

**A COOPERATIVE SECURITY ORDER FOR
ASIA-PACIFIC: INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON NEW
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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Gradual end of the Cold war bipolar divide from mid-1980s had generated trends for alternative paradigms of security in international politics. Thus moving away from the collective security paradigm that had been tried since the early part of 20th century, newer concepts like common security, comprehensive security, and then cooperative security were to emerge as alternatives for seeking stability and peace in inter-state ties. Amongst these, the concept of cooperative security - which arrived only from early 1990s seems the one most suitable for Asia-Pacific. This is partly because cooperative security carries elements from both European conceptions of collective and common security as also Asian principles of comprehensive security and has evolved an inclusive character involving cooperation amongst both friends and adversaries.²

This approach seems to conform to Asian ethos of seeking security-in-peace rather than seeking peace-in-security. Also, having been successful in Europe in creating a framework of Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), this cooperative security model has since come to be one that portends to become increasingly most agreeable and effective concept in Asia-Pacific with ASEAN taking the lead. This is so because the model of cooperative security particularly suits Asian countries where (a) the region happens to be too large and too diverse and (b) security threat remains often intrastate rather than inter-state; making state sovereignty fulcrum of national security. In this case cooperative security approach seeks to ensure security without

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². Proposed first by Canadian Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, Joe Clark, at the September 1990 UN General Assembly session this has since been evolved amongst others by Canadians like Gareth Evans and Axworthy and in the broadest implies "common security of states to be promoted or obtained through their cooperative efforts" though it "indicates a greater diversity of security policies and predicaments" than the term common security while "both acknowledge the necessity to think comprehensively". See J.Soejati Djiwondono, "Cooperative Security in the Asia-Pacific-Pacific Region: An ASEAN Perspective", *The Indonesian Quarterly*, Vol. XXII No.3, p.206; also David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security", *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 7 No.1, (1994), p.7

undermining national security and, instead of trying to eliminate the means of war and causes of conflict it tries to have more modest objectives of building confidence and preventing and managing conflicts. At the same time, it moves beyond bilateral as also purely military approach to security.³

It is in this backdrop of increasing acceptability of cooperative security framework in various soft-security and foreign policy forums around Asia-Pacific that watershed events like 9/11 and the follow-up US war on international terrorism-especially US actions in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as new tenor of six-party talks on North Korean nuclear program-have triggered both positive as well as negative new trends that provide several new challenges as well as opportunities for the future of common security. Given this context, this paper makes an attempt to examine some of these emerging trends in order to highlight strengths and limitation of cooperative security as a model and to see how recent events impinge on the future of cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific in the coming years.

Trends of Cooperative Security in Asia-Pacific

Traditionally, Asia-Pacific has had no history of indigenous multilateral cooperative approach to security.⁴ Nevertheless, end of Cold War divide had witnessed national security strategies in Asia-Pacific moving towards cooperative security framework with ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) taking the lead.⁵ In this, the economic success of ASEAN has become the most effective pillars of cooperative multilateral strategy in Asia-Pacific. Especially, rise of China as economic powerhouse followed by its proactive role in the East Asian financial crisis of mid -1990s had generated new avenues for other local actors to play the lead in strengthening the indigenous character of Asian multilateralism. Since then, countries like China, India and Japan have been

³ Alan Dupont, 'Concepts of Security', in Jim Rolfe (ed.), *Unresolved Futures: Comprehensive Security in Asia-Pacific-Pacific*, (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies, 1995), pp.9-10; also Dipanker Banerjee, "Towards Comprehensive and Cooperative Security in South Asia-Pacific", *South Asia-Pacific Survey*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (1999), p.312

⁴ Graig A.Snyder, "Building Multilateral Security Cooperation in the South China Sea", *Asia-Pacific Perspective*, Vol.23 No.1 (Spring 1997), p. 19; also Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, "Rethinking East Asia-Pacific Security", *Survival*, Vol. XXXVI No.2 (Summer 1994), p.15.

⁵ These trends for cooperative multilateral security amongst ASEAN can be traced back to 1976 when ASEAN Heads of State and government meeting in Bali had resulted in signing of their Treaty of Amity and Cooperation which lays down common rules and norms for cooperation with ASEAN as also between ASEAN and other regional players.

expanding their engagement between themselves as also with ASEAN countries. These and other major players have not only been active members of ARF but China, India and Japan have already outlined their plans to establish free trade areas with ASEAN which carries seeds of potentially facilitating the emergence of larger Asia-Pacific identity.⁶

The United States for long had continued to be reluctant to move beyond its system of bilateral alliances and military bases as means for managing security in Asia-Pacific. Indeed, several US allies in Asia-Pacific were equally reluctant to try any new approaches and to have anyone other than US play the balancer in Asia-Pacific. Most of their reluctance flows from rise of China and this had been the major cause behind their skepticism about encouraging cooperative security trends in Asia-Pacific. However, given the ASEAN lead and success, the US itself was to gradually recognize importance of cooperative multilateralism in Asia-Pacific. However, acceptance of cooperative security beyond ASEAN and ARF has continued to be a slow process and while nations are willing to consider this framework to deal with peripheral issues they still prefer bilateral channels when it comes to debating core issues of their security and they still rely on militaries when it comes to enduring and intractable disputes which generally revolve around claims to territories and resources with nation-building still being work-in-progress.⁷ However, beginning from early 1990s, the acceptance levels of states to debate core issues of national security at least in the Track-II multilateralism has since evolved a stronger profile.⁸

The post 9/11 events have once again revived the debate on whether the cooperative security in the Asia-Pacific region will evolve as balance of power or concert of power approach in the coming years.⁹ And, though the larger trend has been clearly emerging in favor of later approach-and more recent tenor of six-party talks on North Korean nuclear program clearly established

⁶. Muthian Alagappa, *Asia-Pacific Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, (California : Stanford University Press, 1998), p.640

⁷. Desmond Ball, " A New Era in Confidence Building : The Second-track Process in the Asia-Pacific/ Pacific Region ", *Security Dialogue*, Vol.xxv No.2 (June 1994), p.173; also Paul M.Evans, " The Prospects for Multilateral Cooperation in the Asia-pacific/ Pacific Region ", *Journal of Strategic Studies* , Vol.xvii No.1 (March 1995), p.203

⁸. Graig A.Snyder, ' Building Multilateral Security Cooperation in the South China Sea ', *Asia pacific Perspective*, Vol.23 No.1 (Spring 1997), p.18

⁹. See Susan Shirk, " Asia-Pacific Regional Security: Balance of Power or Concert of Power? " in David.A.Lake and Patrick Morgan, (eds.), *Regional Orders and Security in a New World*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp.245-270

that argument—the case of US action in Iraq (especially its bypassing of the UN mandate) seems to revive the balance of power theologies.¹⁰ If one were to go by the basic understanding of cooperative security system where the threats are not premised to be existential but only those flowing from mutual distrust and misperceptions and the relational identity not necessarily negative, or is only minimally so, and it may even be positive then it is not merely US action in Iraq but the precarious nature of larger inter-state relations in Asia-Pacific projects creation of cooperative security order at best a slow and reluctant process in-the-making.

Concert of Powers Approach to North Korea

The six-party talks have been the first effective mechanism of cooperative security in Asia-Pacific which remains outside ARF which has been driven mainly by Southeast Asia's ASEAN. These talks have been partly so fashioned by the fact that US has been opposed to allowing North Korea into ARF and North Korea has been opposed to South Korean proposals for Northeast Asian security forum which it believes to be a US sponsored effort to contain Pyongyang. At the same time, given absence of bilateral diplomatic ties between North and South Korea bilateral channels have also been largely unavailable and ineffective making six-party talks most decisive and effective forum for ensuring security against nuclear threats in Asia-Pacific.

China has been the only outside power which is believed to have both access and influence with Pyongyang which has also contributed to the making of Concert of Powers approach a possibility. The shifting of locale from Europe to Asia as also expansion of four-party talks into six-party talks portends several new trends in-the-making. First and foremost, this has strengthened the framework of Seoul's proposed North East Asian Security Dialogue (NEASED) and, in spite of US reluctance and muted opposition, this seems to clearly strengthen the independent character of cooperative security framework in North East Asia with China emerging as new nucleus of this strategy. In this, more recent trends have been influenced by the new leadership in Beijing playing a far more assertive role during the last two rounds of six-party talks hosted in Beijing. Amongst others, though reluctantly, and at the urging of Japan and South Korean leadership, US has gradually begun to endorse China's

¹⁰. Gu Guoliang, "Redefine Cooperative Security, Not Preemption ", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26 No. 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 140-141

lead in this entire effort which only further strengthens this Asian character of these cooperative security framework in Asia-Pacific.¹¹

But China's multilateralism, of course, remains selective. While it seeks a proactive role in building confidence and resolving disputes in Central Asia and has evolved a more neutral approach to what was once described as South Asian nuclear competition, Beijing continues to keep low profile vis-a-vis other East Asian states where it promotes discussions and verbal confidence building yet wishes to tackle more serious disputes bilaterally. This reluctance clearly flows from China's disputes with Taiwan and around its claims to the South China Sea. The US actions in response to 9/11 in Afghanistan and Iraq and its increased military presence in Asia-Pacific seems also guided by same logic of supporting multilateralism on soft-issues but acting unilaterally or in bilateral context when it comes to dealing with more imminent threats to its interests and objectives. Policy of India has also been on similar lines.

Cooperative Security Policies of China

To first look at China's example, while during the Cold War the communist leadership in Beijing had primarily depended on its hard-power of military and aid-diplomacy for ensuring its security, China's opening up from late 1970s and especially the post-Cold War years have witnessed China introducing wide range of soft-power options including political, economic, and social measures for the purpose with its military means becoming less relevant and gradually becoming less active even in China's domestic politics.¹² Ideas like Constructivism and actors like non-governmental organizations have begun to exercise influence in China and Chinese scholars have begun to challenge the traditions and seek to reform incumbent systems and theories.¹³ US on the other hand perhaps have sought refuge in their return to realism and neo-realism which have gained ground in view of US global war on terrorism.

¹¹. Leon Sigal (Director, Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Council, Social Science Research Council), " The Six-Party Talks Can Succeed ", 3 February 2004 at [http://www.nautilus.org/DPRKBriefingBook/multilateral Talks/Sigal_SixPartyTalks.htm](http://www.nautilus.org/DPRKBriefingBook/multilateral%20Talks/Sigal_SixPartyTalks.htm)

¹². Zi Zhong Yun, " Guoji Guanxi Li lun yu Zhongguo: bijiao yu jiejian " Yantao hui fayan xuan deng (xia), (International Relations Theory and China: Comparison and derivations " Conference Selection of Speeches (Part II), *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi (World Economics and International Politics)*, 2003 Issue 5 (may 2003), p.35.

¹³. Yan Xue-tong, " Guoji Guanxi Lilun yu da duo guanxi yanjiu " (International Relations Theory and Study of Big Power Relations), *Shijie Jinji yu Zhenzhi (World Economics and International Politics)*, 2003 Issue 5 (May 2003), p.36

In terms of its domestic trends, beginning from early 1980s China's economic integration with the outside world has resulted in China's increasing political confidence in multilateral forums and regimes in promoting China's national security. This has replaced China's belief in confrontation with dialogue, compromise and cooperation as dominant traits of China's foreign policy debates and decision-making. As a result, China's changing role within ARF- from passive to active- indicates that Beijing has begun to embrace the notion of cooperative security. Similarly, China's contribution to the political settlement of the Cambodian issue (including withholding support from its long term ideological ally, the Khmer Rouge) and its help in brokering the US-North Korean negotiations on Pyongyang's nuclear program suggests a paradigm shift in China's policy.¹⁴

Cooperative Security Strategies of India

Chinese response to the evolution of Concert of Powers type cooperative security paradigm in North East Asia has been critical in influencing the thinking in New Delhi. However, other than this China factor, New Delhi has also had several other equally important factors that determine its response to the emerging new trends in favor of cooperative multilateralism in Asia-Pacific region. First and foremost for India, it was the collapse of former Soviet Union on the one hand and India's opening up and reforms on the other that had compelled a serious rethinking on India's security and foreign policy priorities leading to India's greater integration with various local, regional and global networks of security policy making. In this context, given the fact that India had for long been a victim of terrorism and that this terrorism had become problematic for its growing cross-border linkages, the 9/11 events were to provide a further push to India's commitment to cooperative security.

As could be expected, India was to make this policy shift in a Joint Statement along with the successor state of its former ally. It was as part of India-Russia Joint Moscow Declaration of November 2001 and later, during Prime Minister Vajpayee's second visit to Moscow-as part of his address to the

¹⁴. See for example, " DPRK and China Discuss Nuclear Issue ", *Korean News Agency of the DPRK* (now onwards KCNA), 30 October 2003; Benjamin Kang Lim, " China Urges US to be more flexible on N.Korea", *Reuters*, 15 December 2003; " DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman on Six-way Talks ", *KCNA*, 28 December 2003; Glenn Kessler, " U.S.Disavows Trip to North Korea: Experts' Possible Visit to Nuclear Facility Is Termed Unofficial ", *Washington Post*, 3 January 2004; David E. Sanger, " Visitors See North Korean Nuclear Capacity ", *New York Times*, 11 January 2004

Russian Academy of Sciences that-India had formally called for the creation of “ a new cooperative security order “ and asserted India’s opposition “ to unilateralism in international matters “ which clearly implied the opposition to US unilateralism. ¹⁵ But at the same time India had also been building close relations with the US and has since described its growing defense cooperation with US as part of efforts at “enhancing cooperative security”. ¹⁶ However, far clearer has been India’s formulations in context of its Look East Policy.

Starting from ASEAN- Indian summit in Cambodia during November 2002, India has launched several regional and sub-regional initiatives that remain premised on its fundamental belief in multilateralism and cooperative strategy. These new initiatives have already begun to show their positive spillover effects in India’s policies in its immediate periphery especially in India’s dealing with Pakistan and its initiatives on Kashmir. For example, addressing a gathering at Singapore’s Institute of South East Asia-Pacific Studies (ISEAS) during his April 2002 visit to this region, Prime Minister Vajpayee had acknowledged India’s interest and confidence about cooperative security being an ideal approach to dealing with non-military threats to security. ¹⁷

In practice, India’s active participation in ARF and India’s expanding and regular military exercises with all major players in the Asia-Pacific also indicates increasing comfort with cooperative and multilateral approach to security. This has also witnessed India focusing on building confidence with both its friends and its adversaries. India’s gradual opening up during the 1990s has also added a strong economic component to its expanding interactions with Asia-Pacific. Indeed, India’s Look East Policy (which now looks far beyond ASEAN and treats its immediate periphery of Myanmar and Indo-China as India’s bridge to the Asia-Pacific) has expended their mutual interdependence making India develop stakes in the Asia-Pacific. Nevertheless, India continues to be selective and feels reluctant in supporting collective security strategies when it comes to more intractable and enduring security threats like Kashmir question where the change in India’s attitude has been imperceptible and piecemeal at best.

¹⁵. P.S.Suryanarana, “Joint Statement Calls for Cooperative Security Order “, *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 7 November 2001; also Amit Baruah, “Help evolve multipolar world: PM”, *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 13 November 2003

¹⁶. “Joint Statement on US-India Defense Policy Group”, US Department of State, Press Statement 8 August 2003 at [http:// www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/pr/23209/htm](http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/pr/23209/htm)

¹⁷. “ PM wants security framework for Asia-pacific: Indian Offers judge to try Khmer leaders “, *The Tribune* (Chandigarh, India), 10th April 2002

Cooperative Security Order will grow only piecemeal?

To be successful and effective in Asia-Pacific region, the principles, purposes and procedures of cooperative security will have to evolve a distinct Asian identity of their own. And, even in ideal circumstances of all important players in Asia-Pacific being in its favor is going to take time and given lack of such traditions and complicating problems since 9/11 this is not going to be an easy task. To begin with one can outline some of the more basic distinct elements of Asia-Pacific region which must kept in mind in creating a cooperative security framework for this region.

Firstly, given their strong emphasis on national sovereignty, Asian conception of cooperative security sees no role for either collective security or regional security when it comes to their domestic conflicts.

Secondly, unlike examples of Europe, it is difficult to find military parity in Asia-Pacific context of inter-state rivalries and their inequalities become particularly stark when the economic component is introduced.¹⁸

Thirdly, Asia-Pacific states as yet also do not envisage collective or regional security resolving their international conflicts especially if methodology involves collective use of force.

Fourthly, cooperative approach also remains ineffective when it comes to intractable and long-standing disputes where bilateral approach is solicited.

And *finally*, the Asia-Pacific states emphasis political agreements on long range goals, diversity and equality, consensus-building and face-saving informal networking and the fostering of interpersonal relations, unilateral and voluntary disclosures and concessions, incrementalism, negotiations, and focus on non-controversial areas, at least to begin with.

In the end, therefore, multilateral approach to cooperative security remains confined to conflict prevention and confidence building and any binding and any verifiable regimes about conduct of militaries yet remains outside the pale of Asia-Pacific cooperative security strategies and any progress in creating a cooperative security order in Asia-Pacific is, therefore, bound to be piecemeal. Also, it will have to account for local features and needs of security which means that debates on cooperative security in Asia-Pacific must remain flexible

¹⁸. This inequalities are further complicated by external linkages and interventions as also by the fact that most Asia-pacific states remain economically vulnerable to big players which often becomes the critical determining factor of inter-state equations that hinders any local initiative towards cooperative security solutions. See Arjun Makhijani, "Common Security is far off", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 46 No. 4, and (May 1990).

and open ended. In this manner, the evolving Asia-Pacific approach will have to evolve its own independent identity that maybe different from that of the West which places a high premium on concrete goals, immediate benefits, and binding agreements with provisions for verification and compliance and arbitration of disputes.¹⁹

Likely Future Trends

The recent activism of US in dealing with international terrorism has generated several forces which, if properly spruced up, will in the long-run provide critical support to the evolution of multilateral cooperative security order in Asia-Pacific. For example, there is a clear realization from this experience that any response to the menace of international terrorism must involve international consensus. This clearly marks a paradigm shift of the super power military capability finally accepting itself to be ineffective unless supported by a cooperative multilateral strategy for building security through building confidence. To quote from US National Security Strategy for 2002, “The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression.”²⁰

In practice, response to these new threats to security will have to be effected through multilateral institutions rather than nation-states alone howsoever powerful may be the state is the state in question. Also, given the nature of terrorism being so fluid, diverse and widespread, any response will have to be so fashioned as to coordinate counter-measures strategies globally, but to achieve operational effectiveness of these strategies in tactics rooted locally with local State and non-state actors playing the lead. Even in case of state-sponsored terrorism or in case of rogue state, any coercion may not desiccate terrorism and may result in terrorist response even by countermeasures like targeted state proliferating dangerous technologies to terrorist or other rogue states. External coercion may also be used by local terrorist organization to force such states to relent its commitments to non-proliferation and non-aggression. Also, if few states project themselves as privileged to carry out campaign against international terrorism this could generate reluctance and resistance even amongst its friends and allies. In such a scenario, cooperative

¹⁹. Muthian Alagappa, *Asia-Pacific Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.643

²⁰. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p.15.

security will have strengths of (a) being grounded in international consensus, norms and institutions and (b) evolve its pragmatic response in appropriate manner to maximize outcomes of their efforts.

Conclusion

To conclude, therefore, Asia seems moving inevitably towards creating a Concern of Powers type cooperative security framework and given the nature of states and security threats in the Asia-Pacific cooperative security order promises to be the most appropriate strategy for ensuring security for such a diverse set of states with such diverse security threats and vulnerabilities. In the evolution of such order possible, India amongst others sees an important role for itself and has been working in direction of building confidence and dialogue in various security and foreign policy forums with several new initiatives having been taken during the recent past.

This paradigm shift in India's security thinking has a direct correlation with India's rising self-confidence as also by external factors like rising US presence in Asia-Pacific region. Amongst others, India is aware of other player's role and of the fact that rising China, being at the centre of Asia-Pacific, will be playing a critical role in the evolution of cooperation security framework in this region. And amongst critical recent trends China's leading role in six-party talks on North Korean nuclear program portends to play a critical experiment in the evolution of cooperation security framework for Asia-Pacific region.