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## THE BELT AND ROAD PLEDGE OF THE DRAGON

BALKAN  
STABILITOCRACIES

A WORLD IN  
(DIS-)ORDER?



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# PRESERVING ASIA'S LONG PEACE

Kevin Rudd

**G**IVEN THE ongoing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, East Asian maritime disputes, and questions over the future trajectory of U.S.-China relations, the Asia-Pacific region faces an important inflection point.

On the 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.

## ORIGINS

**I**ndeed, we seem to have become collectively desensitized to the "long peace" from which the region

has benefited over the two-thirds of a century that has unfolded since the Korean Armistice of 1953. The Vietnam War remained a sub-regional conflict, albeit devastating for the participants. Just as the 1962 Sino-Indian border war remained an exclusively bilateral affair, so did the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. But beginning with Northeast Asia, then post-1975 Southeast Asia, and more recently the economic advance of India, by-and-large Asia has quietly become not just a region of growing prosperity, but the long-term guarantor of global economic growth.

To a large extent, the "Asian economic miracle" has induced a significant degree of pan-regional, geopolitical complacency. We have become the unwitting victims of the neoliberal orthodoxy that economics ultimately solves both politics and geopolitics—that market liberalization will ultimately produce Western

*The Honorable Kevin Rudd is Australia's 26th Prime Minister and President of the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York. The Asia Society Policy Institute's Report, Preserving the Long Peace in Asia, is available for download at <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute>. You may follow him on Twitter @MrKRudd.*



Photo: CIRSD

*Kevin Rudd speaking at a 2016 Horizons Discussion in Belgrade*

political democracy at home and peace abroad, because democracies never attack each other. China, of course, constitutes the singular exception to this view.

**O**ne of the problems in all of this has been the failure of the wider region to generate a pan-regional politico-security institution capable of entrenching regional norms, practices, and cultures for the management of underpinning geopolitical tensions.

Of course, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the standout counter-example. It is a testament to its founding vision 50 years

ago that for states which originally had hostile relationships with each other (the Singaporean and Malaysian confrontation against Indonesia; and, later, the original non-communist "South East Asian Five" versus Communist Indochina), there has been no intra-regional conflict of any magnitude for the last 40 years. When one threatened between Thailand and Cambodia in 2008, it was ASEAN institutional diplomacy that prevailed and resolved the problem. But, despite ASEAN's success, for half a century we have failed to replicate a parallel politico-security institution for the whole of East Asia, let alone wider Asia itself.

APEC (the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum) has evolved into a successful regional economic institution,

although India is not a member. The ASEAN Regional Forum, which does have a security policy mandate for the wider region, does not meet at the level of heads of government, and has never really worked. ASEAN+3 (China, South Korea, and Japan) evolved into ASEAN+6 (including India, Australia, and New Zealand), which in turn evolved into the East Asia Summit (EAS—now including both the United States and Russia).

Over the past two years, an independent policy commis-

sion of the Asia Society Policy Institute (of which I am President) has been considering how to strengthen the existing East Asia Summit, created a decade ago, to enhance its effectiveness as a politico-security institution for the wider region. The commission was made up of former foreign ministers Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, Yoriko Kawaguchi of Japan, Kim Sung-Hwan of South Korea, and Igor Ivanov of Russia; former national security advisors Shivshankar Menon of India and Tom Donilon of the United

States; Wang Jisi, a member of the foreign policy advisory group of the Chinese foreign ministry; and myself.

This commission developed a number of core findings, which I will set out in this article. But before doing so, it is necessary to understand more about the context we currently face in the Asia-Pacific region.

In evaluating the current Asian regional order, five attributes in particular stand out: the persistence of realpolitik concerns; the regional effects of ongoing tensions in U.S.-China relations; an uncoordinated and splintered set of regional institutional arrangements; increased

strain on ASEAN centrality; and questions over the future of leading powers in the region. I discuss each in turn.

#### REALPOLITIK IS ALIVE AND WELL

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

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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.

Although Asian regional integration has increased over the last couple of decades, the region's security order remains primarily state-based, and fractured by longstanding 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. 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 like 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.

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. All of these require a coordinated regional response.

#### TENSIONS AND SCHISMS

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.

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While many Asia-Pacific 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 American security umbrella and their reliance on China's growing economic influence.

In many cases, the ripple effects of this growing schism have been profound. 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 decisionmaking 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 deci-

sions. The swift downturn in China-Republic of Korea (ROK) economic relations in response to the ROK government's decision to host an American missile defense system exemplifies this trend. The Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) case also puts a spotlight on a 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.

#### 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

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with fewer institutional and 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 the agreed-upon norms and rules of the road, allowing countries to simply pursue counter-forums and norms that are 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.

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#### THE ASEAN WAY

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.

More than five decades later, while the dominant feature of the regional security order may still be the American 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 decisionmaking that avoids the most pressing issues of the day. For ASEAN, this sense of paralysis partially reflects internal divi-



sions 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.

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, in order to better navigate the choppy geostrategic waters of 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 a 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.

#### GREAT POWER BUY-IN

The relationship between the Asia-Pacific region's leading powers and its various institutions has often

been complicated due to complex inter-relationships 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. 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 times past, great power leadership has served as the key ingredient for providing institutions with the needed gravitas, momentum, and direction to move forward. For example, the Obama Administration's decisions to elevate American engagement with ASEAN and commit to the President'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.

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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 that 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 multilateral venues that avoid strategic gridlock, which 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.

#### MANAGING CHANGE

Asia's security environment has become increasingly complex and subject to growing friction between leading powers, as described above. Absent strong principles and institutions

to bind the region together, nations will be tempted to seek unilateral advantages where they can, 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? Here I will discuss four such challenges in turn.

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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, as well as 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 which commit countries 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

themselves 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

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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 immovable status quo.

**STRATEGIC COMPETITION**

The rapidly shifting strategic landscape has created another threat to regional stability—growing competition in the region. As China continues to rise, 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 Shinzō 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 its western neighbors and the United States have increased Moscow's 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. 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 leader-level engagement, and promising trends in military-to-military relations, there ap-

*In spite of careful management, historic leader-level engagement, and promising trends in military-to-military relations, there appears to be a widening geopolitical gulf between the United States and China.*

pears to be a widening geopolitical gulf between the United States and China that is manifesting itself in multiple areas, ranging from issues such as those revolving around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to maritime disputes and international trade.

Both China and the United States have argued strenuously that historical patterns can be avoided, going so far as to discuss a “new model of great power relations,” 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.

**FRAGILITY**

Growing instability and competition are exacerbated by a third 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 40 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 vari-

ous 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 decisionmaking 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.”

Lack of trust in this sense serves as a sort of tax on interstate relations, raising the price of collective action. 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

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change and the implications of 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 arms imports in Asia increased from 2004 to

2013 by a remarkable 34 percent. During the latter part of this period, Asian imports accounted for nearly half (47 percent) of arms imports worldwide. 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 eco-

nomics 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, in 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. On the Korean peninsula, North Korea appears to be significantly advancing both the pace and sophisti-

cation of its nuclear and missile programs. This apparent leap forward in the North’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.

### FIVE FUNCTIONS

To address the challenges listed above, there are five functions that regional institutions must be able to perform, and five principles to achieve these goals.

*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.*

First, regional institutions should play a binding role, drawing the region’s 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 and 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 provide flexibility in setting an appropriate, forward-looking agenda, in order to withstand future pressures arising from shifting regional dynamics and evolving security policy priorities.

## FIVE PRINCIPLES

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

First, 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 as a leader-level forum.

Second, promote strategic dialogue alongside tactical cooperation. There is wisdom in the desire to seek cooperation on transnational concerns like humanitarian disasters, which lend themselves more easily to 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.

*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.*

Third, get serious about risk management and dispute resolution. One of the greatest threats in a rapidly militarizing region like 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' once they occur. The development of more formal risk management initiatives may take time, but in the interim nations could continue to seek out regional confidence-building measures.

Fourth, build toward a networked approach. Asia's complex security environment calls for a more fluid and flexible regional security architecture that more resembles a network 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, in order to keep pace.

Fifth, 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 oppor-

tunities 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, strengthening the East Asia Summit would be one of the most important and practical steps countries could take. 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 preventative diplomacy, establishing crisis management protocols, and identifying confidence-building mechanisms.

Specific reforms could include the following four measures. First, 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.

Second, *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.

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Third, *strengthen professional staffing for the EAS*. One option would be to establish 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.

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

Fourth, *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 timeframe to formalize any such expanded institution. The following recommendations are offered as elements of a formal EAS structure:

First, *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 decisionmaking and deliverables. In particular, member states should consider develop-

ing a more robust and deliberative role for the EAS Foreign Ministers’ Meeting.

Second, *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.

And third, *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.

#### IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

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

First, *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 leader-level venue on regional security.

Second, *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 non-governmental EPG that could propose concrete regional confidence-building measures, building on the success of existing bilateral arrangements.

Third, *add regional architecture building to leaders’ bilateral agendas*. In order to build 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 Washington and Beijing can reach a shared agenda for cooperation, institutional reform efforts will be undermined.

Fourth, *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.”

Fifth, and finally, *initiate Track II dialogues on regional principles*. Member states would benefit from a more robust discussion about the ways in which the regional principles that 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.

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 regional peace and prosperity for future generations. ●