

## REGIONAL SECURITY

Notes for Statement by Senator Gareth Evans, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, to ASEAN PMC 6 + 7 Closed Session, Manila, 24 July 1992

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The Asia Pacific area has adjusted to the end of the Cold War much more effectively than many other parts of the world. Rather than leading to an explosion of ethnic violence, global developments following the collapse of the USSR have created the conditions for a number of positive developments in the region, including movement towards a settlement to the long and tragic Cambodian war, and for some modest reduction of tension on the Korean Peninsula. But the Asia Pacific countries still face difficult challenges, and I spelt out a long list of them in my contribution to the Open Session.

During the Cold War we addressed our security interests in rather traditional ways. Both superpowers maintained large military forces in the region, both relied on the notion of deterrence, and both saw themselves as the leaders of clearly defined blocs. The approach was defence through massive strength. It was also an era when the need to maintain discipline within blocs made it difficult for any country to break ranks and threaten its neighbours.

Now, in this new and fluid world, we have to approach security from a new and different perspective. We can no longer depend on deterrence or the discipline of blocs to prevent trouble breaking out. Nonetheless, the Asia Pacific region has managed fairly well. It has avoided much (if not all) of the ethnic and micro-nationalistic strife that has exploded elsewhere. ASEAN in particular has been signally successful in maintaining the security of its own region. This, of course, is especially pleasing to Australia. ASEAN covers Australia's area of primary defence interest, and we see the peace and prosperity of ASEAN as an important contribution to our own security.

In seeking to consolidate these regional achievements, we need to start to devise ways of ensuring that we seek security with others, rather than premising our security policies on the proposition that they are required against others. This is the central idea of the notion of 'common security' - which, as I said at a conference in Tokyo last year, "despite its intellectual origins a few years ago among European social democrats, is not a security policy for wimps". Nothing in the idea implies passivity or appeasement in the face of a security threat. It does not involve emasculating anybody's military forces, nor removing our capability to respond to direct threats to our nations, nor denying the legitimacy of a collective military response - as in the Gulf - to threats to the international security framework. It does involve the idea that lasting security lies not in an upwards spiral of

arms development, fuelled by mutual suspicion, but in a commitment to taking into account the legitimate security anxieties of others, to building step by step military confidence between nations, and to working in a number of ways to maximise the degree of interdependence between nations.

We have already made remarkable progress in establishing the kind of security dialogue which is the necessary starting point for developing a regional "common security" philosophy. This process really began at the ASEAN PMC in Jakarta in 1990, when there was a spontaneous and extremely lively discussion on regional security issues. This led ultimately to the ASEAN Summit in Singapore in January this year formally making regional security an agenda item both with ASEAN and at this PMC.

A rich tradition of "dual track" diplomacy has also emerged, with seminars on regional security in Manila, Bangkok and Bali, not to mention the Asia Pacific Roundtable held by the Malaysian ISIS and a number of other conferences. Further proposals for dialogue have been emerging. Malaysian Defence Minister Najib proposed a meeting of Asia Pacific security officials, which I understand will take place around the middle of next year. And there are the very practical efforts continuing to be made by Indonesia with its sponsoring of a very constructive series of workshops on the conflicting territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The American writer, Ambrose Bierce, once wrote - with his tongue only partly in his cheek - that "the most menacing political condition is a period of international amity". This observation underscores the need to find and consolidate a new approach to the reinforcement of regional security while the world - and the region - is free from the bitter enmities that accompanied the Cold War. A regional approach to security must operate at many levels: it must have an intellectual foundation that explains how it can work; it must also have a diplomatic component, including the "dual track" activities that I mentioned earlier; and it must also have a military dimension that involves the armed forces of the region so that they work together to provide for the security of the entire Asia Pacific region.

It will take time for this sort of multi-layered regional security approach to develop. I do not have any grand design to put forward. Indeed, I think that a new approach will only emerge naturally over time out of the various activities that we all engage in and on the basis of the existing linkages that we already enjoy. But as an Australian contribution to the immediate, current, debate I would like to mention three areas where, in a modest way, we could move towards this objective.

First, there is the possible development of strategic planning discussions. We in Australia believe that we have much in common with the countries of South East Asia in coming to grips with how to respond to the changing security environment of the 1990s. We are all

middle-sized countries that have a need to guard our national and regional security in a new and more fluid world. We are all a little uncertain as to how we should go about addressing various not very clearly defined or definable contingencies in an age when defence equipment is becoming ever more expensive both to acquire and operate. I would therefore like to suggest that Australia and the countries of the ASEAN region - and those beyond it if they are interested - should share perceptions and ideas on how to enhance our security in this context. Middle-level strategic analysts and defence planners could get together on a bilateral (or, if they preferred, multilateral) basis and exchange views. Australia already has close defence links with the ASEAN countries, but we would find it useful to expand these contacts to include a specific set of exchanges on this theme.

Secondly, there is an area of maritime cooperation which we could implement without much delay or difficulty. The region faces a number of so-called "police" issues, which cause us all worry. One that has been causing Australia particular concern is piracy. An increasing number of ships, including some that are Australia-bound or Australian-owned, have been subject to attack. As a step towards reducing the severity of this problem, Australia would be interested in exploring ways of improving maritime information exchanges and other measures that could help address this issue. Australia participates in a maritime surveillance program that guards the tuna resources in the South West Pacific against illegal fishing and which might be relevant to planning an information exchange. We would be happy to talk about this, and about other maritime cooperation arrangements that might evolve from the kind of specific measure I have suggested.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance we attach to the proposal already on the table for a universal United Nations-sponsored arms control register. ASEAN governments have supported this proposal within the UN, and the Malaysian Defence Minister specifically endorsed the idea of a regional arms register in April this year. Australia supports the UN Secretary-General's recent call for "all regional organisations to consider what further confidence-building measures might be applied in their areas and to inform the United Nations of the result". We would be happy to consult with regional countries on how the Secretary-General's proposal should be taken forward.

I do not know whether these thoughts will resonate with the thinking of the regional countries, but we would welcome the opportunity to work with others on further developing these ideas. ASEAN leaders have already charged officials with examining certain concepts which would enhance regional security. At the appropriate stage perhaps those deliberations could encompass the concepts I have suggested here. We would also of course welcome any ideas that others might have as we enter this new and much more fluid era.

While it is important that we do take one step at a time, and not be overly ambitious in our approach to regional cooperation, it is also a matter of recognising that we are now in a watershed period of world and regional history, and that future generations will have

much to thank us for if we grasp with both hands the opportunities that are now presenting themselves for developing new and more far-reaching forms of security cooperation than we have ever previously contemplated.

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