

ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus: A Japanese Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ADMM Plus, focusing on ASEAN's purpose to launch a meeting of defense ministers in terms of community building, the evolution of the ADMM with the ensuing establishment of its enlarged version – the ADMM Plus, and the significance of the ADMM Plus from a comparative perspective. A brief analysis of the approach taken by Japan toward this multilateral framework, as a long-time dialogue partner of ASEAN, is added to the conclusion. Generally, the ADMM and the ADMM Plus processes have so far developed steadily, materializing in an incremental way the original visions to promote institutionalization and practical cooperation. It is highly likely that the ADMM Plus will regularize the annual joint exercises in nontraditional security based on the system of rotational Expert Working Groups (EWGs). Activities in the ADMM (Plus) imply ASEAN's strong will to differentiate the framework from the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which countries concerned have found to be ineffective for promoting conflict prevention and dealing with confrontational, sensitive issues of traditional security, like the South China Sea. Today, the participants in the ADMM Plus including Japan seem to fully recognize the utility of the platform. This is not only in terms of having a regular meeting venue of relevant defense ministers, but also fostering deeper cooperation of defense and security by conducting meetings at various levels of defense officials and joint exercises in nontraditional security areas. However, the participants in the multilateral framework are going to see some future challenges for the relevance of the mechanism, including territorial and maritime disputes.

Since the demise of the Cold War, the region of the Asia-Pacific has witnessed active endeavors of regional countries to create effective and viable mechanisms of cooperation, many of which have materialized as ASEAN-centered frameworks, like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), and the East Asia Summit (EAS). In this regard, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an “inventor” of cooperative multilateralism, which has contributed to addressing economic, political, and security issues in the region. Keeping itself in the “driver's seat” in these cooperative mechanisms, ASEAN is seeking to maintain its centrality as a relevant actor of mediation between external powers. At the same time, however, this ASEAN-centered cooperative architecture based on the so-called “ASEAN Way” is at times criticized for not being able to effectively deal with critical regional problems, like territorial disputes and WMD proliferation. Under these circumstances, ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) is, as the newest cooperative framework of security which was launched in 2006, intended to provide defense

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ministers of ASEAN countries with a regular venue to gather, talk, and cooperate on defense and security-related issues. Moreover, the ADMM Plus, composed of ASEAN members and its eight dialogue partners including Japan, has been embarking on implementing effective security cooperation in nontraditional areas.

The ADMM is also significant in terms of ASEAN's pursuit of forming a political-security community (ASEAN Political-Security Community, APSC) as one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. This project for establishing a "community" aims at reinventing ASEAN as a more unified, cohesive actor in the region as well as the international community, to overcome a serious setback imposed on this regional grouping by the Asian Economic Crisis of 1997. Against this backdrop, the Vientiane Action Program (VAP), adopted at the 2004 ASEAN summit for the purpose of clarifying strategies and goals of the community, defined the establishment of an annual meeting of ASEAN defense ministers in its plan of actions. The ADMM was to jointly tackle the region's security challenges, nontraditional ones in particular. Convening the ADMM is one of the remarkable accomplishments in ASEAN's efforts to construct a political-security community, for the purpose of promoting conflict prevention and confidence building.

Although the ADMM is indeed an interesting and important mechanism worth extensively exploring with regard to not only ASEAN's external relations through multilateralism, but also to its internal evolution, there has been a paucity of academic literature on this subject, chiefly because this is a newly established structure, and its prospects are thus still unclear.¹ Also, the previous research has focused mainly on defense diplomacy from a comparative perspective, lacking detailed analyses on the platform's origins and its trajectory of development. Therefore, this paper explores the ADMM and the ADMM Plus, especially ASEAN's purpose to launch a meeting of defense ministers in terms of community building, the evolution of the ADMM with the ensuing establishment of its enlarged version – the ADMM Plus, and the significance of the ADMM Plus from a comparative perspective. It is followed by a brief analysis of the approach taken by Japan toward this multilateral framework, as a long-time dialogue partner of ASEAN.

ASEAN Political-Security Community: Initiative for a "Relevant" ASEAN

Discussions pertaining to the ASEAN Security Community (ASC) began in 2003, with a proposal raised by then chair Indonesia. The reason why ASEAN under the Indonesian chairmanship embarked on talks about a "security community" was twofold: how to restore the relevance of the grouping after the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis; and what to do to deal with newly emerging security challenges.² ASEAN had lost confidence because of its systemic deficiencies in the case of the economic crisis, which had a devastating impact on ASEAN countries, Indonesia and Thailand in particular. Facing a huge economic turmoil, Indonesia fell into social and political instabilities, which led the country to the collapse of the thirty-year-long Suharto regime. For ASEAN, this meant the loss of the central country's initiative to lead the association. To regain its relevance

¹ As the first extensive and collective research on the ADMM (Plus), see Bhubhindar Singh and See Seng Tan, eds., *From 'Boots' to 'Brogues': The Rise of Defence Diplomacy in Southeast Asia*, RSIS Monograph No. 21, 2011.

² Rizal Sukma, "The Future of ASEAN: Towards a Security Community," Paper presented at a seminar on "ASEAN Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects in the Current International Situation," New York, June 3, 2003.

as a regional grouping, ASEAN aimed at becoming a more resilient, cohesive unity to address economic and security issues. Also, as the natural and traditional leader of ASEAN, Indonesia, seizing the opportunity of chairmanship, took initiative for reinvigorating not only the resilience and relevance of the grouping but also its own leading position within ASEAN. Furthermore, facing new, nontraditional security challenges like terrorism and piracy whose threats had been apparent since the beginning of the new millennium, ASEAN needed concerted efforts by establishing an effective framework of cooperation.

What is a “security community” in ASEAN? In academic terms, a security community can be defined as a group of sovereign states which can maintain confident expectations of a peaceful and stable security environment for a fairly long time.³ This definition was basically applied to Indonesia’s initial proposal on the ASC. The concept was clearly differentiated from a military alliance. It ruled out the use of force for problem solving and expected to see peaceful change based on confidence and trust.⁴ At the outset, however, Indonesia ambitiously showed ASEAN members its proposal with various projects like establishing a counter-terrorism center, conducting joint training in peacekeeping operations, and convening regular meetings of police and defense ministers. Some members of ASEAN were cautious about Indonesia’s suggestions, since they suspected that Indonesia was considering the establishment of a military alliance. Indonesia’s bold overtures could not obtain the unanimous support of ASEAN.⁵

However, the idea of holding a regular meeting among defense ministers survived. At the end of the day, ASEAN’s vision of the security community was culminated in issuing the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II) in October 2003. The Bali Concord II defined the basic principles of the ASC. The preamble to the declaration reaffirmed commitment to ASEAN’s basic principles of politics and security enshrined in important documents like the Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, which meant that the ASC, to be established by 2020, would take over ASEAN’s traditional role of ensuring the security of Southeast Asia based on the concept of “comprehensive security” rather than a defense pact or military alliance. The Bali Concorde II also noted, with the recognition of the salience to tackle emerging security concerns like environmental degradation and maritime security, the importance of having a joint will to share information, the habit of consultation, and settling long-standing disputes by peaceful means. Finally, the declaration clarified the ultimate aim of the ASC as establishing modalities for norms-setting, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post conflict-building.⁶

In the ensuing 2004 summit held in Vientiane, Laos, ASEAN issued an action program on how to materialize the ASC (Vientiane Action Program, VAP). The VAP stipulated that the ASC should be realized to enhance peace and stability through political and security cooperation, mentioning five strategic thrusts, as referred to in the Bali Concord II: political development; shaping and sharing of norms; conflict prevention; conflict resolution; and post-conflict peace-

³ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, 2001, p. 16.

⁴ Sukma, “The Future of ASEAN.”

⁵ Tomotaka Shoji, “ASEAN Security Community: An Initiative for Peace and Stability,” *NIDS Security Reports*, No. 9, December 2008, p. 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

building. Although the VAP just mentioned vague objectives to be attained like “promoting human rights” or “strengthening confidence-building measures,” in the ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action, which was issued together with the VAP, some more concrete and novel ideas such as early warning system or arms register were proposed. Among them was the convening of an annual meeting of ASEAN defense ministers for conflict prevention.⁷ Afterwards, ASEAN developed the concept of the ASC and became more ambitious to materialize it; the 2007 summit held in Cebu decided to form the security community by 2015, five years earlier than originally planned, and the ensuing summit held in Singapore declared that the ASC should evolve into a broader ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), which placed a greater emphasis on political cooperation, like promoting human rights and democracy.⁸

The First ADMM: Launch of Defense Diplomacy

Adopting the proposal to construct a security community made by Indonesia in 2003, ASEAN began a process of launching a defense ministers’ meeting even before the issuing of the VAP. In fact, prior to the establishment of the ADMM, ASEAN had held a defense-related regular meeting: the annual ASEAN Special Senior Officials Meeting (ASEAN Special SOM). This was a working group on security cooperation established in 1996, and had served as a meeting of high-level defense officials of ASEAN member countries. In addition, ASEAN had already had various defense-related meetings within the ARF and military-military interactions.⁹ This SOM requested in May 2004 that the ASEAN Secretariat draft a concept paper on the establishment of the ADMM.¹⁰ In response to the request by the SOM, the secretariat drafted a concept paper and submitted it to ASEAN defense ministers at their inaugural meeting in May 2006.

Based on the fundamental perception that ASEAN had lacked the highest mechanism of cooperation for defense ministers, the concept paper set forth specific objectives of the ADMM: promoting regional peace and stability through dialogue and cooperation; giving guidance to existing dialogue and cooperation mechanisms of defense officials; and forging mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding, transparency, and openness. Also, the ADMM was clearly positioned as contributing to the establishment of the ASC. Structurally, as the highest mechanism of ASEAN defense cooperation, the ADMM was intended to report directly to the

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29; ASEAN, “ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action,” <<http://www.asean.org/news/item/asean-security-community-plan-of-action>> (accessed on May 27, 2013).

⁸ ASEAN, “Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community,” January 13, 2007, <<http://www.asean.org/news/item/cebu-declaration-on-the-acceleration-of-the-establishment-of-an-asean-community-by-2015>> (accessed on May 27, 2013); “Chairman’s Statement of the 13th ASEAN Summit, ‘One ASEAN at the Heart of Dynamic Asia’,” Singapore, November 20, 2007, <<http://www.asean.org/news/item/chairman-s-statement-of-the-13th-asean-summit-one-asean-at-the-heart-of-dynamic-asia-singapore-20-november-2007>> (accessed on May 27, 2013).

⁹ ARF Senior Officials’ Meeting (ARF-SOM), ARF Inter-Sessional Group on Confidence Building Measures (ARF-ISG-CBM), ARF Security Policy Conference (ASPC), and ARF Defense Officials’ Dialogue (ARF-DOD). With regard to military-to-military interactions, they had: (a) ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Meeting (or Chiefs of Staff); (b) ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting; (c) ASEAN Navy Interaction; (d) ASEAN Air Force Chiefs Conference; (e) ASEAN Military Intelligence Meeting; and (f) ASEAN Armies Meet.

¹⁰ ASEAN, “Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting,” <<http://www.asean.org/news/item/concept-paper-for-the-establishment-of-an-asean-defence-ministers-meeting-2>> (accessed on May 27, 2013).

heads of respective countries of ASEAN, whereas it was expected to work, assisted by the SOM, closely with diplomatic frameworks like the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM).¹¹

The First ADMM was held in Kuala Lumpur on May 9, 2006. Myanmar was absent from the meeting because of “domestic commitments,” while the remaining nine ASEAN members all attended. Discussions at the meeting centered on nontraditional issues including terrorism, maritime security, disaster relief, pandemics as well as transnational crime like human trafficking. The attending ministers also exchanged views on the Korean Peninsula and the future of the ARF and confirmed the chief objectives of the ADMM mentioned in the concept paper.¹² It should be noted that the joint press release issued after the meeting confirmed that the ADMM should be open, flexible and outward-looking, and should actively engage ASEAN’s friends and dialogue partners.¹³ The press release did not touch on the establishment of an “ASEAN peacekeeping force,” although it was speculated before the meeting that it might be on the agenda to build a peacekeeping force to intervene in troubled spots in Southeast Asia.¹⁴ This suggested that ASEAN members had not agreed to reinforce military cooperation so far as to institutionalize a joint armed force of ASEAN. In addition, the defense ministers agreed to establish an ASEAN Defense Senior Officials’ Meeting to support the ADMM.¹⁵

Rather than initiating substantial military cooperation, as the first step, the ADMM attempted to create an atmosphere of security cooperation and dialogue within ASEAN. In this regard, the meeting of defense ministers in Southeast Asia would promote cooperation among the militaries of regional countries. Against the backdrop of convening the first ADMM, ASEAN cooperation introduced a new concept of “defense diplomacy.” Defense diplomacy was to forge positive and productive relationships among militaries in the region, leading to the creation and maintenance of a peaceful and stable security environment. The use of this terminology in the region implied that the principle of noninterference should be kept according to the ASEAN Way.¹⁶ Adopting the defense diplomacy meant that the ADMM would be held as a mechanism to increase the level of interaction and enhance mutual trust and confidence, rather than based on threat perception.¹⁷ The launch of the ADMM also reflected a trend in which ASEAN had embarked on “official” multilateralism of security dialogue in addition to the existing “unofficial” one like the Shangri-La Dialogue.¹⁸

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, May 9, 2006; ASEAN, “Joint Press Release of the Inaugural ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting,” Kuala Lumpur, May 9, 2006, <<http://www.asean.org/news/item/joint-press-release-of-the-inaugural-asean-defence-ministers-meeting-kuala-lumpur-9-may-2006>> (accessed on May 28, 2013).

¹³ ASEAN, “Joint Press Release of the Inaugural ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting.”

¹⁴ *The Straits Times*, May 10, 2006.

¹⁵ *New Straits Times*, May 10, 2006.

¹⁶ David Capie, “Structures, Shocks and Norm Change: Explaining the Late Rise of Asia’s Defence Diplomacy,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2013, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ Lianita Prawindarti, “The First ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting: An Early Test for the ASEAN Security Community?” IDSS Commentaries 34/2006, May 16, 2006, <<http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/IDSS0342006.pdf>> (accessed on May 28, 2013).

¹⁸ Capie, “Structures, Shocks and Norm Change,” pp. 9-10.

Evolution of the ADMM: Beyond Another “Talk Shop”

In a series of meetings following the first ADMM, ASEAN strove to enhance the relevance of this framework by clarifying areas of cooperation and setting a timeline for fulfilling the visions, in terms of getting the mechanism on track beyond a mere “talk shop,” as the ARF had often been criticized. In November 2007, the second ADMM was held in Singapore with the attendance of Myanmar’s Deputy Defense Minister Aye Myint, where attending defense ministers discussed maritime security in the Malacca Strait as a major topic.¹⁹ At this meeting, three important documents were adopted: the Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ADMM; the ADMM Three-year Work Program 2008-2010; and the Concept Paper on the ADMM Plus.²⁰ Providing an institutional framework of the ADMM, the protocol was crucial because of its stipulation of a “chain of command” of ASEAN defense cooperation in the sense that the ADMM, as the “highest ministerial defense and security consultative and cooperative mechanism,” should put all defense-related meetings within Southeast Asia under its purview, including the existing military-to-military interactions outside the ASEAN framework.²¹

The Three-year Work Program was, with a view to creating the ADMM’s foundation, salient in that it reflected ASEAN’s resolve to bolster practical cooperation of defense and security; the program identified two important areas of cooperation in nontraditional security: humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR); and peacekeeping. Behind ASEAN’s endeavor to promote practical cooperation in these two areas laid a couple of reasons. First, cooperation in nontraditional security was more agreeable than traditional, and often sensitive, security issues. This was understandable in the sense that ASEAN and external powers were facing difficulties in resolving, or even alleviating tensions of, the South China Sea issue through multilateral frameworks like the ARF. However, regarding nontraditional security, ASEAN countries realized there were a need for more cooperation with each other and less conflicts of national interests of one another. Second, among various nontraditional threats, ASEAN experienced large-scale natural disasters like the Sumatra earthquake and tsunami in 2004 and Java earthquake in 2006. Also, many countries in Southeast Asia often suffered severe floods, like the cyclone Nargis of Myanmar in 2008. In this regard, cooperation in HA/DR was one of the most acute and salient fields for the ADMM to embark on. And third, for ASEAN, the importance of cooperation in peacekeeping was associated with enhancing the grouping’s international reputation and status by contributing more to international security. In terms of ensuring the security of its own region, ASEAN was required to increase their own capacities to deal with internal security affairs, like domestic instabilities. This perception might be drawn from ASEAN’s, or Indonesia’s, experience with East Timor.

With regard to HA/DR as one of the measures to deal with actual exigencies as well as promote confidence building in forming a security community, ASEAN was establishing a system of cooperation. An ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was signed in

¹⁹ *Thai News Service*, November 16, 2007.

²⁰ ADMM, “Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defence Ministers on Enhancing Regional Peace and Stability,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/2.%20Joint%20Declaration%20of%20the%20ASEAN%20Defence%20Ministers%20on%20Enhancing%20Regional%20Peace%20and%20Stability.pdf>> (accessed on May 30, 2013).

²¹ ADMM, “Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM),” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/2.%20Protocol%20to%20the%20Concept%20Paper%20for%20the%20Establishment%20of%20the%20ADMM.pdf>> (accessed on May 30, 2013).

July 2005 as a legal framework to provide a relevant mechanism for ASEAN to respond to natural and man-made disasters. The agreement mandated that ASEAN should establish Standby Arrangements and Standard Operating Procedures (SASOP) to be adequately ready for making effective responses in the case of disaster. Also, the “ASEAN Regional Program on Disaster Management (ARPDM) 2004-2010” was launched, leading to the establishment of a regional disaster management framework.²² Commensurate to these efforts, the ADMM Three-year Work Program encouraged ASEAN members to “share best practices and national Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)” in conducting disaster relief operations and voluntarily support the ASEAN Standby Arrangement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. Furthermore, the ADMM suggested that joint training and exercises should be conducted.²³ In this regard, ASEAN’s desire to foster practical and substantial cooperation in HA/DR was also exemplified in Malaysia’s offer to provide its air base in Subang, southwest of Kuala Lumpur, as an operation center for ASEAN.²⁴

ASEAN has since sought to institutionalize practical cooperation in HA/DR within the ADMM framework as well as develop coordination with other ASEAN-related mechanisms. At the third ADMM held in February 2009 in Pattaya, Thailand, ASEAN defense ministers adopted the Concept Paper on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in order to “accelerate the ASEAN militaries’ operational effectiveness” in disaster management, bearing the AADMER and the SASOP in mind.²⁵ As mandated in the AADMER, ASEAN needed to establish the ASEAN Standby Arrangements for Disaster Relief and Emergency Response, which required the member countries to identify available assets and capacities in the case of conducting disaster relief operations. Based on this, the concept paper defined the utilization of military assets and capacities by stipulating basic principles for the utilization, types of assets and capacities, and modalities of deployment in terms of responsibility, cost, identification, and response time.²⁶ Furthermore, the disaster management framework of ASEAN has been incrementally institutionalized, as exemplified in the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Center) in November 2011. The AHA Center, set up in Jakarta, currently functions as a center for accumulating information and data on earmarked military assets and capacities to be available for the standby arrangements, as well as issuing early warnings about natural disasters.²⁷

When it comes to peacekeeping, the Three-year Work Program proposed to establish a network of peacekeeping centers in ASEAN countries with a view to conducting joint training

²² ADMM, “Concept Paper on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/8.%20ANNEX%20D%20ADOPTED%20Concept%20Paper%20The%20Use%20of%20ASEAN%20Military%20Assets.pdf>> (accessed on June 20, 2013).

²³ ADMM, “ADMM Three-year Work Program,” <http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/3.%20Annex%20F_ADMM%203-Year%20Work%20Programme.pdf> (accessed on June 20, 2013).

²⁴ *Berhama Daily Malaysian News*, November 14, 2007.

²⁵ ASEAN, “Joint Declaration of ASEAN Defense Ministers on Strengthening ASEAN Defense Establishments to Meet the Challenges of Non-traditional Security Threats,” <<http://www.asean.org/images/archive/22314.pdf>> (accessed on June 11, 2013).

²⁶ ADMM, “Concept Paper on the Use of ASEAN Military Assets and Capacities in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.”

²⁷ ASEAN, “Agreement on the Establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management,” <<http://www.asean.org/archive/documents/19th%20summit/AHA.pdf>> (accessed on June 17, 2013). As for the role and functions of the AHA Center, see <http://www.ahacentre.org/>.

and sharing experiences.²⁸ At its fifth meeting held in May 2011 in Jakarta, the ADMM adopted the Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network. This concept paper, with the objective to facilitate existing and future peacekeeping centers of ASEAN respective countries to conduct joint planning/training and exchange experiences, proposed various activities. As the short-term objectives, the paper mentioned information sharing on peacekeeping training curriculum, materials and methodology, and assistance for ASEAN member states to establish their own peacekeeping centers. The medium-term missions were to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), develop common peacekeeping training, operations and best practices manuals, and commence joint training. And for the long-term visions, the ADMM will establish a common standby arrangement, enhance interoperability of peacekeeping forces, and develop existing centers into centers of excellence.²⁹ Following the adoption of the concept paper in the ADMM, ASEAN launched a formal meeting for establishing the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network since its inaugural conference held in Bangkok in September 2012.³⁰ Furthermore, the establishment of a “logistics support framework,” endorsed at the seventh ADMM held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei in May 2013, could substantially bolster the institutionalization and systemization of defense cooperation in HA/DR and peacekeeping. This framework may cover items that support joint operations and exercises like fuel, food, water as well as waste management, and plans to establish points of contact that can facilitate communication among relevant logistics centers.³¹

It is also notable that taking advantage of the ADMM as a meeting venue of all defense ministers within the region, ASEAN has embarked on a new type of cooperation to vitalize the security framework of the grouping. At the fourth ADMM held in Hanoi in May 2010, on the initiative of Malaysia, ASEAN defense ministers discussed the feasibility of defense industry collaboration. The proposal stemmed from the reality that ASEAN countries were “net purchasers” of military equipment and that in some countries defense industries were growing significantly.³² As for Malaysia’s own impetus, the country was eager to develop its defense industry in cooperation with other advanced countries in the region like Singapore, and establish in Malaysia a hub of defense industries for ASEAN.³³ At the fifth ADMM, ASEAN adopted the Concept Paper on Establishing ASEAN Defense Industry Collaboration (ADIC). The concept paper referred to, as objectives of the ADIC: common projects through partnerships, joint-ventures, and co-production; intra-trade on

²⁸ ADMM, “ADMM Three-year Work Program.”

²⁹ ADMM, “Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defense Ministers on Strengthening Defense Cooperation of ASEAN in the Global Community to Face New Challenges,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/5.%20ANNEX%2011-%20Joint%20Declaration%20of%20the%20Fifth%20ADMM.pdf>> (accessed on June 21, 2013); ADMM, “ADMM Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/10.%20ANNEX%209-%20Concept%20Paper%20on%20The%20Establishment%20of%20ASEAN%20PKC%20Network%20-.pdf>> (accessed on June 18, 2013).

³⁰ ASEAN, “Brunei Darussalam Joint Declaration of the ASEAN Defense Ministers, Securing Our People, Our Future Together,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/Joint-Declaration-ADMM-2013-5.%20Brunei%20Darussalam%20Joint%20Declaration%20of%20the%20ASEAN%20Defence%20%20Ministers%20-%2022Securing%20Our%20People,%20Our%20Future%20Together22.pdf>> (accessed on June 21, 2013).

³¹ ADMM, “Concept Paper on Establishment of Logistics Support Framework,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/Concept-Paper-ADMM-2013-2.%20Concept%20Paper%20on%20Establishment%20of%20Logistics%20Support%20%20Framework.pdf>> (accessed on June 19, 2013).

³² ASEAN, “ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting: Concept Paper on Establishing ASEAN Defense Industry Collaboration,” <<http://www.asean.org/images/archive/document/18471-k.pdf>> (accessed on May 29, 2013).

³³ *Jane’s Defense Industry*, March 17, 2010.

defense products and services; defense trade shows and exhibitions; and competitiveness in defense and dual-use industry. The fifth ADMM endorsed the establishment of a consultative group under the ADIC as well. However, challenges are still ahead: due to a huge gap in the development phase of the defense industry, with Singapore at a high level, Malaysia and Indonesia at middle or low levels, and others at a very rudimentary phase, or mutual distrust still existing among the member nations, defense industry collaboration is a long way to go, although its efficiency and effectiveness is evident in terms of cost-effectiveness and confidence building.

Needless to say, regarding defense cooperation, it is more important and difficult to implement concrete measures than issuing various concept papers, or establishing consultative meetings. Like other fields of ASEAN cooperation, the development of practical cooperation in the ADMM is just incremental, proceeding at a pace comfortable to all members. ASEAN defense ministers reiterated their commitment to HA/DR, peacekeeping, and defense industry in a new ADMM Three-year Work Program issued in 2010.³⁴ According to this new planning, the collective will of ASEAN to reinforce defense cooperation is apparent in general terms. However, the actual degrees of development in cooperation of these three areas, with HA/DR being promoted most strongly, are varying due to whether or not the areas of cooperation are problematic or feasible in terms of not stirring up the issue of sovereignty or mutual distrust among the member nations. In this regard, ASEAN's effort to add substance to their defense cooperation persists, which can be observed in their endeavor to institutionalize practical cooperation in certain possible areas. To promote those projects of cooperation in nontraditional security, ASEAN encourages its external partners to join the framework, as the ADMM "Plus."

ADMM Plus: Institutionalized Framework and Practical Cooperation

At the very onset in 2006, the ADMM was already "open, flexible, and outward-looking," as mentioned in the joint press release, which urged the member nations to actively engage ASEAN's external partners.³⁵ The ADMM concept paper also emphasized the importance of having interactions with external powers, while referring to keeping ASEAN's centrality in the multilateral mechanism.³⁶ Against this backdrop, the second ADMM in 2007 issued the protocol to the ADMM concept paper, which called for the establishment of an "ADMM Plus," and the ADMM-Plus Concept Paper.³⁷ The concept paper on the ADMM Plus mentioned the benefits this expanded ADMM would bring to ASEAN. First, in order to deal effectively with nontraditional security threats like terrorism and natural disaster, cooperation not only within ASEAN but also with countries outside ASEAN was indispensable; second, extra-regional powers desired to engage ASEAN in defense and security; third, cooperation with external countries would bring ASEAN expertise and resources to address security challenges; and fourth, the expanded ADMM would help ASEAN reinforce its centrality in multilateralism.³⁸

³⁴ ADMM, "ADMM Three-year-work Program 2011-2013," <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/11.%20ANNEX%208-%20ADMM-3-Year-Work-Program%202010-2013.pdf>> (accessed on June 19, 2013).

³⁵ ASEAN, "Joint Press Release of the Inaugural ADMM."

³⁶ ASEAN, "Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ADMM."

³⁷ ADMM, "Protocol to the Concept Paper for the Establishment of the ADMM."

³⁸ ADMM, "ADMM-Plus Concept Paper," <http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/4.%20Annex%20G_ADMM-Plus%20Concept%20Paper.pdf> (accessed on June 25, 2013).

The centrality of ASEAN was a key to the ADMM Plus. Declaring “ASEAN is at the center of the ADMM Plus,” the concept paper defined important modalities to ensure that ASEAN remain in the driver’s seat of the multilateral framework. First, the ADMM should determine the areas and levels of interaction with counterparts outside ASEAN. Second, applications to participate in the ADMM Plus should be submitted to the chair of the ADMM, and the chair would consult the other members. The ADMM should only invite extra-regional countries to the ADMM Plus based on the consensus of all ASEAN members. And third, the chair of the ADMM shall assume the chairmanship of the ADMM Plus as well.³⁹ Accordingly, the system to keep the centrality of ASEAN in the “plus” meeting would imply the initiative of the grouping concerning what topics should be on the agenda of the meeting.

As for which countries should be invited, the third ADMM in February 2009 decided to confine the membership of the ADMM Plus to full-fledged dialogue partners of ASEAN.⁴⁰ Afterwards, with regard to launching the first “plus” meeting, Vietnam took significant initiative. In November 2009, ASEAN held an ADMM retreat to discuss how to convene the ADMM Plus. At the meeting, Vietnam put forth a proposal to establish an “ASEAN+8” mechanism at the ADMM, by inviting Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, and the US, and the defense ministers of ASEAN reached consensus based on Vietnam’s suggestion.⁴¹ In 2010, as the ASEAN chair, Vietnam continued to play an extremely active role in materializing the platform. In addition to the benefits ASEAN was expected to receive from the ADMM Plus, the country’s active role was also strongly motivated by the necessity to tackle a traditional, hard security challenge in the South China Sea. Facing China’s active, sometimes aggressive, move into the sea area, Vietnam, as a smaller country, was motivated to deal with the issue through multilateralism by encouraging the participation of China as well as other external powers, the US in particular.

Within this context, the fourth ADMM in May 2010 in Hanoi adopted two important documents related to the ADMM Plus concerning configuration/composition and modalities/procedures. As for the membership, the “Concept Paper on ADMM Plus: Configuration and Composition” explained the relevance of adopting the “ASEAN+X” configuration rather than just “+1” or “+3” in terms of striking “a good balance between effectiveness and legitimacy.” Accordingly, the concept paper declared to invite eight dialogue partners of ASEAN as the founding ADMM-Plus members.⁴² The “Concept Paper on ADMM Plus: Modalities and Procedures” defined the frequency of ADMM-Plus meetings as once every three years, although this frequency could be revised. Also, in the intervening three years, the ADMM-Plus Working Group (WG) would be convened to implement decisions made in the ADMM Plus. Further, the document stipulated the establishment of Experts’ Working Groups (EWGs) to address specific security issues, nontraditional ones in particular, like terrorism, maritime security, and HA/DR.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ ADMM, “Concept Paper on the ADMM Plus: Principles for Membership,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/7.%20ANNEX%20E%20ADOPTED%20Concept%20Paper%20ADMM-Plus%20Membership%20Principles.pdf>> (accessed on June 27, 2013).

⁴¹ *Vietnam News Agency Bulletin*, November 5, 2009.

⁴² ASEAN, “ADMM Plus: Configuration and Composition,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/6.%20ADMM-Plus%20Configuration%20and%20Composition.pdf>> (accessed on June 26, 2013).

⁴³ ASEAN, “ADMM Plus: Modalities and Procedures,” <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/6.%20ADMM-Plus%20Configuration%20and%20Composition.pdf>> (accessed on June 26, 2013).

These two documents demonstrated ASEAN's resolve to firmly institutionalize the ADMM Plus mechanism to consolidate a basis of practical cooperation as well as fully engage all major powers of the Asia-Pacific in the process, the US and China in particular.

Accepting the invitation sent by Vietnam, all of the eight dialogue partners of ASEAN attended the first ADMM Plus held in Hanoi on October 12, 2010. Although still greatly concerned about the heightened tension in the South China Sea, the chair Vietnam devoted itself more to initiating practical cooperation in this new framework, focusing on major issues of nontraditional security. The ADMM Plus decided to establish an ASEAN Defense Senior Officials Meeting Plus (ADSOM Plus), which was expected to be responsible for implementing agreements and decisions of the ADMM Plus. At the same time, the ADMM-Plus members agreed to establish EWGs to promote practical cooperation in five nontraditional security areas: HA/DR; maritime security; peacekeeping; counterterrorism; and military medicine.

It was agreed that the EWGs would be co-chaired by a member of ASEAN and a dialogue partner; Vietnam and China would co-chair the EWG on HA/DR, with Malaysia and Australia on maritime security, the Philippines and New Zealand on peacekeeping, Indonesia and the US on counterterrorism, and Singapore and Japan on military medicine.⁴⁴ It was interesting to see Vietnam co-chairing with China the HA/DR EWG despite the rising tension between the countries amid the sovereignty and maritime issues in the South China Sea. This showed there was a cooperative aspect to the complex security environment in East Asia as well as the complexity of the Sino-Vietnamese relations. From the Vietnamese perspective, the emphasis of the ADMM Plus was more on confidence building through cooperation rather than focusing directly on sensitive traditional issues.

Hitherto, practical cooperation of the ADMM Plus has steadily developed in various aspects, aimed at making the platform something more than a "talk shop." First, in June 2013, the ADMM Plus successfully conducted the first HA/DR and military medicine exercise in Brunei Darussalam.⁴⁵ This exercise was intended to build confidence and promote stable relationships among militaries in the region. It was a joint HA/DR operation including the military medicine, focusing on military-military cooperation.⁴⁶ All the members of the ADMM Plus were enthusiastic about participating in the exercise, which saw the deployment of approximately 3,200 personnel, seven ships, and 15 helicopters. In addition, military medical, engineering, and search/rescue teams and assets from 18 member countries were dispatched for exercises based on scenarios, including collapsed buildings, landslide and flash flood. Furthermore, the multi-national forces conducted exercises like the evacuation of casualties and displaced personnel, and the delivery of aid to affected areas.⁴⁷ For the exercise, the "plus" countries were very active, exemplified by the deployment of a cargo ship by the US Navy and of a hospital ship by China, as well as the dispatch of more than 300

⁴⁴ ASEAN, "Chairman's Statement of the First ADMM Plus: Strategic Cooperation for Peace, Stability, and Development in the Region," <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/Chairman's%20Statement%20of%20the%201st%20ADMM-Plus,%20Ha%20Noi,%202012%20Oct%202012.pdf>> (accessed on June 27, 2013).

⁴⁵ MINDEF, "SAF and Other Militaries Conclude the ADMM-Plus HADR/MM Exercise," <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2013/jun/20jun13_nr.html> (accessed on June 27, 2013).

⁴⁶ MINDEF (Brunei), "HADR & MM EX Background," <<http://www.mindef.gov.bn/ADMM2013/index.php/2012-10-05-01-50-52/2012-10-05-01-51-29/hadr-ahx-background>> (accessed on July 1, 2013).

⁴⁷ MINDEF (Singapore), "SAF and Other Militaries Conclude the ADMM-Plus HADR/MM Exercise," <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/press_room/official_releases/nr/2013/jun/20jun13_nr.html> (accessed on July 1, 2013).

troops by Japan. The success of the first joint exercise massively supported by all the participants of the ADMM Plus indicates that the cooperative mechanism would have potential to reinforce the most substantial and practical cooperation in defense and security that the region has ever seen, although serious tensions concerning maritime issues exist between certain countries in the region. Similarly, the ADMM Plus planned to conduct joint exercises in all the other fields of the EWGs in 2013: counterterrorism exercise (CTX) in Indonesia in September; maritime security field training exercise (FTX) in Australia in September-October; and peacekeeping exercise sometime in the fourth quarter of the year.

The ADMM Plus is steadily getting on track by regularizing meetings at various levels and is also embarking on further evolution. According to a principle of rotation of EWGs' co-chairmanship, the second ADMM Plus, which was held in Brunei in August 2013, appointed new chair countries for the respective EWGs, with one more EWG on humanitarian mine action added.⁴⁸ The institutionalized co-chairmanship of the EWGs will be able to further enhance practical cooperation among the ADMM Plus members in certain areas of nontraditional security, possibly including the regularization of joint exercises.

Another dimension of evolution of the platform is to convene the ADMM-Plus meeting more frequently. Although the interval meetings like the ADSOM-Plus and EWGs got on track, there was an argument that the interval time between the ADMM Plus meetings should be shortened. Upon this argument, the sixth ADMM held in Phnom Penh in May 2012 adopted the Concept Paper on Review of Frequency of ADMM-Plus Meetings, which declared to hold the ADMM-Plus meeting once every two years.⁴⁹ Finally, the second ADMM Plus endorsed the proposal that the third meeting would be held in 2015.

The third aspect of evolution of the ADMM Plus is active participation in or utilization of the platform by major powers outside ASEAN. For example, China is making use of the "non-plus" ADMM; the defense minister of China informally had talks with ASEAN defense ministers, bilaterally and multilaterally, on the sidelines of the ADMM meetings in Jakarta (2011), Phnom Penh (2012), and Bandar Seri Begawan (2013). These "informal" meetings of defense ministers between China and ASEAN countries provided both parties with opportunities to exchange views on regional security issues, like the talks between the Philippines and China about the Scarborough Shoal stand-off.⁵⁰ Reportedly, China is proposing to hold an "ASEAN-China Defense Ministers'

⁴⁸ ADMM, "Concept Paper on the Transition of the ADMM-Plus EWG Co-chairmanship," <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/Concept-Paper-ADMM-2013-4.%20Concept%20Paper%20on%20the%20Transition%20of%20the%20ADMM-Plus%20Experts'%20%20Working%20Group%20Co-Chairmanship.pdf>> (accessed on July 1, 2013); ADMM, "Concept Paper on Establishment of the ADMM Plus EWG on Humanitarian Mine Action," <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/Concept-Paper-ADMM-2013-3.%20Concept%20Paper%20on%20Establishment%20of%20the%20ADMM-Plus%20Experts'%20%20Working%20Group%20on%20Humanitarian%20Mine%20Action.pdf>> (accessed on July 1, 2013); ADMM, "Chairman's Statement of the Second ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus," <[https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/2013_Aug_2nd%20ADMM-Plus_BSB_29%20Aug%202013_Chairman's%20Statement%20of%20the%20Second%20ASEAN%20Defence%20%20Ministers'%20Meeting%20Plus%20\(Final%20Version\).pdf](https://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/2013_Aug_2nd%20ADMM-Plus_BSB_29%20Aug%202013_Chairman's%20Statement%20of%20the%20Second%20ASEAN%20Defence%20%20Ministers'%20Meeting%20Plus%20(Final%20Version).pdf)> (accessed on November 6, 2013).

⁴⁹ ADMM, "Concept Paper on Review of Frequency of ADMM-Plus Meetings," <<http://admm.asean.org/dmdocuments/14.%20ANNEX%208%20-%20Concept%20Paper%20on%20Frequency%20of%20ADMM-Plus%20Meeting.pdf>> (accessed on July 1, 2013).

⁵⁰ It was reported that the two parties agreed to withdraw forces from the shoal, but the Philippines currently denounces that Chinese patrol vessels are still staying in the shoal and blocking Philippine ships from entering the area.

Meeting.” The US has also been actively participating in the ADMM, like Secretary Panetta’s visit to Bali in October 2010 when the ADMM retreat was convened. It should also be noted that Japan and China had talks for the first time after the Senkaku incident that happened in September 2010, and the bilateral talks created an atmosphere to improve their relations.

Duplications?: ADMM Plus Compared with the ARF and the Shangri-La Dialogue

Originally, the ADMM was defined as an integral part of ASEAN and expected to complement and actively engage the ARF.⁵¹ By establishing the ADMM, ASEAN attempted to strengthen its position within the ARF by forging ASEAN’s unity and cooperation in defense and security.⁵² In this regard, the ADMM (Plus) and the ARF can function respectively and cooperate with each other according to an appropriate division of labor. Basically, there are fundamental differences between the two mechanisms in terms of origin, architecture, and the scope of membership. The ARF was established under a diplomatic initiative. Therefore, the highest consultative body of the ARF is the annual meeting of foreign ministers, and the framework is under the jurisdiction of the ministry of foreign affairs of each member country. On the other hand, the MOD-led ADMM was formed as a regular meeting among defense ministers in the region. This “MOD-led/MOFA-led” contrast makes the two frameworks different from each other in character despite the fact that both are for talks on defense and security.

When it comes to membership, the ARF has as many as 27 participants, including an extra-regional actor like the EU. Even though the EU’s engagement in security in the Asia-Pacific is undoubtedly important, there can be a concern that a too-expanded membership may hinder prompt decision-making and efficient coordination among the members. In establishing the ADMM Plus, ASEAN considered it important to confine the membership to an appropriately small number of participants outside Southeast Asia, possibly drawing on a lesson from experiences with the ARF. This kind of attitude of ASEAN was implied in the ADMM Plus concept paper on configuration and composition, stipulating that the ADMM Plus should be both small and large enough in terms of striking a “good balance between effectiveness and legitimacy.”⁵³

With regard to practical cooperation, both of the mechanisms can be overlapped in the sense that the ADMM Plus conducted a HA/DR-military medicine joint exercise while the ARF has regularized the DiREX, a similar HA/DR joint exercise. However, ASEAN and extra-regional countries, many of which are participating in both platforms, seem to be seeking an appropriate way of dividing labor between the two to avoid inefficient duplications; the ADMM-Plus HA/DR-MM joint exercise focused more on military-military cooperation than civil-military coordination, which was sought in the third ARF-DiREX conducted in Thailand in May 2013.⁵⁴

Potentially, more problematic is the relationship, or an adequate division of labor, between the ADMM Plus and the Shangri-La Dialogue. ASEAN’s official meeting of defense ministers may face a competition with a similar predecessor of security dialogue, hosted by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The ADMM Plus overlaps with the Shangri-La

⁵¹ ASEAN, “Concept Paper for the Establishment of an ADMM.”

⁵² *The Straits Times*, May 10, 2006.

⁵³ ASEAN, “ADMM Plus: Configuration and Composition.”

⁵⁴ ARF, “DiREX 2013: Background,” <<http://www.arfdirex2013.org/about/background.html>> (accessed on July 2, 2013).

more in function than the ARF. Both the ADMM Plus and the Shangri-La Dialogue aim to provide a venue for regional defense ministers to gather and talk, and the participants in both forums attach great importance to bilateral interactions outside the formal meetings.⁵⁵ However, there are equally considerable differences between the two. According to the ASEAN Way, all participants are of equal qualification at the ADMM Plus, whereas structurally the Shangri-La Dialogue is “explicitly hierarchical,” disrespecting equality among participants.⁵⁶ With regard to implementing practical cooperation beyond talks, the ADMM-Plus process is much better organized in terms of institutionalizing sub-systems like the ADSOM Plus, the ADSOM-Plus Working Group (WG), and various EWGs.

While the US and Japan place great value on both gatherings, China seems to put a higher priority on the ADMM Plus than the Shangri-La Dialogue. This contrast of attitudes is shown by the fact that the representative of China at the Shangri-La has recently been the deputy chief of general staff, although the Chinese defense minister has regularly attended the ADMM and ADMM-Plus meetings. Meanwhile, the US and Japan have dispatched their secretary of defense and defense minister, respectively, to the Shangri-La. This is probably because China prefers a closed, formal meeting between regional defense ministers to an open session where China’s representatives are at times urged to respond to severe criticisms against China about sensitive security issues like the South China Sea. Thus considering the fundamental differences between the ADMM Plus and the Shangri-La Dialogue, a future direction of division of labor will depend on the strategy of each participant, like utilizing the Shangri-La as an opportunity for public diplomacy on defense policy and the ADMM Plus as a closed meeting to talk about defense and security as well as promote practical cooperation.

Conclusion: Japan’s Attitude

Clearly, Japan regards the ADMM Plus to be important and helpful because it is the only official meeting among defense ministers in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁷ Japan’s active role in the framework was demonstrated by its co-chairmanship of the military medicine EWG with Singapore. The devastating impact of a giant earthquake, ensuing tsunami, and repeating aftershocks in March 2011 has made Japan more conscious of the necessity of strengthening multilateral security cooperation. Regarding expected collaboration in addressing nontraditional security issues, Japan will be far more active in participating in the ADMM Plus and subordinated working groups, as well as taking initiative in pursuing practical cooperation.

Japan actively participates in the ADMM Plus for three reasons. First, the country is eager to reinforce security cooperation with ASEAN. Second, it is in Japan’s security interest to maintain contact with regional countries, China in particular. Third, historically, multilateralism is one of the important instruments for Japan’s security policy in a limited context. That the Ministry of Defense can take initiative to activate the defense-related framework is an important impetus as well. Within this context, capacity-building cooperation led by the Ministry of Defense also

⁵⁵ David Capie and Brendan Taylor, “The Shangri-La Dialogue and the Institutionalization of Defence Diplomacy in Asia,” *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 23, Iss. 3, July 2010, p. 362.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Defense, Japan, “ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus): Multilateral Security Dialogues,” <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/exc/multilateral.html> (accessed on July 4, 2013).

reinforces the compatibility of Japan's security cooperation with ASEAN's endeavor to form a political-security community; the 2007 three-year work program emphasized the importance of capacity building in disaster relief and peacekeeping.⁵⁸ Even though conducted in bilateral terms, Japan's capacity-building collaboration is certainly encouraging ASEAN countries to enhance their own capacities to deal with various domains of nontraditional security.

Generally, the ADMM and the ADMM-Plus processes have so far developed steadily, materializing in an incremental way the original visions to promote institutionalization and practical cooperation. It is highly likely that the ADMM Plus will regularize the annual joint exercises in nontraditional security based on the system of rotational EWGs. Activities in the ADMM (Plus) process imply ASEAN's strong will to differentiate the framework from the ARF, which countries concerned have found to be ineffective for promoting practical cooperation and dealing with confrontational, sensitive issues of traditional security, like the South China Sea. Of course, it is still unclear whether or not promoting cooperation in nontraditional areas can positively affect traditional issues in terms of alleviating tensions stemming from confrontations amid territorial disputes.

Today, the participants in the ADMM Plus including Japan seem to fully recognize the utility of the platform not only in terms of having a regular meeting venue of relevant defense ministers but also deeper cooperation of defense and security by conducting meetings at various levels of defense officials and joint exercises in nontraditional security. However, the participants in the multilateral framework are going to see some future challenges for the relevance of the mechanism: can cooperation in nontraditional security have spillover effects on improving the situation in traditional security? Can the ADMM (Plus) talk about the South China Sea? Yes, but can it effectively deal with the issue to resolve, or at minimum alleviate tensions in the sea area? It remains to be seen. The biggest challenge for the members may be whether they can build basic confidence and trust in an effective and efficient way, and whether they can be fully trustable to one another for confidence building to have a positive impact on sensitive, hard security issues like the East and South China Seas.

⁵⁸ "ADMM Three-year Work Program."

