

Overall Regional Security Picture

- The interplay of relations amongst the major powers of the region has been generally stable and is guided by many shared interests. This in part has helped contribute to an overall security situation in the Asia-Pacific region that is generally stable and peaceful.
- The security architecture of the region is characterized by the rise of China and India with the parallel resurgence of Japan in the economic realm. The US still has a strong role to play in the region despite the latest global financial and economic crisis. Russia continues to play a role but its direct impact on the Asia-Pacific region has been not as visible as before.
- At present, there are no region-wide arrangements at present that allow for all these major powers to interact with one another except for the ASEAN Regional Forum which provides a platform for dialogue on political and security issues and promoting cooperation to address issues of common concern.
 - There are however security fora or arrangements that cover various sub-regions in the Asia-Pacific. These include the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) as well as bilateral and multilateral defense arrangements among countries in the region.
 - In the Korean Peninsula, the Six-Party Talks is laying the foundation for the development of a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism. There are prospects for progress in the Six-Party Talks that may ultimately lead to the development of such a mechanism.
 - There are also new ideas such as “an Asia-Pacific Community” recently raised by Australia which aspires to create a new regional institution that would address the full spectrum of dialogue, cooperation and action on economic, political and security challenges to the region.
 - Indeed, all these security arrangements or mechanisms serve to enhance regional peace and stability. The key is finding the most effective modality to ensure complementarity and, if possible, synergies, between these different security arrangements or mechanisms.
- In addition to the peaceful interplay of relations between the major powers, there are several developments that have contributed to general peace and security in Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific region.
- First is the engagement of countries in the region in regional integration and community-building process as part of a broader strategy to achieve sustainable growth and development.

- On 15 December 2008, the ASEAN Charter has entered into force, making ASEAN more rules-based, driven by institutions, and more importantly, places people at the heart of the organization. The ASEAN Charter lays the foundation for the shaping and sharing of norms that will guide peaceful and mutually beneficial intra-regional relations. It provides the framework for institution-driven regional policy rather than one based purely on national interests.
- From a loose association of countries in the past, ASEAN is now a legal entity that aspires to become an ASEAN Community in the near future.
- At the upcoming ASEAN Summit and Related Summits next year under Thai Chairmanship, we expect to move ASEAN further forward in becoming an ASEAN Community through enhanced integration and closer cooperation in all three pillars of the Community, namely political-security, economic and socio-cultural.
- We expect to see the operationalization of the Community Councils and the Committee of Permanent Representatives, as well as the establishment of an ASEAN human rights body and dispute settlement mechanisms, which will make ASEAN more institution-driven.
- Second is the continuous development of regional and sub-regional fora and arrangements from IMT-GT, ACMECS and GMS to ASEAN, East Asia Summit, APEC and the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), to name a few.
 - These sub-regional arrangements, working in cooperation with ASEAN, will create cobwebs of cooperation based on mutual interests that will help promote peace and stability in Southeast Asia, and help drive economic growth.
 - They combine to create an evolving regional architecture that is open and outward looking, and able to address the multi-dimensional security challenges arising from globalization.
- Contemporary challenges and threats tend to be transnational and transboundary in nature. Some have called these threats non-traditional security threats. This may include terrorism, transnational crime, natural disasters and pandemics. Cyclone Nargis and the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India remind us of the prevailing challenges that require our collective efforts to tackle.
- An important threat to peace and stability in the next year may come from the impact of the financial on the real sectors of the economies in the region. If there is indeed global recession according to some scenarios, increased poverty and marginalization may result in social problems within States, which may spillover into tensions between States.

- It is therefore important to address all these challenges that have a potential impact on human security. This is why promoting a people-centred ASEAN and meeting the needs of the peoples of ASEAN are important priorities for ASEAN, especially under the Thai Chairmanship.

Priorities of Thailand during its Chairmanship of ASEAN

- Being the **birthplace** of ASEAN, Thailand is pleased to be the ASEAN's Chairman during the important transitional period after the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter.
- During our Chairmanship, Thailand will give priority to fulfilling our commitments under the ASEAN Charter for the benefit of ASEAN people which can be summarized by the '3 Rs':
 - **'realising the ASEAN Charter'** – to ensure that all the details necessary for the establishment and implementation of new ASEAN organs envisaged in the ASEAN Charter will be in place;
 - **'revitalising a people-centred ASEAN community'** - to make sure that our people are fully engaged in our community-building process and to raise people awareness through various activities such as, hosting an ASEAN Civil Society Conference in parallel with the 14th ASEAN Summit and establishing the ASEAN Association of Thailand; and
 - **'reinforcing human security in ASEAN community'** – to make sure that ASEAN is able to address and alleviate issues affecting people's well-being in a concrete manner. This includes the issues of food security, energy security, disaster management and financial stability.
- The theme 'ASEAN Charter for ASEAN Peoples' was therefore chosen for the 14th ASEAN Summit to be held in Thailand.
- As for the rescheduling of the 14th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Foreign Ministers at their Special meeting in Jakarta on 15 December 2008, gave their full support for Thailand to convene the Summit at dates to be agreed upon by ASEAN, hopefully before the end of February 2009. H.E. the Prime Minister of Thailand, in his first press conference on 17 December 2008, reassured Thailand's readiness to host the 14th ASEAN Summit and Related Summit from late January onwards. We are consulting our ASEAN and EAS Partners on the dates for the Summit which Thailand is proud to organize as the first Summit under the ASEAN Charter.

ASEAN Regional Forum

- The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) remains the only forum for political and security dialogue which brings together key countries that have an impact on the Asia-Pacific region.
- Over the past 14 years, the ARF has achieved progress in terms of promoting greater trust and confidence within the region. There has been no outbreak of major armed conflict in the Asia-Pacific region in the past fifteen years.
- But in view of ongoing threats in the region, both non-traditional and traditional, questions are being raised as to what concrete measures can the ARF take to address more effectively these threats. Many of these threats are transboundary in nature, from natural disasters to transnational crime and terrorism. Continuing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, despite the efforts undertaken under the Six-Party talks mechanism, make this issue an ongoing agenda in the discussions within the ARF.
- In face of these challenges, the ARF needs to determine how it can be more effective and become more relevant in the emerging regional security architecture.
- That is why an important priority of Thailand during our ARF Chairmanship is to develop an ARF Vision Statement which will guide the future evolution of the ARF into the year 2020. In so doing, the ultimate objective is to contribute to the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The means to this goal is to, amongst others, foster a habit of cooperation and consultation within the region, through the ARF, to address issues of common concern before they affect regional peace and stability.
- Our approach is that the ARF Vision Statement needs to be forward-looking but pragmatic, taking into account the aspirations and concerns of all ARF participants. As such, all ARF participants should take part in the development of the ARF Vision Statement as they are all stakeholders.
- It is our goal to have this Vision Statement adopted at the 16th ARF in the middle of 2009 in Thailand.

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