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New Ways of Looking at Security Architecture:

Security Fora and Security Providers

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Introduction

One of the real weaknesses of regional security architecture is the amorphous and imprecise nature of the debate surrounding it. Before any practical reform can be initiated in the policy-world, a better understanding of the phenomenon is required. As William Tow (2008: 36) argues – 'It's a daunting task interpreting the confusing mosaic of alternative security organisations and competitive geometries which constitute the Asia-Pacific security environment.' The first step is to clarify our definitions, referents and concepts, before probing into the real constituents of regional security architecture. This paper is divided into three sections addressing these issues:

- Changing nature of security architecture
- New developments in Asia-Pacific
- Core 'security providers'

1. Changing Nature of 'Security Architecture'

The term 'security architecture' is usually employed as if it's meaning were self evident and requiring no definition (see Tow & Taylor 2008). Essentially it is considered to be some form of security dialogue at its least developed, and security collaboration, perhaps an alliance, at most developed. In Tow's (2008: 2) words: 'security architectures are institutions or associations that shape the context and organisation of [a] region's security order'. In order to grasp the notion of security

architecture, we must recognise that there are different *typologies* of security organisations and *structural variations* within and between them.

Typology: There are many types of institution that individually or collectively comprise a region's security architecture(s). If we seize upon the metaphor of 'architecture', we might suggest that these different organisations represent different buildings in some kind of notional city. Some might be likened to skyscrapers, while other may be little more than temporary fabrications. The most important point is that not all components of security architecture are multilateral organisations with neat acronyms, but may be based upon treaties or issue-specific dialogue fora. Common forms of security cooperation include, the traditional military alliance, the non-aggression pact, the coalition, the 'concert' of powers, the security community, regimes, and others. Complicating this already labyrinthine array of institutions is the recent addition of *new* forms of security cooperation: the 'quasi-alliance' (Cha 1999), the 'virtual alliance' (Cossa 1999), the 'coalition of the willing' (un-attributed? - Bush), and the 'strategic partnership' (Kay 2000; Wilkins 2008).

Structural variation: Components of security architecture will differ not only due to their typology, but through structural variations in *purpose*, *membership*, *formalisation*, *capabilities*, and *scope*. Security organisations like any institution are formed for a purpose, to achieve certain common goals. These may be extremely practical, for example, common defence against a mutual enemy, or more indeterminate, like regional dialogue or confidence building. The organisations comprising the regional security architecture will vary in terms of their inclusivity or exclusivity of membership. APEC for example is a pan-regional multilateral organisation including every state in the region, while the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) only comprises three close allies: the US, Japan and Australia.

Security organisations will also vary in terms of their degree of formality and depth of institutionalisation. For example, ASEAN is heavily institutionalised, as is the US-Japan alliance, wheras the TSD lacks any formal charter or treaty. Different groupings will also have different capabilities – compare the resources of the US-Japan-Australia alignment with those of the SCO or ASEAN for example, to witness the disparity. Generally speaking, the greater its capabilities, the more effective the organisation at achieving its stated purpose. Finally, the level of cooperation will vary in terms of scope of activities, from the very issue-specific, for example the Six Party Talks (focused purely on the Korean security situation), to broad cooperation over a range of functional areas; economic, military, counter-terrorist, cultural, like the SCO. Naturally, the scope of the organisation's activities are usually closely allied to its designated purpose, though the scope of activities often expands beyond its original remit, as witnessed in the case of the EU.

Ideological aspect: This is of fundamental importance to the debate on regional security architecture since the struggle to define or redefine the area is manifest in the institutions comprising it and competing for primacy. Björn Hettne (2005: 544) asserts that:

> Often a region is simplistically mixed up with a particular regional organization. The organization tries to shape what it defines as "its" region by promoting cooperation among states and other actors, which is possible to the extent that a genuine experience of shared interests in a shared political community exists – that the region is "real" and not only "formal".

In present debates on security architecture we see different constituencies competing to advance their preferred definitions of the region. On one hand, APEC (and the notion of 'Asia-Pacific Community') stands as a vehicle for defining the Asia-pacific inclusively, to incorporate the Americas of the eastern Pacific Rim, and thus legitimise the US security presence, (but excluding India?). On the other hand, the East Asian Community (EAC) notion of the region excludes the Americas, but includes India, thus shifting the geographical and political locus of the region to East Asia, whilst omitting the eastern Pacific countries. Thus different definitions of the region through institutional membership represent competing geopolitical projects. Tow (2008) concludes that 'there has never been a single regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific – only competing architectures'.

2. New developments in Asia-Pacific

There is no shortage of security organisations and regimes in place in the wider Asia-Pacific region (Tow and Taylor count over 100 Track I and over 200 Track II channels). This wide proliferation - the proverbial 'alphabet soup' or 'noodle bowl' - may be as much a weakness as a strength of the regional architecture. This has not prevented propositions for further additions or variations. There are three significant schemes to be dealt with in turn.

(i) Six Party Talks into North East Asia Security Forum: Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill once proposed the construction of some form of North East Asian security community around the Six Party Talks (6PT) mechanism (US, China, Russia, Japan, ROK, DPRK). Even as recently as 2008 Scott Snyder (4) contended

that 'The process of the six-party talks…has arguably laid the foundations for the development of a permanent security mechanism in Northeast Asia.' This currently shows little prospect. The fact that the 6PT have been abrogated by Pyongyang in response to criticism of its April satellite launch; a point underlined in May by a nuclear test, make this a non-starter. First, the 6PT have seemingly failed in their narrow remit of solving the nuclear North Korea issue. Second, the membership of this organisation is limited, including two weak/peripheral actors in the Asia-Pacific (Russia, DPRK) and one 'spoiler' – a generator of security problems rather than a contributor to regional stability: the DPRK. This seems a rather weak foundation upon which to found such a grand enterprise.

(ii) Sino-American G2: Suggestions have arisen in response to the global financial crisis that Washington and Beijing collaborate to direct economic recovery and provide future governance. The G8 is seen as outdated and the G20 too diluted to perform such a role. There are serious deficiencies in implementing such a model (Parello-Plesner). First, a G2, like APEC would only be concerned with economic security governance – how would it address issues such as Pakistan or North Korea, without the engagement of other powers? Second, while it potentially flatters China by according it with the status of superpower (akin to the USSR) the fact remains that the PRC is not yet in a position to assume this mantle. A club that involves the world's second (US) and fourth (China) largest economies and excludes the first (EU) and third (Japan) seems ill-thought out and calculated to antagonise these excluded powers. Lastly, China may use this position to gain leverage on issues such as Tibet or Taiwan, (consider for example Beijing's blocking of India's loan from the Asian Development Bank, to apply pressure over the Arunachal Pradesh/Aksai Chin border issue).

(iii) *Asia-Pacific Community*: In June 2008 PM Kevin Rudd unveiled his proposal to create and Asia pacific Community (APC) by 2020 (Rudd 2008). Expressing his dissatisfaction with the current instruments of regional security architecture he argued for:

- A regional institution which spans the entire Asia-Pacific region – including the United States, Japan, China India, Indonesia and the other states of the region.
- A regional institution which is able to engage in the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action on economic and political matters and future challenges related to security.

Though Rudd did not consult with other regional actors prior to this proposal, the initiative was a clear sign of Australia's middle power diplomacy aimed at creating engagement in Asia, but with the involvement of the United States. There are several limitations to this latest solution to regional security architecture. First, the outline of the community has been left vague, presumably in order to create space for debate on its actual form and format. Second, how does the organisation fit with the other two pan-regional economic and community-building dialogues APEC and ARF (or even EAS) respectively? Should these organisations be merged, which would create problems over membership caveats, or is the APC simply duplication?

3. Key Regional Security Providers

Multilateral fora are often proposed as mechanisms for regional security governance, but there is an important differentiation between security *governance* and security *provision*. For example, consider the distinction in Europe between the OSCE as a forum for security governance (dialogue) and the function of NATO as a security provider. This distinction also applies to the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific. In this sense, fora such APEC, EAS, ARF and others all contribute to security governance but are poorly equipped for security provision. Better suited are 'mini-lateral' groupings such as the US-alliance system (*redux*), ASEAN (plus) and the SCO.

(i) US-alliance (*redux*)

The American alliance system of the Cold War, founded in 1951 and sometimes referred to as the 'San Francisco system' or 'hub and spokes' model has mutated into a smaller more tightly knit core in which Japan and Australia, (with South Korea as outlier) play key regional supporting roles to the US. Though Washington's ability to act as security guarantor in the region has weakened in line with general patterns of hegemonic decline, this is balanced by a more proactive role by Tokyo and increased cooperation along the Canberra-Tokyo axis. It would still be legitimate to ascribe this modified or 'redux' alliance network a central role in regional security provision. While the US alliance system does little to contribute to regional community-building beyond its allies, it is an important part of the region's security architecture for engendering real practical cooperation among its partners, not least extended deterrence, and structuring diplomatic efforts, confidence building measures and multinational exercises (APSS 2008). Since its inception, commentators, official and

academic, have dubbed the US alliance system the bedrock of regional security and a provider of stability (insert refs). Others, usually outside the system, such as China, have critiqued US alliances, but it has proven effective in addressing or freezing many of the region's critical security concerns, such as the defence of Japan and South Korea (forward deployment), and beyond this, leading counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and anti-piracy initiatives. Active members of the alliance system are under no illusions as to the capability of an APEC or EAC to provide replacement for these 'hard' security guarantees.

(ii). ASEAN (plus)

Founded in 1967 partially driven by a joint perceived threat of communism, and partially as a method to resolve intra-mural disputes in South East Asia following the Indonesian *Konfrontasi*, ASEAN has grown increasingly to resemble the European Union. This is particularly notable in regard to efforts toward confidence and security building in the region (shaped by the 'ASEAN way') and plans for increased economic integration (eventually a Free Trade Area). ASEAN has gone beyond its role as a sub-regional security community however to export its achievements across the wider Asia-Pacific region; hence ASEAN 'plus'. The ARF and ASEAN plus three (APT) are efforts both to export the ASEAN way onto a wider scale, and to enmesh the security of the other major regional powers with that of ASEAN, creating a form of 'security interdependence'. Though ASEAN's capabilities are limited in comparison to the US and its allies, and the SCO as a whole, and its sheer diversity creates certain caveats between its members, it has achieved tangible gains in

providing regional security for South East Asia (e.g. ZOPFAN, NWFZ), while aiming to diffuse security governance to the wider Asia-Pacific. Not only does it serve to mediate intra-mural conflicts between its members, it acts as a force multiplier for its small state members when dealing with larger entities, such as China. It has created tangible cooperation mechanisms with regard to environmental sustainability/resources management, counter-terrorism, transnational crime, unregulated population movements, piracy and a code of conduct for resolving disputes through the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)..

(ii). SCO strategic partnership network

The SCO, founded in 1996 as the 'Shanghai Five' and institutionalised in 2001, developed in tandem with the deepening and expanding Sino-Russian 'strategic partnership'. It extends the partnership into a network of partnerships between the two great powers, China and Russia, and the four Central Asian states: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, making a '2+4' arrangement. Initial assessments of the organisation were pessimistic over its future, but in the last decade the SCO has gone from strength to strength, adding India, Pakistan, Mongolia and Iran as observers and Sri Lanka and Belarus as 'dialogue partners'. It has provided a measure of successful security governance between China, Russia and Central Asia, registering significant successes in confidence building, trade and combating the three 'evils' of terrorism, separatism and religious fundamentalism, plus transnational crime. Mediated by the 'shanghai spirit', enshrined in the SCO Charter, it serves as a

new model of security cooperation, one that it hopes to extend across the wider region.

Conclusions

Weaknesses in the regional security architecture begin with a vague understanding and consensus on its typology and nature, exacerbated by the wide proliferation of security mechanisms, and their relative effectiveness or desirability. This has not prevented a slew of new proposals for additional security organs such as an expansion of the 6PT, a Sino-American G2 and an Asia-Pacific Community. This occurs at the very time that established institutions such as the US-alliance system, ASEAN and the SCO deepen and expand their remits as security providers.

One of the first steps toward reform should be to make the distinction between pan-regional *security fora* such as APEC, ARF (and a putative Asia Pacific Community), and the smaller mini-lateral groupings – US-alliances, ASEAN and SCO that have made tangible gains in *security provision* for their respective memberships. Both the security fora and security providers perform important and overlapping functions, which remind us that there is no one formula for the perfect security architecture and no one route to the achievement of regional security. In Tow's words (2008: 34) 'It is unlikely that any single, overarching multilateral security architecture will emerge anytime soon to supersede existing bilateral and multilateral instrumentalities in the Asia-Pacific.'

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