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REPORT

Preserving the Long Peace in Asia

The Institutional Building Blocks of Long-Term Regional Security

Independent Commission on Regional Security Architecture

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A REPORT OF THE ASIA SOCIETY POLICY INSTITUTE

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON

REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Asia Society POLICY INSTITUTE

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This report represents a consensus view of the Asia Society Policy Institute's Independent Commission on Regional Security Architecture. By serving as signatories to the report, Commissioners have signaled their endorsement of the major findings and recommendations in the document. Commissioners were not, however, expected to concur with every statement in the report. Members of the Commission participated in this study in their personal capacity, and their endorsement does not reflect any official position of the organizations with which they are affiliated.

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

APC	Asia-Pacific Community
ADMM	ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting
ADMM-Plus	ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASA	Association of Southeast Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASPAC	Asian and Pacific Council
CBMs	Confidence Building Measures
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia
CUES	Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EAC	East Asian Community
EAEG	East Asia Economic Group
EAMF	Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum
EAS	East Asia Summit
EPG	Eminent Persons Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICBMs	Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PRC	People's Republic of China
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organization
S&ED	Strategic and Economic Dialogue
TAC	ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership

MEMBERSHIP KEY

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

ASEAN Plus Three (ASEAN+3): ASEAN member states, China, Japan, Republic of Korea

ASEAN Plus Six (ASEAN+6): ASEAN member states, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea

ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): ASEAN member states, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Republic of Korea, United States

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB): Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, Vietnam

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC): Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papa New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, United States, Vietnam

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): ASEAN member states, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, United States

Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA): Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam

East Asia Summit (EAS): ASEAN member states, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, United States

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA): Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

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FOREWORD

THE CORE STRATEGIC QUESTION FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE 21ST CENTURY is whether the Asia-Pacific region will be able to maintain another generation of remarkable economic growth and sustain peace in the face of unprecedented geopolitical change.

Until recently, the answer to this question appeared to be an unequivocal yes. Conventional wisdom suggested that the forces of economic globalization were drawing the region together and would, in time, overcome the political, security, and territorial tensions left over from history. Underlying this view was the corresponding assumption that a robust U.S. security presence would continue to provide much-needed stability, allowing nations to focus more on their common economic interests than perceived security threats.

Neither of these assumptions can now be taken for granted. Globalization and economic integration now face a less certain future. While this is more evident in the West than in the East, there are now new threats to global trade, investment, and capital flows that will challenge all countries, including those in Asia. Similarly, the election of a U.S. president who has vowed to reorient U.S. foreign policy toward an "America First" approach raises new questions about the future U.S. security role in the Asian region. One view is toward a general American retrenchment, and a more ambiguous commitment to traditional allies. Another is that the United States may become more interventionist, as some would argue the Trump administration's rhetoric suggests. Either way, the region faces fresh strategic uncertainty.

Of course, these are not the only sources of strategic uncertainty for the region's future. The North Korean nuclear weapons program looms the largest of them all. A range of other intra-regional tensions continue to ebb and flow, including those involving the East China Sea, the South China Sea, cross-strait relations, ethnic tensions and domestic insurgencies, India-Pakistan relations, as well as the unresolved questions of the Sino-Indian border. And then there is the overall ballooning of regional military expenditures, which in 2015 saw Asian military budgets exceed those of the Europeans in aggregate terms for the first time. And of course, not all sources of strategic uncertainty are external. Rising powers are wrestling with the challenges of enormous structural reforms and modernization at home, placing newfound constraints on their outward engagement with regional and global partners.

Strategic pessimists, often self-described as realists, argue that this cocktail of global and regional uncertainties will reach a dangerous critical mass, eroding the little remaining regional stocks of political and strategic trust, inevitably resulting in crisis, conflict, or even war. But this reflects an excessively determinist view of history and denies the power and impact of what political scientists call human agency. My view is that Asia-Pacific governments have the ability, through the choices they make and the policies they pursue, to shape a different outcome for the region.

This paper therefore explores a simple, but important question: In the midst of regional uncertainty, what difference can regional political institutions make? Are they sufficient in size and scope to make a material difference to the prevailing strategic culture of the region? If not, then how might they be reshaped?

I am extraordinarily fortunate to have had such an esteemed group of colleagues join me in tackling these difficult questions. Composed of seven senior experts from across the Asia-Pacific region, our Policy Commission represents a uniquely qualified group of some of the most thoughtful and experienced foreign policy experts I know. They all understand first-hand the difficulty of preventing strategic differences from overriding common interests, as well as the value of open and transparent debate on the challenges facing the Asian region. Collectively, they have decades of experience advising regional leaders, negotiating through crises, and bringing both innovation and pragmatism to Asian security discussions. On this project, as in everything else, they have provided thoughtful and nuanced contributions, and I owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

Of course, this Commission recognizes that long-standing strategic perceptions, often based on conflicting interests, values, and shared historical experience, cannot simply be wished away at the stroke of a pen if we choose to bring a new regional institution into being, or breathe new life into an old one. The history of international relations tells us that will simply not be the case. But it is equally true that it can become a dangerous, self-fulfilling prophecy to simply assume the worst about other states and to prepare ourselves accordingly.

The burden of this paper is that there is a credible third way, one that recognizes geopolitical divides where they exist, but at the same time also acknowledges that strategic disagreements are often better managed within the framework of regional institutions that are anchored in commonly accepted norms, protocols, and procedures.

Over time, such regional institutions can begin to change the way in which states think about, see, and respond to one another. Indeed, the core logic of such an institutional approach is that common perceptions of regional challenges and opportunities would become much larger over time—furthermore, that this would slowly change the prevailing strategic culture, rather than have it dominated exclusively by those factors that have traditionally divided regional states over the decades and, in some cases, centuries.

Put simply, it's about how we can use effective regional institutions to take the regional temperature down over time, rather than just simply allowing it to spiral.

The practical purpose of this paper therefore is to explore what is possible for the future security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region: What gaps exist? How could these credibly be filled? And is there a credible pathway forward?

Kevin Rudd
President, Asia Society Policy Institute
26th Prime Minister of Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION FACES AN IMPORTANT INFLECTION POINT. On one hand, increasing GDP levels, widespread poverty reduction, and growing trade integration have created optimism for the region's future and given states every incentive to avoid conflict. On the other hand, the Asia-Pacific region's security environment has become increasingly complex, amplifying the risk that nations may stumble into conflict. Amid these changes, it cannot be taken for granted that Asia's 'long peace' will continue indefinitely. Now more than ever, we must examine mechanisms that can help prevent future crises from emerging and prepare against threats to strategic stability.

With these issues at mind, the Asia Society Policy Institute convened an Independent Commission on Regional Security Architecture in 2015 that was aimed at evaluating the challenges facing Asia-Pacific's existing regional security architecture and proposing potential reforms to strengthen and enhance regional institutions. This report outlines the Commission's findings in several areas: (1) attributes of the current regional order; (2) challenges facing Asia's regional architecture; (3) principles for a more effective security architecture; (4) potential pathways to reform that could address institutional deficits; and (5) recommendations for immediate next steps.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE CURRENT REGIONAL ORDER

A region's security architecture consists of a multi-layered web of relationships, institutions, and forums through which nations develop shared norms and take actions to advance international security. In turn, these rules and norms, in conjunction with interstate power dynamics, serve as the basis for a regional "order." It is this regional order, and the way in which it balances the inherent tension between anarchic interstate relations and the mediating influence of shared norms and rules, that sets the expectations for state behavior in a given region. In evaluating the Asian regional order, five attributes in particular stand out.

- **Realpolitik is alive and well.** Although Asian regional integration has increased over the last couple of decades, the region's security order remains primarily state based and fractured by long-standing territorial disputes and great power politics. This reliance on bilateral and informal channels can help nations navigate difficult issues more efficiently, but also leaves them more sensitive to fluctuations in the political atmosphere.

- **U.S.-China tensions are generating schisms in the regional order.** As China's global economic power has grown, a new dynamic has emerged in which Asian nations see an increasing divergence between their security interests and their economic imperatives. While many nations view the United States as their security partner of choice, there is also a widespread feeling of dependence on the Chinese economy. The growing concern for many Asian nations is that in a world in which their economic and security interests diverge, partners will be forced to choose between the two in uncomfortable ways

- **The regional alphabet soup is comforting but hazardous.** The dominant feature of Asia's security architecture in the postwar period has been the hub-and-spoke system of U.S. alliances alongside a growing group of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centric institutions and informal mini-lateral coalitions. This loose architecture has provided

nations with a certain degree of comfort, allowing them to shop for the forum they find most suited to the issue at hand. However, it has also obviated the necessity of developing a stronger regional consensus around norms and rules of the road, allowing countries to preference those venues that align with their own interests.

- **The ASEAN way is still central, but also under increasing strain.** In a system dominated by great power politics, ASEAN has managed to give smaller nations not only a voice at the table but also the ability to shape the agenda. However, ASEAN's consensus-based approach has come under increasing pressure in recent years. The challenge for ASEAN in the future will be to rebuild its internal cohesion and strategic independence in order to reinforce its capacity to play a leadership role in an increasingly polarized region.

- **Great power buy-in is essential.** It has often been ASEAN and middle powers in the region that have led the charge for stronger Asian security institutions, due in no small part to the view that such institutions would help enmesh the region's larger powers into a shared consensus and agenda. Yet greater power participation and leadership also matters. Committed engagement from leading powers, such as former U.S. President Obama's commitment to annual attendance at the East Asia Summit, is an essential component of a strong regional architecture. The question going forward will be whether the leading powers of the Asia-Pacific region will continue to play this role or seek to preserve their strategic flexibility.

CHALLENGES FACING ASIA'S REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

The Asia-Pacific security environment is grappling with several significant challenges that necessitate the development of a stronger, more effective regional architecture. These include:

- **Rapid political and economic transformations.** Asia-Pacific countries are wrestling with the implications of rapid technological advances, demographic shifts, and economic transition, all of which are reshaping the strategic landscape in the region. The rapid pace of transformation increases the urgency of setting clear rules of the road and seeking cooperative solutions to address emerging challenges. The challenge for the region is therefore to develop better mechanisms to manage change and transformation that nonetheless remain flexible enough to avoid creating the perception that nations have been locked into an immoveable status quo.

- **Growing strategic competition between major players in the region.** As China rises and other Asia-Pacific nations adapt to evolving power dynamics in the region, leading powers across the region are experiencing newfound friction points in their bilateral relationships. In particular, growing strategic competition between the United States and China has implications for the wider security architecture as the deepening geopolitical gaps between the two countries create schisms in the region.

- **Fragility caused by "trust deficit" among regional states.** Historical animosities and ongoing territorial disputes have created a trust deficit, in which security relations and decision-making remain heavily influenced by historical perceptions and misperceptions. This trust deficit increases the risk of instability or conflict in Asia, as mutual suspicion leads countries to imbue even tactical decisions with strategic intent.

- **Widespread militarization and acquisition of new technologies.** Rapid technological changes and the proliferation of advanced military and dual-use technologies are transforming security relations in Asia. In the absence of greater transparency, technological advancements are deepening mistrust between regional neighbors and leading nations to skew their own investments in an effort to hedge against other countries' perceived advantages. The combination of heightened mistrust and new capabilities is, in turn, altering regional military operations in a manner that further enhances risk as countries feel compelled to "deter" their neighbors through increased deployments and military activities.

PRINCIPLES FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

To address the challenges listed above, the report outlines five functions regional institutions must be able to play, and five principles to achieve these goals. First, regional institutions should *play a binding role*, drawing regional states toward greater convergence around common security interests. Second, the architecture should *mitigate against historical mistrust* and offset the patterns of history by providing opportunities for strategic dialogue as well as practical cooperation. Third, an effective regional architecture should, over time, *facilitate better management of crises and disputes*. Fourth, a regional architecture should also *rationalize and align the efforts of individual institutions and mechanisms*. Finally, an effective regional architecture should p*rovide flexibility in setting an appropriate, forward-looking agenda* in order to withstand the future pressures arising from shifting regional dynamics and evolving security policy priorities.

To achieve these objectives, countries should embrace five principles to strengthen the Asia-Pacific security architecture.

- **Strengthen the center.** The challenge of the Asian system is not to eliminate its more fluid disaggregated nature, but to encourage better coordination, with a more empowered multilateral mechanism at the center. To strengthen the center of Asia's regional architecture, states should commit to further strengthening and enhancing the role of the East Asia Summit (EAS) as a leaders-level forum.

- **Promote strategic dialogue alongside tactical cooperation.** There is wisdom in the desire to seek cooperation on transnational concerns such as humanitarian disasters, which lend themselves more easily toward multilateral cooperation. However, an exclusive focus on these common challenges can also perpetuate strategic mistrust by avoiding discussion of the more difficult sources of regional conflict. It will be important for nations to also double down on their commitment to free and open dialogue as a means of enhancing trust.

- **Get serious about risk management and dispute resolution.** One of the greatest threats in a rapidly militarizing region such as the Asia-Pacific is the risk of inadvertent crisis and/or military escalation. Regional security institutions can play an important function in avoiding such outcomes by developing practical mechanisms to prevent crises and disputes and provide policy 'off ramps' when they do occur. The development of more formal risk management initiatives may take time, but nations could continue to seek out regional confidence-building measures in the interim.

- **Build toward a networked approach.** Asia's complex security environment calls for a more fluid and flexible regional security architecture that resembles a network more than a hierarchy. A network-centric approach requires countries to place a premium on promoting coordination and communication between organizations, embracing complementarity over uniformity, and flexibility over rigidity. As the security environment continues to evolve, institutions should also work to adjust their rules, memberships, and machinery to keep pace.

- **Embrace further strengthening of ASEAN.** As ASEAN engages in internal deliberations about its future vision and role in the region, external partners should encourage and help facilitate further strengthening of ASEAN centrality. For their part, ASEAN nations should also embrace opportunities to enhance the organization's strategic independence and leadership in order to retain its place at the center of the region's architecture.

ENVISIONING PATHWAYS TO REFORM

In approaching the question of how Asia-Pacific nations could best pursue efforts to build a stronger security architecture, the report argues that strengthening the EAS would be one of the most important and practical steps countries could take. In the near-term, the report suggests member states could retain the relatively informal nature of the EAS but also focus on some basic reforms that would better institutionalize the forum and enhance its ability to set a strategic agenda and be more responsive to emerging events in the wider region. Member states could also take initial steps to develop a more operational role for the EAS, enabling it to play a meaningful role in preventive diplomacy, establishing crisis management protocols, and identifying confidence-building mechanisms.

Specific reforms could include:

- **Strengthen support for the chair.** One non-ASEAN nation, on a rotational basis, would represent the "Plus-8" countries and work closely with the ASEAN chair/EAS chair to set the agenda for the annual leaders meeting. This would be similar to the co-chair approach used in other settings, and would help create a wider, more deliberative dialogue about annual priorities.

- **Expand the Jakarta process.** Ensure that all non-ASEAN members of the EAS designate an individual as their Permanent Representative to ASEAN in Jakarta. This would ensure that the EAS agenda-setting process is given more attention, and could also be used as a starting point for an informal crisis management mechanism.

- **Strengthen professional staffing for the EAS.** One option would be to have a more robust ASEAN Secretariat that could provide institutional support for the EAS, and help align EAS priorities with the work of other regional institutions. Another option would be to establish a "floating" EAS Secretariat that could help ease the ASEAN chair's burden.

- **Develop temporary EAS working groups.** The EAS could begin taking on a more operational role by establishing temporary working groups, appointed for one-year terms, to issue recommendations on emerging policy issues.

In the long-term, efforts could be made to reform the EAS into a more formal organization that brings together broader components of security cooperation across the region. This would involve a process of drafting and agreeing upon rules of operation for the institution, as well as a period of time to formalize any such expanded institution. The following recommendations are offered as elements of a formal EAS structure:

- **Align and empower EAS bodies.** A more formal EAS should help align priorities between regional institutions, and could be empowered by more frequent deliberations by its supporting bodies to help drive decision-making and deliverables. In particular, member states should consider developing a more robust and deliberative role for the EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

- **Create permanent support through an EAS Secretariat.** To address the concern that the existing EAS's lack of a permanent secretariat opens up the annual agenda to politicization, leaders could establish an EAS Secretariat, and appoint a Secretary-General to lead this new body, through an approach comparable to the support structures used by other regional organizations.

- **Establish crisis prevention and dispute resolution mechanisms.** Member states could create real operational capabilities for the EAS by considering the establishment of formal crisis prevention and risk reduction mechanisms, such as a multi-national Risk Reduction Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

While institutional reform may require years of deliberation, the Commission recommends several immediate steps that countries could take to help smooth the path for further institutional reform in the future.

- **Establish a High-Level EAS Reform Committee.** This committee could meet on an ongoing basis to consider proposals to reform EAS rules and processes, particularly as they relate to strengthening the EAS's role as the premier leaders-level venue on regional security.

- **Establish a non-governmental Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to propose concrete regional confidence-building measures.** Leaders could agree at the next EAS meeting to establish a nongovernmental EPG that could propose concrete regional confidence-building measures, building on the success of existing bilateral arrangements.

- **Add regional architecture building to leaders' bilateral agendas.** In order to build a stronger architecture, leaders must overcome their preference for bilateralism and begin to discuss the priorities and concerns they have with the existing multilateral system. This is especially the case for the U.S.-China relationship: unless the U.S. and China can reach a shared agenda for cooperation, institutional reform efforts will be undermined.

- **Strengthen the ASEAN Charter.** As ASEAN member states review the Charter, they might want to consider revisiting the proposals of the 2006 Eminent Persons Group. This could include reviewing the proposal to allow for more flexible applications of "consensus."

- **Initiate Track II dialogues on regional principles.** Member states would benefit from a more robust discussion about how regional principles they have all endorsed are understood and employed in practice. States should consider establishing Track II dialogues to build consensus on the practical implementation of regional principles and discuss how statements such as the "Bali Principles" should be interpreted.

CONCLUSION

The effort to strengthen Asia's regional security architecture, while arduous, is necessary, and the time to start is now. Determining the ultimate design of effective regional security architecture may be a slow, iterative process, but nations cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good in this situation. It is essential that Asia-Pacific nations start to more actively manage the region's growing security dilemmas. Together, nations can begin to develop the necessary mechanisms that will prevent crises and create a more resilient security order that can preserve the regional peace and prosperity for future generations.

1. INTRODUCTION

THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION FACES AN IMPORTANT INFLECTION POINT. Increasing GDP levels, widespread poverty reduction, and growing trade integration have created optimism for the region's future, giving states every incentive to avoid conflict. And yet, history has proven that economic integration will not always prove sufficient to prevent this outcome.[1]

The Asia-Pacific region is sitting astride significant shifts in the global order, driven in part by increased volatility in great power relations, especially among the United States, China, and Russia. New challenges to strategic nuclear stability are emerging, as are a range of next-generation security challenges in the cyber and space domains. In addition, regional states are grappling with a much broader array of traditional and nontraditional security challenges, including the growing prevalence of so-called "gray zone" threats—incidents such as cyber or terrorist attacks or other destabilizing actions that fall short of war, but nonetheless threaten to spark a conflict.[2] Meanwhile, many states continue to wrestle with trans-boundary and border disputes with their neighbors in areas as varied as the East China Sea, the Himalayas, and the Mekong River.

Amid these changes, it cannot be taken for granted that Asia's 'long peace' will continue indefinitely. Of course, some may point to the lack of major conflict over the past 70 years and argue that the existing architecture, in spite of its perceived relative weakness, continues to serve its purpose. If existing security structures have proved sufficient to deter war—one could argue—why are changes needed? In short, if it isn't broken, why fix it?

> The complexity and fluidity of today's security environment amplify the risk that nations may stumble into conflict, even inadvertently.

The simple answer is that the region has fundamentally changed in a range of ways since 1945, and even 1975, that render existing structures less effective for the tasks at hand. The complexity and fluidity of today's security environment amplify the risk that nations may stumble into conflict, even inadvertently. Thus we cannot assume that regional peace and prosperity are somehow inherently self-sustaining. Now more than ever, we must examine with fresh eyes the mechanisms that can help prevent future crises from emerging, and serve as shock absorbers against existing threats to strategic stability.

One such mechanism is the region's security architecture: the multilayered web of relationships, institutions, and forums through which nations develop shared norms and take actions to advance international security. Asia's security architecture has been the subject of much discussion in recent years, as a wide array of formal institutions, informal forums, and other mini-lateral meetings have emerged alongside the more traditional hub-and-spoke system of bilateral alliances that predominated during the Cold War.

Yet while Asian institutions have proliferated, one could argue they have not yet fully matured. Regional organizations have at times struggled with ill-defined and overlapping mandates, combined with an inability to make structural adjustments to accommodate changing regional dynamics.[3] Similarly, the region's leading forums have not yet developed the crisis prevention and dispute resolution

tools, as well as enforcement mechanisms that might help address interstate tensions.[4] As a result, Asia has developed an institutional surfeit combined with a security deficit, leaving many questioning whether the current system has both the mandate and institutional machinery to handle the emerging policy challenges across the Asia-Pacific.

With these issues in mind, the Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI) launched an initiative in 2015 aimed at evaluating the challenges facing the Asia-Pacific's existing security architecture and at making recommendations on a path forward. This initiative sought to better understand the nature of present and future threats to the existing Asia-Pacific order, and to provide recommendations on how the existing security architecture and its associated institutions could best be adapted to address these problems.

Over the past 18 month, the ASPI Independent Commission on Regional Security Architecture met several times to deliberate on key issues, including the following:

- the nature of the Asian regional order and the evolution of its regional security architecture;

- critical regional and global trends that challenge the existing architecture and the gaps they expose in the existing system;

- potential pathways to reform that could help address institutional deficits; and,

- options and recommendations for next steps that could be taken by regional governments.

The following report reflects the Commission's findings and recommendations.

2. ORIGINS OF THE CURRENT REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY ARCHITECTURE and the challenges it faces, it is instructive to briefly examine how this system came into being. In the immediate aftermath of World War II and throughout the Cold War era, Asian interstate relations were largely a bilateral affair, in contrast to the trend toward multilateralism emerging in other regions, such as Europe and Latin America. This is not to say that Asia did not experiment with multilateralism. Indeed, multiple attempts were made to develop fledgling forms of regional cooperation during the Cold War period, but most of these efforts either failed or remained limited in scope. Most notably, several countries established the ill-fated Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954. Unfortunately, the organization lacked teeth and was plagued by internal disagreements, leading to its eventual dissolution in 1977.[5] In 1961, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines attempted to establish a small organization promoting regional cooperation in Southeast Asia: the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA). This organization also collapsed due to internal disagreements, in this case regarding the Sabah border dispute.[6] In 1966, several countries developed a new multilateral body, the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), an anti-communist bloc that included Australia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, South Vietnam, Taiwan, and Thailand. Once again, however, multilateralism foundered due to geopolitics, this time related to disputes over whether mainland China or Taiwan should be represented in the organization.[7]

Other smaller multilateral alliances were also established during this period, such as ANZUS in 1951 (an alliance between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States), as well as the Five Powers Defence Arrangement in 1971 (including Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom). Both arrangements endured (though ANZUS lost its three-way structure), but neither indicated a broader shift away from bilateralism in the region.

> ASEAN's unexpected success helped pave the way, and served as the foundation stone, for the burgeoning network of regional institutions that began to take shape over the following decades.

The one marked exception to this trend of failed multilateralism was the creation in 1967 of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Originally established by five Southeast Asian nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand), ASEAN was created to promote economic growth and social cooperation among its members, as well as to encourage greater stability in Southeast Asian security affairs.[8] Over time, the organization gradually expanded to reach its current membership of 10 Southeast Asian nations (now including Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) and has recently moved toward the establishment of a more "EU-like" structure through the creation of a formal "ASEAN Community" in 2015.[9] ASEAN's unexpected success helped pave the way, and served as the foundation stone, for the burgeoning network of regional institutions that began to take shape over the following decades.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the seeds of regional integration really began to take root in the Asia-Pacific region. Absent a clear and common security threat, Asia-Pacific nations began to consider

the nascent concept of a more cooperative order built around shared values and new institutions. The earliest fruit of these discussions was the establishment in 1989 of the Asia-Pacific Economic Coopera- tion (APEC) forum, which was created to promote stronger economic cooperation among Pacific Rim nations.[10] APEC's establishment was not without controversy, however, as some regional leaders believed the institution was insufficiently "Asian" in orientation. Soon afterward, Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammed Mahathir proposed an alternative group—the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG)—that would create a free trade zone among ASEAN, China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.[11]

FIGURE 1

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS MEMBERSHIP

While Mahathir's proposal did not succeed, it marked a shift toward greater Asian regionalism, as new institutions began to spring up throughout the 1990s. Most notably, the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 marked the region's first foray into creating a security-oriented multilateral structure.[12] Over the course of the next two decades, Asian regional institutions continued to expand. Organizations such as ASEAN+3 and the Chiang Mai Initiative were developed to address the desire for closer economic and financial cooperation. New security organizations such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) were created. And most notably, with the establishment of the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005, the Asia-Pacific region had a venue that drew regional leaders together into a wide-ranging political, economic, and security dialogue for the first time.

From the beginning, three distinct features stand out in evaluating Asian institutional development. First, the blossoming of Asian organizations in the post–Cold War era has often *occurred in response to major shocks and transitions*. The first steps in expanded regional integration took place in the immediate post–Cold War era, as nations questioned what a more multipolar order might entail and what roles China and the United States, in particular, would play in the new regional landscape.[13] The second concerted push for greater regional integration evolved from the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, and reflected deep regional disappointment and disillusionment with the American response to the crisis, as reflected in the hardline posture adopted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).[14] The most recent wave of multilateralism emerged out of the 2008 global financial crisis and rising concerns about growing regional militarism. Several nations again brought forward proposals to develop a more robust leaders-led institution, most notably, the Australian proposal for an "Asia-Pacific Community" and the Japanese concept of an "East Asia Community."[15] Though neither of these proposals resulted in new institutions, they helped spur the most significant institutional reform of recent years: the elevation and gradual expansion of the role of the East Asia Summit.

Unfortunately, while this crisis-driven approach has been an influential factor that has helped propel deeper economic interdependence, it has arguably helped limit the establishment of more meaningful security institutions. Without major security conflicts comparable to the jarring economic crises that have occurred in the region, or large-scale regional crises, the relative stability provided by the U.S.-guaranteed security order has tamped down any sense of urgency for more robust security institutions.

Second, the development of regional security institutions has been *a decidedly competitive process*, reflecting deep differences of opinion over the appropriate mandate, composition, and principles that should undergird the region's architecture. Nations across the Asia-Pacific region have fundamental disagreements over the issues that should be addressed via multilateral channels, which have partially fostered the growth of myriad, subregional organizations with relatively narrow mandates. Similarly, there have been long-standing debates about the most effective composition of Asian institutions. While China and some Southeast Asian countries have expressed a preference for narrower "Asian" institutions, the United States and allies such as Japan and Australia have argued for a more inclusive concept centered on "Asia-Pacific," or more recently, "Indo-Pacific," cooperation.[16] And finally, there are widespread questions about the most important "rules of the road" to which nations should adhere. For example, while the ASEAN way depends on strict adherence to the principles of noninterference and voluntary consensus, there are debates about whether these principles have in practice prevented Asia-Pacific institutions from addressing regional crises.[17]

Third, in light of the more recent, rapid, and complex challenges to regional stability, the existing security institutions have *struggled to maintain their relevance*. A significant disparity of viewpoints remains over the appropriate mandate for Asian regional security institutions, as reflected in the plethora of organizations created to address security concerns. The long-standing ASEAN model prioritizes consensus building, viewing regular meetings between leaders as an investment in long-term confidence building, regardless of their immediate outcomes. While this approach has succeeded in maintaining balance in a region riddled by disagreements, the price has been the development of organizations that are sometimes criticized for failing to move beyond a "talk shop" structure.[18]

The original mandates behind organizations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are impressive. The ARF, for example, was specifically designed with the aims of promoting constructive dialogue and consultation, confidence building, and preventive diplomacy. Nonetheless, from the outset these original goals were compromised by the differing views of member states and the wide-ranging geographical scope of its overall membership.[19] Although one could certainly argue that the ARF has succeeded in promoting dialogue, it is far more difficult to suggest that, in its more than 20 years of history, it has proactively engaged in preventive diplomacy or succeeded in achieving a "more predictable and constructive pattern of relations" across the region.[20]

> While regional meetings and organizations continue to proliferate, governments are now facing a sort of institutional fatigue, overwhelmed by the frequency of discussions and yet underwhelmed by their results.

As a result, while regional meetings and organizations continue to proliferate, governments are now facing a sort of institutional fatigue, overwhelmed by the frequency of discussions and yet underwhelmed by their results. This crisis of purpose requires a fresh examination and discussion of the raison d'être for the various institutions that currently make up the region's security architecture. What are the critical challenges facing the Asian regional order and how is this order being transformed? What do these changes suggest about potential gaps in existing institutions and how could these credibly be filled?

3. ATTRIBUTES OF THE CURRENT REGIONAL ORDER

ANY DISCUSSION OF THE CHALLENGES FACING THE ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY ARCHITECTURE first requires a look at the regional order in which that architecture exists, and the ways in which it both shapes and constrains the effectiveness of regional institutions. As noted earlier, a region's security architecture consists of a web of relationships and institutions, through which nations interact and develop agreed-upon norms and activities to promote peace and security. In turn, these rules and norms, in conjunction with interstate power dynamics, serve as the basis for a regional 'order.' It is this regional order, and the way in which it balances the inherent tension between anarchic interstate relations and the mediating influence of shared norms and rules, that sets the expectations for state behavior in a given region.

In evaluating the Asian regional order, five attributes in particular stand out.

Realpolitik is Alive and Well

Although Asian regional integration has increased over the last couple of decades, the region's security order remains primarily state based and fractured by long-standing territorial disputes and great power politics. Shifting interregional power dynamics have only heightened geopolitical tensions in the region, creating a sense of constant jockeying among leading powers for political, economic, and security influence. This resurgence of traditional geopolitics is not an exclusively zero-sum phenomenon, as regional institutions continued to expand in scope and depth in recent decades. But these institutions have by and large not played a significant role in resolving regional disputes or crises.[21] For example, as the 2015 boat crisis unfolded in the Gulf of Thailand, ASEAN struggled and was unable to generate a coordinated response to a growing refugee emergency. Similarly, while regional organizations such as the EAS and the ARF have discussed issues such as South China Sea disputes and North Korean provocations, efforts to resolve these disputes have persistently been handled through separate channels, such as the Six-Party Talks.

> This preference toward bilateral and informal channels provides nations with a more streamlined means of negotiating choppy geopolitical waters. On the other hand, these mechanisms can often become brittle as the political atmosphere deteriorates.

On the one hand, this preference toward bilateral and informal channels provides nations with a more streamlined means of negotiating choppy geopolitical waters. On the other hand, these mechanisms can often become brittle as the political atmosphere deteriorates, creating a greater willingness to avoid compromise and resort to traditional power politics to resolve problems. Moreover, bilateral channels are inadequate to address many of the region's most prevalent concerns, such as nuclear proliferation, natural disasters, violent extremism, and cyber threats, which require a coordinated regional response.

U.S.-China Tensions are Generating Schisms in the Regional Order

As China's global economic power has grown, a new dynamic has emerged in which Asian nations see an increasing divergence between their security interests and their economic imperatives. While many nations view the United States as their security partner of choice, and the recognized leader of a regional security order, there is also a widespread feeling of dependence on the Chinese economy. The result is that countries across the region often feel torn between their dependence on the U.S. security umbrella and their reliance on China's growing economic influence.

The ripple effects of this growing schism have been profound in many cases. Increasingly, geopolitical tensions between the United States and China have spilled over into other arenas, as regional partners struggle with how to reconcile and balance their ties between the two nations. At times, economic deliberations, such as the decision to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) or the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), have become increasingly geopolitical in tone, imbuing economic decision-making with an outsized sense of geopolitical symbolism. At other times, geopolitical disputes, such as those in the East and South China Seas, have had economic consequences, leaving nations concerned about the potential economic ramifications of their political-security decisions. The swift downturn in China-Republic of Korea (ROK) economic relations in response to the ROK government's decision to host a U.S. missile defense system exemplifies this trend. The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) case also puts a spotlight on the growing concern for many Asian nations: in a world in which their economic and security interests diverge, partners are increasingly being forced to choose between the two in uncomfortable ways.

The Regional Alphabet Soup is Comforting But Hazardous

The dominant feature of Asia's security architecture in the postwar period has been the coexistence of the U.S.-led 'hub and spoke' system of traditional alliances alongside a growing group of ASEAN-centric institutions and informal mini-lateral coalitions. This largely uncoordinated conglomerate of both formal and informal arrangements has provided nations with a certain degree of comfort, allowing them to shop for the venue they find most suited to the issue at hand. The development of informal mini-lateral arrangements has enabled nations to tackle more complex security discussions in a streamlined setting with fewer institutional or bureaucratic obstacles, while also allowing formal institutions to address less contentious nontraditional security issues that more easily lend themselves to a consensus-based approach.

The optimistic view of regional 'forum shopping' is that it has provided countries with a means of navigating and avoiding contentious issues in a system riddled with disagreements and differing viewpoints. The downsides of this approach, however, are readily apparent. Forum shopping has obviated the necessity of developing a stronger regional consensus around agreed-upon norms and rules of the road, allowing countries to simply pursue counter-forums and norms more aligned with their own interests. Moreover, the region's disaggregation has enabled leading powers to engage in aggressive 'forum shaping,' seeking to bolster their preferred principles within mini-lateral settings in the absence of a broader regional consensus. The result is a regional architecture that has become increasingly splintered and factionalized and, accordingly, more prone to tension and escalation.

The ASEAN Way is Still Central, But Also Under Increasing Strain

Few would have predicted back in 1967 that a small, nascent group of five Southeast Asian nations would develop into a central feature of the Asia-Pacific's regional architecture. Fifty years later, while the dominant feature of the regional security order may still be the U.S. alliance system, ASEAN has established itself as the undeniable centerpiece of regional institutionalism. In a centrifugal region lacking strong binding principles, the ASEAN way, for all of its perceived flaws, has provided unifying ideals and a modus operandi around which the region has cohered. Moreover, in a system dominated by great power politics, ASEAN has managed to give smaller nations not only a voice at the table but also the ability to shape the agenda.

However, ASEAN's consensus-based approach has come under increasing pressure in recent years. Critics point to a sense of paralysis on hard security questions, and a lowest-common-denominator approach to decision-making that avoids the most pressing issues of the day. For ASEAN, this sense of paralysis partially reflects the internal divisions within Southeast Asia caused by increasing tensions in the U.S.-China dynamic. These internal tensions came to a head during the 2012 ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Summit, when divisions over the South China Sea resulted in the unprecedented failure of ministers to produce a final communiqué.[22] The challenge for ASEAN in the future will be to rebuild its internal cohesion in order to reinforce its capacity to play a leadership role in an increasingly complex and polarized region. It will need to refocus on ASEAN's most critical attribute—strategic independence—and develop a more contemporary vision for ASEAN centrality to better navigate the choppy geostrategic waters in the region. It will also need to build a greater sense of regional community beyond ASEAN, by providing non-ASEAN players with an enhanced sense of ownership and voice in setting and shaping the wider regional security agenda. Put simply, more than ever, ASEAN will need to earn its centrality and leadership in the region's architecture, rather than simply assuming it will always be a given.

> In a system dominated by great power politics, ASEAN has managed to give smaller nations not only a voice at the table but also the ability to shape the agenda.

Great power buy-in is essential

The relationship between the Asia-Pacific region's leading powers and its various institutions has often been complicated due to complex interrelationships between the leading powers, as well as differing preferences over which institutions and forums to prioritize. It has often been ASEAN and middle powers in the region that have led the charge for stronger Asian security institutions, due in no small part to the view that such institutions would help enmesh the region's larger powers into a shared consensus and agenda.[23] In contrast, larger powers have sometimes appeared reluctant to constrain their strategic space by binding themselves too closely to certain institutions.

Yet strong engagement from the region's leading powers, and in particular the United States and China, will be an essential component for the success of the region's institutions for the foreseeable future. At several moments in time, great power leadership has served as the key ingredient to provide institutions with the needed gravitas, momentum, and direction to move forward. For example, the Obama administration's decisions to elevate U.S. engagement with ASEAN and commit to the Presi-

dent's annual attendance at the East Asia Summit were important factors in strengthening the regional architecture, as was President Bill Clinton's 1993 decision to enhance U.S. participation in APEC.

The question is whether the leading powers of the Asia-Pacific region will continue to play this role in the future. In a region beset by rapid geopolitical change, rising nations may instead feel an incentive to avoid binding themselves too closely to a consensus they may be in a better position to shape further down the road. The United States and its allies may prefer to shift focus toward mini-lateral venues that avoid the strategic gridlock that has proven frustrating in broader settings. The region's powers will therefore continue to wrestle with the competing desires of preserving strategic flexibility on the one hand and binding the broader region (and one another) into a shared strategic consensus on the other. Reconciling these competing goals, as well as differing visions of what any alternative or additional security architecture should contain, is a central challenge facing the region today.

4. CHALLENGES FACING ASIA'S REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

ASIA'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY COMPLEX and subject to growing friction between leading powers, as described in previous pages. Absent strong principles and institutions to bind the region together, nations will be tempted to seek unilateral advantages where they can find them, further contributing to a sense of growing instability—strategically, politically, and economically. Given these realities, what role could a stronger regional architecture play? What are the most significant challenges that stronger institutions should address?

Transformation

The most significant challenge facing the Asia-Pacific region today is to successfully manage change. Technological advances are rapidly reshaping the strategic landscape in Asia, and leveling the playing field between various developed and developing nations. Demographic shifts are creating difficult policy choices for regional leaders, as Northeast Asian governments wrestle with aging workforces, while South and Southeast Asian nations struggle to educate and employ a growing youth bulge. On the economic front, many governments are wrestling with how to reform domestic industries and markets to compete in an increasingly competitive international field. And finally, on the security side, challenges such as cyber terrorism, violent extremism, climate-related disasters, and international migration are posing newfound threats to regional governments.

The rapid pace of transformation poses two particular problems. The first is the lack of clear rules and norms that define appropriate rules of the road for regional governments. In the absence of these norms, the strategic landscape risks becoming something of a Wild West, or the Wild, Wild East, as some have said. The second, and related, issue is the absence of strong regional mechanisms within which countries are committed to developing cooperative solutions to shared challenges. Without such a commitment to cooperation and burden sharing, the risk is that smaller countries may choose to abdicate their responsibilities to leading powers, while larger players may choose to engage in might-makes-right solutions. Unfortunately, in a region composed of a number of rising powers, each with a different conception of its optimal future place in the wider regional order, there are inherent disincentives against setting new rules of the road. Rising powers are unlikely to lock into new agreements or a status quo when they believe they may be in a more optimal bargaining position in the future, or when they believe a lack of clear rules provides strategic advantages. The challenge for the region is therefore to develop better mechanisms to manage change and transformation that nonetheless remain flexible enough to avoid creating the perception that nations have been locked into an immoveable status quo.

> Without such a commitment to cooperation and burden sharing, the risk is that smaller countries may choose to abdicate their responsibilities to leading powers, while larger players may choose to engage in might-makes-right solutions.

Strategic Competition

The rapidly shifting strategic landscape has created another related threat to regional stability—growing competition in the region. As China rises and other Asia-Pacific nations adapt to evolving power dynamics in the region, leading powers across the region are experiencing newfound friction points in their bilateral relationships. For example, China's move to enhance its access to the Indian Ocean region has created new suspicions and tensions between Beijing and New Delhi. Similarly, Prime Minister Abe's push to expand Japan's military role in the region has heightened sensitivities in both Seoul and Beijing. Meanwhile, Russia's deteriorating relations with the United States and its Western neighbors have increased its interest in enhancing its presence and ties in the Pacific region.

For China and the United States, in particular, growing strategic competition has led to growing fears that this relationship is headed toward the so-called Thucydides trap.[24] While Chinese leaders recognize the benefits China has accrued from the current liberal order, they have increasingly chafed at the limited role they believe China has been given in shaping the rules and parameters of this order. The United States, for its part, has strenuously argued that China, perhaps more than any nation, has benefited enormously from the rules of the existing system. Unsurprisingly, these disagreements have led to friction in numerous areas. Indeed, China and the United States are currently more economically integrated than at any other time in history; yet this integration has not prevented growing strategic competition. In spite of careful management, historic leaders-level engagement, and promising trends in military-to-military relations, there appears to be a widening geopolitical gulf between the United States and China that is manifesting itself in multiple areas, ranging from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to maritime disputes to international trade.

Both China and the United States have strenuously argued that historical patterns can be avoided, going so far as to discuss a "new model of great power relations"[25] expressly premised on the idea of seeking cooperative endeavors while constructively managing differences. However, while conflict may not be inevitable, the dynamics that can lead to friction and rivalry will require careful and astute management.

> The result of these lingering disputes is a trust deficit, in which security relations and decision-making remain heavily influenced by historical perceptions and misperceptions.

Fragility

Growing instability and competition are exacerbated by another challenge: the underlying fragility caused by a trust deficit among many regional states. In spite of the relative peace the Asia-Pacific region has enjoyed over the past forty years, historical animosities continue to run deep. Ongoing territorial disputes abound in Asia, dividing major powers and smaller nations alike. These include the Sino-Indian border dispute, cross-strait tensions between Beijing and Taipei, the dispute between Russia and Japan over the Kurils/Northern Territories, the dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands, grievances between Japan and the Republic of Korea over the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, and tensions between China and various ASEAN claimants in the South China Sea. These leave to one side the historical animosities within the ASEAN family that often impede deeper security policy coordination among the member-states.

The result of these lingering disputes is a trust deficit, in which security relations and decision-making remain heavily influenced by historical perceptions and misperceptions. The absence of trust can be profound. Much like in organizational settings, the absence of trust creates a security environment in which "information isn't shared, work isn't done, change doesn't occur and the cogs in any organization, political or otherwise, turn far more slowly."[26] Lack of trust in this sense serves as a sort of tax on inter-state relations, raising the price of collective action.[27] It also increases the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation, as mutual suspicion leads countries to imbue even tactical decisions with strategic intent.

Militarization

The final challenge facing the regional security order will be managing the rapid pace of technological change and the implications of the widespread proliferation of advanced military and dual-use technologies. Over the past several years, Asian military modernization has proceeded at a dramatic pace; collectively, Asian nations now spend more than Europe on their military outlays. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute calculates that from 2004 to 2013, arms imports in Asia increased by a remarkable 34 percent.[28] During the latter part of this period, Asian imports accounted for nearly half

FIGURE 2
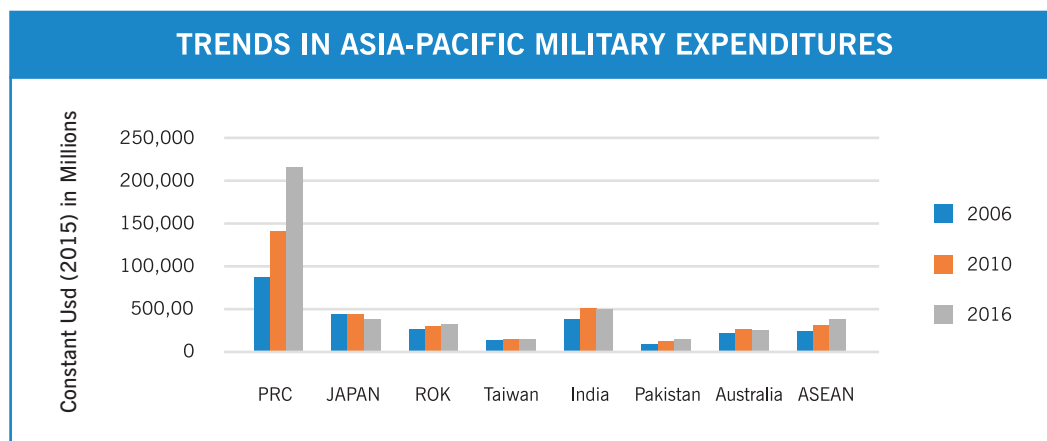
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Military Expenditure Database,
https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex.

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https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex.
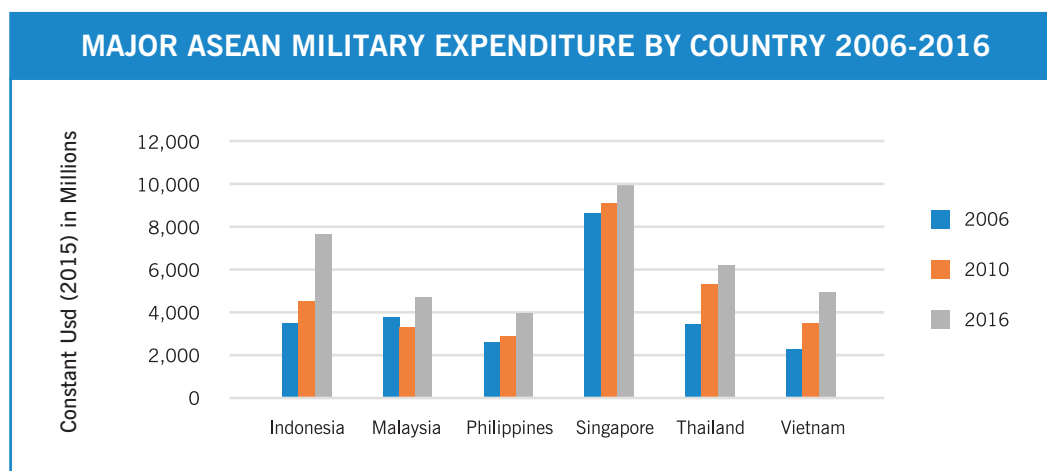
(47 percent) of arms imports worldwide.[29] At the same time, a number of regional states have acquired advanced new cyber and space technologies with significant potential military applications.

Military modernization is, in part, the natural result of nations growing in political influence and economic power. However, in the absence of greater transparency and agreement on the appropriate use of these technologies and capabilities, they are heightening strategic mistrust. This trend is only likely to grow stronger over time as nations skew their investments toward technologies that they believe will counter the perceived military advantages of neighboring states. The combination of heightened mistrust and new capabilities is, in turn, altering regional military operations in a manner that further enhances risk as countries feel compelled to 'deter' their neighbors through increased deployments and military activities.

In particular, growing militarization in the maritime domain (and specifically, the East and South China Seas) as well as on the Korean peninsula is significantly elevating the risk of a regional crisis. For example, in the South China Sea, we have seen the growing use of maritime militia to enforce disputed areas; the establishment of new bases, airfields, and weaponry such as surface-to-air missiles; and an uptick in both surface and subsurface patrols in an increasingly congested maritime area.[30] On the Korean peninsula, the DPRK appears to be significantly advancing both the pace and sophistication of its nuclear and missile programs. In 2016, the DPRK conducted two nuclear tests and attempted more than twenty missile launches.[31] In addition, it has made clear it is expanding the sophistication and survivability of its arsenal through the development of new solid-fuel missiles, road-mobile and submarine-launched missiles.[32] Most recently, the DPRK surprised observers by successfully testing an inter-continental ballistic missile on July 4 and July 28, 2017. This apparent leap forward in the DPRK's capabilities, and increasingly assertive rhetoric from the Trump administration, have fueled deep concerns that the region may be moving toward a serious security crisis.

5. TOWARD A MORE EFFECTIVE APPROACH

GIVEN THE CHALLENGES PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED, WHAT ROLE CAN REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS PLAY? If we seek to establish a more stable and secure regional order, what functions do institutions need to play? First, regional institutions should *play a binding role*, drawing regional states toward greater convergence around common security interests. Second, the architecture should *mitigate against historical mistrust* and offset the patterns of history by providing opportunities for strategic dialogue as well as practical cooperation. This will require not only engaging in open discussion about common security concerns but also moving toward more tangible confidence-building mechanisms to alleviate or reduce those concerns. Third, an effective regional architecture should, over time, *facilitate better management of crises and disputes.* Whether through formal or informal means, it must be capable of providing a venue for nations to discuss and seek collective responses to emerging crises before they escalate. Fourth, the regional architecture should also *rationalize and align the efforts of individual institutions and mechanisms.* Fifth, the regional architecture should *provide flexibility in setting an appropriate, forward-looking agenda* in order to withstand the future pressures arising from shifting regional dynamics and evolving security policy priorities.

> The challenge of the Asian system is not to eliminate its more fluid disaggregated nature, but to encourage better coordination, with a more empowered multilateral mechanism at the center.

The following section offers five principles to support these functions and develop a more effective regional security architecture for the future.

Strengthen the Center

To effectively bind states together, an effective architecture must first and foremost include all of the necessary participants to successfully address the region's most critical strategic concerns. Successfully binding the region in a way that reverses the current tendency toward polarization requires a renewed focus on ensuring that all of the relevant players are included at the table in a meaningful way. The challenge of the Asian system is not to eliminate its more fluid disaggregated nature, but to encourage better coordination, with a more empowered multilateral mechanism at the center. In particular, an effective regional architecture must include a leaders-level forum that brings both the United States and China into substantive security policy dialogue in the presence of, and with the participation of, the other affected regional players.

To provide a stronger central core for Asia's security architecture, we suggest the following:

- It is essential that ASEAN-based institutions remain the centerpiece of the regional architecture. ASEAN has historically played a critical binding role for the broader region, serving as a sort of nexus between larger powers such as India, China, and Russia. Its strategic independence has enabled it to play the role of neutral arbiter and to moderate tensions between disparate viewpoints and the big powers.

- It also follows that the East Asia Summit should be the logical central node of a broader regional network. Its current composition brings a wide range of players to the table without becoming over-wieldy, while its broad mandate provides leaders with a unique venue in which to discuss political, economic, and security issues. Furthermore, the common membership of the EAS with the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) helps promote policy coherence and institutional complementarity within a leaders-level process. The task for regional governments is to commit to further strengthening this institution and imbuing it with sufficient authority and resources to help guide the broader system.

Promote Strategic Dialogue Alongside Tactical Cooperation

Reversing the long-standing trust deficit in the Asia-Pacific region will require a security architecture that can serve two purposes: fostering open dialogue and promoting more frequent military cooperation. Unfortunately, these two priorities have often been presented as competing, zero-sum objectives. There has been a frequent debate over whether regional institutions should address traditional security issues that, while often including the region's most difficult strategic challenges, may prove divisive or whether they should focus on shared nontraditional concerns that may prove more amenable to a broad-based consensus. An effective architecture must, in time, do both.

There is wisdom in the desire to seek out issues of common regional concern, such as humanitarian disasters, pandemic disease, and organized crime, which affect nations across the region and lend themselves toward cooperative solutions. As noted earlier, the process of establishing regional mechanisms to address these challenges plays an important role in addressing the trust deficit. For example, while overall relations between the United States and Russia might be poor, both nations have an interest in addressing problems such as violent extremism and preventing proliferation in Asia. Settings such as the ADMM-Plus can still provide a channel to promote practical cooperation on these issues irrespective of broader geopolitical strife. However, an exclusive focus on these common challenges can also perpetuate strategic mistrust by avoiding discussion of the more difficult sources of regional conflict. Regional institutions will gradually lose their legitimacy if they cannot provide an open forum for nations to discuss the most important topics of the day.

Important progress on this front has been made in the past few years. In particular, the East Asia Summit has succeeded in providing a venue for leaders to put sensitive issues on the table. Nonetheless, ongoing disputes remain about the degree to which countries should be able to raise more difficult topics in various settings, such as the debate that occurred in the 2015 ADMM-Plus meeting over the appropriateness of discussing South China Sea issues in a defense forum.[33] It will be important going forward for nations to double down on their commitment to free and open dialogue as a means of enhancing trust. Even if the topics prove divisive, open dialogue is an essential part of crisis prevention.

Get Serious About Risk Management and Dispute Resolution

One of the greatest threats in a rapidly militarizing region such as the Asia-Pacific is the risk of inadvertent crisis and/or military escalation. Regional security institutions can play an important function in avoiding such outcomes by developing practical mechanisms to prevent crises and disputes and provide policy 'off ramps' when they do occur. Multiple Asia-Pacific regional documents acknowledge the need

for such venues and endorse the idea of their establishment, but to date, little progress has been made on this front.[34] More importantly, the UN Charter enshrines the important role that regional institutions should play in resolving disputes, openly advocating for "the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies.[35] With tensions escalating in the South China and East China Seas, as well as on the Korean peninsula, the need for risk management mechanisms is clearer than ever.

While the development of formal dispute resolution or risk management mechanisms may be a lofty and long-term goal, establishing better risk management need not wait for the establishment of large-scale initiatives. Nations could begin by taking simple steps toward regional confidence-building measures, such as establishing task-specific working groups within the EAS, either with all participating nations or via voluntary subgroups of interested nations. These working groups could begin to develop greater transparency and agreed-upon norms around sensitive issues such as military doctrine and deployments, maritime security, military exercises, cyber warfare, and nuclear security. This initiative need not create permanent, standing bodies that contribute to the ongoing overflow of deliberative bodies, but it could facilitate a more informal means of tackling difficult issues for a discrete period of time. Over time, the establishment of more permanent bodies, such as an impartial dispute resolution mechanism or a crisis management center, would also strengthen the regional architecture.

Build Toward a Networked Approach

Various nations have explored proposals to bring greater coherence and unity to the existing regional security architecture. While some may lament the absence of a more formal, centralized model, the reality of the Asian security context is that it is too diverse and too riven by disputes to accommodate a centralized, one-size-fits-all approach. The security architecture will therefore need to be able to accommodate nations' differing comfort levels and abilities to engage in specific security concerns. Nations can begin to close the region's strategic divisions by pursuing complementarity over uniformity in the security architecture. Instead of seeking to establish a centralized, hierarchical system, countries should instead aim for a more flexible, networked approach.

> A network must also embrace flexibility over rigidity. As the Asian strategic landscape continues to evolve, institutions should work to adjust their rules, memberships, and machinery to keep pace.

What would a networked approach look like? It should have an effective central node to serve as a coordination mechanism, as well as to set norms, evolve rules, provide guidance, and ensure that sub-regional institutions do not pursue approaches inconsistent with broader ideals. A networked approach requires a premium on coordination and communication between organizations, given its inherently more fluid structure. A network must also embrace flexibility over rigidity. As the Asian strategic landscape continues to evolve, institutions should work to adjust their rules, memberships, and machinery to keep pace.

Of course, pursuing a more informal, networked architecture in lieu of a more rigidly, hierarchical approach will also require certain compromises. It will mean accepting that the overall system will retain a degree of disaggregation, with different states belonging to different subregional institutions

in addition to their common membership within ASEAN-centric institutions such as the EAS/ARF/ ADMM. Nations will have to accept that the Asia-Pacific architecture will retain both elements of exclusivity as well as redundancy. But there is no reason that Asia-only groupings and U.S. alliance structures cannot exist side-by-side, while allowing common security institutions such as the EAS to gradually grow in regional stature and importance. For example, with India's and Pakistan's accession into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), both the SCO and the ARF provide an opportunity for greater dialogue about how to promote stability in South and Central Asia. What is more important is that a leaders-level venue can provide general principles and guidance to ensure that individual organizations within the architecture are not proceeding in ways that are fundamentally corrosive to one another.

Embrace Further Strengthening of ASEAN

As noted earlier, ASEAN centrality is a defining feature of the emerging Asia-Pacific security architecture and should retain this place in the future. The ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation has now been signed by more than 30 nations and provides unifying principles, such as peaceful resolution of disputes and renunciation of the use of force, around which the region has cohered. Similarly, the 2005 Kuala Lumpur Declaration and the 2011 Declaration of the East Asia Summit on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations (the "Bali Principles") provide a valuable foundation to translate these principles into a vision for a strong regional institution, one that is "open, inclusive, transparent, and outward-looking" and that promotes strategic dialogue and practical cooperation.[36] Nonetheless, as the region has evolved, ASEAN has at times wrestled with how to maintain its strategic independence and how to exercise its centrality in the most effective way. As ASEAN engages in internal deliberations about its future vision and role in the region, external partners should encourage and help facilitate further strengthening of ASEAN's role. Rather than seeking to drive ASEAN decision-making, partners should encourage ASEAN's ongoing discussions and creative thinking as it wrestles with how to better harmonize deeply held principles of "sovereignty" and "noninterference" with the need for regional institutions that can provide effective security policy transparency, preventive diplomacy, and crisis management.

For their part, ASEAN nations should also embrace the need for institutions to evolve in tandem with changes in the regional environment. This includes looking for opportunities to strengthen its voice as a strong, independent actor. ASEAN should also seek out opportunities to imbue greater flexibility into the regional architecture, allowing institutions to move more nimbly to take up emerging issues. Among other things, flexibility will mean finding a way to provide non-ASEAN countries with a greater sense of ownership in defining an agenda for pan-regional security dialogue. Absent this reform, ASEAN risks marginalizing its own central role as non-ASEAN nations increasingly seek alternative venues through which to address their concerns.[37]

6. ENVISIONING PATHWAYS TO REFORM

HOW CAN ASIA-PACIFIC NATIONS BEST PURSUE efforts to build a stronger, more robust security architecture? What are the possible routes that could move the region toward a more effective approach? And could these be credibly pursued given current levels of regional mistrust? A number of approaches could be considered. The following section provides a possible roadmap for reform, looking at both near-term and long-term efforts to enhance the security architecture by transforming the East Asia Summit into a more effective central security policy node for the wider region. This is based on the simple logic that it is better to build on the hard-earned mandates of existing security institutions, rather than trying to forge a fresh consensus on establishing a new institution from the ground up.

> It is better to build on the hard-earned mandates of existing security institutions, rather than trying to forge a fresh consensus on establishing a new institution from the ground up.

This roadmap is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather to serve as an illustrative example for policymakers of what an enhanced security architecture might entail. The real question will be the appetite of regional leaders to pursue such reforms. Thus the examples that follow provide initiatives, moving from most achievable to most ambitious, that could be pursued sequentially over time.

FIRST-STAGE REFORMS: ENHANCE THE EAS AS AN AGENDA-SETTING FORUM WHILE BUILDING ITS OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

One of the least controversial means of reforming the regional architecture could be to focus on bolstering the effectiveness of the East Asia Summit, an effort that has already been initiated, albeit with varying degrees of success. EAS leaders have embraced the goal of strengthening the EAS, but countries continue to struggle with the appropriate long-term mandate and composition for the forum.[38] Additionally, disagreements over the most appropriate agenda for EAS discussions have left non-ASEAN states disillusioned at times with the lack of clear direction they have seen coming from the organization. Nonetheless, the simple truth remains that the EAS will become as important or unimportant as regional leaders choose to make it.

In the near-term, member states could retain the relatively informal nature of the EAS but also focus on some basic reforms that would better institutionalize the forum and enhance its ability to set a strategic agenda and be more responsive to emerging events in the wider region. Member states could also take initial steps to develop a more operational role for the EAS, enabling it to play a meaningful role in preventive diplomacy, establishing crisis management protocols, and identifying confidence-building mechanisms. Better institutionalizing the EAS could help bring greater coherence to the broader architecture, while increasing its operational capacity would provide a concrete means of reversing the lingering trust deficit in the region. Specific reforms could include the following:

Strengthen Support for the Chair

One non-ASEAN nation, on a rotational basis, would represent the "Plus-8" countries and work closely with the ASEAN chair/EAS chair to set the agenda for the annual leaders meeting. This would be

similar to the co-chair approach already used in other settings, such as the ADMM-Plus' Expert Working Groups. Through such practice, ASEAN and non-ASEAN countries could engage in a more deliberative dialogue in the months leading up to the summit about the priorities for each year's discussions and the top issues that leaders need to tackle. This step, though relatively simple, would give non-ASEAN states a larger voice in structuring agenda topics and could begin to restore faith in the EAS's ability to influence the regional security landscape.

Expand the Jakarta Process

Leverage growing cooperation and coordination between EAS member states through the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives. One way to further enhance this process would be to ensure that all non-ASEAN members of the EAS designate an individual as their permanent representative to ASEAN in Jakarta rather than simply dual-hatting their ambassadors, to ensure that the process of EAS agenda setting is given a greater degree of time and attention. The permanent representatives could then expand their work, in tandem with the ASEAN Secretariat and the EAS Unit, to formally negotiate the deliverables of each summit in advance and to implement EAS decisions. Similarly, the Jakarta Process could be used to establish an initial, informal crisis management mechanism. At the request of any member state, plus the ASEAN chair, ambassadors, and permanent representatives in Jakarta could be called together within 72 hours of a crisis to deliberate and issue a statement, including any joint recommendations.

Strengthen Professional Staffing for the EAS

For the EAS to take on a greater role in guiding and shaping multilateral affairs, it must begin to have more permanent institutional support for its work. One option that would retain the EAS' informality, while providing additional bureaucratic support for annual EAS chair, would be to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat. A more robust Secretariat could serve as a force multiplier for the fledgling EAS Unit and could provide additional assistance aligning EAS priorities with other regional institutions and ensuring appropriate follow-through on EAS initiatives. ASEAN nations have endorsed in principle the idea of strengthening the Secretariat, but they have been stymied due to funding challenges.[40] Going forward, ASEAN should consider revisiting its funding rules for the Secretariat and allowing additional voluntary contributions by higher-income ASEAN nations. At the same time, ASEAN nations could develop rules to ensure that additional contributions do not equate to additional voting power.

Beyond strengthening the ASEAN Secretariat, EAS members might also consider establishing a 'floating' version of an EAS Secretariat. This would entail each member state identifying an experienced diplomat who would advance to the country chairing ASEAN for a year-long term. Under this plan, these individuals would provide the ASEAN chair with a temporary Secretariat unit that could help ease the burden of planning and preparation for the ASEAN chair, while also creating additional staff to work with the EAS Unit and the permanent representatives back in Jakarta.

Develop EAS Temporary Working Groups

The EAS could begin building its operational capacity by establishing temporary working groups tasked with developing recommendations on discrete security policy topics (e.g., cyber security confidence-building measures) or emerging concerns (e.g., security responses to a growing pandemic). This

would allow the EAS to begin playing a tangible role in proposing solutions to emerging crises as well as recommending new rules of the road to reduce the risks of such crises in the future. Working groups could be proposed by member states, or generated by EAS ambassadors/sherpas for consideration by leaders. These groups could function much like existing ADMM-Plus and ARF working groups, with participants from each nation jointly led by an ASEAN and non-ASEAN chair. However, they would not serve as permanent EAS structures, but merely as temporary bodies that would develop recommendations over a discrete time period (perhaps one-year terms) and then be discharged at the end of their duties. The EAS Unit would serve as staff support for these groups, providing a convening function and drafting recommendations.

SECOND-STAGE REFORMS: FORMAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR THE EAS

A longer-term, more ambitious effort could consist of reforming the EAS into a more formal organization, which would aim to bring together broader tenets of security cooperation across the wider region. While this approach would require significant willpower to implement, as well as years of effort, it could also provide the backbone for a more substantive contribution to the region's security architecture with the teeth to play a meaningful role in crisis prevention and response. Under this scenario, EAS member-states could begin the process of transforming the ideas agreed upon in the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the 10th Anniversary of the East Asia Summit into more concrete tenets and rules of operation for the institution. The process of drafting and achieving agreement on such rules would likely take several years, followed by an additional period to formalize any such expanded institution. At this point, member states might also want to consider whether to expand the composition of the forum and whether it should seek an evolved title to denote its expanded responsibilities beyond mere 'summitry.' Leaders could also give consideration to the longer-term evolution of the organization into an East Asian Community (EAC) or a broader Asia-Pacific Community (APC).

> EAS member-states could begin the process of transforming the ideas agreed upon in the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the 10th Anniversary of the East Asia Summit into more concrete tenets and rules of operation for the institution.

These formal rules could also help reconcile the political, security, and economic mandate of the EAS with the preexisting mandate of APEC, which has played a critical role in pan-regional trade liberalization during the past 25 years. The long-term division of labor between the two institutions would, however, remain clear: APEC would focus on pan-regional economic integration, while the EAS would maintain its role as the premier forum for managing strategic political, security, and economic concerns.

A more formal EAS structure could include the following elements:

Greater Empowerment and Alignment of EAS Bodies

The key feature of the existing EAS is its leaders-led structure, which provides a convening platform for regional heads of state. However, due to the informal nature of the EAS, these discussions thus far have done little to generate lasting solutions to the region's challenges. In a more formal EAS, the annual

leaders' meeting would be set up to allow leaders the opportunity to engage in more structured discussions and decision-making on key agenda items, in addition to their informal deliberations.

These discussions would also be enhanced through more frequent deliberations of supporting bodies (i.e. biannual foreign, defense, and finance ministers' meetings, with monthly meetings of ambassadors) to help provide more significant decisions and deliverables. A key step in this process should be to develop a more robust role for the annual EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which currently serves as little more than a box-checking exercise leading up to the leaders' meeting. Over time, the EAS would benefit from developing the Foreign Ministers' Meeting into a more focused and deliberative discussion, one that engages in genuine debate and tees up agreements and deliverables for leaders. One of the practical limiting factors in developing a more substantive role for EAS ministers thus far has of course been the existing role of the ASEAN Regional Forum and the reluctance of countries to engage in two largely redundant, contemporaneous discussions between ministers. To address this issue, countries could work to develop unique roles for each institution. For example, the EAS Ministers Meeting could serve as the principal venue within which to drive decision-making for ministers, while the ARF Ministers Meeting could then focus on discussing these issues with the broader regional community, including extra-regional dialogue partners such as the European Union.

These changes would not only empower the EAS as a decision-making body, but it would also allow heads of state to begin more clearly setting priorities and guidance for supporting ASEAN-Plus bodies such as the EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the ADMM-Plus, the EAS Economic Ministers' Meeting, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF). This would provide a greater degree of coherence across the system by establishing a mechanism for leaders to task ministers and align work across the political, defense, and economic fields. Over time, as this mechanism becomes more regularized and empowered, nations might consider further streamlining the overall architecture by reducing redundancies between EAS institutions and other fora (i.e., limiting ARF ministerials to every two years to avoid the requirement for two foreign ministers' meetings per year).

Permanent Support Through an EAS Secretariat

A frequently cited complaint about the existing EAS is that its lack of a permanent Secretariat opens up the annual agenda to politicization. Additionally, leaders lack a clear mechanism to implement or enforce their proposals due to the absence of a permanent support staff. Moving forward, leaders could consider further institutionalizing EAS decision-making processes by establishing an EAS Secretariat closely linked with the ASEAN Secretariat. Member states could collectively appoint a secretary-general to lead this new body and provide civil servants to staff it. The Secretariat could gradually reach its full operational capacity in two to three years, giving member states time to allocate the necessary personnel and funding support, as well as to establish new protocols and procedures for this body. This approach would be comparable to the support structures employed by other regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Crisis Prevention and Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

Establishing a more formal, expanded, and robust role for the EAS should also entail carving out real operational capabilities for this institution, allowing Asia's regional architecture to finally break out of the exclusively convening model that characterizes existing regional institutions. For example, a wider EAS

could be imbued with a significant crisis prevention role through the establishment of a Risk Reduction Center. This impartial body would serve as an early warning mechanism and confidence-building organization modeled on the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Center and would serve multiple purposes. First, the center would serve as a real-time information hub, monitoring and sharing information with EAS member states on emerging crises in the region, including humanitarian and natural disasters, border skirmishes, and maritime crises. Based on this information, EAS member states could then call for an Extraordinary Ministers' Meeting to address emerging crises. Second, the center would be responsible for overseeing and implementing regional confidence-building measures (CBMs), serving as a repository for shared information on regional military activities and operations, tracking implementation of regional CBMs, and promoting personnel exchanges and training exercises to facilitate adherence to regional agreements.

In addition, EAS members could establish a new dispute resolution mechanism, which would consist of a panel of independent security experts who could provide mediation on political-security disagreements when requested by the parties to the dispute. This step would align with the dispute resolution mandate outlined in Article 22 of the ASEAN Charter, which requires member states to establish dispute settlement mechanisms in all fields of ASEAN cooperation. It would also support the UN Charter's suggestion that regional states work to establish their own dispute resolution mechanisms. Although some disputes might still be better handled through extra-regional venues, such as the International Court of Justice, that could be perceived as more neutral venues, establishing a regional mechanism would be an important step in providing regional solutions to regional problems.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IS LIKELY TO BECOME A CONTENTIOUS PROPOSAL that will require years of negotiation, irrespective of the approach that regional states might ultimately choose to pursue. In the meantime, countries can take immediate steps while they discuss the appropriate way ahead on broader regional institutional reform. All of the recommendations listed here could be undertaken immediately and would help smooth the path for institutional reform in the future.

Establish a High-level Committee on Strengthening the EAS

While fundamental regional institutional reform may require years of deliberation, EAS leaders could help energize this process by recommending the establishment of a high-level committee to strengthen the organization. While some efforts on this front are already underway through the EAS reform workshops, member states will need to allocate concerted effort and focus to the subject if they hope to make this challenging task a reality.[41] As the 2018 ASEAN chair, Singapore could initiate this process by convoking an EAS high-level committee consisting of government representatives from each member state. This committee could meet on an ongoing basis to consider new member state proposals to reform EAS rules and/or processes. These proposals would be primarily focused on recommendations to strengthen the EAS's role as the premier leaders-level venue on regional security, but they could also include additional proposals to bring more coherence to the current security architecture as a whole by building closer institutional ties between the EAS and other regional organizations.

Establish an Eminent Persons Group to Propose Regional Confidence-building Measures

Member states need not wait on formal institutional reform to begin addressing the strategic trust deficit in the region. Leaders could agree at the next EAS meeting to establish a nongovernmental Eminent Persons Group (EPG) that could propose concrete regional confidence-building and security-building initiatives for member states to pursue. This group could be modeled on the 2006 ASEAN Eminent Persons Group that established recommendations on the development of an ASEAN Charter.

New regional CBMs could build off of existing successes that have already gained traction in the region. For example, bilateral mechanisms such as the U.S.-China Air-to-Air Agreement could be broadened into a regional arrangement, or existing regional arrangements, such as the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES), could be expanded to incorporate new elements (such as applicability to civilian/coast guard vessels). Many of these ideas have already been explored, suggesting that the time is ripe for states to initiate a serious effort to develop real rules of the road in these areas. These measures would help minimize the likelihood of miscalculation or crisis, as well as serve as important building blocks for more routine habits of cooperation in the region.

Add Regional Architecture Building to Bilateral Leaders' Agendas

One of the challenges of strengthening Asia-Pacific institutions will be to overcome the clear preference for bilateralism that pervades the region. Put simply, Asia's regional security architecture will not thrive until nations believe that multilateral approaches can be both efficient and effective in achieving

their goals. To tackle this challenge, leaders must engage in frank discussions about the importance of multilateral cooperation, in the same way that discussions of economic development, trade, and security threats rise to the top. To build a stronger architecture, leaders must prioritize discussions of the most important issues and concerns they have with the existing system and the issues they believe best suited (or ill-suited) for multilateral settings. They will need to see regional institutions not simply as idealist talk-shops but as mechanisms that serve their practical, national interests.

It will be particularly important for these conversations to take place in the U.S.-China relationship. No matter the precise nature of reforms to the existing security architecture, support from the United States and China will be essential to the ultimate success of this effort. This is not to say that the United States and China can determine the path of Asia's regional architecture through a G2-style discussion, or that their support is even the most important determinant of success. But while American and Chinese buy-in will not guarantee success, their opposition or lack of support will most certainly undermine any reform effort. The U.S.-China dynamic is the central driver of the region's geostrategic tension, and the region cannot begin to find coherence and common cause unless the United States and China also find a shared agenda for cooperation.

> One of the challenges of strengthening Asia-Pacific institutions will be to overcome the clear preference for bilateralism that pervades the region.

The United States and China could agree to add a working group under the newly established Diplomatic and Security Dialogue that could take up the topic of regional security architecture reform. The task of this group could be to discuss shared principles and objectives for the Asia-Pacific security architecture on which both nations can agree, as well as potential agenda topics and initiatives that both would support adding to a leaders-level discussion.

Strengthen the ASEAN Charter

Any successful effort to enhance and strengthen the regional security architecture should begin with an effort to strengthen the institution that sits at its core: ASEAN. When the ASEAN Charter was signed in November 2007, member states explicitly agreed that the document could be reviewed and revised in five years' time. During the most recent ASEAN Summit in September 2016, member states agreed to embark on the first review of the Charter since its inception.

As member states deliberate over ASEAN's future, they might also consider revisiting the proposals of the 2006 ASEAN Eminent Persons Group (EPG), which was tasked with developing "bold and visionary" recommendations for the ASEAN Charter. There was not adequate support for some of the EPG's suggestions at the time they were considered, but more than a decade later, nations should again take a bold approach and revisit some of these ideas.

One idea that ASEAN should consider reviewing is the proposal to allow for more creative interpretations of "consensus" within the ASEAN Charter, allowing for its more flexible application.

Initiate Track-two Dialogues on Regional Principles

As noted earlier, one of the more significant hindrances to developing a more effective and coherent

security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region is the lack of agreement on the foundational principles to which nations should adhere. Efforts to establish a more meaningful crisis prevention or dispute resolution role will continue to founder as long as nations remain stymied by debates on the meaning of noninterference, state sovereignty, consensus, and adherence to the rule of law.

However, this subset of particularly thorny questions should not be allowed to detract from the effort to find agreed-upon principles that can serve as a strong foundation for a more operational security institution. On the surface, there is a fair degree of consensus on the need for a principles-based approach that adheres to the rule of law. There is even a common core of shared principles that can be found in documents ranging from the UN Charter to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the 2011 Bali Declaration. And yet this foundation has not constrained rising tensions in the region. What is lacking is a shared consensus on the meaning of these principles, how nations interpret them in practice, and how the security architecture should enforce their implementation.

FIGURE 4

PRINCIPLES ENSHRINED IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHARTERS									
	APEC	ASEAN	BALI PRINCIPLES	CICA	EAS	EUROPEAN UNION	REC	TAC	UNITED NATIONS
Respect of mutual sovereignty		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Respect for fundamental freedoms		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Settlement of differences and disputes by peaceful means			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Respect for international law		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Promotion of good relations, trust, and friendship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Promotion of Human Rights			✓	✓		✓			✓
Renunciation of the threat of use of force			✓	✓	✓			✓	
Enhancement of mutually beneficial cooperation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

EAS member states could begin to establish track-two dialogues, either bilaterally or in small group settings, that would bring together former officials from member states to build a common understanding about the practical implementation of Asia-Pacific principles, as enshrined in the 2011 Declaration of the East Asia Summit on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations (the "Bali Principles"). Participants would explore differing interpretations of the Bali Principles, include recommendations on how nations should implement these principles in national security affairs, how to balance competing ideas, and the responsibility of sovereign states and regional institutions to enforce adherence. The results of this dialogue could then be shared with EAS member states at the next EAS meeting.

8. CONCLUSION

THE SUBJECT OF REGIONAL INSTITUTION BUILDING IS NOT GLAMOROUS. The process of institution building is not easy. But this is not to say that it is not worth undertaking. The effort to strengthen Asia's regional security architecture, while arduous, is necessary, and the time to start is now.

Determining the ultimate design of effective regional security architecture may be a slow, iterative process, but nations cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good in this situation. We can no longer assume that the economic benefits and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region will continue to accrue indefinitely without more active management of the region's growing security dilemmas.

The proposals offered here will not, on their own, fundamentally shift the propensity toward instability and crisis that animates the Asia-Pacific region. But they can begin the process of shifting this equation. A commitment to undertake some of these initiatives would go a long way in developing stronger, more dynamic, and flexible regional institutions—to better match the requirements of today's more fluid environment. Moreover, taking proactive steps to establish practical, confidence-building mechanisms could be an important effort in beginning to move beyond the legacies of conflict and mistrust that undermine our ability to pursue shared interests.

> The effort to strengthen Asia's regional security architecture, while arduous, is necessary, and the time to start is now.

The inherent dynamism of the Asia-Pacific region has thus far been overwhelmingly positive. It has helped move hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. But we cannot stand by idly and allow growing security tensions to undermine these extraordinary economic achievements. Therefore, this region and its future institutional evolution must be actively managed. Strategic drift is not a credible option. Together, nations can begin to develop the necessary mechanisms that will prevent crises and create a more resilient security order that can preserve the regional peace and prosperity for future generations.

ENDNOTES

[1] There is a long-standing debate among international relations scholars about the relationship between economic interdependence and the risk of military conflict. Many scholars point to the outbreak of World War I as the most compelling argument against commercial liberal theory, which is the idea that economic interdependence can prevent conflict by raising the opportunity costs of going to war. For a discussion of this issue, see Barry Buzan, "Economic Structure and International Security: The Limits of the Liberal Case," *International Organization*, Vol. 38 (Autumn 1984), pp. 597–624; and Norrin M. Ripsman and Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, "Commercial Liberalism Under Fire: Evidence from 1914 and 1936," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Winter 1996–97), pp. 4–50.

[2] For a discussion of gray zone conflict in the 21st century, see U.S. Special Operation Command's white paper, "The Gray Zone," September 9, 2015. Available Online: https://publicintelligence.net/ussocom-gray-zones/.

[3] "For example, the establishment of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in 2010 created certain redundancies with the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which also included a security and defense track. Similarly, the establishment of an East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting created inherent redundancies with the annual ARF meeting. More broadly, multiple organizations are charged with tackling various aspects of regional political and security affairs, including the EAS, the ARF, the ADMM-Plus, the SCO, the IORA, ASEAN+3, and even APEC.

[4] Of note, Asia is the only region of the world that does not yet have an established dispute resolution mechanism within one of its major regional organizations. In Europe, the OSCE adopted a Convention on Conciliation and Arbitration in 1992, which facilitated the establishment of a court empowered to settle conflicts over territorial disputes, maritime delimitation issues, or environmental and economic disputes. In Africa, the African Union established both a Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise to manage dispute and conflict resolution. In the Middle East, the Gulf Cooperation Council's Charter facilitates the establishment of a Commission for the Settlement of Dispute, which can be convened as needed, while the Arab League's Charter includes three specific articles empowering its council to mediate and intervene as needed in regional disputes. In Latin America, the Organization of American States developed the Fund for Peace in 2000 to mediate border disputes between members. Some of these mechanisms have been more effectively employed than others in practice; nonetheless, the existence of such provisions in regions across the globe again highlights the absence of any such mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific region.

[5] See https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato for a brief description of the history of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).

[6] See "ASEAN Conception and Evolution" by Thanat Khoman for a discussion of alternate multilateral groupings during the Cold War era. Available Online: http://asean.org/?static_post=asean-conception-and-evolution-by-thanat-khoman.

[7] Ibid.

[8] The ASEAN website contains a brief history of the founding of the organization. See "About ASEAN." Available Online: http://asean.org/asean/about-asean/history/. See also "ASEAN Conception and Evolution" by Thanat Khoman.

[9] "The vision of an ASEAN Community, composed of three pillars (Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural) was codified through the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) in 2003. The idea was further developed, and accelerated, in the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community (2009–2015) in March 2009. Available Online: http://asean.org/?static_post=declaration-of-asean-concord-ii-bali-concord-ii; and http://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/ASEAN_RTK_2014/2_Roadmap_for_ASEAN_Community_20092015.pdf

[10] For a history of APEC's development, see "About APEC." Available Online: www.apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC/History.

[11] Mahathir originally proposed the establishment of an East Asian Economic Group as a means of bolstering Asian influence against the emergence of new trade blocs in North America and Europe. After opposition by the United States and other nations, such as Australia and Japan, the proposal was modified to establish an informal East Asian Economic Caucus. See "An ASEAN perspective on APEC" by Yoji Akashi for a discussion of the debates over APEC vs. the EAEG. Kellogg Institute Working Paper #240. August 1997. Available Online: https://kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/240.pdf.

[12] See Richard Smith, "Regional Security: Is Architecture All We Need?" *The Stanley Foundation*, December 2007, Available Online: www.stanleyfoundation.org/publications/pab/SmithPAB07.pdf.

[13] Rodolfo C. Severino describes how uncertainty and ambiguity in the post–Cold War security environment influenced the decision to establish the ASEAN Regional Forum as a venue for political and security dialogue in his book, *The ASEAN Regional Forum* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), pp.10–11.

[14] ASEAN Plus Three: Emerging East Asian Regionalism," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 42, No. 3(2002), pp.448–449.

[15] Kevin Rudd, "Shangri-La Dialogue: Keynote Address," Singapore, 2009. Available Online: www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri-la-dialogue/archive/shangri-la-dialogue-2009-99ea/opening-remarks-and-keynote-address-9dcf/kevin-rudd-de50; address by H.E. Dr. Yukio Hatoyama at the 64th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 24, 2009. Available Online: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/hatoyama/statement/200909/ehat_0924c_e.html.

[16] The aforementioned debate between Mahathir and his Asian counterparts over APEC vs. the EAEG is a well-known example of this disagreement, but it has continued to the present day, as seen in debates over the decision to expand the composition of the East Asia Summit in 2011, and Xi Jinping's 2014 speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), calling for a "new regional security cooperation architecture" in which "it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia, and uphold the security of Asia." Available Online: www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml. This approach contrasts with statements from U.S. officials, which have focused on the importance of a broader "Asia-Pacific" region stretching from the Indian subcontinent across the Pacific. For example, see former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's article, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, Oct. 11, 2011. Available Online: http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/.

[17] Even within ASEAN, there have been occasional acknowledgments that noninterference has hampered the organization and may need to be employed more flexibly. For example, Singapore's former foreign minister, George Yeo, noted in remarks to Parliament in 2007 that ASEAN's credibility would have been at stake had it not issued a public statement regarding violence in Myanmar. He observed, "ASEAN's policy of non-interference cannot be rigidly applied when internal developments in a member country affect the rest of us." Available Online: www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/overseasmission/washington/newsroom/press_statements/2007/200710/press_200710_02.html. More recently, a Malaysian lawmaker, Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar, went so far as to suggest Myanmar's ASEAN membership should be reviewed due to the Rohingya crisis, stating "the principle of non-interference is void when there is large-scale ethnic cleansing in an ASEAN member state." Available Online: www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/malaysia-calls-on-asean-to-review-myanmars-membership-over-rohingya-crisis-11302016160013.html.

[18] Editorial, "New ASEAN, old problems," *Japan Times*, March 9, 2009. Available Online: www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2009/03/05/editorials/new-asean-old-problems/#.WUIkXmjyvcs

[19] See Ralph A. Cossa, "Promoting Preventive Diplomacy in the Asia Pacific Region," in *Preventive Diplomacy: Charting a Course for the ASEAN Regional Forum*, Pacific Forum CSIS, July 2002. Available Online: https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/issuesinsights_v02n03.pdf.

[20] See the ASEAN website, "About the ASEAN Regional Forum," for more details on the ASEAN Regional Forum's founding principles and objectives. Available Online: http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/about.html

[21] The decision of ASEAN foreign ministers to convene an emergency meeting in 2011 in an effort to seek resolution to escalating border conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand stands in stark contrast to the traditionally noninterventionist approach of Asian regional organizations. However, this case also highlights that ASEAN's institutional engagement remains in large part dependent upon the willingness of the ASEAN chair to proactively engage.

[22] However, in an effort to reassert ASEAN solidarity, the foreign ministers did agree to a new "Six Point Principles on the South China Sea" coming out of the Phnom Penh meeting. Available Online: www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/aseans-six-point-principles-south-china-sea/p28915.

[23] APEC, for example, was created from complementary Japanese and Australian proposals. ASEAN itself was formed by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand. Malaysia also submitted the East Asia Economic Group proposal, which laid the conceptual groundwork for the future creation of the East Asia Summit.

[24] See Graham Allison's excellent discussion of this problem in "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" Available Online: www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/.

[25] Though proposed by Xi Jinping a few years earlier, the United States first expressed openness to further exploring this idea during the June 2013 Obama-Xi Sunnylands Summit. Since this point, however, the precise meaning of the term has been open to debate and a source of disagreement between the two countries.

[26] See Margie Harwell, "The Trust Deficit: The Price We Pay When Power Trumps Principle," March 28, 2017. Available Online: www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2017/03/28/the-trust-deficit-the-price-we-pay-when-power-trumps-principle/#35f7fbdb441e.

[27] Ibid.

[28] See SIPRI Factsheet on Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2013. Available Online: http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1403.pdf

[29] Ibid.

[30] Department of Defense, *The Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy: Achieving U.S. National Security Objectives in a Changing Environment*, July 27, 2015, pp. 8–12. Available Online: www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/NDAA%20A-P_Maritime_SecuritY_Strategy-08142015-1300-FINALFORMAT.PDF; www.cnn.com/2016/02/16/asia/china-missiles-south-china-sea/index.html

[31] Choi Sang-Hun, "Kim Jong-un Says North Korea Is Preparing to Test Long-Range Missile," *New York Times*, January 1, 2017. Available Online:www.nytimes.com/2017/01/01/world/asia/north-korea-intercontinental-ballistic-missile-test-kim-jong-un.html?mtrref=www.lawfareblog.com&_r=0.

[32] See Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, January 2016. Available Online: www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Military_and_Security_Developments_Involving_the_Democratic_Peoples_Republic_of_Korea_2015.PDF; and Ankit Panda, "North Korea Tests Its Pukkuksong-2 Solid Fuel Ballistic Missile Again: First Takeaways," *The Diplomat*, May 22, 2017. Available Online: http://thediplomat.com/2017/05/north-korea-tests-its-pukkuksong-2-solid-fuel-ballistic-missile-again-first-takeaways/.

[33] For a discussion of these events during the 2015 ADMM-Plus meeting, see the piece by Prashanth Parameswaran. Available Online: http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/china-blocked-asia-defense-meeting-pact-amid-south-china-sea-fears-us-official/.

[34] Article 22 of the ASEAN Charter explicitly calls for ASEAN to establish dispute settlement mechanisms in all fields of ASEAN cooperation. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia also provides for the establishment of a High Council to settle disputes between signatories, if requested by the parties to the dispute.

[35] United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, October 24, 1945, 1UNTS XVI. Available Online: www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-viii/index.html.

[36] See the 2005 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the East Asia Summit. Available Online: www.asean.org/?static_post=kuala-lumpur-declaration-on-the-east-asia-summit-kuala-lumpur-14-december-2005.

[37] We can see evidence of this growing trend, for example, in the recent Republic of Korean proposal for an exclusively Northeast Asian institutional mechanism. While such an initiative could still be consistent with the networked approach recommended, there would be a need to ensure synergy with overall region-wide efforts, or risk further splintering the system.

[38] The 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the East Asia Summit explicitly sets out certain lines of effort to strengthen the EAS going forward. Available Online: www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2015/November/10th-EAS-Outcome/KL%20Declaration%20on%2010th%20Anniversary%20of%20the%20EAS.pdf.

[39] Singapore Institute of International Affairs, *Rethinking the East Asia Summit: Purpose, Processes and Agenda*, Singapore, 2014. Available Online: www.siiaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2014-10-Policy-Brief-Rethinking-the-East-Asia-Summit-Purpose-Processes-and-Agenda.pdf.

[40] ASEAN's current funding construct for national contributions to the Secretariat sets equal contributions for all 10 states and pegs this contribution to the ability to pay of the ASEAN nation with the lowest GDP levels. While this funding principle may help generate a sense of fairness, in practice it has also made it more difficult for the ASEAN Secretariat to play a more substantive role in supporting ASEAN institutions.

[41] EAS member states have already convened a series of workshops, most recently hosted by Thailand in 2017, to explore options to enhance the East Asia Summit as a leaders-level mechanism.

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COVER IMAGE: Flags of Southeast Asian nations fly in Hanoi ahead of the 16th ASEAN Summit, 2010, Hoang Dinh Nam/AFP/Getty Images; Naval ships from multiple countries in formation for RIMPAC exercise operations in 2002, Phil Mislinski/Getty Images.