S. military and economic aid, which will improve the capacity of the armed forces to combat insurgencies and pump resources into the economy to boost recovery from the economic slowdown.\(^ {16}\)

From the American perspective, the deployment of U.S. forces to the Philippines, albeit under the guise of a training exercise, constitutes the next location for the U.S. war on terrorism after Afghanistan. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz stated that the destruction of the Abu Sayyaf “would be a small blow against the Al Qaeda network,” though he went to emphasize that military action would be carried out by Philippine troops.\(^ {17}\) The exercise is scheduled to last until August 2002 with the possibility of an extension until the end of the year. As an indication of the importance Washington has placed on this deployment, the U.S. commander is Brigadier General Donald Wurster, head of special operations in the Pacific. The Macapagal-Arroyo government wishes to see the Americans remain in Mindanao as does the vast majority of the local population, who benefit from enhanced security and U.S. economic assistance and infrastructure development.\(^ {18}\)

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In fact, Abu Sayyaf’s current connection to Al Qaeda is problematic. While Abu Sayyaf was formed in the early 1990s and, in its early days, proclaimed religious fervor, it has become a criminal gang engaged in murder and kidnapping for ransom, striking not only in the Philippines but also in Malaysia. The group’s focus is the southern Philippines; it possesses neither the intention nor the capability to strike the United States. Although it may have had some early contacts with Al Qaeda operatives in the mid-1990s, there is no evidence that these have continued, especially since Abu Sayyaf now funds itself through kidnappings, which have raised in excess of $20 million. Rather than an Al Qaeda clone, Abu Sayyaf is more in the tradition of southern Philippine pirates.19

The main issues in the joint exercise, which in many respects was a search and rescue operation, are who commands the U.S. participants and what are their rules of engagement? The understanding appears to be that the Americans serve only as advisors, do not engage in combat, but can defend themselves if attacked. How all this plays out in the fog of battle, however, is an open question. As for who commands, U.S. law and practice require that U.S. officers command American forces. However, the Philippine constitution prohibits the operation of foreign combat forces on Philippine soil—a major reason for the U.S. deployment being called a training exercise. Discussions between the two countries’ defense and foreign policy leaders apparently led to an understanding that Philippine officers had “authority” over the forces they lead, including the U.S. advisors, but U.S. officers retained “command.” (One wonders if this is a distinction without a difference!)

There are other risks for the U.S. forces in Zamboanga and Basilan. One is that the search for Abu Sayyaf not be confused with a search for the MILF, a much larger dissident organization, with armed forces, that is engaged in negotiations with Manila. Moreover, some former rebels who had fought with the MILF and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the latter now governing part of Mindanao, have defected again to the rebel side. If Philippine forces with U.S. advisors clash with these groups, the whole basis of the U.S. presence is undermined and the MILF, currently negotiating a peace plan with Manila, could revert to rebellion.20 An additional disturbing feature is the Philippine army’s reputation in Muslim-

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controlled areas. It has employed some of the same terrorist tactics as its adversary. Since the Abu Sayyaf has no uniforms and can melt back into the civilian population, the parallel with the Vietnam War should be disturbing to U.S. armed forces.21

**Multilateral Cooperation in the War on Terrorism**

Because Southeast Asian radical Islamic terror cells communicate across national boundaries, collaboration among the region’s governments is essential for their disruption. Tracking financing and the movements of members, weapons, and other lethal materials requires cooperation among national intelligence services. This cooperation can be bilateral or multilateral; the latter is preferable because at least four states have been significantly penetrated—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore—while a fifth, the southern part of Thailand, may be peripherally involved.

Admiral Dennis Blair, until recently Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, has called for the widest possible cooperation in the war on terrorism because the challenge “is beyond the resources and authority of any single country and its armed forces.”22 Yet he has also warned that some militaries have exacerbated these problems:

> Unfortunately, some countries send poorly trained and equipped units to the field to fight rebel forces. The result too often is indiscriminate shooting by inexperienced troops and has even included a complete loss of discipline by these units. Some have joined in the very violence they were sent to stop.23

Moreover, efforts to deal with regional terrorists on a unilateral basis can exacerbate relations between neighbors. In late January 2002, Indonesia sharply criticized Malaysia for its decision to deport half of the 900,000 registered Indonesian workers in the country—a move justified by Kuala Lumpur as part of a tighter security effort in the wake of September 11. The rift represents growing tension in Southeast Asian relations over attempts by individual countries to handle terrorism by themselves.24

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23 *Ibid*.
Attitudes toward Indonesia have become particularly strained in light of President Megawati Sukarnoputri’s inability or unwillingness to detain terrorist suspects wanted by Singapore and Malaysia. Moreover, in July 2001, Indonesian authorities discovered Al Qaeda members who were planning to attack the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta. Instead of arresting them, however, the terrorists were merely pressured to leave the country.²⁵

Nevertheless, some cooperation among the ASEAN states exists. Intelligence exchanges on terrorism take place, leading to surveillance of suspected groups, and local coast guards have increased their protective watch over freighters and accompanying U.S. warships through the Strait of Malacca.²⁶ Most of this cooperation has been bilateral, however, with agreements to strengthen intelligence sharing occurring when heads of state visit one another. A positive result from these bilateral understandings occurred in January 2002 when Malaysia sent renegade Muslim leader of the Philippine MNLF, Nur Misuari, back to Manila after he had led a short-lived insurrection in Mindanao. Indonesia has also sent police specialists to the Philippines to assist in the investigation of suspected terrorist Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, an Indonesian with links to the militant Jemaah Islamiya.

Admiral Blair has emphasized that America’s primary role in Asia is to assist countries in rooting out terrorist infrastructure. Along these lines, the Indonesian foreign minister, Hassan Wirayuda reported that the United States offered $10 million to train Indonesian police in anti-terrorist skills, including the control of illegal money transfers and interdiction of contraband.²⁷ It is unclear whether Indonesia accepted the offer. While Indonesian officials talk of regional cooperation against terrorism, in fact, only Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines have actually detained suspects, several of them Indonesians. The U.S. ambassador to Singapore, Frank Lavin, expressed frustration with Indonesia’s reluctance to act, eliciting a reply that unlike Singapore and Malaysia, Indonesia cannot detain suspects without evidence. Jakarta’s neighbors, however, are increasingly fed up with its political instability and internal security problems because they spill over into their countries.²⁸

²⁵Ibid, p.3.
Southeast Asian terrorist groups are essentially home grown and not part of an international terrorist network, although individual members may have trained with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Some Islamists from Malaysia have gone to participate with Laskar Jihad in Indonesia, but, for the most part, these groups are small, poorly armed, and act locally, seldom going beyond national borders. Embryonic efforts at intelligence sharing within the region have begun, but they must overcome local nationalism and some suspicions of sharing secrets with neighbors. Nevertheless, ASEAN is moving toward regional anti-terrorist cooperation. A May 2002 ASEAN security ministers’ meeting led to a draft agreement on intelligence sharing, joint training of security forces, and enhanced cooperation in law enforcement—including extradition.29

The United States is offering financial aid and technical assistance to enhance anti-terrorist capabilities for the region’s police, customs, and finance officials, as well as regional armed forces. This year’s annual Cobra Gold joint exercise in Thailand will focus on an anti-terrorist scenario, involving participants from Singapore, Thailand, and the United States, as well as observers from several other Asian states, including China. Cobra Gold, the largest annual U.S. military exercise in Asia, has evolved over its twenty-year existence to include humanitarian intervention and now anti-terrorist maneuvers.

Yet over the long run, Southeast Asian states must change the political, social, and economic milieus that breed terrorism. Specifically, socioeconomic development in the southern Philippines must take place, and economic recovery in Indonesia, the restoration of law and order in the Moluccas and Sulawesi, and a political solution to the conflicts in Aceh and Irian Jaya must be sought. Internal security resources in Southeast Asia are low. Until these capabilities are enhanced and the socioeconomic deficits erased, terrorism will continue to flourish regardless of outside efforts to eradicate it. Hunting down terrorists deals with the symptoms but not the underlying disease.
