

ASEAN Models of Asia-Pacific Security Multilateralism: From ARF to ADMM Plus

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Abstract

Geographical proximity is one of the key elements in the concept of security interdependence. One country's security policy often directly affects security calculations and strategic assessments of its neighbors. Security cooperation is thus more desirable at the regional level. In the Asia-Pacific region, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) exemplifies a political approach to security multilateralism; while the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) highlights a defense approach. This article discusses the origin and nascent development of the ADMM Plus to understand its institutional base and designated functions and tries to provide a fair response to the criticism of being ineffective. It argues that even in response to common transnational security concerns, the regional defense cooperation can hardly be "de-bordered". Instead of pursuing the institutional design of operational integration, the modus operandi of the ADMM Plus continue to follow the "protocol" of diplomacy. The recently revisited notion of defense diplomacy is useful to explain the rationales of members' acceptance to the ASEAN-centric arrangements.

Keywords: *ADMM Plus, ARF, ASEAN, defense diplomacy, security multilateralism*

亞太多邊安全主義：

從東協區域論壇到東協擴大國防部長會議

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摘 要

地理位置相近是構成安全互賴關係的主要因素之一，一國的安全政策通常直接影響鄰國的戰略安全評估，因此，多邊安全合作在區域層次較容易形成。在亞太地區，以東協為制度中心的安全多邊合作模式包括了以政治途徑為主的東協區域論壇，以及以國防途徑為重的東協擴大防長會議。本文主要討論後者的源起與初期發展，擬藉由了解其制度運作基調，以回應一般對東協擴大防長會議效能不彰的評述。本文認為即使是應對共同的跨國性威脅，國防合作仍無法排除國界的限制；在制度設計上，東協擴大防長會議仍循外交模式，不以任務執行上的整合為目標；國防外交概念為各成員國支持這個以東協為中心的制度運作模式提供了一個註解。

關鍵詞：東協擴大防長會議、東協區域論壇、東協、國防外交、多邊安全主義

I. Introduction

Geographical proximity is one of the key elements in conceptualizing security interdependence. One country's security policy often directly affects strategic assessments and security calculations of its neighbors. Multilateral security cooperation is thus more desirable at the regional level. In the Asia-Pacific region, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) exemplifies a political approach to security multilateralism; while the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) highlights a defense approach. The ADMM Plus, however, has been receiving the same criticism as the ARF for not being effective or relevant in resolving long-standing conflicts and hard security issues (such as territorial disputes and geostrategic tensions in the South China Sea). This article hopes to suggest a fair response from perspectives of defense diplomacy.

The paper starts with discussions of the ARF, the first establishment of security multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific after the end of the Cold War. The second section studies the origin and nascent development of the ADMM Plus and hopes to answer the question that whether a defense approach suggests something different from the political approach adopted in the ARF. Interestingly, the institutional base and designated functions of both mechanisms have strong ASEAN connections. The third section thus explores the rationale of members' support for the ASEAN modality in the ADMM Plus.

In sum, I argue that even in response to common transnational security concerns that the ADMM Plus aims to tackle, the functional defense cooperation can hardly be "de-bordered". Instead of pursuing an institutional design of operational integration, the *modus operandi* of the ADMM Plus continue to follow the "protocol" of ASEAN model of diplomacy. The recently revisited notion of defense diplomacy, however, highlighting conflict prevention and defense statecraft, is useful to explain the rationale of members' acceptance to the ASEAN-centric arrangements.

II. A Political Approach to Security Multilateralism: ASEAN Regional Forum

Although there were bilateral, triateral or minilateral defense initiatives in the Asia-Pacific from 1950s to 1980s, most of them are threat-based alliances, featuring the principle of exclusive participation.¹ The collapse of U.S.-Soviet Union bipolar security blocs and strategic uncertainties caused from power vacuum as well as China's rise after the end of Cold War opened a door for regional countries to develop an inclusively region-wide security cooperation process. Japan, in search for the status of being a normal state, took this strategic opportunity and played a foremost role in pushing regional security institution-building.² The former Japanese foreign minister Nakayama Taro proposed a political dialogue to enhance mutual security with its ASEAN counterparts in the 1991 ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference. The idea was eventually extended into a set-up of security multilateralism: the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the first establishment of security multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific. The first ARF meeting was formally launched in Bangkok on July 25, 1994.

A. The Political Approach

ARF is to promote open dialogues on common security interests and concerns between the ASEAN members and non-ASEAN security stakeholders. In terms of membership, a state or a supranational organization having impacts on peace and security within the footprint of key ARF activities, regardless of its geographic location, can be admitted to the Forum. Such a unique formula invites membership and participation from

¹ For instances, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was signed in September 1954 as a collective defense organization to block communism in the region; the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) was established in 1971.

² More discussions about Japan's role in the region's institution-building can be seen in Chyungly Lee, "The Compatibility of East Asia and Asia Pacific Multilateralism: Japan's Strategic Rationales," in Rose, C and Teo, V., eds. *The United States between China and Japan* (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 423-457; Kuniko Ashizawa, "Japan, the United States, and Multilateral Institution-Building in the Asia-Pacific", in Ellis S. Kraussand and John T. Pempel, eds., *Beyond Bilateralism: US-Japan Relations in the New Asia-Pacific* (Berkeley CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 248-271.

East Asia, South Asia, America, and Europe. More importantly, the modality of ARF is based on the concept of cooperative security and the principle of inclusiveness.³ Accordingly, political adversaries (such as India and Pakistan) or strategic rivalries (such as North Korea and the United State) could convene directly and regularly in a multilateral format under the ARF framework.

ARF extends ASEAN's political and diplomatic approaches to regional security.⁴ At the outset, ARF made the Foreign Ministerial Meeting the highest decision-making body, despite the designated scope of dialogue and consultation was security-related. Such an arrangement not only demonstrated ARF's political approach to security multilateralism but also reflected members' caution about inviting defense/military sectors to the Forum. The first ARF Defense Officials' Dialogue/Meeting was not held until 2002. Until now the level of defense dialogues and engagements among ARF members still remains at the senior official level. Defense ministerial meetings have not been institutionalized in ARF.

In the second ARF meeting, ministers adopted a concept paper to guide the future direction of the institutional evolution. Three stages - the promotion of confidence-building measures, the development of preventive diplomatic mechanisms, and the development of conflict resolution mechanisms - were identified in the 1995 Concept Paper.⁵ After a decade of promoting confidence building measures, ARF members agreed to move forward. Following a decision of the 12th Ministerial Meeting in 2005, the

³ More discussions, please see Ralf Emmers, *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2013); Paul Evans, "Cooperative Security and Its Discontents in Asia Pacific: The ASEAN Connection." *American Asian Review* Vol. 19, No. 2 (2001), pp. 99-119; Jügen Haacke and Noel M. Morada, *Cooperative Security in Asia-Pacific: The ASEAN Regional Forum* (London: Routledge Curzon 2010).

⁴ Jose T. Almonte, "Ensuring security the 'ASEAN way'," *Survival*, Vol.39, No.4, 1997, pp. 80-92; Michael Leifer, *The ASEAN Regional Forum: Extending ASEAN's Model of Regional Security. Adelphi Paper 302* (London: Routledge. 1993).

⁵ ARF, "1995 The ASEAN Regional Forum: a Concept Paper, adopted in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam on 1 August 1995," <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1995-THE-ASEAN-REGIONAL-FORUM-A-CONCEPT-PAPER.pdf>

ARF Inter- Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures was replaced by the ARF Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy.⁶ Although members were not ready to completely move into the second stage, the change signaled that members were more willing to discuss substantive issues than before and more comfortable in exploring action-oriented cooperation.

In the celebration of ARF's 15th anniversary in 2009, ARF members charted a vision for ARF and reaffirmed ASEAN's role as the primary driving force of institutional building. In addition to institutional enhancement, the Hanoi Plan of Action to Implement the ARF Vision Statement adopted the following year specified five areas of cooperation. They were disaster relief, counter terrorism/transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament, and peacekeeping operations. Despite an ARF Preventive Diplomacy Work Plan and a new ARF Work Plan on Disaster Relief were announced in 2011 and 2012 respectively, the ARF foreign ministers reiterated and reaffirmed that the implementation of the ARF Vision Statement shall move *the ARF process forward at a pace comfortable to all participants*. Under such a guideline, with the principle of cooperative security based on a structure of peaceful relations among members and the inclusiveness of membership reflecting widely diverse security interests, the ARF process inevitably moved slowly, even stagnantly, toward the designated third stage: the development of conflict resolution mechanism.

B. The “Way”

Most of the studies on ARF's establishment and development, despite in different interpretation, recognize ASEAN in the driver's seat and take ARF as an ASEAN-extended model of regional security cooperation. As manifested in the ASEAN Charter, the “ASEAN centrality” in building regional architecture is not a power-based assertion. Rather, it is the “way”, not the organization itself, which prompts ASEAN to be in the center of

⁶ For more discussion, see Takeshi Yuzawa, “The Evolution of Preventive Diplomacy in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Problems and Prospects.” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 5, 2006, pp. 785-804.

regional architecture.⁷ Even the modus operandi of recent establishments of defense cooperation continue to follow the ASEAN way of cooperation set earlier in ARF. Three features of the “way” particularly call for scholarly attention.⁸

The first feature of the “way” is the forum model. At the nascent stage of initiating region-wide security cooperation, the lack of mutual trust concerned many regional leaders. Yet, even with political will of cooperation, tactically, the region was too diverse and heterogeneous for countries within to commit to any treaty-based contractual body. The optimal agreed formula to start the process of security cooperation naturally was information and policy consultation in a forum model. Ironically, to ease the anxiety of being obliged to follow certain organizational mandates seemed to be a necessary condition to start. A forum model is certainly not designed to resolve any conflict or negotiate solutions for any specific problem. Rather, the pragmatic goal is for members to build consensus and gradually shape a common vision of regional security.

The second feature is voluntariness of implementation. Under a consensus umbrella, individual member states retain their policy to develop their individual pace of accomplishing the collective goals. There is no single formula of implementation. Some members might voluntarily expedite the process, while others carry out their policies cautiously. The flexibility of implementation allows members to be free from pressure of being discriminated against or sanctioned by other members. Such unilateral voluntariness has been critical in fostering the willingness of states to stay in the process and continue their involvement even when there are conflicting priorities between the region’s mandate and an individual country’s plans.

This pattern is evident in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

⁷ ASEAN, “The ASEAN Charter, adopted at the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore on November 20, 2007, ASEAN, December 15, 2008,”
<https://asean.org/storage/November-2020-The-ASEAN-Charter-28th-Reprint.pdf>.

⁸ These features have been presented in author’s previous work: Chyungly Lee, “The ASEAN-Way and Multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *Asia-Pacific Research Forum*, No. 55, March 2012 pp. 1- 23.

(APEC), but also can be seen in ARF. When a certain level of defense capacity is required for members to jointly respond to transnational issues, not all the members are obliged to take the same actions. Member states sharing common risks and concerns are encouraged, but not compelled, to join the multilateral drills of non-traditional security, such as disaster relief management. Gradually the tacit understanding for implicit contracts de facto institutionalizes the principle of unilateral voluntariness in regional cooperation.

The third key feature of the “way” is the open-end evolutionary approach of institutional building which allows flexibility and room for members’ collective adaptation toward common goals. By not contracting into any fixed rules and regulations at the outset, all the members have the opportunity to shape the rules of the game through participation. Members are able to flexibly adjust the agenda, framework, and the pace of cooperation. While specific goals of cooperation are pre-set, this flexibility permits routes and timetables to be adjusted to the new dynamics of regional security and strategic environments. The orientation implies not only the aforementioned non-binding forum model, but also reserves flexibility for the future organizational developments. In ARF, that members agree to progress on the three stages manifested in the 1995 Concept Paper at a comfortable pace perfectly demonstrate the ASEAN’s evolutionary approach of cooperation.

Compared to other regional security organization of collective defense (such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO), ARF members have been cautious about engaging military sectors. Even among ASEAN members, the defense minister’s meeting was not launched until 2006, almost 40 years after ASEAN’s establishment. The establishment of the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting (ADMM) and its extension to the ADMM Plus opened a new phase of security multilateralism with an emphasis on the role of defense.

III. Nascent Developments of Defense Regionalization: ADMM and ADMM Plus

The U.S.-led hub-and-spoke system of alliance has been the cornerstone of Asia-Pacific security. Unlike ARF's formula of inclusive membership, the hub-and-spoke model, constructed by a network of bilateral alliances and expanded to minilateral coalitions of like-minded countries,⁹ features its exclusively invited participation. Such collective defense arrangements are not for developing into a region-wide defense cooperation mechanism. In contrast, ADMM Plus, extended from ADMM and using ASEAN as an institutional base, has the potential to develop a unique formula of Asia-Pacific defense multilateralism. This section discusses the origin and early developments of the ADMM Plus to outline its institutional design and designated functions.

A. Before ADMM

At the onset of ASEAN's establishment, founding members adopted a *conflict avoidance* approach to manage tensions among themselves. Instead of directly tackling their unresolved territorial, political and historical conflicts, members agreed to put them aside and develop functional and economic cooperation to build mutual trust. This approach successfully prevented head-on confrontations among members. In addition, the principle of non-intervention and the assertion of state sovereignty consolidated regime legitimacy of individual members and safeguarded their internal stability from both penetration of international communism and interference of regional powers. The formula of conflict avoidance, however, also suggested that security issues were too sensitive to be addressed in ASEAN meetings. Consequently, there was an agenda vacuum of security cooperation in ASEAN until the end of the Cold War.

Although ASEAN was not able to develop a collective security agenda, ideas of bilateral or subgroup military cooperation were occasionally

⁹ For more discussion, see United States Department of State, U.S. *Collective Defense Arrangements*; Bruce Vaughn, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relations in the Asia Pacific Region*, CRS Report RL33821.

presented by some of ASEAN leaders. ASEAN members saw that bilateral defense cooperation was more beneficial and relatively easier to deal with.¹⁰ Indeed, a “joint defense council” was proposed by Indonesia in 1976; a trilateral ASEAN military exercise was suggested by Singapore in 1982; an ASEAN joint command proposed by Malaysia in 1982; a concept of Defense Community promoted by Malaysia in 1989. Despite failing to reach organizational consensus, a “defense spider web”¹¹ has once emerged when the bilateral military exercises among the three core ASEAN states: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore were held in late 1980s. Bilateral defense arrangements were initially mainly to address traditional threats from communist and regional border insurgencies but continued to extend their cooperation into broader fields even after communism has faded from the region. The areas of cooperation then included intelligence sharing, joint exercises and training.

The growing bilateral defense ties has formed a foundation for later development of multilateral defense cooperation. The impediments of ASEAN’s defense cooperation back then can be understood from three fronts. First, most ASEAN members only had very small militaries and had insufficient capabilities to project military force into a conflict zone. The lack of defense capacities would impede their ability to commit any direct military assistance to members under threats. Secondly, leaders were concerned that defense cooperation would limit ASEAN’s flexibility in managing existing intramural conflicts and economic cooperation. Thirdly, establishing defense cooperation could increase Chinese or Soviet suspicion and possibly trigger an attack against a member with a particular security alliance.¹²

Security issues were not formally included in ASEAN’s agenda until

¹⁰ Amitav Acharya, *Regionalism and Multilateralism: Essays on Cooperative Security in the Asia-Pacific* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Intl, 2002), p. 105.

¹¹ The term was firstly coined by the chief of Indonesian Armed Forces, General Try Sutrisno, in 1989. For a brief review of pre-ADMM defense regionalization, see See Seng Tan, “The ADMM and ADMM-Plus: Progressing Slowly but Steadily?” In Sarah Teo and Bhubhindar Singh co-ed. *Roundtable on the Future of the ADMM/ADMM Plus and Defense Diplomacy in the Asia Pacific*, RSIS Policy Report, 2016, pp. 6-7.

¹² Amitav Acharya, “The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: “Security Community” or “Defence Community”?,” *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 64, No. 2, Summer 1991, pp. 159-160.

the fourth ASEAN Summit in 1992. The discussion led to the establishment of ARF. Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous section, ARF was not designed for military/defense cooperation. Rather, three stages of security cooperation manifested in the 1995 Concept Paper required substantial diplomatic actions. In other words, the ARF approach to the region's security is more a political process in which ministries of foreign affairs of member states were designated to be more important than defense officials in developing cooperation mandate.

B. ADMM

Since 1996, ASEAN started to hold defense-related meetings regularly, including ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting in 2000, ASEAN Navy Interaction in 2001, ASEAN Chiefs of Defense Forces Meeting (or Chiefs of Staff) in 2002, ASEAN Military Intelligence Meeting in 2003, and ASEAN Air Force Chiefs Conference in 2004. The Working Group on Security Cooperation of ASEAN Special Senior Officials' Meeting (Special SOM) had served as a venue of high-level defense officials of ASEAN member states to engage with each other. In May 2004, this Special SOM however proposed to upgrade the level of the region's defense diplomacy and initiate the idea of launching the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM). The proposal was included in the ASEAN Security Community (ASC) Plan of Action and adopted at the 10th ASEAN Summit in November 2004.

The first ADMM was held in Kuala Lumpur on May 9, 2006.¹³ Issues discussed included the chronological tensions in the Korean Peninsula, the future of ARF, and mostly the nontraditional security agenda (such as terrorism, disaster relief, transnational crimes and terrorism). Institutionally, an ASEAN Defense Senior Officials' Meeting was created to support the ADMM. As for building an ASEAN peacekeeping force, despite being speculated before, members did not come to any conclusion of building any

¹³ Myanmar's defense minister was absent from this meeting because of the alleged "domestic commitments."

form of joint armed force of ASEAN in this inaugural meeting.¹⁴ It sent a strong signal that ASEAN members were not ready (politically and militarily) to institutionalize a joint armed force.

To avoid the same criticism of ineffectiveness as other ASEAN cooperation, the second ADMM adopted the Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ADMM. The Protocol provides an institutional framework of the ADMM and affirms that the ADMM is the “highest ministerial defense and security consultative and cooperative mechanism” in the region. It further stipulates a “chain of command” and requests ALL defense related meetings and activities taken place in Southeast Asia should be under ADMM’s purview, including those military-to-military interactions beyond the ASEAN framework.¹⁵ The agreement to report military-to-military interaction with non-ASEAN regional powers suggests members’ commitment to one of the objectives addressed in the Concept Paper, i.e. “building mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding, transparency, and openness”.

ADMM also announced its first Three-Year Work Program (2008-2010). The concrete work program to some extent indicated ASEAN’s resolve to correct the image of “a talk shop” and bolster practice cooperation of defense and security. Two areas of cooperation highlighted in the program were humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) and peacekeeping. Both programs started with sharing the best practices and national Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Later, members agreed to conduct training drills and introduce the role of military. The same as other ASEAN processes, the development of practical cooperation in the ADMM has also been incremental, proceeding at a pace comfortable to all members. The Work

¹⁴ ASEAN, “Joint Press Release of the Inaugural ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia,” May 9, 2006, <https://asean.org/joint-press-release-of-the-inaugural-asean-defence-ministers-meeting-kuala-lumpur/>.

¹⁵ ADMM, “Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM),” *ASEAN*, November 14, 2007, <https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2007-Protocol-to-the-ADMM-Concept-Paper-1.pdf>.

Program continues and is reviewed and revised every three years to cope with the region's new security needs and goals. For instance, in addition to HA/DR and peacekeeping, ministers added another functional cooperation area in defense industry in the second three-year work program 2011-2013.¹⁶

HA/DR under the ADMM framework was indeed built on ASEAN's previous efforts in HA/DR.¹⁷ The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was signed in July 2005 as a legal framework for members to respond to natural and man-made disasters. According, the ASEAN Standby Arrangements for Disaster Relief and Emergency Response was announced. Members are required to report available assets and capacities in the case of conducting disaster relief operations. In the third ADMM in February 2009, the Concept Paper on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief was adopted to define the utilization of military assets and capacities, including modalities of deployment, joint training and exercises.¹⁸ It is hoped to "accelerate the ASEAN militaries' operational effectiveness" in disaster management.¹⁹ After ADMM's first three-year work program, ASEAN established the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Center) in November 2011. The Center is to keep on earmarked military assets and capacities available for

¹⁶ ADMM, "ADMM Three-year-work Program 2011-2013.," *ANNEX 8*, The Concept Paper on Establishing ASEAN Defense Industry Collaboration (ADIC) was adopted at the fifth ADMM.

¹⁷ The agreement mandated that ASEAN should establish Standby Arrangements and Standard Operating Procedures (SASOP) to be adequately ready for making effective responses in the case of disaster. Also, the "ASEAN Regional Program on Disaster Management (ARPDM) 2004-2010" was launched, leading to the establishment of a regional disaster management framework.

¹⁸ ADMM, "Concept Paper on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief," *Annex D*, <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/document/18471-d.pdf>.

¹⁹ ADMM, "Joint Declaration of ASEAN Defense Ministers on Strengthening ASEAN Defense Establishments to Meet the Challenges of Non-traditional Security Threats," *ASEAN*, Feb. 26, 2009, <https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/3.%20Joint%20Declaration%20of%20ASEAN%20Defence%20Ministers%20on%20Strengthening%20ASEAN%20Defence%20Establishments%20to%20Meet%20the%20Challenges%20of%20NTS%20Threats.pdf>.

the standby arrangements and to issue early warnings of natural disasters.²⁰

In terms of peacekeeping, another focus of ADMM's first three-year Work Program, the objective is to build a network of peacekeeping centers among ASEAN countries. At its fifth ADMM in May 2011 in Jakarta, the ADMM adopted the Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network to outline goals at different stages of this process. Starting from sharing information and experience on peacekeeping training, the network hopes to assist all the ASEAN member states to establish their own peacekeeping center. The next stage would be to develop common peacekeeping training, operations and best practices manuals, and commence joint training. In the long run, the ADMM hopes to establish a common standby arrangement, enhance interoperability of peacekeeping forces, and develop existing centers into centers of excellence.²¹ Institutionally, following the adoption of this concept paper in the ADMM, ASEAN launched a formal meeting for establishing the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network in Bangkok in September 2012.²²

C. ADMM Plus

At the very onset in 2006, the ADMM was designated to be “open, flexible, and outward-looking”. Ministers then adopted a concept paper to initiate ADMM Plus at the second ADMM in 2007 and another document

²⁰ ASEAN, “Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management,” *ASEAN*, November 17, 2011, <http://wordpress-144887-1597394.cloudwaysapps.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Agreement-of-AHAC-Establishment-A5-20140703.pdf>.

²¹ ADMM, “Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defense Ministers on Strengthening D-efense Cooperation of ASEAN in the Global Community to Face New Challenges,” *ASEAN*, May 19, 2011, <https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/5.%20-ANNEX%2011-%20Joint%20Declaration%20%20the%20Fifth%20ADMM.pdf>; ADMM, “ADMM Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network, A-NNEX 9, <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/document/18471-j.pdf>.

²² ADMM, “Brunei Darussalam Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defense Ministers, Securing Our People, Our Future Together,” *ASEAN*, May 7, 2013, <https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/Joint-Declaration-ADMM-2013-5.%20Brunei%20Darussalam%20Joint%20Declaration%20of%20the%20ASEAN%20Defence%20%20Ministers%20-%2022Securing%20Our%20People,%20Our%20Future%20Together22.pdf>.

to manifest principles for ADMM Plus membership at the third ADMM in February 2009.²³ The impetus was clear that in order to effectively tackle the region's nontraditional security threats, ASEAN welcome more functional defense cooperation with non-ASEAN regional members. Within this context, ministers reached an agreement on the configuration and composition of ADMM Plus members at the fourth ADMM in May 2010. The formula was "ASEAN+X", rather than just "+1" or "+3", in order to keep "a good balance between effectiveness and legitimacy." Accordingly, the concept paper declared to invite eight ASEAN dialogue partners to join 10 ASEAN members as the founding members of the ADMM Plus.²⁴ In the same meeting, ministers also outline the modalities and procedures to operate.²⁵ Although it temperately set the AMDD-Plus meetings to be held once every three years, members decided to meet more frequently soon after their first meeting.

Since ADMM Plus is actually extended from ADMM, ASEAN remains at the center of the institutional design of the ADMM Plus. All the ADMM Plus related concept papers defined important modalities to ensure that ASEAN would remain in the driver's seat of this extended multilateral framework. First, the ADMM would determine the areas and levels of interaction with counterparts outside ASEAN. Second, applications to participate in the ADMM Plus should be submitted to the chair of the ADMM, and the chair would consult the other members to reach final decisions. The ADMM should only invite extra-regional countries to the ADMM Plus based on the consensus of all ASEAN members. And third, the chair of the ADMM shall assume the chairmanship of the ADMM Plus

²³ ADMM, "Concept Paper on the ADMM Plus: Principles for Membership." adopted at the 3rd ADMM, Pattaya, 25 - 27 February 2009
<https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/7.%20ANNEX%20E%20ADOPTED%20Concept%20Paper%20ADMM-Plus%20Membership%20Principles.pdf>.

²⁴ ASEAN, "The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-plus (ADMM-plus): Configuration and Composition," ASEAN,
<https://www.asean.org/storage/images/archive/document/18471-g.pdf>.

²⁵ ASEAN, "ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING-PLUS (ADMM-PLUS): MODALITIES AND PROCEDURES," ASEAN,
<https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/document/18471-h.pdf>.

as well. The institutional design to keep ADMM at the center in the “plus” meetings allows ASEAN to intervene the agenda of ADMM Plus in response to the group’s demand.

The first ADMM Plus was held in Hanoi on October 12, 2010. ASEAN’s eight dialogue partners – Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, ROK, Russia, and the United States - all attended the meeting. Despite the increasing tensions with China in the South China Sea at that time, Vietnam, as the 2010 ASEAN Chair, managed to put aside bilateral disputes and accommodate participation of China and other big powers. By focusing on discussions on issues of nontraditional security in this inaugural ADMM Plus, ministers again adopted ASEAN’s conventional conflict avoidance approach. The meeting concluded with an agreement of functional defense cooperation in five areas: maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster management, peacekeeping operations, and military medicine. Experts’ Working Groups (EWG) would be organized to explore the cooperation agenda.

ADMM Plus is not ASEAN’s first intent to engage external militaries in building peace and security in the region. ARF also had various defense-related meetings to promote military-military interactions but has been criticized for its ineffectiveness. In contrast, however, the ADMM Plus has steadily developed practical cooperation in various aspects and hopes to avoid being as only a “talk shop.” In June 2013, the ADMM Plus successfully conducted the first HA/DR and military medicine exercise in Brunei Darussalam. Approximately 3,200 personnel, seven ships, and 15 helicopters were deployed. In addition, military medical, engineering, and search/rescue teams and assets from 18 member countries were dispatched for exercises based on scenarios, including collapsed buildings, landslide and flash flood. Exercises such as the evacuation of casualties and displaced personnel, and the delivery of aid to affected areas were conducted by joint multinational forces. The US Navy deployed a cargo ship; China sent a hospital ship; and Japan dispatched more than 300 troops.²⁶

²⁶ Tomotaka Shoji, “ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus: A Japanese Perspective,” *NIDS Journal of Defense and Security*, No.14, December 2013, p.13.

Despite several members of the ADMM Plus being involved in the increasing tensions in the South China Sea in early 2010s, none of them were absent in the first ADMM Plus joint drill. This phenomenon seemed to give a hope for ADMM Plus to reinforce substantial and practical defense cooperation in the region and to be an institutional base for developing the defense approach to Asia-Pacific security multilateralism. Most of the studies agree that ADMM Plus has outperformed ARF but remain cautious about challenges ahead.²⁷

IV. Rationales: Defense Diplomacy

As opposed to the traditional use of military assets or forces for advancing particular foreign policy goals, i.e. the so-called coercive diplomacy,²⁸ the ADMM Plus provides a platform for militaries and defense ministries with diverse national interests to undertake a wide range of functional nontraditional security cooperation in peacetime. The significance of military and defense cooperation in peacetime is no longer limited to the physical defense arrangements for deterrence or coercion but extended into at least two other aspects: conflict prevention and defense statecraft. This developing trend has reset the instrumental definition of defense diplomacy. This section explores the rationales behind members' participation in the ADMM and the ADMM Plus from these two perspectives of defense diplomacy.

A. Conflict Prevention

In the post-Cold War era, defense diplomacy was first referred to missions of armed forces with the goal to dispel hostility, build and maintain trust and assist in the development of democratically accountable armed forces.²⁹ Pacific and/or cooperative initiatives made by national defense establishments and military practitioners were actually used for trust building

²⁷ For instance, See Seng Tan, "Is ASEAN Finally Getting Multilateralism Right? From ARF to ADMM +", *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1, November 2019, pp. 1-16.

²⁸ B. S. Sachar, "Military Diplomacy through Arms Transfers: A Case Study of China," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2004, p. 290.

²⁹ George Robertson, "Strategic Defence Review," *United Kingdom Ministry of Defence*, July 1998, pp. 106-107.

and conflict prevention/resolution.³⁰ Measures in the tool box include exchanges of military and/or civilian defense officials, appointing defense attachés to each other, military cooperation, personnel trainings, support of military equipment, joint training.³¹ Such an instrumental definition of defense diplomacy has shifted scholarly attentions from physical defense arrangements to the latter half of the term: diplomacy.³² Defense diplomacy, involving both civilian and military resources, possibly creates a low-cost and low-risk “continuation of dialogue by other means” to reduce the likelihood of conflict among former or potential enemies.³³

For a long time, both ASEAN and ARF adopted political/diplomatic approaches to the region’s security. Members hope to see peaceful changes through confidence and trust building³⁴ and at the same time refrained themselves from military/defense cooperation. When the defense sector was introduced in ASEAN and ASEAN-extended meetings, the conventional norms stuck. Defense diplomacy is deemed as a process to forge positive and productive relationship among militaries in the region, leading to the creation and maintenance of a peaceful and stable security environment. Such a concept is neither based on any threat perception³⁵ nor for preparing a NATO-

³⁰ See Seng Tan and Bhupindar Singh, “Introduction,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 8, No.3, 2012, pp.221-231; David Capie, “Structures, Shocks and Norm Change: Explaining the Late Rise of Asia’s Defence Diplomacy,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2013, pp. 4-5, Juan Emilio Cheyre, “Defence diplomacy,” in Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 297-306

³¹ A. Cottey and A. Forster, “Reshaping Defense Diplomacy: New Role for Military Cooperation Assistance,” *The Adelphi Paper*, 365, 2004.

³² Jun Yan Chang, ‘Defense diplomacy in ASEAN?’, *Thinking ASEAN*, Issue 17, November 2016, p. 5.

³³ Evan A. Laksmana, “Regional Order by Other Means? Examining the Rise of Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia,” *Asian Security* Vol. 8, No. 3, September 2012, pp.254; Garren Mulloy, “Japan’s Defense Diplomacy and ‘Cold Peace’ in Asia,” *Asia Journal of Global Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, November 2007, p. 3; Cottey and Forster, *Reshaping Defense Diplomacy*, Ch. 1.

³⁴ Timo Kivimäki, “Southeast Asia and Conflict Prevention: Is ASEAN Running Out Of Stream?” *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2012, pp. 403-427.

³⁵ Lianita Prawindarti, “The First ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting: An Early Test for the ASEAN Security Community?” *RSIS*, May 16, 2006, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CO06034.pdf>.

like collective defense arrangement. The pattern of interaction in this process also follows the “protocol” of diplomacy. That is, the principle of non-interference³⁶ should be kept according to the ASEAN way. State authorities have the sovereign rights to decline the visits of foreign militaries. Therefore, the ADMM Plus is indeed more a platform of intergovernmental cooperation, rather than a legalist “community” defined in the European experience or a supranational organization of operational integration.

The establishments of ADMM and ADMM Plus are important steps in ASEAN Community building. Traditionally, ASEAN members perceived a security community as a group of sovereign states to maintain confident expectations of a peaceful and stable security environment for a fairly long time.³⁷ The concept of such an imaginary security community started to evolve when ASEAN formally kicked off the process of building the ASEAN Community in 2003. Under Indonesia’s chairmanship and leadership, ASEAN members signed Bali Concord II to show their collective political will to reinvent ASEAN as a more unified and cohesive actor in the region as well as the international community after external powers vigorously involved in the region’s recovery from the 1997-1998 political-economic turmoil. The Bali Concord II manifests a strategic goal of building the ASEAN Community with three pillars: security, economic, and socio-cultural communities.³⁸

Indonesia took the advantages of being ASEAN chair and suggested various projects under the umbrella of ASEAN Security Community (ASC) to tackle emerging security threats in the ASEAN region, such as establishing a counter-terrorism center, conducting joint training in peacekeeping operations, and convening regular meetings of police and defense ministers. However, these projects could hardly be done only through ASEAN’s

³⁶ David Capie, “Structures, Shocks and Norm Change: Explaining the Late Rise of Asia’s Defence Diplomacy,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2013, pp. 4-5.

³⁷ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 16.

³⁸ James R. Ferguson, “ASEAN Concord II: Policy Prospects for Participant Regional Development,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.26, No.3, December 2004, pp. 393-415.

traditional “non-military” ways. Some of members started to suspect that military alliance or at least a joint armed force in ASEAN was behind Indonesia’s intent. With such suspicion, member states were cautious about moving beyond ASEAN’s longtime perception of security community.³⁹ Consequently, the principles of ASC defined in the 2003 Bali Concord II continue to follow ASEAN’s traditional way of cooperation, emphasizing political and diplomatic consultation for the region’s comprehensive security.

As discussed in the previous section, ADMM was a result from the adoption of Vientiane Action Program (VAP) in the 2004 ASEAN Summit. VAP was to specify strategies and goals of the ASEAN community building. The VAP of ASC extended the original idea of ASC into domains of political developments. The VAP stipulated that the ASC should be realized to enhance peace and stability through political and security cooperation in five strategic thrusts referred in the Bali Concord II: political development; shaping and sharing of norms; conflict prevention; conflict resolution; and post-conflict peace building. Among other measures suggested, convening annual ASEAN defense ministers’ meeting was considered one of the measures of conflict prevention. Although the concept of ASC later evolved into a broader ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) in 2007, which placed a greater emphasis on political cooperation in promoting human rights and democracy, the scope of ADMM, launched in 2006, remains more close to Indonesia’s original initiative of ASC than APSC.

The ADMM Plus has also been used as a venue for regional powers to influence each other’s strategic views by persuasion, not coercion.⁴⁰ Some argue that members in a multilateral defense mechanism tend to use the forum to exert soft power.⁴¹ When strategic rivalries share the same platform,

³⁹ Alan Collins, “Forming a Security Community: Lessons from ASEAN”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* Vol. 7, Issue 2, March 2007, pp. 203-225.

⁴⁰ Winger emphasis the notion of soft power in defense diplomacy but not necessarily in a multilateral forum. See Gregory Winger, “The Velvet Gauntlet: A Theory of Defence Diplomacy,” *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*, 2014, https://files.iwm.at/jvfc/33_10_Winger.pdf.

⁴¹ Ektewan Manowong, and Witchayanee Ocha, “Defense Diplomacy and ASEAN Community Integration: Opportunities and Challenges”, *APHEIT Journal*, Vol. 6, No.1, 2017, pp. 5-14.

military forces or defense infrastructure can be peacefully used to influence strategic thinking of other members. Defense cooperation in a multilateral format is no longer only for supporting diplomatic allies militarily. Instead, the low risk and low cost cooperation and exchanges, as measures of conflict prevention, are expected not only to enhance defense ties among mutually friendly states but also to mitigate tensions among potential rivals or former enemies.

B. Defense Statecraft

Like other ASEAN-extended regional cooperation mechanisms, the formation of ADMM Plus suggests ASEAN's strategy to enmesh major powers in security governance of the ASEAN region. The success of this strategy, however, heavily depends on the willingness of major powers, especially the United States, China and Japan, to participate in this framework. With disparity of defense capacities between non-ASEAN members and ASEAN members, if not for defense aids, what is the rationale for regional powers to stay in this platform? More and more evidence suggest that defense statecraft is now one of the domains of the overall agenda in conducting diplomacy. The fundamental goal is to pursue national interests without using actual or physical armed forces. For regional powers, in particular, defense collaborations and engagements with ASEAN states in a multilateral format to a great extent are for pursuing their broader regional agenda and advancing their long-term strategic aims.

Indonesia has been seen as a leader in ASEAN's development. The idea of ASEAN's defense cooperation was actually pushed by Indonesia. Nevertheless, Indonesia was leading the development of the ADMM framework in accordance with its own national interests. On the one hand, defense diplomacy is for strategic engagement with regional powers; while on the other hand, it is for the military modernization of Indonesia. By initiating ADMM, Indonesia tries to cope with geopolitical changes whilst maintaining the country's defensive ability against regional uncertainties.⁴² The push for

⁴² See the chart in IIs Gindarsah, "Indonesia's Defence Diplomacy: Harnessing the Hedging Strategy against Regional Uncertainties," *RSIS Working Paper* No. 293, June 2015, p. 7.

cooperation in countering terrorism, in particular, serves Indonesia's national interests. Indonesia applied a direct model of defense diplomacy to enhance its capacity in combating terrorism, and at the same time, create confidence building measures (CBM) among ASEAN countries.⁴³

Japan has played a bridging role between powers and ASEAN members and an initiator of Asia-Pacific security multilateralism. In particular, Japan's active participation in the ADMM Plus can be understood from at least three aspects. First, reinforcing security cooperation with ASEAN has been a key to secure the sea lane of transportation for Japan's economic security. Second, maintaining contacts with regional powers through the channel of the ADMM Plus allows Japan to promote its regional security interests, especially in the context of managing tensions with China. Third, historically, multilateralism is one of the important instruments for Japan's security policy.⁴⁴ Among other projects, the capacity-building cooperation led by Japan's Ministry of Defense in particular coverages Japan's longtime endeavors of engaging ASEAN and the building of ASEAN Political Security Community.

In the first ADMM Plus held in Hanoi in 2010, China's defense minister Liang Guangkie indicated China's support by stating that non-traditional security threats are transnational and unpredictable, and thus require joint response.⁴⁵ Such a statement had almost locked the ADMM Plus agenda to non-traditional security cooperation. But China's strategic goal did not rest on participating in nontraditional security cooperation in a multilateral platform. In the following years, China has used the "nonplus" ADMM

⁴³ Aji Widiatmaja, "Indonesia Defense Diplomacy Strategy in ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) to Build ASEAN Security Architecture in Counter-Terrorism," *Indonesia Defense Diplomacy Strategy*, 2019, pp. 1-20.
https://www.academia.edu/42286623/INDONESIA_DEFENSE_DIPLOMACY_STRATEGY_Indonesia_Defense_Diplomacy_Strategy_in_ASEAN_Defense_Ministers_Meeting_Plus_ADMM_Plus_to_Build_ASEAN_Security_Architecture_in_Counter_Terrorism_Cooperation

⁴⁴ Tomotaka Shoji, "ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus: A Japanese Perspective", *NIDS Journal of Defense and Security*, No.14, December 2013, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁵ Evan A. Laksmana, "Regional Order by Other Means? Examining the Rise of Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," *Asian Security* Vol. 8, No. 3, September 2012, pp.255.

format to conduct informal defense dialogues with ASEAN member states bilaterally or minilaterally. Informal meetings between China and ASEAN members have been held on the sidelines of the ADMM meetings since 2011. China uses these informal meetings to maintain its presence in the region.⁴⁶ The views exchanged in these informal meetings are not limited to non-traditional security issues but extended into their common geostrategic and geopolitical concerns. Later China and ASEAN launched ASEAN-China Defense Ministers' Meeting. The increasing intensity of China-ASEAN defense exchanges suggests that supporting ADMM Plus at the onset opened a door for China to consolidate regional trust and to deepen its engagements with ASEAN members, individually and collectively, in the defense sector.

For the United States, after the policy neglect of the Bush administration, one of the key aspects of Obama's Asia policy was to resume leadership in the region's multilateral diplomacy.⁴⁷ In addition to becoming a new member in the East Asia Summit, the U.S. joined ADMM Plus as a founding member. As China had been substantially involved in various regional institutional building processes since 1997, to gain back the agenda setting power in regional cooperation was essential for America's return. The United States, however, emphasized the effectiveness of regional cooperation and preferred functional security cooperation to informal policy consultation and dialogue.⁴⁸ Under the ADMM Plus framework, it has been leading joint non-traditional security drills and helping the defense capacity building of ASEAN members. As opposed to its traditional approach of forming defense alliances, America's participation in the ADMM Plus was not merely for increasing its military presence in the region but indeed for advancing its strategic interests and extending its influence sphere in the Asia-Pacific region.

⁴⁶ Ali Abdullah Wibisome, "ASEAN-China Non-Traditional Security Cooperation and the Inescapability of the Politics of Security", *Global & Strategis*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2017, pp. 39-54

⁴⁷ Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century", *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>.

⁴⁸ Hillary Clinton, "Remark on Regional Architecture in Asia: Principle and Priorities", *Secretary of State*, January 12, 2010, <http://m.state.gov/md135090.htm>.

V. Conclusion

It has been well studied and documented that the ASEAN model of cooperation and community building are different from the European style. The former stresses “consultation” and “diplomacy”, while the latter carries out the legalist style of integration. The essence of the ASEAN way is indeed “diplomacy”. ARF, highlighting the role of non-military actors, well exemplifies ASEAN’s political and inclusive approaches to regional security and shows how soft institutional balancing contributes to the inclusion of all the non-ASEAN regional security stakeholders in one single security cooperation mechanism. The ADMM Plus, prioritizing functional defense cooperation on nontraditional security issues, also includes participation of non-ASEAN regional powers. However, its *modus operandi* remains consistent to the ASEAN model of intergovernmental cooperation, rather than achieving supranational operational integration.

The most common criticism on ADMM or ADMM Plus has been its irrelevancy to resolve territorial and maritime conflicts in the region. Nevertheless, as discussed in this article, both mechanisms have instrumental roles in defense diplomacy. They are not created for the purpose of directly solving hard security issues. It is only fair to make the assessment based on their designated functions. The ADMM Plus was never meant to play a role of conflict resolution in hard security tensions, but more and more voices suggest that long-standing hard security issues should also be included in the ADMM Plus agenda. With an ASEAN evolutionary approach of institutional building, the possibility for ADMM Plus to play a role in preventing the eruption of armed confrontation in military hot spots, such as the South China Sea, should not be totally excluded.

One of the lessons from the cooperative experience in ADMM Plus was that tackling non-traditional security issues could be the most convenient entry point to start defense cooperation among powers with diverse interests. However, the overall regional capacity building of responding transnational threats has been constrained by ASEAN members’ general commitment to non-confrontational and non-interventionist principles. Joint operation in combatting common transnational threat can hardly be de-bordered but to

follow the protocol of diplomacy. ASEAN's longstanding sovereign norms to a certain extent impede ADMM Plus members from achieving the operational readiness and responsiveness at the regional level.

The ADMM Plus is certainly not the only defense summit on Asian security. The IISS Shangri La Dialogues launched in 2002 has been a well-recognized venue for defense ministers from all over the world to exchange views and flash policy signals. However, it is initiated and organized by a London-based think tank: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Participants in the Dialogue neither hold any membership commitment nor have any institutional binding in between the annual meetings. It is a successful think-tank project that inspires policy makers, but has no sign to be developed into an intergovernmental cooperation platform. The momentum and dynamics of the Dialogue are not comparable to either ARF or the ADMM Plus.

There are also other regional endeavors for prompting cooperation in specific nontraditional security areas. For instance, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery in Asia (the ReCAAP Agreement) was signed by 14 regional countries in 2006 to enhance regional cooperation in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships through information sharing, capacity building and cooperative arrangements. Such a single issue specific cooperation pattern might be focused and effective to accomplish tasks. Nevertheless, by taking ASEAN as an institutional base, the ADMM Plus process not only accommodates all the key regional security powers but also covers a more comprehensive non-traditional security agenda that meets region-wide needs.

Theoretically, the phenomenon that regional powers (such the United States, China, and Japan) yields to a formula suggested by a group of relatively small and middle-sized countries (ASEAN) directly challenges the argument of power-based institutionalism, which emphasizes the need for hegemony to start and stabilize multilateral institutions. In contrast, the experience in the Asia-Pacific region suggests that the ASEAN-way diplomacy is not only a necessary condition to start regional multilateralism but also a sufficient element to create an equilibrium for constructing

multilateral regional order in the Asia-Pacific region. The stability would be sustainable if no regional power could ensure to be better off by exiting the ASEAN-centric arrangement. The developing trends in the ADMM Plus to a certain extent are in line with this optimistic note.

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