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Conflict Prevention in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific

Elsina Wainwright

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It is now widely agreed that the world faces old and new security challenges that are more complex than our multilateral and national institutions are currently capable of managing. International cooperation is ever more necessary in meeting these challenges. The NYU Center on International Cooperation (CIC) works to enhance international responses to conflict, insecurity, and scarcity through applied research and direct engagement with multilateral institutions and the wider policy community.

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Acronyms

ABG	Autonomous Bougainville Government
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AMM	Aceh Monitoring Mission
APPSMO	Asia Pacific Program for Senior Military Officers
APEC	Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN+3	ASEAN states plus China, Japan and South Korea
BCPR	Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (United Nations Development Program)
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
DPA	Department of Political Affairs (United Nations)
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (United Nations)
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (United Nations)
EU	European Union
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka/Free Aceh Movement
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
HD	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
HDC	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	International Deployment Group (Australian Federal Police)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IISS	International Institute For Strategic Studies
IMT	International Monitoring Team (Mindanao)
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (United Nations)
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
KNU	Karen National Union
MCG	Ministerial Contact Group (Pacific Islands)

MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSU	Mediation Support Unit
NGO	Nongovernmental Organizations
NPA	New People's Army
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka/Free Papua Movement
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PMG	Peace Monitoring Group (Bougainville)
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRAN	Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RSIS	Rajaratnam School of International Studies
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SRSG	Special Representative to the Secretary-General
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TCG	Tripartite Core Group (United Nations, ASEAN, and the Myanmar government)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIN	United Nations Mission in Nepal
UNMIT	United Nations Mission in Timor Leste
UNOMB	United Nations Observer Mission to Bougainville
UNPOB	United Nations Political Office in Bougainville

Executive Summary

The Asia Pacific has experienced thirty years without inter-state conflict, but a number of long-running, low-level internal conflicts continue in Southeast Asia, and several South Pacific states have recent experience of instability. Tensions also remain at the inter-state level, and shifting power dynamics between the US, China, and other Asian states have the potential to foster regional instability. In addition, a raft of transnational threats, such as resource scarcity and climate change, are creating new uncertainty.

Given the host of challenges, the limited conflict prevention role played by international and regional institutions in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific is at first glance surprising. A review of operational conflict prevention efforts in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific shows that while international organizations – particularly the United Nations – and regional organizations perform some conflict prevention roles in the region, these remain circumscribed.[1] The constraints upon them stem from the importance of sovereignty in the region, but they also have historical, institutional, and political underpinnings. As a result, regional crisis management has involved a variety of other actors, including states and NGOs, and multi-actor mechanisms have assumed a particular prominence.

Structural prevention initiatives have been less constrained in the Asia Pacific, with a plethora of actors, again including the UN, using statebuilding and development tools to build state resilience, manage transnational threats, and avert violence.[2] The region also has a number of networks and confidence-building processes, which round out its conflict prevention framework.

A fair amount of conflict prevention activity is therefore taking place in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, and the categories of preventive action[3] performed by various actors in the region include:

[1] This paper defines operational conflict prevention as the use of diplomatic, political, economic or security tools to forestall an imminent new conflict; contain, defuse and resolve ongoing conflict and prevent its escalation; or prevent the resumption of conflict.
[2] Structural conflict prevention is defined here as medium to long-term measures to avoid conflict, prevent its recrudescence, and build resilience in at-risk states.
[3] See Elizabeth Sellwood for her categories of UN preventive action in a Middle East context, 'The Role of the United Nations in Middle East Conflict Prevention', NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, 2009, pp. 3-4.

1. Mediation – such as political dialogue and negotiation support, short-term arrangements, deals and ceasefires between parties, and drafting peace agreements. As examples, the UN-Commonwealth joint mediation and political dialogue support in Fiji before the suspension of efforts last year; and the work of NGOs the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) in Aceh.

2. Broader peace process support – including electoral process assistance, constitution drafting, justice, power sharing, economic arrangements, wealth/resource sharing, and technical advice in support of political objectives. For example, the UN's electoral support in Timor-Leste; and the work of the UN and the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville.

3. Confidence and relationship-building – including facilitating communication between relevant parties, such as state and non-state actors. For example HDC's work in Mindanao; and sideline meetings between states at various fora such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue.

4. Compiling and providing best-practice information and analysis. For example, the World Bank's Regional Governance Hub; and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA's) ongoing work on natural disasters and conflict.

5. Post-conflict consolidation of security and the security-development transition. For instance, work done by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI); the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao; and the Aceh Monitoring Mission.

6. Providing endorsement and legitimizing processes. For example, the UN Security Council Presidential and Secretary-General's statements of support for RAMSI.[4]

7. Institution-building in post-conflict and fragile state contexts. RAMSI, for example; and the World Bank and the

[4] Solomon Islands' recognition of Taiwan precluded a UN Security Council resolution on the crisis.

Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) work in Aceh, Timor-Leste, and Cambodia.

8. *Assistance with managing the impact of transnational threats.* For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (ESCAP's) analysis of the 'triple threat' of the economic crisis, food-fuel price volatility, and climate change; and the ADB's efforts to address cross-border environmental challenges.

Ad hoc, multi-actor mechanisms have worked well in the region; their good track record and the ongoing features of the Asia Pacific suggest that multi-actor mechanisms are likely to remain the region's primary conflict management vehicle. But with significant security challenges facing the region, these mechanisms should be strengthened to address these challenges more effectively.

What, then, might conflict prevention actors in pre-, post, conflict and fragile state settings in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific do to enhance the effectiveness of ad hoc multi-actor mechanisms, and thereby minimize the risk of conflict? And how, in particular, might the UN's own political and in-region mechanisms most effectively contribute to conflict prevention in the region?

Recommendations

1. Build anticipatory relationships and focus on functional cooperation

The UN and other conflict prevention actors should engage in anticipatory relationship building with rival elites and other relevant stakeholders within pre- and post-conflict, conflict-affected and fragile state contexts in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. This should include strengthening networks of those in the region with preventive diplomacy, peace process, and statebuilding expertise. The UN must also pay particular attention to the capabilities of its mediators and mission deployees[5] and to grooming the next generation of mediators, including from the presently under-represented Asia Pacific.

[5]On the importance of the right personnel performing mediation and peacebuilding work, see recommendation 96(d), Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, 2004, p. 114.

There should also be a focus on cooperating in functional areas such as humanitarian response and disaster prevention, about which Asia Pacific states are less neuralgic, rather than a political/security cooperation focus. At the same time, the capacity of regional organizations to collaborate meaningfully with other conflict prevention actors should continue to be enhanced.

Specific proposals:

a. The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and DPA and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) should respectively establish joint initiatives to train the next generation of mediators, possibly with the support of an NGO such as HDC. DPA and ASEAN could also explore the possibility of jointly convening a regional 'young leaders' dialogue'.
b. OCHA should continue to deepen its collaboration with both the ARF and ASEAN, and also continue to develop a detailed work program on civil-military cooperation and disaster response interoperability.
c. There should be an exchange of personnel between the UN and PIF Secretariats.

2. Strengthen the UN's capacity to support regional mechanisms

Given the constraints upon it in a political/security context, the UN's overarching political approach to the region should be to not focus on its own role *per se*, but on building its technical capacity to support other actors, and on flexibly adding in capabilities to ad hoc, multi-actor mechanisms. In particular, the UN should concentrate on its ability to provide mediation and broader peace process support, including the provision of electoral process, transitional justice, and constitution drafting assistance.

The UN's performance in the Asia Pacific also highlights problems that are found in UN operations worldwide, such as insufficiently intensive pre-deployment training for peace operations, and poor integration among its agencies on the ground – these continue to be in need of remedy.

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Specifically, the UN should:

a. Deepen its technical capabilities to provide mediation and peace process support.
b. Refine the relationship between its various conflict prevention mechanisms.
c. Improve pre-deployment training and deployees' understanding of effective civil-military-police relations.
d. Enhance information exchange with ASEAN and the PIF, and help to strengthen ASEAN's and the PIF's relationships with other regional organizations.

3. Address transnational threats

Multilateral and bilateral actors have important roles to play in managing the array of transnational threats facing Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, and helping to build fragile states' internal capacity to withstand the effects of these threats. At present there is a lack of strategic assessment as to the interactions between transnational threats such as resource scarcity and climate change, and how such threats might contribute to conflict. Effective policy responses to transnational threats will need this analytical deficit to be corrected.

This is an area in which the UN might take a regional lead. The importance of sovereignty in the region and concerns about international organizations as 'Western-centric' suggest that the UN should not focus on establishing a regional diplomatic presence. Instead, it could promote regional mechanisms to address transnational threats.

Specific proposals:

a. The UN should build a mechanism at its regional headquarters in Bangkok – potentially through ESCAP, but drawing in DPA – to engage in dialogue with national security representatives from regional states, and promote global public goods and the regional management of regional security challenges.
b. The UN - again, potentially through ESCAP – should use its convening power to assemble the principal actors tackling the key transnational threats in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific (including international and regional organizations,

as well as bilateral donors) to discuss their various programs and options for a more coordinated approach.
c. UN DPA should establish an analytical unit to examine the linkages between various transnational threats and their interactions with conflict, in particular those between resource scarcity and security.

4. Build state institutions and manage the security-development transition

The institution-building capacity of conflict prevention actors operating in the Asia Pacific should be enhanced – there is, in particular, a gap in the effective provision of security sector reform (SSR) and rule of law assistance. For example, the UN's capacity to provide SSR assistance has been found wanting in Timor-Leste, and it needs to be significantly improved.

As events in Timor-Leste in 2006 and Bougainville after 2005 demonstrate, political and security dynamics in post-conflict settings and the overall health of any peace agreement require close and continuing scrutiny. One possible answer to the exit dilemma is for political oversight to rest with those who have the most to lose from a relapse of violence – such as regional bodies and neighboring states. Within the UN structure, oversight could be provided by informal stakeholder groupings.[6]

Specific proposals:

a. UN DPKO should strengthen its capacity to provide SSR assistance, starting with its capacity for donor coordination and support for the formulation of national security strategies and civilian oversight mechanisms.
b. An informal security guarantee to Timor-Leste – initiated by the UN Security Council and provided perhaps by an interested party such as a neighboring state or regional body – could be an important part of the UN's exit from Timor-Leste, as could the maintenance of oversight by an informal stakeholder grouping.

[6]See, for example, Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict*, op. cit., on the Core Group on East Timor, pp. 191-222. While the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and DPA involvement will end with the transition to a development phase in post-conflict contexts, different UN actors will likely continue to play a role, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The UN Peace Building Commission, which provides support to peace processes in post-conflict countries, is also interested in playing a role in Timor-Leste.

Conflict Prevention in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific

The Asia Pacific region is in the most broadly peaceful era in its history – it has experienced thirty years without inter-state conflict. Extraordinary economic growth has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. Notwithstanding this striking record, however, a host of long-running, low-level internal conflicts continue in Southeast Asia, and several South Pacific states have recent experience of instability. Significant tensions also exist at the inter-state level, which could be amplified by a raft of growing transnational threats such as climate change and resource scarcity.

Dramatic shifts in regional power dynamics are also creating new uncertainty. While for several decades, U.S military strength and its network of alliances have underpinned stability in the region, the rise of China and India may signal the end of this period of American predominance. By 2025 China and India will probably both have overtaken the GDP of all states except the US and Japan;[1] by 2030, China's economy could overtake that of the US.[2] The global financial crisis appears to have accelerated China and India's rise, and China is on track this year to overtake Japan to become the second largest economy globally.[3]

The Asia Pacific's growing economic dominance is accompanied by increasing diplomatic and strategic clout, and the 2009 US National Intelligence Community Estimate describes the region as 'poised to become the long-term power center of the world.'[4] China and India's emergence is also recasting Southeast Asia's geopolitical landscape, as both compete for energy, markets, diplomatic influence, and naval access. States in the region apprehend this strategic flux and the uncertainty surrounding continued US strategic primacy. A number, including Australia, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, have increased their defense spending, amplifying the very strategic uncertainty for which they are preparing.[5]

Who will take responsibility for conflict prevention and conflict management in this transitional period? During any power shift, major power competition can complicate or obstruct efforts to tackle conflicts, even where robust international or regional mechanisms have been established for prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping. In the Asia Pacific, the existing conflict management mechanisms are under-developed.[6]

A review of operational conflict prevention efforts in the region shows that while international organizations, particularly the UN, and regional organizations perform some conflict prevention roles in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, these roles are circumscribed.[7] The constraints upon them flow from the high degree of respect for sovereignty prevalent in the Asia Pacific, but they also have historical, institutional, and political underpinnings. The UN itself faces particular skepticism, including the charge that it and the other Bretton Woods institutions have a relative disinterest in the region, as well as having governance structures that have yet to accommodate the Asia Pacific's accelerating economic and geostrategic importance.[8]

Structural prevention initiatives have been less constrained, with a plethora of actors, including the UN, using statebuilding and development tools to build state resilience, manage transnational threats, and avert violence.[9] A number of multilateral 'track two' networks and confidence-building processes also contribute to conflict prevention in the region. But the sum of all these efforts is still limited.

Given the long-running conflicts and sources of tension in the Asia Pacific, the limited conflict prevention role played by international and regional institutions in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific is at first glance surprising. Yet, as this paper argues, a fair amount of conflict prevention activity has taken place in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, though less by grand design than in an ad hoc fashion, as opportunities have arisen. In the absence of a major, formalized role for international and regional organizations, regional crisis management has drawn in a variety of other actors, including states and NGOs, and seen ad hoc, multi-actor mechanisms assume a particular prominence. A series of case-specific, multi-actor mechanisms have worked well in the region; their good

track record and the ongoing features of the Asia Pacific suggest that they are likely to remain the region's primary conflict management vehicles.

What role can the UN and regional organizations play in this context? This paper argues that in spite of their limitations, they can still make a significant contribution to conflict prevention and management in the Asia Pacific. Their priorities should be to strengthen existing prevention mechanisms; support other actors on a case-by-case basis; and flexibly add in capabilities to facilitate prevention efforts led by others. This report concludes with recommendations on how the UN and other actors can develop new tools and networks to underpin a flexible strategy for prevention in the Asia Pacific.

The first recommendation stresses the importance in the Asia Pacific of a focus on cooperation in functional areas, such as civil-military cooperation in a disaster response context. Such functional cooperation is less constrained by regional sensitivities than full-scale political or security cooperation, and offers the prospect of enabling future political/security cooperation in the region, by allaying concerns about outside involvement.

The analysis within this paper falls into two parts. First, it reviews the nature of crises in the region – highlighting the complexity and diversity of current and potential conflicts, and noting how growing transnational threats may exacerbate these. Second, it analyzes existing conflict prevention mechanisms, beginning with the UN and regional organizations, but also considering states, NGOs and financial institutions as preventive actors. This paper shows that there are significant resources for conflict prevention in the Asia Pacific. The challenge is to harness these in a period of growing strategic uncertainty.

1. Regional Crises

Since the end of the Cold War, low-level internal violence has been the prevailing type of conflict in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. This has arguably contributed to the fragmented nature of conflict prevention in the region: case-specific coalitions of actors have emerged to help deal with specific low-level conflicts. In some cases, conflict management processes have been complicated by tensions arising from poor socio-economic conditions. There is also a risk of inter-state conflict in the region, while transnational issues such as resource scarcity and climate change may foster instability and even conflict.

a. Internal conflicts, current and potential

Internal conflicts persist in the southern part of Thailand, Mindanao in the Philippines, Papua in Indonesia, and in Myanmar. All involve separatist insurgencies fuelled by enduring grievances about representation, access to resource-derived revenues, or employment opportunities, and all have ethnic and/or religious dimensions.

> ## Since the end of the Cold War, low-level internal violence has been the prevailing type of conflict in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

In **Southern Thailand**, violence between the militants and the Thai central government continues, with over 3,400 deaths since the conflict rekindled five years ago.[10] The crisis within the Thai political system has reduced attention to the conflict and slowed peace negotiations. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's government declared itself open to dialogue with the militants, and formulated fresh guidelines towards the conflict, which focus more on education, justice and development. However, the central political turmoil has made the government loath to move too far on this issue, lest it be used against them in a domestic political dispute. This has left the Thai military in charge of the response in the south.

On the Philippine island of **Mindanao**, fighting reignited between the Philippine army and a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rogue command in 2008 after the Philippine Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the Philippine government-MILF draft peace agreement. The court decision damaged the credibility of moderate MILF members who support negotiation, and burnished the credibility of those that want to fight. Contact between the government and the MILF has resumed – talks were

held in December 2009, notwithstanding the pall cast by the massacre by the private militia of a local warlord in Maguindanao a few weeks prior. An International Contact Group comprised of Japan, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the NGOs the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC), the Asia Foundation, Conciliation Resources, and Muhammadiyah has been established to assist with the negotiations process.[11]

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), from which the MILF splintered, is also still an actor in Mindanao's four-decade, stop-start separatist insurgency. The 1976 Philippine government-MNLF agreement has not been fully implemented and has yet to resolve that dimension of the conflict. In addition, the Philippines continues to experience a Communist insurgency, particularly in its south: the New People's Army (NPA) has been battling government forces for 40 years, and anticipated formal talks, the first in five years, have yet to take place.

While the last few years have seen a more positive political and development trajectory in Papua, the situation remains volatile.

Myanmar remains embroiled in the world's longest-running contemporary conflict – over 60 years – with numerous ethnic groups against the military regime. Myanmar's junta has concluded ceasefires with over a dozen of these ethnic groups, but these ceasefires are fragile. Political and development promises made to various groups by the junta have not materialized, and over the last year the military has launched fresh offensives against some of the groups. With elections scheduled for this year and ethnic groups supposed to play an opposition role, Myanmar is heading into a period of considerable uncertainty.

In the Indonesian province of **Papua**,[12] President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has repaired some of the damage wrought by previous efforts to undermine the 2001 special autonomy initiative.[13] A number of Free Papua Movement's (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka's or OPM's*) political demands have been met, and the President has stated that

the over 40-year separatist struggle requires a political rather than military solution. The focus in the province is also shifting from political issues to development, and there has been an increase in development spending. However, violence (by the fragmented OPM or its affiliates against the security sector; as well as ethnic Papuans against immigrants; intra-Papuan tensions; and the targeting of the resources sector, especially Freeport mine) increased in 2009, particularly in the lead up to the legislative elections last April. The military reaction was robust, with accusations of Indonesian security sector intimidation.[14] So while the last few years have seen a more positive political and development trajectory in Papua, the situation remains volatile.

Timor-Leste and the provinces of Aceh in Indonesia and Bougainville in Papua New Guinea are all in the consolidating phase after their respective conflicts. **Timor-Leste** in particular has a tumultuous recent history, and around 550 Australian and New Zealand military personnel remain on the ground, at the Timorese government's request, to help maintain security. Timor-Leste has stabilized politically since the 2006 security crisis and the 2008 assassination attempt on President Jose Ramos Horta, and the Timorese government has taken more of a leading role over the UN mission – for example, the government has assumed responsibility for policing. Many serious problems remain, however. These include a young and largely unemployed population (nearly half of whom are under 15); significant land and food pressures; quasi-militias in the form of martial arts groups; and a highly problematic security sector, which is politicized and rife with internal tensions, and in which the roles of the police and military are still blurred.

Aceh, meanwhile, is enjoying the results of a reasonably successful peace process, with the incorporation of Free Aceh Movement (GAM) militants into democratic political structures. The disarmament of GAM and decommissioning of its weapons, and relocation of non-organic military and police contributed to an upswing in security.[15] Occasional violence in Aceh tends now to stem more from elite competition for Aceh's revenues than from actions against the state. Aceh's growing prosperity has

helped to reinforce the peace, as has public distaste for the involvement of former GAM militants in illegal activities and intimidation.

The winding up of the post-tsunami funding apparatus has created some uncertainty in Aceh, and a few aspects of the peace agreement, such as a truth and reconciliation commission, have not been implemented.   And while dramatic post-tsunami reconstruction has helped to reinforce the peace in tsunami-affected communities, a number of conflict- but not tsunami-affected communities have not received a similar level of donor support, and there is a risk that growing disparity in support and poverty levels might undermine the peace process. Furthermore, the recent discovery of a terrorist training camp in Aceh indicates that such a fragile post-conflict setting can be attractive to terrorists and transnational criminal elements.[16] Notwithstanding these risks, however, the autonomy framework is by and large working, and in the July 2009 presidential election, the reelected Indonesian President received a greater percentage of the votes in Aceh – 90% – than in any other part of Indonesia.[17]

While the 2001 peace agreement in **Bougainville** also involved the granting of autonomy, the situation on the ground is not as positive as in Aceh.[18] Nor has Bougainville received a similar amount of attention from the international donor community or its national government, and its interim decentralization framework and the PNG government-Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) relationship are dysfunctional. Bougainville has not seen a significant improvement in development since the 2005 withdrawal of the UN observer mission,[19] and the south of the province has been restive, with little economic activity or government service provision. The ongoing presence of weapons – with new ones coming in from neighboring Solomon Islands – continues to destabilize the province, particularly its south.

The election of President James Tanis in December 2008 resolved an ABG leadership vacuum, and there are signs that some of these problems might be addressed. But Bougainville remains fragile as it moves towards its 2012 referendum on possible independence, and ongoing

challenges include youth unemployment, and weapons collection and disposal.

Internal conflicts will likely remain the most common type of conflict in the Asia Pacific region in the medium term. Domestic political imperatives have inhibited resolution of the conflicts in Mindanao and Southern Thailand, for example, and Papua (where political concessions have been made and the state-periphery relationship is sounder) and Myanmar both experienced an upsurge in violence last year.

While internal conflict is the predominant type of conflict in the region, multiple inter-state territorial disputes persist and occasionally escalate.

In addition to post-conflict Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific contain a number of other fragile states, including Cambodia, Laos and Papua New Guinea, which have weak institutions of governance and jobless young populations. With limited state resilience, there is a risk such states might experience heightened social and political instability, even conflict, if faced with a significant shock.

b. Inter-state tensions in the Asia Pacific

While internal conflict is the predominant type of conflict in the region, multiple inter-state territorial disputes persist and occasionally escalate. The starkest recent example is the 2008 Thai-Cambodia border crisis, in which the UNESCO World Heritage listing of the Preah Vihear Temple in Cambodia rekindled Thai contestation of the temple and its nearby border, and the situation escalated into a military standoff. Cambodia brought the issue to ASEAN and the UN Security Council, whereas Thailand sought to handle the issue bilaterally. While the two states eventually held bilateral negotiations and tensions lessened, Cambodia has not formally withdrawn its request for the matter to be on the Security Council agenda, so the issue continues to simmer. Thai-Cambodian relations have been further exacerbated by the Cambodian Prime

Minister's appointment of ousted former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra as economic advisor, and Cambodia's subsequent rejection of Thailand's request for Thaksin's extradition.

Other territorial disputes in the region include the islands and waters of the South China Sea, which are contested by the Southeast Asian states of Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, as well as by China and Taiwan; the energy-rich Gulf of Thailand, contested by Thailand and Vietnam; and the Ambalat maritime area, over which ongoing Indonesian-Malaysian tensions heightened last year, with Indonesia accusing Malaysia of a naval incursion into its waters.[20]   In North Asia, territorial disputes persist (such as those between China-Japan and Japan-South Korea), and traditional regional flashpoints include Taiwan and North Korea.

China, if its rise continues, will at some point challenge this US primacy, while India's rise is complicating the regional picture further.

With enduring territorial disputes and a shifting geostrategic landscape dominated by China and to a lesser extent India's rise, Asia's continuing peaceful trajectory is by no means guaranteed.[21]   Discontinuities are always possible, and potential threats to stability are many. At the great power level, China-Japan relations are still fraught, though they have improved from their low point of several years ago; and the US-China relationship, as US President Obama recently declared, will 'shape the 21st Century.'[22]   For several decades Asia-Pacific stability has been premised on US strategic primacy, and the US has managed the region with a traditional hub-and-spokes alliance model. But China, if its rise continues, will at some point challenge this US primacy, while India's rise is complicating the regional picture further.

c. Transnational security challenges

Southeast Asia and the South Pacific also face a host of pressing transnational challenges including food, water and energy scarcity; climate change; lingering effects

of the global financial crisis; terrorism; transnational crime; and pandemics. A number of these challenges are interconnected and can exacerbate each other.[23]

The 2008 food crisis hit Southeast Asia hard, with protests over soybean scarcity in Indonesia and government crackdowns on those hoarding rice in the Philippines.[24] Potable water availability and transboundary water management are growing problems throughout the region. Along the Mekong river basin, for example, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar are downstream of Chinese dam projects which will control the river's flow and have a potentially dramatic effect on those countries' fresh water and food supplies.

Southeast Asia and the South Pacific will be among the regions most affected by climate change and the attendant increase in the number and strength of natural disasters. The Asia Pacific broadly defined is the most natural disaster-prone region – in the last ten years, the region has experienced more than half of the world's disasters.[25] Urbanization and high-density living in Southeast Asia make its population highly vulnerable to such events. Flooding is expected to increase in coastal areas, particularly affecting the low-lying megadelta regions in Southeast Asia and coastal Pacific island villages.[26] Rising temperatures and rising sea levels will increase the risk of illnesses such as malaria, and likely force mass people movements throughout the region.[27] Some of Indonesia's smaller islands and whole Pacific Island states will probably be subsumed. Climate change is therefore regarded in the South Pacific as an existential threat.[28]

The effects of climate change are already being felt by the archipelagic states of Southeast Asia and the low-lying atolls of the South Pacific. Storms are intensifying in the South China Sea, and their patterns are altering: cyclones which once passed over the Philippines on their way to Vietnam are now bouncing back to batter the Philippines a second time, in effect doubling its number of storm events. Rising sea levels are starting to submerge Pacific Island atolls such as Tuvalu and the Carteret Islands within PNG, coastal villages in the South Pacific are emptying as waters rise (the evacuation of Carteret Islanders has

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already begun), and states such as Kiribati are making plans to relocate its population.

Food, water and energy scarcity are all linked challenges, and climate change will serve as a 'major threat multiplier'.[29] Climate change is already exacerbating existing water problems such as the salination of the Mekong Delta; salt water is contaminating acquifers across the region, compromising drinking water.[30] Experts predict that climate change will also cause food shortages in the region due to lower crop yields and declining fish populations.

The risk of significant political and social instability in the region from the global financial crisis has diminished as the recovery has proceeded. In fact Asia, in particular China, India and Indonesia, has experienced the world's most pronounced economic recovery, and has driven a significant amount of broader global growth.[31] However, the financial crisis amplified the stresses on a number of other regional states – including Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Timor-Leste, which all experienced a rise in the numbers of people in poverty[32] – and increased the possibility of instability within those states.

Southeast Asia also faces an ongoing threat from Islamic terrorist groups with links to Al-Qaeda. The threat from Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) has diminished, due in large measure to regional law enforcement cooperation and Indonesia's policing and deradicalization efforts. JI retains some capability, however, as the hotel bombings in Jakarta last July demonstrated, and the recent discovery of an Aceh-based terrorist training camp – seemingly a new grouping which includes disaffected former members of JI and other groups – indicates the durability of the terrorist threat.[33] The militant group Abu Sayaff also remains active in southern Philippines, and the Philippine military has launched further operations against it.

Transnational crime, including drug production and trafficking, sex trafficking, money laundering and identity fraud, is also a serious problem in the region, particularly emanating from states with weak security infrastructure and control over their territory. Laos, for example, has

porous borders with its five neighbors, and over recent years, there has been a significant increase in opium poppy cultivation and opium production and trafficking. Cambodia is susceptible to money laundering as well as drug trafficking. Large-scale quantities of heroin and metamphetamines are produced in territory controlled by the Wa ethnic group within Myanmar, and then trafficked throughout the region and beyond.

Piracy had long plagued the Malacca Straits, one of the world's most heavily used and strategic waterways, through which the vast majority of sea-borne energy passes from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific. The number of attacks has decreased markedly over the last few years, however, as a result of a concerted regional effort that will be discussed later in this paper.

Climate change is now expected to have major geostrategic implications, such as the destabilization of state governments, the fuelling of terrorism, and the mass movement of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Finally, human proximity to birds and livestock in Asia make it the world's greatest reservoir of viruses transmissible to humans. As SARS and the Avian flu virus showed, Asia is a likely source of future pandemics which have the potential to overwhelm the health systems of fragile states.

All of these transnational threats have significant implications for regional security and could exacerbate the region's ongoing conflicts. Natural disasters occurring in Mindanao, Southern Thailand, and Bougainville, for instance, can contribute to instability and worsen the plight of those affected by conflict. Recent flooding in Mindanao has displaced thousands of people already displaced by the conflict there, increasing upheaval and the risk of disease.[34]

Climate change is now expected to have major geostrategic implications, such as the destabilization of state governments, the fuelling of terrorism, and the mass movement of refugees and internally displaced persons.[35]

The US Department of Defense is factoring climate change into US national security strategy.[36] US defense planners are concerned that the humanitarian and relief operations required after climate change-associated events will pose a significant burden on the US military, including its transportation and support assets, and consequently affect its combat readiness posture.[37]

Transnational threats are also likely to be among the drivers of future instability and possibly internal conflict. A major shock to a fragile state's system, for example from a severe pandemic or water shortage, could significantly weaken governments and their institutions, and overwhelm a fragile state's already-reduced capacity to function. Growing food, water and energy scarcity could likewise cause an internal crisis if sub-state groups come into competition over access. And threats such as water and energy scarcity have the potential to inflame inter-state tensions. The continuing drive for energy security, for instance, is intensifying competition between India and China within Myanmar, and could cause conflict between states contesting energy-rich territory such as the South China Sea.

The complexity of conflicts and transnational threats in the Asia Pacific is, if anything, surpassed by the complexity of the mechanisms attempting to respond to them.

The above analysis suggests that, while the main challenge in the Asia Pacific in the near to medium term is likely to remain low-level internal conflicts, there is also a risk of rising inter-state tensions and even inter-state conflicts. The region's many transnational challenges could also generate or exacerbate instability. But these transnational challenges – for example, piracy, resource scarcity and climate change – are also opening up new opportunities for functional cooperation between both Asia Pacific and outside actors.

2. Conflict Prevention Actors and Activities

The complexity of conflicts and transnational threats in the Asia Pacific is, if anything, surpassed by the complexity of the mechanisms attempting to respond to them. The UN, other international organizations and regional bodies have become engaged in conflict prevention efforts – but each faces significant structural obstacles to doing so. Partly as a result of these institutional obstacles, states, NGOs and in particular multi-actor coalitions have increasingly led the way in responding to individual conflicts, often successfully.

The analysis that follows begins by looking at the main international and regional actors in the Asia Pacific, showing why they have only a limited regional role in operational conflict prevention in the region. It then shifts its focus to the other actors that have taken on a greater role in conflict issues as a result. Finally, it turns to structural prevention – and shows that UN funds and agencies, as well as the World Bank, do have a significant role in the Asia Pacific. The contrast between the UN's limited operational role and its more substantial structural activities points to how it might develop a more robust role facilitating prevention activities led by others, discussed in the recommendations section.

a. International Organizations
i. The UN

The UN is not a major conflict management actor in Southeast Asia. Since the 1991 Paris Accords settled the Cambodian conflict, the UN's prominent political and security initiatives in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific have been those in Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Fiji, and Bougainville.

The UN Integrated Mission in Timor Leste (UNMIT) has succeeded several previous UN peacekeeping and statebuilding missions, and has a mandate to provide support to Timor-Leste's electoral process and the Timorese police (with a UN police presence), and to assist the Timorese government with a security sector review.

The UN Secretary-General's good offices mechanism has been in operation in Timor-Leste for a number of years, and the position of the UN Special Representative to the Secretary-General (SRSG), currently held by Ameera Haq, entails meeting with representatives of rival parties, in order to defuse any tensions that arise. The UN has played an important role in maintaining security in Timor-Leste and in supporting the electoral process. But its institution building has been more problematic – its SSR assistance, in particular, was slow, failed to win Timorese government support, and has thus proved largely ineffective.[38]

The UN is also involved in ongoing diplomatic efforts towards **Myanmar**. These arise out of the 1992 human rights mandate for Special Rapporteur and the 1994 General Assembly mandate requesting the UN Secretary-General's involvement (which was interpreted as a good offices mandate). The UN Secretary-General's most recent Special Adviser on Myanmar, Ibrahim Gambari,[39] traveled to Myanmar on a number of occasions, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has made Myanmar a signature issue. The Secretary-General's visit in 2008 after Cyclone Nargis, the first to Myanmar by a UN Secretary-General in 44 years, laid the groundwork for international humanitarian assistance to enter the country, under the coordination of the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) of the UN, ASEAN and Myanmar's regime. Efforts to parlay this successful humanitarian effort into the political arena, however, have been rebuffed by the regime.

The UN has faced the policy dilemma in Myanmar of how to engage a 'recalcitrant' state. While Myanmar under the junta has made some progress on a political process – a roadmap is being implemented, with elections scheduled for this year – it is certainly flawed, and the international community remains divided on how to respond. Divisions within the Security Council and among General Assembly member states have complicated the implementation of the Secretary-General's good offices and circumscribed the role the UN can play in Myanmar. In 2007, China and Russia exercised a joint veto in the Security Council – for the first time since the 1970s – over a proposed resolution on Myanmar. In December 2008, the UN Secretary-General called on member states for more consensus on the issue.

Informal mechanisms have been established,[40] including the Group of Friends of Myanmar (a large grouping, with 14 members, including four ASEAN member states and the five permanent members of the Security Council), but a significant diplomatic breakthrough has yet to be made.

The UN's post-Nargis initiatives were significant acts of policy entrepreneurship in a humanitarian context. But while the cyclone raised expectations about diplomacy, there is still no consensus as to objectives.[41] The UN Secretary-General's July 2009 visit to Myanmar had less impact than his first trip, and the focus on democratization and the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi seems at cross purposes with the regime's focus on the ethnic conflicts and ceasefires. This disconnect has impeded greater diplomatic progress.

The UN has faced the policy dilemma in Myanmar of how to engage a 'recalcitrant' state.

The UN has also had a political and diplomatic role in the Pacific island state of Fiji following its December 2006 coup d'etat. The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) fielded a couple of initial missions to Fiji to explore possibilities for engagement. Then in February 2009, after a request from coup leader Commodore Frank Bainimarama, a joint UN-Commonwealth technical mission was mounted to provide political dialogue support and to lock Fiji's interim government into a dialogue process involving opposition political parties. But in April last year, the interim government sacked the Fijian judiciary, abrogated the constitution, and postponed elections till 2014 – these actions led to two critical UN Secretary-General statements[42] and the suspension of mediation efforts. Commodore Bainimarama also banned major political parties from taking part in talks, and in September prevented the visiting Commonwealth representative from meeting with major political parties – as a result of these actions, the dialogue process has not moved forward.

There has also been a virtual freeze on the number of Fijian participants in UN missions.[43] Fiji's involvement in peacekeeping is a long-standing source of pride and

revenue to Fijians, and is therefore a potential point of leverage with the regime. Some analysts believe that this creative, though unofficial, sanction is fraught, however, because other states in similar circumstances (such as Bangladesh) continue to provide staff for UN missions, and such missions lack qualified personnel, in any event. Balancing the desire to sanction Fiji with the needs of peacekeeping operations illustrates the difficulty of competing imperatives across UN Departments.

The UN also had a peace monitoring role in **Bougainville**, in the form of the UN Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) from 1998-2003 and its successor the UN Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB) from 2004-2005. These missions, in collaboration with the Australian-led regional Peace Monitoring Group, monitored the ceasefire and provided support to the peace process. The 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement set out a weapons disposal plan, and provided for elections for an autonomous government and a referendum on independence 10 to 15 years thereafter. In May 2005, the UN mission assessed the weapons disposal plan as complete and facilitated international observers at the resulting election, after which the mission wound down.

The UN faces significant constraints on its conflict prevention role.

Since that time the UN Development Program (UNDP) has provided support to social cohesion and reconciliation processes. However, the continuing presence of weapons, along with political and social instability in Bougainville, made the UN mission's 2005 withdrawal seem premature; and DPA quietly reengaged. DPA has since pulled back somewhat after the resolution of Bougainville's leadership vacuum suggested a more concerted local effort to stabilize the province; and a gun control program (run by UNDP's Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery, or BCPR) has also been implemented.

In addition to these efforts, DPA has had smaller, low-key political initiatives in other regional states in which other actors have had a more prominent role, such as the Philippines. DPA's regional role has involved short missions

to crisis zones, and confidence- and relationship-building efforts with governments and other relevant parties. For example, DPA has sought to make clear to parties that they can request the Secretary-General's good offices without involving the Security Council or the General Assembly.

What accounts for the UN's relatively limited conflict prevention role in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific? Certainly there has been a fair amount of activity surrounding operational conflict prevention within the UN system over the last few years, particularly within DPA, the UN's primary conflict prevention actor. DPA has responsibility for mediation, preventive diplomacy, the Secretary-General's good offices, electoral support, and the oversight of political missions. The UN Secretary-General reaffirmed conflict prevention as a core UN objective within the DPA strengthening agenda,[44] as a result of which DPA's mediation capacity has increased. A Mediation Support Unit (MSU) provides analytical and operational support to mediation efforts, and a mediation standby team – a one-year standing capacity of deployable experts in general mediation, power sharing, constitution drafting, security sector arrangements, and transitional justice and human rights – was established in 2008. There has also been an increasing focus on Special Political Missions as a means to provide a range of support to national actors short of the military functions associated with peacekeeping operations. The UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), which provided light monitoring of Nepal's two armies and their weapons as well as assistance to the April 2008 election of a constituent assembly, is an interesting example of a mission with its political mandate limited by the political sensitivities of both Nepal and its powerful neighbor India regarding the UN role.[45]

The UN faces significant constraints on its conflict prevention role, however. On the '**supply side**', the UN is not funded to be a conflict prevention organization, even though conflict prevention is a core priority. While global demand for UN preventive diplomacy is at an all-time high and the cost of prevention has proved to be far less than after-the-fact peacekeeping, resources for prevention remain limited. Significantly fewer resources go to DPA for prevention than to the Department of

Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) for peacekeeping. DPA's strengthening reforms have included some more funding, but demand for conflict prevention will likely continue to outstrip the capacity to supply, and DPA is likely to remain overstretched. The UN also faces the ongoing challenge of how to raise funds for conflict prevention from reluctant member states, a task complicated by the absence of robust indicators that past conflict prevention efforts have in fact prevented conflict.[46]

Considerable constraints exist on the '**demand side**' as well. Asia Pacific states have proved unwilling to request the Secretary-General's good offices, and some UN offers of political and security assistance have been rebuffed.[47] In 2007 DPA proposed the establishment of a regional office in Singapore – this proposal would have given DPA a regional platform from which to build states' mediation and dialogue capacity and promote collective responses to regional security challenges. However, it was rejected by regional states.

The UN's circumscribed role can be attributed in part to the importance in the region of the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. Southeast Asian and Pacific Island states tend to prize their sovereignty highly and can be acutely sensitive to perceived intrusions thereon – a posture influenced by still-potent memories of colonialism.[48] This is particularly the case with external involvement in a state's domestic affairs, but it can also extend to involvement in regional political and security issues.[49] Indonesia is sensitive to external involvement in Papua, for instance, which removes the possibility of third-party mediation in the province.[50] States like the Philippines are more amenable than others to the UN and other outside actors playing a role in the region, but even its government is reluctant to countenance formal UN involvement where Philippines' internal affairs are concerned.

The UN's lack of demonstrable success in Myanmar, and the difficulties that persist in the security sector in Timor-Leste have done little to offset regional concerns about UN political/security involvement. There is also some residual concern, scarcely lessened by the current

Secretary-General being South Korean, that the UN is a Western vehicle and that any UN assistance amounts to 'intervention'.[51] And a perception exists among Southeast Asian and Pacific Island states that UN involvement in any internal issue internationalizes that issue, and thereby risks the label and attendant stigma of being a 'failed' or 'failing' state.[52] UN officials have at times been told to focus their political and diplomatic efforts on Africa instead. Furthermore, there is a regional preference for quiet, intra-party resolution of disputes and crises, and for conflict resolution processes based on informal diplomacy rather than formal mechanisms.[53]

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As a result of these constraints, it is unlikely that the UN will field many more peacekeeping or political missions in the region along the lines of Cambodia and Timor-Leste. UN's political and security record in Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Fiji and Bougainville has been mixed, sometimes because of events beyond its control. DPA has not had sustained in-country engagement in the region, and has had limited opportunities to build local dispute resolution and negotiation capacities. But DPA Asia Pacific has an experienced leadership, which is well aware of the constraints upon it and understands the need to engage creatively with the opportunities with which the UN is presented.

The comparative advantages of the UN system include its convening power, field staff expertise, the wide range of tools at its disposal, and its logistical capacity to shepherd dialogue processes. It can engage with state governments as well as militias and can have a long-term time frame – both of these can be hard for bilateral actors to achieve. The UN is viewed in many parts of the world as a neutral body, and can therefore bring legitimacy to a process, as well as offer lessons learned from similar situations around the world. But the UN also has weaknesses, chief among

which is that not all see it as unbiased, particularly in Asia. UN agencies' lack of coordination can also present a challenge in conflict, post-conflict, and fragile state contexts.

ii. Other international organizations

The UN is not the only international organization involved in operational conflict prevention in the Asia Pacific – the **Commonwealth** and the **Organization of the Islamic Conference** (OIC) are two other international actors operating in the region, and while neither have played an especially prominent conflict prevention role in the Asia Pacific, they warrant brief mention. The Commonwealth has played a role in some matters involving Commonwealth countries (most of which are former British colonies), for example its joint mediation efforts with the UN in Fiji. The Commonwealth has since fully suspended Fiji's membership from the Commonwealth – this is only the second time the Commonwealth has taken such a step.[54] The Commonwealth has played less of a role in other Commonwealth countries in the South Pacific; in PNG and Solomon Islands, for example, regional power (and fellow Commonwealth member) Australia has taken more of a leading role. The Commonwealth's effectiveness in Southeast Asia is circumscribed by the fact that only Malaysia and Singapore are member states.

> **ASEAN is constituted to be more reactive than proactive, and any conflict prevention function ASEAN performs depends on the inclinations of its Secretary-General.**

The OIC acts via member states, such as Malaysia, and has played some role in Southeast Asia – for instance, it has been involved in the Southern Philippines for several decades, from sending missions in the 1970s through to its current involvement as a third-party actor in the MNLF process. However, its involvement is also limited to disputes involving its members; and some governments fighting Islamic insurgencies have had some concern that the OIC might sympathize with the insurgents instead.

b. Principal regional organizations
i. ASEAN

While ASEAN is Southeast Asia's main regional organization, it has not been a major conflict prevention actor.[55] It has been constrained by its cornerstone principles – set out in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and reaffirmed in the 2008 ASEAN Charter – of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. It did not become heavily involved in Timor-Leste after the post-ballot violence in 1999, for instance, treating it as internal matter for Indonesia; and it has not played a role in Papua either. Nor has ASEAN been involved in the Southern Thailand conflict or in Spratly Islands disputes,[56] and its involvement in the 2008 Thai-Cambodian conflict was brief.

In addition to the deep political obstacles to ASEAN becoming more interventionist, there have been significant institutional constraints. Conflict prevention is not part of ASEAN's explicit remit, and ASEAN lacks formal conflict resolution mechanisms.[57] ASEAN is constituted to be more reactive than proactive, and any conflict prevention function ASEAN performs depends on the inclinations of its Secretary-General. ASEAN's involvement in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis, for instance, was the result of the current proactive ASEAN Secretary-General, Surin Pitsuwan, seizing an opportunity. Recent efforts by its Secretary-General to enhance ASEAN's conflict prevention capacities, with the support of the UN and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), have met with some member state resistance, although there are signs of movement, with the advertisement for the position of UN-ASEAN Relations Officer. Furthermore, any role ASEAN might play has been constrained by a lack of capacity within its Secretariat, with its small annual budget of under US$10 million. So even when the intention is there, ASEAN has lacked the infrastructure to be a major security actor.

Another institutional constraint stems from ASEAN's traditional *modus operandi*, which is marked by consultation and consensus and is known as the 'ASEAN Way'. Progress is made through leaders' meetings and

agreements, and it is hard for issues to be progressed if these meetings are cancelled. Like all member-state institutions, ASEAN is vulnerable to the domestic travails of its member states, particularly if they hold the Chair. The cancelled summits as a result of host Thailand's political upheaval caused ASEAN to lose some momentum.

As an organization driven by consensus, ASEAN is the sum of its member states – and several of these are not robust democracies. This has clear implications for ASEAN's policy-making. Rivalries exist between member states, including as to which state takes a leadership role within the organization. Some differences also exist between older member states and the 'new ASEANs' of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam on issues ranging from trade/economic initiatives to human rights. Myanmar itself has been something of a test case for ASEAN and its policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. ASEAN states have long maintained that policy needs to focus on Myanmar's stability, and that engagement, not sanctions, is the right approach. And ASEAN, with its consensus-based approach, has needed Myanmar's support.

Still, there has been some shift in ASEAN's policy towards Myanmar. In September 2007, Singapore as ASEAN Chair issued a statement criticizing Myanmar for the use of deadly force against demonstrators,[58] and then criticized Myanmar's reluctance to accept international assistance after Nargis. In May 2009 Thailand as ASEAN Chair expressed 'grave concern' over the recent trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, called again for her immediate release, and stated that Myanmar 'as a responsible member of ASEAN, has the responsibility to protect and promote human rights.'[59] ASEAN's statements on Myanmar and the use of 'Responsibility to Protect' language are noteworthy changes. Notwithstanding the tougher language, however, ASEAN has not taken significantly stronger action against Myanmar, such as suspending military ties.[60] Some member states, for example Indonesia, have bridled at the slow speed of change on Myanmar and on human rights more broadly.[61]

In 2003, ASEAN states decided to create by 2015 an ASEAN Community with Economic, Socio-Cultural and Political

Security pillars, and blueprints for each of these pillars have been prepared. The 2008 adoption of a Charter that codifies ASEAN's goals and endows it with a legal identity is also a significant development. But it is not yet clear how this Charter will be implemented, nor, more broadly, how ASEAN will evolve.

ASEAN has had a conflict prevention impact in the region precisely by being an expression of the collective desire for the stability required for economic growth.

Reconciling the new rules-based character of ASEAN under its Charter with the traditional consensus and consultation will be an ongoing challenge, as will reconciling non-interference and sovereignty with the Charter's 'collective responsibility' for security.[62] There had been some hopes that the Charter would be more robust in promoting collective security, and that the human rights body it was to establish would have some powers of enforcement. The need for ratification by all member states has resulted in a less robust Charter than some had sought, however; and while the creation of a human rights body shows some acceptance of R2P, it has no monitoring or enforcement mechanisms and focuses instead on the promotion of human rights.

ASEAN member states' key priority remains the consolidation and expansion of economic growth, and therefore ASEAN is primarily an economic vehicle. In fact, ASEAN has had a conflict prevention impact in the region precisely by being an expression of the collective desire for the stability required for economic growth. The political and security sphere is no doubt the most challenging for ASEAN, and its activities have been mainly confidence building, quiet discussion of disputes, and behind-the-scenes diplomacy. But while ASEAN's next two Secretary-Generals are from Vietnam and Brunei, which might slow movement into the political and security realm, there has been a modicum of momentum around ASEAN's political and security role.

In 1993, ASEAN member states agreed to establish the **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)** as a multilateral forum for discussion of regional political and security issues. The ARF also draws in broader regional powers, including the US, China, Japan, Russia, and Australia, as dialogue partners. While it has value as a venue for dialogue and for relationship- and confidence-building, the ARF has not played a large dispute resolution role – it was not even used as the forum to discuss North Korean nuclearization, notwithstanding the membership of all relevant states.

But the ARF has moved more squarely into the realm of disaster recovery and humanitarian relief. In May 2009, under ARF auspices, the US and the Philippines co-sponsored a civilian-led, military-supported disaster-relief exercise designed to enhance member state interoperability, including of search and rescue assets, engineering reconstruction, and medical assistance.[63] This exercise drew in 26 Asia Pacific states, marked the first time the ARF has become operationalized, and is a notable example of growing collaboration in humanitarian and disaster response contexts.

ii. Pacific Islands Forum

While the Pacific Islands Forum, the South Pacific's main regional body on economic and political policy, has been more amenable to a political and security role than ASEAN, it has also faced constraints. Created in 1971 (as the South Pacific Forum), its membership consists of 16 South Pacific states, including Australia and New Zealand, and member

The main comparative advantage of regional organizations in conflict prevention should be their nuanced understanding of regional dynamics, including regional crises.

states' leaders meet annually to craft regional responses to economic, political, social and development challenges. Trade integration was an initial priority for the PIF, but the Forum then acquired more of a security dimension through a succession of treaties – the 1992 Honiara Treaty, the 1997 Aitutaki Declaration, the 2000 Biketawa Declaration, and the 2002 Nasonini Declaration – which

dealt variously with law enforcement and regional security cooperation. The Biketawa Declaration in particular was a watershed document: while reaffirming the principle of non-interference, it laid out guidelines for collective action in response to a crisis or the request of a member state. This declaration not only provided an important mechanism for crisis response, but also overcame a traditional disinclination to encroach upon any aspect of state sovereignty. As such, it represented a pronounced shift in member states' willingness to respond to crises within other member states.[64]

The Biketawa Declaration formed the legal basis for the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a security and capacity-building operation which deployed in July 2003, at the then Solomon Islands Prime Minister's request and in response to Solomon Islands' political and security crisis. Fourteen other Forum states, including New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, currently contribute around 220 troops, 300 civilian police and 160 civilian staff to this PIF-endorsed mission. The declaration was also invoked in response to Nauru's request for assistance with its economic and financial crisis – resulting in the Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru program (PRAN) – and it has been the mechanism by which election observer missions have taken place in Bougainville, Solomon Islands, and Fiji.

In 2005, in another shift from staunch adherence to sovereignty, PIF leaders endorsed the Pacific Plan, which provides a framework for regional cooperation and integration under the pillars of economic growth, good governance, security, and sustainable development. Initiatives include deeper trade and economic integration, and fisheries sector and transport (air and maritime) cooperation.[65] This effort to pool governance in functional areas stems from a desire to increase efficiencies, reduce duplication, and build critical mass within the isolated, sparsely populated region. Implementation of the Plan is slow and politically charged, however, as sensitivities continue to surround the cession of sovereignty it requires.

The main comparative advantage of regional organizations in conflict prevention should be their

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nuanced understanding of regional dynamics, including regional crises. Certainly, the collective desire to maintain regional stability also gives them a compelling strategic interest in resolving regional conflicts. While in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands this interest can be trumped by sovereignty concerns, the PIF and to an extent even ASEAN are relaxing the automatic application of noninterference. Regional organizations' weaknesses at crisis management can include bringing to bear existing regional and bilateral rivalries, which might give rise to a vested interest in certain outcomes.

Like ASEAN, the PIF's emphasis on consensus (in this case, the 'Pacific Way') can make it difficult to reach decisions, and the doctrine of noninterference still resonates in member states. As with ASEAN, the PIF also has logistical constraints. Its Secretariat cannot mount a security or capacity-building operation unless its bigger members, particularly Australia or New Zealand, provide a significant amount of the required resources and infrastructure. And as with Myanmar for ASEAN, Fiji has posed a dilemma for the Forum – it has challenged Forum unity, exposed considerable divisions within the organization, and tested the limits of the 'Pacific Way'.[66]

In January 2009 Forum leaders announced that Fiji's interim government had until May 1 2009 to begin preparations for elections by the end of 2009, including announcing a firm election date.[67] These steps were not taken, and in a unanimous decision, member states suspended Fiji from Forum meetings and events. Forum leaders reaffirmed this position at their annual meeting in August.[68]

However, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, which are members with Fiji of the subregional Melanesian Spearhead Group, had been reluctant to suspend Fiji. While states such as Australia and New Zealand maintained a tough line towards Fiji's interim government throughout, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu sought a quieter, more conciliatory approach – they reportedly made private overtures to Fiji and even a collective representation on Fiji's behalf at the August PIF meeting.[69] Fiji also demonstrates how the dilemma of dealing with a renegade state is made more acute when that state is one

of the key regional powers and – in Fiji's case – home of the regional organization's Secretariat and of many other regional bodies.

States play an important conflict management role in Southeast Asia – Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia have all been actors of some leverage.

The Forum has also addressed transnational security challenges, most recently and compellingly climate change, with a call for global action at its August meeting.

c. Other conflict prevention actors

In the absence of the UN or regional organizations playing especially large conflict management roles in the Asia Pacific, the breach has been filled by a plethora of other actors such as states and NGOs. It has also been filled by multi-actor mechanisms, which draw in various conflict prevention actors, on an ad hoc basis, and have a reasonable record of success.

i. States

States play an important conflict management role in Southeast Asia – Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia have all been actors of some leverage. Malaysia has been prominent as a third-party actor, for example its good offices role vis a vis the MILF in Mindanao. Indonesia was co-chair with France of the Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia, and had a role in the mid-1990s negotiations in Mindanao. In the last couple of years Indonesia has become increasingly active in the region, as its democracy has consolidated, its stability increased and its prosperity grown. The Indonesian government has used the Acehnese peace process and former GAM militants to seek to delegitimize radicalism and demonstrate the benefits of negotiation to other militants in the region. Indonesia has also been involved in diplomatic efforts towards Myanmar, including helping to establish an informal Focus Group drawing in Myanmar, China and India, and the UN – Myanmar showed a degree of openness towards this

initiative – though India subsequently withdrew, giving 'national interests' as the reason.

In the South Pacific, states have often preferred quiet diplomacy between the region's leaders and elder statesmen, for example PNG Prime Minister Somare's (ultimately unsuccessful) efforts to encourage Fiji's Commodore Bainimarama to attend last January's special Forum meeting.

China is playing a growing role in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

States experiencing internal conflicts can prefer states to play a third-party role, in the belief that those states will be more sympathetic towards them rather than the militants. States as conflict prevention actors can have more room to maneuver than multilateral institutions, and can do so at often greater speed – this allows for more informal management of disputes, based on connections between leaders or foreign ministers. Another important attribute is the 'jurisdiction' states have in refereeing ceasefire violations and other disputes between the parties. But states within a region can also bring the 'baggage' of inter-state frictions. Malaysia's role in Mindanao, for instance, is complicated by enduring Philippine-Malaysian tensions over the Malaysian state of Sabah.

Notwithstanding regional skepticism about outside involvement, European states and actors have sometimes played a third-party role in conflicts in the Asia Pacific. Norway, for instance, is a third-party actor in the process involving the Communist insurgency in the Philippines. Muslim countries from outside the region, often operating under OIC auspices, have also played a role in conflicts involving Muslim actors. As an example, Libya was involved in the facilitation of talks with the MNLF, and is a member of the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao.

Under the Obama Administration, the US has focused in a more strategic manner on the Asia Pacific and its institutions. President Obama's November 2009 visit to North Asia and the APEC meeting in Singapore and his planned 2010 trip to Indonesia and Australia, in addition to

Secretary of State Clinton's decision to make Asia her first foreign destination last year (the first Secretary of State to ever visit the ASEAN Secretariat) and her subsequent trip to attend the ARF summit (at which the US signed ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation), have all reinforced this message of commitment to the region.

Renewed US attention towards the Asia Pacific and its regionalism can alter the dynamics of conflict resolution; it appears to have provided some impetus to the revival of the MILF peace process in Mindanao,[70] and seems to have encouraged Myanmar to be responsive to engagement with the US. In September 2009 US policy shifted to incorporate both engagement with the Myanmar junta as well as the maintenance of sanctions. This policy reassessment was predicated on the view that neither the previous US policy of sanctions nor the ASEAN policy of engagement had been effective.

China is playing a growing role in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. It is the 'primary economic patron' of the fragile states Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, and has a significant development, economic and diplomatic presence in Timor-Leste, the Philippines and Indonesia.[71] China's provision of aid to PNG, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Niue, Fiji and the Federated States of Micronesia, which has stemmed in part from its diplomatic competition with Taiwan, appears to now be similar in amount to assistance from donors such as New Zealand and Japan, though still much less than Australia's level of aid to the region.[72]

Australia and New Zealand also play conflict management roles in the region, particularly in the South Pacific. In addition to their significant aid programs, they have been leading actors in the security, capacity-building, and peace process support missions in Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands and Bougainville. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) contains an International Deployment Group (IDG), one of the few deployable civilian police capabilities worldwide. AFP personnel have played a significant role in stabilization and capacity-building operations in the region, including in Solomon Islands, Tonga, PNG, Nauru, and Vanuatu in the South Pacific, and in Timor-Leste.

Australia's deployment of additional troops to Timor-Leste in February 2008 after the assassination attempt on Timor-Leste's President might be viewed as a preventive deployment, with the aim of stopping the political and security crisis from escalating further.

ii. Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

Over the last decade there has been a notable increase in third-party actors worldwide, including NGOs, offering mediation/facilitation and peace process support services. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) are two NGOs with significant roles in Southeast Asia; HD is particularly active and has since 2006 had a regional office based in Singapore. It facilitated the first set of negotiations between Aceh and Indonesia, between 2000-2003, and played a 'good offices' role in Myanmar. It also assisted Timor-Leste's President with a national dialogue process, and provided support to the Timorese government-petitioning soldiers dialogue. HD maintains low-key involvement in Thailand and remains heavily involved in Philippine processes: it provides support to Norway in its facilitating role between the Philippine government and the Communist Party (and its military arm); to the process to implement the 1996 Philippine government-MNLF agreement; and to the reviving MILF-Philippine government process. In addition, it is a member and serves as the secretary of the International Contact Group on the Philippines, formed in late 2009 to support the latter.[73] HD Centre is also developing a project to assist the ASEAN secretariat in capacity building.

A second set of negotiations on Aceh were facilitated by CMI and concluded in the 2005 Aceh Peace Accord between GAM and the Indonesian government. A number of factors contributed to peace in Aceh, including the willing and able national leadership team of Indonesian President Yudhoyono and then Vice President Jusuf Kalla, GAM's readiness to negotiate and acceptance of an outcome less than independence, a war-weary population, and a catalyzing event in the December 2004 tsunami. CMI's Chair, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, had the requisite standing and leverage to encourage progress

and set in place an effective monitoring mechanism jointly composed of EU and ASEAN forces.

The London-based NGO Conciliation Resources has worked to support democracy and train civil society in Fiji. It has also analyzed the dynamics of conflict resolution in Bougainville, including the crucial role played by women in ending the hostilities, and remains engaged in the Philippines through the promotion of a 'comparative learning' project between the Philippines and Colombia and as a member of the International Contact Group on the Philippines referred to above.

Multi-actor mechanisms have shown themselves to be more viable in the region than formal institutional conflict prevention structures.

NGOs' comparative advantages include their agility, an often deep understanding of local dynamics, a capacity to be low-profile and form long-term relationships with militants and other relevant parties, an absence of bureaucratic protocol, and the perception of parties to a conflict that they lack a stake in the outcome. As a result, they can play a valuable role in expanding the stakeholders involved in a process. Their obvious weakness is a lack of leverage, which can make them a less powerful referee between the parties, and underlines the necessity of collaboration with official actors.[74]

iii. Multi-actor mechanisms

Due to the constraints upon some actors in the region, crisis management in the Asia Pacific has often involved a complex pattern of interactions between a number of actors.[75] These multi-actor mechanisms have shown themselves to be more viable in the region than formal institutional conflict prevention structures. The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), for example, was a hybrid mission, drawing in the EU; ASEAN states Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei; and Norway and Switzerland. AMM's mandate was to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement – this included monitoring GAM's disarmament and the decommissioning

of its weapons, and the relocation of non-organic police and military personnel. While it was a civilian mission, former military personnel also took part as some of the mandated tasks (such as monitoring decommissioning and demobilization) required military training. The AMM, which deployed in September 2005 and wound down in December 2006 after elections were held in Aceh, is regarded as a successful operation, in which ASEAN and the EU played complementary roles. ASEAN's involvement was useful for symbolic purposes and to assuage any regional concerns, while the EU contingent provided important logistical support.

There have also been multinational efforts in Southeast Asia to combat transnational threats such as piracy.

The International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao has been comprised of military personnel from Malaysia, Brunei and Libya, plus a development adviser from Japan and representatives from both the Philippine government and the MILF. Established in 2004 by the OIC to monitor ceasefires, promote the peace process, and enable economic and social development, it has served as a largely effective referee, reducing the number of armed engagements in Mindanao and becoming generally regarded as a 'critical bulwark of the peace process'.[76] While it was largely in limbo after the 2008 Supreme Court decision, the recent revival of the peace process has led to the recommencement of its activities.[77]

The South Pacific provides two examples of multinational operations led by a regional state, Australia. The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands initially comprised of over 2,000 military, police and civilians from Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Fiji and Tonga, with Australia and New Zealand providing the bulk of the personnel and logistical support. Headed by a civilian Special Coordinator, RAMSI soon restored law and order and helped to stabilize Solomon Islands' finances. The mission continues to provide assistance in the areas of law and justice, machinery of government, and economic governance. While its structural foundation renders it vulnerable to changing alignments within Solomon Islands parliament, and it has

at times had a fractious relationship with various Solomon Islands governments, RAMSI has remained broadly popular among the Solomon Islands population. The mission has also reinforced the importance of deployed civilian police in statebuilding operations, in order to maintain law and order, pursue criminal investigations, and train local police in statebuilding operations.[78]

The second example from the South Pacific is the 1998-2003 Australian-led Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) in Bougainville, which replaced the New Zealand-led Truce Monitoring Group. The PMG was comprised of around 300 civilians and unarmed military personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu and Fiji. Its role, in collaboration with the UN political mission, was to monitor the ceasefire and provide information on and build confidence in the peace process.

There have also been multinational efforts in Southeast Asia to combat transnational threats such as piracy. A regional monitoring and enforcement effort involving coordinated naval patrols, a joint air surveillance initiative ('Eye in the Sky'), and intelligence sharing, has contributed to a dramatic drop in attacks in the hitherto piracy-plagued Malacca Straits in the last few years.[79] The littoral states of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore were the primary actors in this initiative, but other regional states such as Thailand and the Philippines were also involved. The success of this multinational initiative is all the more significant because states worked around their sovereignty concerns to address the transboundary challenge.

The TCG (the UN, ASEAN and the Myanmar government) mechanism to coordinate relief and recovery efforts in the Myanmar Delta after Cyclone Nargis demonstrates effective collaboration between international and regional organizations, albeit in a humanitarian context. While ASEAN's participation provided important symbolism (and the Myanmar regime had sought its involvement), this marked the first occasion on which the ASEAN Secretariat was operationalized, and ASEAN lacked the requisite capacity and operational expertise. These were duly provided by the UN, with World Bank support.

While it seems unlikely that the TCG mechanism will expand beyond its current remit (the junta is unwilling to extend it geographically or functionally), it has spurred broader functional cooperation between the UN and ASEAN. Prior to Nargis, UN-ASEAN cooperation had proceeded in fits and starts – in marked contrast to the UN's more systematic cooperation with the African Union, for example. In December 2006 ASEAN acquired observer status at the General Assembly, and a 2007 UN-ASEAN Memorandum of Understanding gave the relationship a political orientation driven by DPA and ESCAP, rather than the development orientation it had when the relationship was managed by UNDP. But DPA-ASEAN annual seminars on conflict prevention ceased in 2007 because of a lack of concrete results and ongoing funding. And part of the relationship's post-Nargis momentum has been lost as a result of the postponement of the third joint UN-ASEAN summit because of Thailand's turmoil.[80] DPA has sought to expand support to the ASEAN Secretariat, in particular its conflict prevention capacity. Although progress in this regard has been slow due to ASEAN member state sensitivity, in early 2010 DPA began recruitment for a UN-ASEAN Relations Officer.

iv. Other organizations and confidence-building networks and processes

A number of other organizations, networks and confidence-building processes are also part of the conflict prevention framework in the region. Broader Asia Pacific organizations include the Six Party Talks on North Korean nuclearization (which draws in the US, North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan and Russia); ASEAN+3 (ASEAN states plus China, Japan and South Korea); the East Asia Summit (ASEAN+3 states, and India, Australia and New Zealand); and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, China, Japan and South Korea, with the US, Australia, New Zealand and eight other Asian and Pacific rim states).

Apart from the explicit conflict prevention role of the North-Asia-focused Six Party Talks, only APEC has played an overt conflict prevention role. Its 1999 meeting coincided with the post-ballot violence in Timor-Leste, and as a result APEC leaders applied pressure to Indonesia to help end the violence. APEC's initial economic agenda broadened post-September 11 2001 to incorporate security, and since that time its meetings have generated a number of initiatives to address transnational threats such as terrorism.

In the South Pacific, members of the subregional Melanesian Spearhead Group sometimes use diplomatic measures in support of other member states, for example their conciliatory diplomacy to Fiji and previous statements on the RAMSI mission.

There have been fewer constraints on international and regional organizations engaging in activities with a structural conflict prevention dimension in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

The Shangri-La Dialogue, the annual 1.5 track meeting hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore, serves a confidence- and relationship-building purpose: it enables Asia Pacific defense ministers to present positions in general sessions and to hold sideline meetings.[81] The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) is a second track political and security dialogue involving officials in their private capacities and other experts in the region. Smaller confidence-building mechanisms include the Asia Pacific Program for Senior Military Officers (APPSMO), run by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, which seeks to forge relationships between senior military officers throughout the region and beyond. The International Crisis Group (ICG) also plays a significant role in analyzing the region's current and potential conflicts and post-conflict settings and making recommendations to the bilateral and multilateral policy community.

Obstacles facing all conflict prevention actors

Of the many problems inherent to any conflict management process, four are worth mentioning in the Asia Pacific context. First, states in crisis often have weak governments which are vulnerable to change. When they change, as they did in Thailand, negotiators must form new relationships and reestablish trust, which slows down any dialogue-facilitation efforts.

Second, it can be difficult to find the right militant counterparts with whom to negotiate, particularly where militant groups are shadowy and fragmented, as in Southern Thailand and Papua. The authority and influence of figures with whom prospective mediators have negotiated in the region have at times been open to question.[82] This can be due to a militant generational divide. Older militants in Papua, Mindanao and Southern Thailand, sometimes living abroad, tend to cling less steadfastly to the notion of independence, and be more likely to accept approaches from mediators – sometimes without buy-in from younger, more hard-core militants in the field. The Indonesian government, for example, flew in for discussions an OPM founder who had spent 50 years in exile – but this initiative was less successful than had been hoped, and seemed to accentuate intra-OPM rifts.[83]

Third is the delicacy of balancing the competing imperatives of forging an agreement, which requires secrecy, with the need at some stage for an adequate consultation process to achieve buy-in from important stakeholders such as legislatures and the judiciary, so the agreement is endorsed. The brokering and then scuppering of the 2008 Philippine government-MILF agreement demonstrates this problem, as well as the need for a communications strategy to manage stakeholder expectations.[84]

Finally, coopting spoilers is a critical component of any peace process. Spoilers can include those militants deriving economic benefit from war, and also sometimes a military that is inadequately incentivized to disengage from a conflict that is revenue raising or career enhancing.[85] The Acehnese experience shows how effective dealmaking by national leadership can help to coopt a military.

d. Structural prevention actors

The greatest indicator of conflict is a history of conflict,[86] and medium to long-term measures to avoid conflict, prevent its recrudescence, and build resilience in at-risk states are a critical component of effective conflict management. There have been fewer constraints on international and regional organizations engaging in activities with a structural conflict prevention dimension in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. This is largely because states in the region have been more accepting of multilateral organizations – even the UN – performing such functions. Prominent multilateral structural prevention actors in the region include the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) within the UN system, and the multilateral financial institutions the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) – it is of worth to survey some of their activities which have the greatest conflict prevention impact.

UNDP's role in the region entails the provision of policy advice and technical assistance on issue areas such as governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment and energy. In conflict-affected Southern Thailand, for example, UNDP assists with building local government capacity, including disaster management in the face of frequent landslides and flooding, and also focuses on natural resource management, the impact of climate change, and the rise of food and oil prices. UNDP has a sizeable presence in Myanmar (though with a restricted mandate allowing no funding to the regime) and helped coordinate the post-Nargis humanitarian response.

UNDP has a regional center in Bangkok, which provides advisory support to the UNDP Country Offices and helps promote regional capacity building. Crisis Prevention and Recovery is one of UNDP's four main priorities in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, as it is globally, and UNDP's BCPR is active in crisis prevention and disaster recovery in the region. In Bougainville, for example, BCPR is involved in institution- and capacity building, tension-reduction

interventions, and, where required, post-conflict trauma support.

UNDP has a main office in Fiji in the South Pacific, from which it serves most Pacific Island states, with separate offices in PNG and Samoa and a sub-office in Solomon Islands. Its work includes building capacity to manage crises such as the natural disasters to which the region is susceptible.

OCHA's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok coordinates the UN's humanitarian response to natural disasters and conflict. This entails the provision of emergency relief and recovery efforts, such as relief to the region's numerous internally displaced persons.[87] Established in 2005, OCHA's regional office played an important emergency response role after the 2007 Jakarta floods, the 2008 floods in Laos, and Nargis in Myanmar. As well as its regional headquarters, OCHA has staff in Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, PNG and Thailand.

Increasingly, OCHA has been collaborating with regional organizations such as ASEAN. OCHA and ASEAN worked closely together on the post-Nargis emergency response, and OCHA supports ASEAN's Disaster Management Cooperation mechanism.[88] OCHA is also working with the ARF as its regional humanitarian coordination role expands – this includes civil-military coordination, since the military is the first responder organization in many Asia Pacific states.

The biggest UN actor in the region is its regional development arm, **ESCAP.** ESCAP's work includes supporting regional policy responses to transnational challenges: its 2009 *Economic Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*, for instance, analyzes and recommends regional responses to the 'triple threat' of the economic crisis, food-fuel price volatility and climate change.[89] ESCAP promotes regional economic, energy security and water resource management cooperation mechanisms, and was responsible for the 1995 establishment of the Mekong River Commission, within which Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia jointly manage their shared lower river basin. ESCAP also provides technical assistance to Pacific Island states.

The **World Bank** plays a conflict prevention role in the Asia Pacific in three key ways. First, its fragile states and governance programs help to build institutional capacity and resilience in conflict, post-conflict and fragile state settings. Initiatives include support for civil service development and financial procurement systems, and community-driven development programs in settings such as Mindanao, PNG, Southern Thailand and Timor-Leste. In Indonesia, the World Bank's program of block grants at the sub-district level for villagers to distribute (with the aim of reducing tensions)[90] has been adopted by the Indonesian government and expanded throughout the country.

ESCAP promotes regional economic, energy security and water resource management cooperation mechanisms.

Second, the Bank has assumed an intellectual leadership role in analyzing conflict and its causes, particularly in Indonesia.[91] World Bank staff have examined the dynamics of conflict as well as linkages between vigilanteism, gang warfare and land fights within conflict settings. The Bank also surveys residual suspicion in former conflict zones between local communities and the state. Its work in Aceh, for example, has included tracking violence and supporting the Acehnese government as it disburses funds.

The third way in which the Bank has a conflict prevention impact is through its promotion of regional initiatives, regional cooperation, and multi-donor collaboration throughout the region. The World Bank has established a Regional Governance Hub in Bangkok to enable information sharing; partnership building with other multilateral and bilateral donors; and connecting regional resources on governance. The World Bank's relationship with ASEAN, which grew out of post-Nargis technical assistance to ASEAN's Secretariat, is also expanding.

The regional financial institution the **Asian Development Bank** provides loans, grants and technical assistance aimed at poverty reduction to Asia Pacific states, and

Categories of preventive action[93]

The categories of preventive action performed by various actors in the region include:

1. Mediation – such as political dialogue and negotiation support, short-term arrangements, deals and ceasefires between parties, and drafting peace agreements. As examples, the UN-Commonwealth joint mediation and political dialogue support in Fiji before the suspension of efforts last year; and the work of NGOs HDC and CMI in Aceh.

2. Broader peace process support – including electoral process assistance, constitution drafting, justice, power sharing, economic arrangements, wealth/resource sharing, and technical advice in support of political objectives. For example, the UN's electoral support in Timor-Leste; and the work of the UN and the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville.

3. Confidence- and relationship-building – including facilitating communication between relevant parties, such as state and non-state actors. For example HDC's work in Mindanao; and sideline meetings between states at various fora such as the ARF and the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue.

4. Compiling and providing best-practice information and analysis. For example, the World Bank's Regional Governance Hub; and OCHA's ongoing work on natural disasters and conflict.

5. Post-conflict consolidation of security and the security-development transition. For instance, work done by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI); the International Monitoring Team in Mindanao; and the Aceh Monitoring Mission.

6. Providing endorsement and legitimizing processes. For example, the UN Security Council Presidential and Secretary-General's statements of support for RAMSI.[94]

7. Institution-building in post-conflict and fragile state contexts. RAMSI, for example; and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank's work in Aceh, Timor-Leste, and Cambodia.

8. Assistance with managing the impact of transnational threats. For example, ESCAP's analysis of the 'triple threat' of the economic crisis, food-fuel price volatility, and climate change; and the ADB's efforts to address cross-border environmental challenges.

its three priorities[92] also have conflict prevention and resilience-building effects. Its first priority is the promotion of strong and more inclusive economic growth, through investment in infrastructure, education and skills training, and basic service delivery. It has been involved in Aceh, for example, with a US$300 million grant administered through the Aceh-Nias post-tsunami reconstruction fund, which includes assistance for housing, health, urban planning and water supply. The ADB also supported states such as Indonesia with financial crisis management and mitigation.

ADB's second priority is the promotion of environmentally sustainable growth, including building fragile states' internal capacity to protect the environment and minimize the impact of climate change. ADB's third priority involves the promotion of regional and subregional cooperation, with the aim of improving cross-border infrastructure and regional trade and investment, and addressing transnational environmental challenges, natural disasters and pandemics. ADB has a long-standing record of supporting subregional mechanisms such as the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) program, which focuses on infrastructure development and shared natural resource management in the Mekong countries; the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle; the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area; and regional environmental governance efforts, such as those involving atmospheric pollution.

All of these activities by multilateral organizations are intended to shore up state resilience and support regional solutions to regional problems, thereby minimizing the risk of conflict. There has been some progress on multilateral coordination – the UN and the World Bank, for example, have agreed upon a partnership framework for crisis and post-crisis situations – as well as some cooperative efforts to address transnational threats such as climate change; resource scarcity; terrorism; and natural disasters. Fragmentation and some duplication of efforts continue, however, in conflict, post-conflict, and fragile state settings – including among UN actors.

3. Observations and Recommendations

No one conflict resolution actor stands out as particularly prominent in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific – multiple initiatives have involved multiple actors, often in ad hoc groupings. Will this continue to be the case? Certainly the Obama Administration's approach of prioritizing multilateral solutions to global challenges and refocusing US attention towards the Asia Pacific will probably further affect the dynamics of conflict management in the region and which actors perform which roles.

The global multilateral architecture, including the UN, remains out of step with Asia Pacific power dynamics, however. And while the London and Pittsburgh G20 meetings produced noteworthy decisions resulting in increased Asia Pacific involvement, the continuing exclusion of prominent regional states from key parts of this architecture has reinforced regional views that it is 'Western-centric' and lacking in legitimacy.

Until more pronounced architectural change takes place, ad hoc, multi-actor mechanisms which draw in states and NGOs as well as institutions will likely continue to be the primary conflict management mechanism in the region. The UN and other conflict prevention actors need to situate themselves within this context.

Multi-actor mechanisms have a reasonable record of success in the region: by and large, the operational lines developed on a case-by-case basis and at field level have been effective. But the ongoing and future security challenges facing the Asia Pacific are considerable, and ad hoc processes and mechanisms can and should be strengthened to address these challenges more effectively.

What, then, might conflict prevention actors in pre-, post-, conflict and fragile state settings in the Asia Pacific do to enhance the effectiveness of ad hoc multi-actor mechanisms, and thereby minimize the risk of conflict? And how, in particular, might the UN's own political and in-region mechanisms most effectively contribute to conflict prevention in the Asia Pacific?

a. Build anticipatory relationships and focus on functional cooperation

Third-party actors have an important role to play before conflicts become 'ripe' for resolution – and to help them 'ripen'.[95] This includes forming relationships and finding creative ways to engage with rival elites and with parties to a conflict. Then relationships and mechanisms are in place when an opportunity for engagement presents.

The Asia Pacific region's unfortunate susceptibility to natural disasters sometimes presents opportunities for engagement – the Aceh Peace Agreement was forged after the 2004 tsunami, for example, and Myanmar was eventually persuaded to allow in international recovery efforts after Nargis. But while an exogenous event such as a natural disaster can provide an opening for engagement, the underlying conditions must also be propitious.

This is a fraught area: early warning of conflict is highly problematic, and even when outside interest is high and a crisis clearly imminent (Fiji before the 2006 coup, for instance), formulating an effective response can prove very difficult. Still, solid anticipatory relationships can amount to a form of early warning.

The UN DPA and other conflict prevention actors should therefore engage in further anticipatory relationship building in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.[96] Such efforts could leverage the crisis prevention and recovery expertise within the UNDP Regional Center in Bangkok, and could also include strengthening broader networks of those in the region with preventive diplomacy, peace process, and statebuilding expertise – similar to the roster of governance experts being assembled by the World Bank's Regional Governance Hub.

The interactions of mediators and peacebuilding officials with warring parties are clearly critical for any conflict resolution, and as DPA seeks to forge relationships, it must pay particular attention to the skillsets, experience and personalities of its mediators and mission deployees.[97] This requires grooming the next generation of mediators, including from the Asia Pacific, which is at present under-

represented. DPA, as it compiles its roster of mediation experts, should ensure that it both taps into existing Asia Pacific expertise and helps to deepen regional expertise by training the next generation.

Asia Pacific states are not as neuralgic about cooperation in less politically sensitive fields such as humanitarian response and disaster prevention.[98] Initial efforts at cooperation by the UN and other actors should therefore focus on functional areas. This should include improving the interoperability of regional and multilateral capabilities, and civil-military cooperation in a disaster response context, such as the recent ARF exercise and the developing OCHA-ASEAN relationship. UN-ASEAN cooperation in functional areas could help allay lingering skepticism about UN involvement more squarely in the political and security sphere.

It also makes sense to enhance the capacity of regional organizations to collaborate meaningfully with other conflict prevention actors. Donors should therefore continue to build the capacity of ASEAN's and the PIF's Secretariats. The broader UN-ASEAN relationship should be made more strategic: the UN-ASEAN MoU provides a framework upon which to build. Strengthening cooperation and exchange between the UN and the PIF is similarly worthwhile.

Specific proposals:

a. UN DPA and ASEAN, and DPA and the PIF should respectively establish joint initiatives to train the next generation of mediators, possibly with the support of an NGO such as HDC. DPA and ASEAN could also explore the possibility of jointly convening a regional 'young leaders' dialogue'.
b. OCHA should continue to deepen its collaboration with both the ARF and ASEAN, and also continue to develop a detailed work program on civil-military cooperation and disaster response interoperability.
c. There should be an exchange of personnel between the UN and PIF Secretariats.

b. Strengthen the UN's capacity to support regional mechanisms

Given the constraints upon it in a political/security context, the UN's overarching political approach to the region should be to not focus on its own role per se, but on building its technical capacity to support regional and subregional actors, and on flexibly adding in capabilities to ad hoc, multi-actor mechanisms. The UN should strengthen its regional organizations process, and continue to look for ways to assist the mediation/facilitation efforts of other actors, drawing on comparative advantages such as its logistical capacity and convening power. In this regard, DPA's efforts to deepen its relationship with and support for the ASEAN Secretariat are noteworthy.

UN DPA is not frequently the headline actor in the region, but it is often the key actor offering peace process support – such as electoral process, constitution drafting, or transitional justice assistance. It should, therefore, concentrate on its ability to provide technical support to broader peace processes, as well as mediation support, in a manner that is appropriate to the Asia Pacific context. Another way the UN could assist regional conflict prevention mechanisms is to offer some form of endorsement. The UN Security Council's imprimatur on specific operations can endow a legal validity, and reinforce that mechanism as a legitimate regional response.[99]

The UN's performance in the Asia Pacific also highlights problems that are found in UN operations worldwide.[100] These include insufficiently intensive training for deployed personnel, and poor coordination among its agencies on the ground. These problems continue to require remedy. UN personnel deployed on peace and statebuilding operations should all receive intensive pre-deployment training, and senior mission staff should have an understanding of the importance of effective civil-military-police relations. The UN should also improve coordination between its various agencies in conflict, post-conflict and fragile state settings.

In addition, UN DPA should enhance its information exchange with regional organizations, including the

sharing of methodologies for and lessons learned in preventive diplomacy, peace process support, and post-conflict statebuilding. ASEAN, for its part, has expertise in the transition from wartorn to stable, prosperous societies, and in the role member states can play as third-party actors. There is much a moderate Muslim democracy like Indonesia could share about its militants' deradicalization policies, for example. DPA should continue to facilitate such information exchange with other regional organizations. There is also a need for better UN guidelines for decisionmaking and coordination in joint operations, as DPA is aware.[101]

Specifically, the UN should:

a. Deepen its technical capabilities to provide mediation and peace process support.
b. Refine the relationship between its various conflict prevention mechanisms.
c. Improve pre-deployment training and deployees' understanding of effective civil-military-police relations.
d. Enhance information exchange with ASEAN and the PIF, and help to strengthen ASEAN's and the PIF's relationships with other regional organizations.

c. Address transnational threats

The UN, the World Bank, the ADB and bilateral donors have important roles to play in managing the array of transnational threats facing Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. They also can help to build fragile states' internal capacity to withstand the effects of transnational threats, and so reduce the possibility of state failure or a resulting conflict.

There is evidence in the Asia Pacific that transnational threats such as resource scarcity and climate change are interacting with each other, but at present these interactions are insufficiently understood by both the academic and policy communities. There is also a lack of strategic assessment as to how they might contribute to conflict. Effective policy responses to transnational threats will need this analytical deficit to be corrected. The institutional corollary is that multilateral and bilateral

efforts will need to become less stove-piped in their responses to transnational challenges; crisis response, for example, will increasingly require a conflict management dimension.[102]

This is an area in which the UN might take a regional lead. The importance of sovereignty in the region and concerns about international organizations as 'Western-centric' suggest that the UN should not focus on establishing a regional diplomatic presence such as DPA's efforts to set up a regional office in Singapore. What the UN can do instead on a regional basis is to promote and, where necessary, catalyze, regional mechanisms to address transnational threats. The UN could explore using its convening power to discuss inter-state disputes over transnational challenges – scarcity issues, for instance – and tensions as they arise.

Specific proposals:

a. The UN should build a mechanism at its regional headquarters in Bangkok – potentially through ESCAP, but drawing in DPA – to engage in dialogue with national security representatives from regional states, and promote global public goods and the regional management of regional security challenges.
b. The UN – again, potentially through ESCAP – should use its convening power to assemble the principal actors tackling the key transnational threats in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific (including international and regional organizations, as well as bilateral donors) to discuss their various programs and options for a more coordinated approach.
c. UN DPA should establish an analytical unit to examine the linkages between various transnational threats and their interactions with conflict, in particular those between resource scarcity and security.

d. Build state institutions and manage the security-development transition

Conflicts are triggered by decisions made by political elites, and the domestic institutional environments they operate within shape those decisions. Preventive and post-conflict statebuilding, in particular of political, financial and rule of law institutions, is therefore a critical component of conflict

prevention. Helping to build state and local governance and service delivery capacity, and strengthening public finance management, can ameliorate key sources of conflict and contribute to an enabling environment for gainful economic activity.

The institution-building capacity of conflict prevention actors operating in the Asia Pacific needs to be enhanced; there is, in particular, a gap in the effective provision of SSR and rule of law assistance. SSR is a vital task for post-conflict operations, but it can be viewed in the field as purely technical assistance provided solely by security sector personnel, while local political dynamics and the need to create new norms of behavior are neglected.[103] UN DPKO's capacity to provide SSR assistance has been found wanting in Timor-Leste; but some actor needs to fulfill this role in post-conflict and fragile state contexts globally. On some occasions bilateral actors could take the lead.[104] In numerous instances, however, there will be no options to provide SSR assistance apart from DPKO, and therefore its capability to provide such assistance needs to be significantly improved. A focus on donor coordination, coordinating a national security strategy, and providing support to parliamentary/civilian oversight mechanisms would be a good place for DPKO to start.

In order to contribute to state resilience, statebuilding operations need to ensure that they are building up local capacity, and not just 'sucking it out'.[105] And one of the key lessons of RAMSI is that it takes years to repair degraded institutions, establish new norms and bureaucratic processes, revise *modus vivendi*, and rebuild trust after a long period of uncertainty.

The post-conflict consolidation of security and then transition from a political/security to a development focus are highly complex processes in post-conflict societies. There is a need to balance competing imperatives: on the one hand, the reality of finite resources and many demands, but on the other hand the need not to draw down security assistance too precipitously, or else the violence that led to the security operation in the first place might return. As events in Timor-Leste in 2006 and Bougainville from 2005 demonstrate, political and security dynamics in

post-conflict settings and the overall health of any peace agreement require close and continuing scrutiny. This can occur through transitional security activities, such as the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants; efforts to reduce tensions between rival parties; and ongoing support for the implementation of any peace agreement, relevant political processes, and the consolidation of state authority. In addition, support for a state's own dispute resolution capacities is important for building state resilience.

While acknowledging potential sensitivities on the ground, particularly for multilateral actors, in any blurring of political/security and development/humanitarian roles, a more integrated response in post-conflict operations by political/security actors and development/humanitarian actors would help ensure that security is maintained and political dynamics remain healthy while the vital business of rebuilding and development occurs. In this regard, the joint DPA-UNDP Peace and Development Advisers program, which seeks to strengthen state capacity to defuse tensions and solve disputes, is a noteworthy combined initiative.[106]

One possible answer to the political/security 'exit dilemma' is for political oversight to rest with those who have the most to lose from a relapse of violence–such as regional bodies and neighboring states. Within the UN structure, oversight could be provided by informal stakeholder groupings.[107] An informal security guarantee provided by individual states or regional organizations could also serve as a deterrent.[108]

Specific proposals:

a. UN DPKO should strengthen its capacity to provide SSR assistance, starting with its capacity for donor coordination and support for the formulation of national security strategies and civilian oversight mechanisms.

b. An informal security guarantee to Timor-Leste – initiated by the UN Security Council and provided perhaps by an interested party such as a neighboring state or regional body – could be an important part of the UN's exit from Timor-Leste, as could the maintenance of oversight by an informal stakeholder grouping.

Endnotes

[1]See Dennis C. Blair, Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 12 2009, p. 21. See also Dennis C. Blair, Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Select Committee on Intelligence, February 2 2010, pp. 21 and 27.

[2]Goldman Sachs Global Economics Department, *BRICs and Beyond*, 2007, p. 155, and BBC News, 'China economy sees strong growth', January 21 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8471613.stm.

[3]Dennis C. Blair, 2010 Annual Threat Assessment, p. 5; 'An astonishing rebound' and 'On the rebound', *The Economist*, vol. 392, no. 8644, August 15-21 2009, pp. 9, 69-72.

[4]Dennis C. Blair, 2009 Annual Threat Assessment, p. 21.

[5]See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance: 2009*, Routledge, London, 2009, pp. 363-424. See also Australian Government Defence White Paper, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Canberra, 2009; and Nopporn Wong-Anan, 'Asians talk of peace, haggle over arms', Reuters, May 31 2009.

[6]While this paper focuses on Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, it occasionally refers to North and South Asia while describing the broader regional context. The paper also focuses primarily on the role played by multilateral institutions rather than that of bilateral actors.

[7]This paper defines operational conflict prevention as the use of diplomatic, political, economic or security tools to forestall an imminent new conflict; contain, defuse and resolve ongoing conflict and prevent its escalation; or prevent the resumption of conflict.

[8]The agreement on IMF board reform at the March 2009 London G20 summit and the decision at the September 2009 Pittsburgh G20 summit to make the G20 the principal global economic forum are, however, steps in the direction of accommodating shifting power dynamics within the global multilateral architecture.

[9]Structural conflict prevention is defined here as medium to long-term measures to avoid conflict, prevent its recrudescence, and build resilience in at-risk states.

[10]International Crisis Group, 'Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand', Asia Report No. 170, Bangkok/Brussels, June 22 2009. See also Rungrawee Chalermsripinyorat, 'Stemming Recruits to Southern Militancy', *Bangkok Post*, June 24 2009, and Duncan McCargo, *Tearing apart the land: Islam and legitimacy in Southern Thailand*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2008.

[11]See International Crisis Group, 'The Philippines: After the Maguindanao Massacre', Asia Briefing No. 98, Jakarta/Brussels, December 21 2009.

[12]In 2003, the Indonesian government divided the province of Papua into two: Papua province and West Papua province. 'Papua' when used in this paper refers to both of these post-2003 provinces.

[13]In an effort to quell secessionist impulses within Papua, the Indonesian government enacted the Special Autonomy Bill of 2001, which granted the province of Papua certain political and economic rights.

[14]Olivia Rondonuwu, 'Indonesia's Papua remains a flashpoint ahead of poll, *Reuters*, Jakarta, July 7 2009.

[15]See Patrick Barron and Adam Burke, 'Supporting Peace in Aceh: Development Agencies and International Involvement', *Policy Studies 47 (Southeast Asia)*, East-West Center, Washington DC, 2008.

[16]It did not remain a haven for long, however: it seems local Acehnese informed the authorities of the existence of the camp. See p. 9 of this paper for further detail.

[17]See Michael Vatikiotis, 'The peace dividend in Aceh', *Jakarta Post*, August 11 2009, reprinted as an HDC Opinion.

[18]The Bougainville civil war began with rebel attacks on the Australian-owned Panguna copper mine and then the mine's forced closure in 1989. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army sought to secede from PNG, and hostilities continued until a 1997 truce and the 1998 signing of a ceasefire agreement.

[19]UN Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB). See p. 13 of this paper for a description.

[20]See Richard P. Cronin, 'Maritime Territorial Disputes and Sovereignty Issues in Asia', Testimony to Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, July 15 2009.

[21]See Hugh White, 'Why War in Asia Remains Thinkable', IISS-JIIA Conference, Tokyo, June 4 2008; and US National Intelligence Council, 'Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World', Washington DC, November 2008.

[22]President Barack Obama, US-China Economic and Strategic Dialogue, July 2009.

[23]Blair, 2009 Annual Threat Assessment, p. 41.

[24]See Keith Bradsher, 'High Rice Cost Creating Fears of Asia Unrest', *New York Times*, March 29 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/29/business/worldbusiness/29rice.html>

[25]OCHA Regional Offices webpage. <http://ochaonline.un.org/AboutOCHA/Organigramme/OCHARegionalOffices/tabid/1278/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

[26]Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fourth Assessment Report, 2007, pp. 50, 52.

[27]See Asian Development Bank Report, 'The Economics of Climate Change in Southeast Asia: A Regional Review', Manila, April 2009.

[28]See the Pacific Leaders' Call to Action on Climate Change, Annex A to Final Communique of 40th Annual Pacific Islands Forum Meeting, Cairns, August 6 2009.

[29]Alex Evans, *Multilateralism and Scarcity: Building international capacity for food, energy and water security*, NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, July 2009, pp. 5, 14.

[30]Michael Richardson, 'Dams in China turn the Mekong into a river of discord', YaleGlobal Online, 16 July 2009. <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=12580>

[31] Blair, 2010 Annual Threat Assessment, p. 4.

[32]World Bank, *Battling the Forces of Global Recession: East Asia and Pacific Update*, April 2009, pp. 9-19. See also Peter McCawley, 'Mass Poverty in Asia: The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis', Lowy Institute Policy Brief, Sydney, June 2009.

[33]Sidney Jones, 'Terrorism: What have we learned from Aceh?', Tempo, March 11 2010, sourced on the International Crisis Group website at http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6595.

[34]OCHA Integrated Regional Information Networks, '375,000 hit by Mindanao floods', August 3 2009, ReliefWeb. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/ASAZ-7UKFLX?OpenDocument> But natural disasters can sometimes help to catalyze a peace process, as with the 2004 tsunami in Aceh. This will be examined later in the paper.

[35]See John M. Broder, 'Climate Change Seen as Threat to US Security', *New York Times*, August 9 2009, p. 1.

[36]See, for example, the US Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, Washington DC, February 2010, pp. 84-87.

[37]Thomas Fingar, 'National Intelligence Assessment on the National Security Implications of Global Climate Change to 2030', Statement to House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence & House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, June 25 2008, p. 16.

[38] See Jim Della-Giacoma, 'The UN's lame security review for Timor-Leste', The Interpreter Weblog, Lowy Institute, February 17 2009, and Yoshino Funaki, 'The UN and Security Sector Reform in Timor-Leste: A Widening Credibility Gap', NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, May 2009.

[39]Ibrahim Gambari was named the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Sudan in late 2009, and no successor has yet been appointed.

[40]See Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict*, USIP Press, Washington DC, 2007, pp. 225-228.

[41]For example, France tried to invoke the 'Responsibility to Protect' concept in the Security Council over the failure of Myanmar's junta to allow in international humanitarian aid after Cyclone Nargis, but this was opposed by China.

[42]UN Secretary-General's statements SG/SM/12180, April 13 2009 and SG/SM/12179, April 9 2009.

[43]As of August 31 2009, Fiji contributed 50 police, 7 military observers, and 221 troops to UN peacekeeping operations.

[44]UN Secretary-General's Report, A/62/521, November 2 2007.

[45]Teresa Whitfield, *Focused Mission: Not so limited duration, identifying lessons from the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)*, NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, March 2010.

[46]The MSU and standby team faced some early operational challenges, including MSU-standby team relationship dynamics and the standby team's lack of continuity (with the attendant loss of momentum and institutional memory). There is also is the challenge of coordinating the multiple actors with direct conflict management responsibilities throughout the UN system, including DPA; DPKO; BCPR within UNDP; the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Commission; and the Inter-Agency Framework for Coordination on Preventive Action (Framework Team).

[47]Myanmar is an exception to the UN having a diplomatic role in Asia, as it came under a General Assembly human rights mandate.

[48]Southeast Asian states (except Thailand) became independent only 30 to 40 years ago, and the current generation of leaders has strong memories of colonial involvement and the birth pangs of their respective nations. Suspicion of outside conflict prevention efforts also stems from the region's Cold War experience of superpower involvement and proxy wars. See Michael Vatikiotis, 'Asia: Towards Security Cooperation', International Peace Academy, *Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series*, February 2007, p. 11.

[49]Adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference has become less rigid in the South Pacific, however, as will be discussed below.

[50]Last year the Indonesian government ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross out of Papua because of its prison visits to OPM militants and for being in breach of new official operating provisions in Papua. Indonesia's sensitivity about Papua in large part stems from a long-standing Indonesian concern about maintaining the territorial integrity of its heterogeneous archipelago.

[51]This is reinforced by the sense that the UN and Western states at times lecture the region on issues such as human rights and Myanmar. See Michael Vatikiotis, 'Asian Diplomacy Needs Empowering', Asia Security Initiative Blog, MacArthur Foundation, June 2 2009. <http://asiasecurity.macfound.org/blog/entry/asian_diplomacy_needs_empowering/>

[52]The reticence also stems from a pride in the achievements of many Southeast Asian countries since independence, and of the broad regional stability and increasing prosperity since the Paris Agreement.

[53]Thailand, for instance, has used informal meetings to negotiate with the ethnic group the Karen National Union (KNU) on its border with Myanmar.

[54]The first was the suspension of Nigeria in 1995, during General Sani Abacha's rule.

[55]ASEAN was established during the Cold War to prevent the expansion of communism in the region. Inter-state war still raged in Southeast Asia at the time of ASEAN's foundational 1967 Bangkok Declaration, and the founding states of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand sought to demonstrate that this was not a military alliance: security was squarely off the agenda.

[56]The exception is the significant 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

[57]See Michael Vatikiotis, 'The faltering ASEAN way', Opinion piece for Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, October 2008.

[58]Statement by ASEAN Chair, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs George Yeo, New York, September 27 2007.

[59]The statement also said 'Thailand, as the ASEAN Chair, reaffirms ASEAN's readiness to contribute constructively to the national reconciliation process and the peaceful transition of democracy in Myanmar.' ASEAN Chairman's Statement on Myanmar", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, May 19 2009.

[60]Similarly, the December 24 2008 UN General Assembly Resolution criticizing Myanmar on human rights grounds saw Brunei, Laos, Malaysia, and Vietnam vote against the resolution, and Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, abstain, with Cambodia absent. See also Nehginpao Kipgen, 'UN General Assembly isn't the right forum', *Asian Tribune*, December 21 2008.

[61] Some analysts in Indonesia are even thinking beyond ASEAN as the central pillar of Indonesia's foreign policy. See Rizal Sukma, 'ASEAN members should stop having themselves on', East Asia Forum, December 2 2008. < http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2008/12/02/asean-members-should-stop-having-themselves-on/> Other regional observers are wondering about the impact on ASEAN and its relevance of the rise of China and India. See Amitav Acharya, quoted in Ary Hermawan, 'Can ASEAN survive in the post-American world?', *The Jakarta Post*, Jakarta, July 16 2009.

[62]See Simon Chesterman, 'Does ASEAN Exist? The Association of Southeast Asian Nations as an International Legal Person', *New York University Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper* 83 2008, p. 13; Michael Vatikiotis, 'The faltering ASEAN way', Opinion piece for Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, October 2008; and Barry Desker, 'Is the ASEAN Charter necessary?', *RSIS Commentaries*, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, July 17 2008.

[63]ARF/VDR Public Affairs website at http://www1.apan-info.net/arfvdrpao/Home/tabid/6819/Default.aspx; US State Department website, 'ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Exercise a Significant Milestone', July 15 2009, at http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/2009/126073.htm.

[64]See then Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General Greg Urwin, 'The Role and Function of the Pacific Islands Forum', Keynote Address at the Leadership Fiji Conference, Suva, September 28 2005.

[65]See the Pacific Plan at http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Pacific_Plan_Nov_2007_version.pdf.

[66]Graeme Dobell, 'The Pacific Way Wanes', The Interpreter Weblog, Lowy Institute, August 26 2008.

[67]See Forum Leaders Special Retreat Communique on Fiji, Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders Retreat, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, January 27 2009.

[68]Leaders also called at their annual meeting for constructive dialogue between all parties within Fiji, and stressed the importance of the Pacific Islands Ministerial Contact Group (MCG) and the PIF-Fiji Joint Working Group as mechanisms for dialogue with Fiji.

[69]See Jenny Hayward-Jones, 'Is the MSG a threat to Pacific unity?', The Interpreter Weblog, Lowy Institute, July 20 2009.

[70]Philippine government-MILF preparatory talks were held two days before Presidents Arroyo and Obama met in Washington DC. President Obama said the Philippine President had 'initiated a peace process in Mindanao that we think … has the potential to bring peace and stability to a part of the Philippines that has been wracked by unrest for too long.' Remarks by President Obama and President Arroyo of the Philippines in Joint Press Availability, Oval Office, July 31

2009.

[71]Thomas Lum, Wayne M. Morrison, Bruce Vaughan, 'China's "soft power" in Southeast Asia', CRS Report for Congress, Washington DC, January 4 2008, p. 1.

[72]Fergus Hanson, 'China: Stumbling through the Pacific', Lowy Institute Policy Brief, Sydney, July 2009.

[73]See page 4 of this report for a description and full membership list of the International Contact Group on the Philippines.

[74]Martin Griffiths, 'Talking peace in a time of terror: United Nations mediation and collective security', Opinion, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, March 2004, pp. 5-6.

[75]On the concept of 'institutional pluralism', see Richard Gowan and Sara Batmanglich, 'Too Many Institutions? European Security Cooperation after the Cold War', in *Cooperating for Peace and Security: Evolving Institutions and Arrangements in a Context of Changing U.S. Security Policy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009.

[76]International Crisis Group, 'The Philippines: Running in Place in Mindanao', Asia Briefing No. 88, Jakarta/Brussels, February 16 2009, p.2. See also Stratfor briefing note, 'Philippines: Moro Rebels and a Threat of Turmoil', April 28 2008. <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/philippines_moro_rebels_and_threat_turmoil>

[77]Japan is now contributing two development advisers, and Indonesia, Qatar, and Norway have also been invited to take part.

[78]See Elsina Wainwright, 'Australia's Solomon Islands commitment: how is it progressing?', *The Sydney Papers*, Summer 2006, pp. 181-191.

[79]See Sira Habibu, 'Piracy on Malacca Strait has dropped this year', *The Star Online,* Kuala Lumpur, June 23 2009; Michael Schuman, 'How to defeat pirates: Success in the Strait', *Time*, April 22 2009.

[80]See Michael Vatikiotis, 'New directions in the relationship between ASEAN and the UN', HDC Briefing Paper, January 2009.

[81]Information about the Dialogue can be found at http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/.

[82]Paul Collier, V.L. Elliot, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, Washington DC, 2003, p. 83.

[83]See Richard Chauvel, 'Between guns and dialogue: Papua after the exile's return', Nautilus Institute Australia, Austral Policy Forum, April 23 2009.

[84]See UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council, S/2009/189, p. 13.

[85]Either or both of these have been the case in Aceh, Papua, Mindanao, and Southern Thailand. See, for example, International Crisis Group, 'The Philippines: Running in Place in Mindanao', Asia Briefing No. 88, Jakarta/Brussels, February 16 2009, p.4.

[86]Then ICG analyst John Virgoe describes two 2008 instances, one involving then Indonesian Vice-President Jusuf Kalla as facilitator, in which marginal militant figures negotiated in Southern Thailand and apparent breakthroughs were achieved that were later proved to be false starts. John Virgoe, 'Thailand's Southern Fix', openDemocracy, 19 November 2008, sourced at http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5785&l=1.

[87]There are over 500,000 IDPs in Myanmar, 120,000-300,000 in the Philippines, 100,000-200,000 in Indonesia, and around 100,000 in Timor-Leste. See the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website at http://www.internal-displacement.org/.

[88]The UN is also involved in other regional disaster management initiatives, for example the tripartite cooperation program between the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the ASEAN Secretariat, and the World Bank on disaster risk reduction and disaster management, which was launched in May.

[89]UN ESCAP, *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2009: Addressing triple threats to development*, New York, March 2009.

[91]As examples, see Patrick Barron, Claire Q. Smith, and Michael Woolcock, 'Understanding Local Level Conflict in Developing Countries: Theory, Evidence and Implications from Indonesia', *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, No. 19, December 2004; and Patrick Barron, Rachael Diprose, David Madden, Claire Q. Smith, and Michael Woolcock, 'Do Participatory Development Projects Help Villagers Manage Local Conflicts? A Mixed Methods Approach to Assessing the Kecamatan Development Project, Indonesia', *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, No. 9 (revised), March 2009.

[92]See Asian Development Bank, *Strategy 2020*, Manila, 2008.

[93]See Elizabeth Sellwood for her categories of UN preventive action in a Middle East context, 'The Role of the United Nations in Middle East Conflict Prevention', NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, 2009, pp. 3-4.

[94]Solomon Islands' recognition of Taiwan precluded a UNSC resolution on the crisis.

[95]On the concept of 'ripeness', see for example I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989, and I. William Zartman, 'The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments', *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, no. 1, pp. 8-18.

[96]UN DPA political involvement in Nepal, though outside the region, is illustrative.

[97]On the importance of the right personnel performing mediation and peacebuilding work, see recommendation 96(d), Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, 2004, p. 114.

[98]The Australia-Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction is an example of fruitful bilateral cooperation in this space.

[99]The ex post facto Security Council Presidential Statement in support of RAMSI is a good example of the UN reinforcing the legitimacy of a regional mission.

[100]The problems of UN internal processes and UN operational reform initiatives will be examined in a subsequent CIC paper on conflict prevention in the global context.

[101]SG Report, S/2009/189, April 8 2009, p. 15.

[102]Alex Evans, op. cit., pp. 47-50.

[103]Jake Sherman, *Strengthening Security Sector Governance in West Africa*, NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, March 2009; and Jim Della-Giacoma, 'The UN's lame security review for Timor-Leste', op. cit.

[104]Australia, for example, has a significant police capacity-building presence and defence cooperation program in the South Pacific, and the Australian government has established the Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence to provide assistance, inter alia, with security sector reform in the region.

[105]See Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*, Vintage, Great Britain, 2003; and Francis Fukuyama, *State Building: Governance and World Order in the Twenty-First Century*, Profile Books, London, 2004.

[106]The Peace and Development Advisers initiative is part of the UN DPA-UNDP Joint Program on Building National Capacity for Conflict Prevention.

[107]See, for example, Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict*, op. cit., on the Core Group on East Timor, pp. 191-222. While DPKO and DPA involvement will end with the transition to a development phase in post-conflict contexts, different UN actors will likely continue to play a role, including UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The UN Peace Building Commission, which provides support to peace processes in post-conflict countries, is also interested in playing a role in Timor-Leste.

[108]Bruce Jones, Richard Gowan, Jake Sherman, 'Building on Brahimi: Peacekeeping in an era of strategic uncertainty', NYU Center on International Cooperation, New York, April 2009, pp. ii-iv.

About the Author

Dr Elsina Wainwright is Deputy Director for Personnel and a Senior Fellow in the Statebuilding Program at New York University's Center on International Cooperation. She is also an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Centre for International Security Studies (CISS) at the University of Sydney, Australia. From 2002 to 2006, she was the Strategy and International Program Director at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Canberra. Prior to joining ASPI, she was an associate with the management consulting firm McKinsey & Company and a consultant political analyst for the International Crisis Group in Bosnia. She studied as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, where she completed both her Masters and Doctorate in International Relations.

CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

New York University
418 Lafayette Street, Suite 543
New York, NY 10003
(212) 998-3680
cic.info@nyu.edu
www.cic.nyu.edu