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REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND SECURITY CHALLENGES : A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Introduction

How have regional arrangements dealt with security challenges? The relevant literature argues that depending on their respective purpose, regional arrangements will want to address a number of different security challenges and to do so in different ways. For instance, where regional security arrangements seek to promote cooperative security the emphasis tends to be on confidence building and perhaps limited forms of practical security cooperation; one would not expect them to undertake collective defence or peace-enforcement missions (Wallander and Keohane 1999). Regional arrangements may also differ in terms of their institutional design.[1] This has implications for what they can or cannot do, since there is often a link between, on the one hand, design and, on the other, the level of resources and capacities available. However, with few exceptions (for example Duffield 2006), the Security Studies or International Relations literature does not offer very many frameworks by which to systematically compare just how regional arrangements differ in terms of their practical responses to security challenges and conflict. While analysis of what regional arrangements do or do not do can thus be analysed with reference to variables such as their nature, purpose and capabilities as well as the role played by individual members or participants, it is useful to gain greater clarity about the extent of variation regarding how regional arrangements respond to very similar practical challenges, especially those that are of considerable policy significance.

In this paper we explore the extent and nature of regional variation by addressing six major security challenges facing a wide variety of regions:

- How have participants of regional arrangements responded to great power penetration of their region?

- How do regional arrangements manage relations with states perceived to aspire to regional hegemony?

- Do regional arrangements play any explicit role, formal or informal, in dealing with political-security disputes among two or more of the participants?

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[1] By institutional design, Acharya and Johnston (2007: 15-16) mean 'those formal and informal rules and organizational features that constitute the institution and that function as either the constraints on actor choice or the bare bones of the social environment within which agents interact, or both.' Specifically, they identify five major features of institutional design: membership (i.e. the number of actors allowed to participate); scope (i.e. the range of issues that the institution is designed to handle); formal rules (i.e. regulations governing how decisions are made); norms (i.e. the formal and informal ideology of the institution); and mandate (i.e. the institution's overall purpose).

- To what extent are regional arrangements prepared to deal with intrastate conflict within one of their participants?

- In what ways do regional arrangements deal with transnational security challenges, i.e. cross-border threats involving non-state actors or forces?

- Are regional arrangements prepared to address security threats beyond their own borders through out-of-area operations?

For the purposes of this working paper, we explore these questions with reference to the following three regional arrangements: the African Union (AU); the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Not only do these organisations constitute the primary institutions addressing security and conflict challenges within their respective regions, they also represent distinct memberships, a mix of more mature and younger arrangements, and offer a varied group of organisations with regard to great power membership. Launched in 2002, the AU is the successor body to the longstanding Organisation of African Unity (OAU). It is particularly interesting inasmuch as in its short lifespan it has broken with some of the OAU's traditional commitments regarding conflict management and embarked upon an ambitious project of institution building in the security realm (Makinda and Okumu 2007). ASEAN is generally considered the most successful regional organisation in the developing world, but it has faced questions over its relevance as a security actor in a rapidly changing environment (Emmerson 2008). The SCO, in contrast, emerged on the back of the 'Shanghai Five' that was successful in building confidence along what was the Soviet-China border as testified by the 1996 Shanghai Agreement on Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Border Asia, as well as the 1997 Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas. This security regime transformed into a multi-purpose security institution in 2001 (Matveeva and Giustozzi 2008).

Overall, we conclude that there are similarities in the ways in which the AU, ASEAN and the SCO approach the challenges of averting external domination and regional hegemony as well as in how they address security issues beyond their region. There are clear differences, however, regarding their responses to intrastate strife within member states and their approaches for dealing with transnational issues and challenges.

Comparative Framework

The comparative analyses produced so far to examine or explain regional security dynamics fall into three broad categories: first, accounts of regional war and peace (Adler and Barnett 1998; Buzan and Wæver 2003; Miller 2007); second, works of institutional comparison (Acharya and Johnston 2007; Solingen 2008; Duffield 2006); and third, largely empirical surveys of how regional arrangements deal with security and conflict issues (Lake and Morgan 1997; Diehl and Lepgold 2003). While these earlier studies generate important insights, we set out a comparative framework for assessing the nature and extent of variation displayed by regional arrangements in their attempts to deal with security challenges. Specifically, we address six central issues that confront most of the world's regions.

Great Power Penetration

As regions are part of the international system, a question arises as to how much they are influenced by that system's great powers. At the moment, depending on how one characterises the current world order, regional arrangements may be operating in a unipolar system, a context of American hegemony, or what one analyst calls a 1+4 system of great

powers (Buzan 2004). However we conceptualise the current world order, regional arrangements differ according to the extent to which their agendas are being influenced by external great powers. In conceptual terms there are two poles on a spectrum of external power penetration. At one extreme, the external actor dominates the region and its institutions as an imperialist power. A lesser version of this suggests that regions and their institutions are more heavily influenced by external powers than by internal dynamics (Katzenstein 2005). At the opposite end of the spectrum is the argument that some regions are shaped by local dynamics rather than by global forces. A lesser version of this would see regional dynamics to be at least as significant as the influence brought to bear by external powers (Acharya 2007). In other words, the extent of great power penetrations can vary considerably across the globe.

In such an environment, regional arrangements can adopt a spectrum of responses or strategies to cope with the perceived dangers of external power penetration (Acharya 2004). Here we identify three basic dispositions or postures: explicit resistance, accommodation strategies and explicit support. When the priorities and values or interests of local and foreign actors seriously diverge, regional arrangements may resist external attempts to influence political or security dynamics in their neighbourhood. When members of a regional arrangement feel that the security or associated benefits of great power penetration outweigh the domestic or regional costs of support for the major power, they are likely to accommodate aspects of the external actor's agenda even if they consider problematic or reject particular elements of it. In some instances, however, the security benefits are so obvious and uncontroversial among regional states that explicit broad-based support will be provided.

1. African Union

Given the fact that anti-imperialism is one of the cardinal principles espoused by the AU's 53 members, it is not surprising that the organisation's default position towards external penetration can be characterised as one of explicit resistance and the search for autonomy from foreign interference. This posture has been hardened by the painful history of colonialism and the way in which African conflicts were often exacerbated by the superpower politics evident during the Cold War. More recently it was reflected in the initially acerbic reaction of most African states to the US decision to create a new Africa Command to organise its security engagement with the continent (Makinda 2007). In spite of these sentiments, a basic lack of resources and conflict management capabilities has forced the African Union to embrace a pragmatic reliance on external support and the concomitant need to at least acknowledge the importance of foreign agendas in the continent's peace and security issues. Many of the AU's recent policies towards the 'global war on terror', for example, have been influenced by the interests of external (mainly Western) powers (Rotberg 2005; Le Sage 2007). Indeed, the fact that the AU's peace operations receive almost all their required funds from Western donors led the Union and the UN Security Council to search for an alternative set of funding mechanisms.[2] In this sense the practical orientation of the Union's members has been to adopt a variety of accommodation strategies. These have often involved public acceptance of external agendas, but rather less willingness to ensure their effective implementation. Particularly in the last decade, however, many members of the AU have been offered an alternative to Western penetration in the form of China's – and to a lesser extent India's – rapidly expanding aid and assistance programmes. In some cases, African governments have greeted these initiatives with high levels of support, not least because of the Chinese government's stated desire to adopt a policy of non-interference,

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[2] This was the remit set out in UN Security Council resolution 1809 (2008) for the panel of 'distinguished persons' chaired by former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi. See United Nations 2008.

which stands in stark contrast to much of the assistance flowing from G-7 states (Alden et al. 2008; Taylor 2008).

2. ASEAN

The current ASEAN members have consistently experienced great power penetration, albeit in different form.[3] Efforts to re-impose colonial rule after the Pacific War and the systemic struggle between East and West brought much conflict and pain to Southeast Asia during the Cold War period and until the early 1990s left the region divided into two camps: non-communist ASEAN and the Indochinese states. Though relying in part on America's hub-and-spokes system of bilateral alliances and its forward deployed military in the Asia-Pacific to maintain regional security, the Cold War also saw ASEAN countries pursue a 'principle of regional autonomy' (Acharya 2001: 51-56). However, Malaysia's proposal for the neutralisation of Southeast Asia was rejected in 1971 in favour of the establishment of a politically less conspicuous Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). Perceiving the United States as a benign power, ASEAN countries relied on Washington for their external security in ways that allowed these countries to concentrate on their national development. After the end of the Cold War, bilateral and multilateral relations with the US became more complicated as Washington exerted significant political pressure in relation to a number of issues (human rights, democratisation, neoliberal reforms, Burma).

 Given the geographical proximity and in some cases contiguity between ASEAN states and the People's Republic of China, the overlapping territorial claims in relation to the South China Sea, as well as the impact of China's reform policies, particularly in the economic realm, it is clear that dealing with great power penetration in the post-Cold War period has for ASEAN primarily implied managing the rise of China. Perceptions of China remain informed by significant suspicion, which is in part a result of China's erstwhile interference in the domestic affairs of ASEAN states. Apart from uneasy ties with Indonesia (Sukma 1999), Beijing has also had difficult relations with Vietnam, albeit for different reasons (Chen 1995; Chang 1985). Many ASEAN countries are to this day not as comfortable in cooperating with China in relation to political-security and defence issues as they are with the United States (Tan and Acharya 2004).

Seeking to avert both a repeat of great power intervention in their domestic and regional affairs as well as a future calamitous conflict between the United States and China, ASEAN countries have collectively pursued a multi-pronged engagement strategy directed at all major regional powers, including Japan and India. For instance, over the years ASEAN countries have consistently re-articulated their respect for a number of basic international norms, which they would also like all external powers to subscribe to in earnest. Specifically, ASEAN has advocated that the major regional powers should accede to the organisation's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), which commits signatories to peacefully resolving disputes and abiding respect for the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. While China was the first major power to sign the TAC in 2003, a step that marked a major reassessment of Beijing's earlier troubling assertiveness over territorial claims, the United States has yet to do so. That said, the incoming Obama administration announced in February 2009 that Washington would begin the formal interagency process to pursue accession to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (Clinton 2009).

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[3] The original five ASEAN members were Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. Brunei Darussalam joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999.

A further aspect of what in effect constitutes a transfer of ASEAN's regional security model to the wider East Asia-Pacific is the establishment of regional dialogues that serve not only the purposes of mutual confidence building, but also give all major powers a stake in Southeast Asia, while allowing ASEAN to formally lead the process. A clear illustration of ASEAN's pursuit of such diplomatic centrality is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which includes the US, Japan, China, Russia, India and even the European Union as participants in the only formal foreign ministers-led security dialogue forum in the Asia-Pacific (Leifer 1996; Haacke and Morada forthcoming). Given China's growing economic role and influence, ASEAN has found the exercise of regional leadership more difficult in the ASEAN+3 process, which also involves Japan and South Korea. Seeking to widen East Asian regionalism and community building with geopolitical considerations in mind, ASEAN countries have successfully established the overlapping East Asia Summit, which allows leaders from the ASEAN+3 countries as well as India, Australia and New Zealand to engage in strategic dialogue. To guard against domination of these dialogue structures by the major powers, all are characterised by similar design, namely low-level institutionalisation, and they come with the expectation that decisions are informed by due regard for sovereignty and non-interference as well as consensus.

Third, in response to a changing strategic environment ASEAN has also embraced, however cautious, deeper integration in the form of the ASEAN Community, including in the areas of security and even defence (Severino 2006; Chalermpalanupap 2008). While moving toward an ASEAN Political and Security Community, the Association remains committed to Southeast Asia being an outward-looking region that maintains an inclusive regional architecture within which it overtly welcomes all major powers, but perhaps finds more reassuring the regional presence of some than of others. Indeed, bilateral security and defence ties that individual ASEAN states have with the United States remain for the most part far more advanced than those they have with China. This dual approach of simultaneous 'omni-enmeshment' and 'indirect balancing' has been understood as hedging (Goh 2005). As regional reactions to Washington's focus on Southeast Asia as a 'second front' and its penchant for militarised approaches to counter-terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 highlighted, however, domestic political considerations also limit the extent to which individual regional governments feel they can openly cooperate with the US.

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

While the 'SCO region' extends from Kalinigrad to Vladivostok, and from the White Sea to the South China Sea, its heart is squarely located in Central Asia.[4] That region's strategic significance in relation to global security and energy has led major powers to either proactively reassert or build up their influence in the region (Dittmer 2007). Russia lost some of its overwhelming influence in Central Asia following the demise of the Soviet Union. By mid-1994, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan had joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Program. Also, Uzbekistan in particular grew openly critical of the Moscow-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The loss of Russian influence in its own backyard was further highlighted by NATO's focus on 'out-of-area' operations in the Balkans, which was interpreted by Moscow as a possible pretext to draw on human rights to intervene in the territory of the former Soviet Union. In response, Moscow has sought to reinstate deeper political-military and economic ties with the former Soviet republics

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[4] The SCO members are Russia, PR China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan is not a member; it opted for neutrality in 1993. Observer status has been granted to India, Iran, Pakistan (all July 2005) and Mongolia (June 2004).

(Johnson 2004: 45). The institutional vehicles to regain lost strategic ground have not only involved the SCO, but also the CIS and in particular the 2002 Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). However, relations between the US and Central Asian states further strengthened in the wake of 9/11. Central Asian states within the SCO offered Washington assistance in the 'global war on terror', allowing the US to establish a significant regional military presence. Above all, Washington gained access to Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in southern Uzbekistan and Manas Air Base near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan allowed the US military and NATO fly-over rights, and hosted a small French contingent involved in Afghan operations. While supportive of Central Asia's provision of logistical assistance in the 'global war on terror' and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Moscow and Beijing both opposed an open-ended US military presence on their doorstep (Bailes and Dunay 2007: 8-19).

Both Moscow and Beijing also refused to endorse a shift in US foreign and security policy that focused less on an urgent terrorist threat and more on the promotion of freedom in Central Asia. This greater US focus on democracy and human rights in its Central Asia policy also led to serious disenchantment in the region's capitals. Not surprisingly, SCO documents have consistently emphasised that all states have a right to their own political and socio-economic systems as well as the abiding importance of respecting the principle of non-interference. Roy Allison has referred to this political coalescing as 'protective integration' (Allison 2008). In the case of Uzbekistan, regime security considerations (see below) have also led President Karimov to opt for a rapprochement with Russia. SCO states have generally switched their stance from overt support for the US to accommodation, but there have also been expressions of resistance.

At the Astana summit in July 2005, SCO members – pointing to 'positive dynamics of stabilizing internal political situation in Afghanistan' – called on the anti-terrorist coalition to 'set a final timeline for their temporary use' of facilities on the territories of SCO member states (SCO 2005). While US troops were subsequently withdrawn from the Karshi-Khanadad base on Uzbekistan's request (Daly et al. 2006), they temporarily remained at Manas, which has served as a forwarding air base for US and NATO troops in Afghanistan and played a key role in OEF. This arrangement proved controversial both inside Kyrgyzstan and the wider region, however. At the 2007 Bishkek Summit, SCO leaders argued that 'stability and security in Central Asia can be provided first and foremost by the forces of the region's states on the basis of international organizations already established in the region'. Support for the US within Kyrgyzstan, which was initially symbolised by the very low fee of US$2m charged to Washington for the use of Manas, has also ebbed. In early 2009, the Kyrgyz Parliament voted to evict US forces from the Manas air base.

Local Hegemony

A regional arrangement may have a local hegemon or a state that is perceived to harbour hegemonic ambitions. Prominent examples might include Russia within the CIS, the US within NATO, Nigeria within ECOWAS or Australia within the Pacific Islands Forum. Such states may influence the security agenda adopted and security approaches taken by the entire regional arrangement. This may also be the case when there is more than one major power within the organisation. There are also regional arrangements where there is no clear hegemon or obvious aspirant, such as the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe or the League of Arab States. Similarly to the question of external power penetration, the participants of a regional arrangement will need to decide how to respond to possible

hegemonic agendas within the organisation. Once again there is a similar spectrum of responses ranging from constraining to supporting the actual or perceived hegemonic agenda.

1. African Union

There is no clear hegemonic state within the AU.[5] This is not surprising given the Union's large membership and its lack of a great power or nuclear weapons state. Nevertheless, the continent's security dynamics are often shaped by the struggle between several subregional powers and their attempts to influence the Union's agenda. The central players in this regard have been South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, and Libya. A recent example of the struggle for status was the intra-African debates about UN Security Council reform leading up to the 2005 World Summit. Here, African governments failed to agree on which two states should occupy the 'African' permanent seats on a reformed and expanded Security Council. All agreed that South Africa would get one slot but Nigeria and Egypt fought over the other and were soon joined by Kenya, Senegal and Tanzania, which insisted they too should be eligible (Traub 2007: 400).

The concern to constrain the hegemonic ambitions of these states within the wider AU membership has also been evident in several respects. One relevant example occurred during the debates over the rules and procedures that would guide the Union's new Peace and Security Council (PSC). While some members, notably Nigeria and South Africa, suggested that the PSC should contain permanent members – like the UN Security Council – other members rejected this idea (Author's interview with AU official, May 2007). The compromise was that five of the PSC's fifteen members would be elected for a period of three years while ten members would be elected for a period of two years. A second example is the emphasis placed on a consensual approach to decision making within both the AU Assembly and PSC. This helps mitigate dominance by one or a few states.

2. ASEAN

Within Southeast Asia, at least two states in particular have in the past submitted claims to (sub-) regional hegemony: Indonesia and Vietnam (Emmers 2005).[6] Both countries have at times even pursued their hegemonic ambitions by resorting to coercive power. In Indonesia's case, under President Sukarno, this involved violent expressions of nationalism directed at its immediate neighbours during the period of *Konfrontasi* (1963-66). While retaining Jakarta's distinct sense of regional entitlement, the Indonesia of President Suharto (1966-98) continued to pursue regional leadership in Southeast Asia, but to achieve this goal focused on diplomacy and ASEAN (Anwar 1994). By comparison, the claim to regional leadership over Indochina posited by Vietnam's communist leadership was amplified by its victory in the Second Indochina War and the subsequent unification of the country in 1976. Having agreed with Laos on a friendship treaty the following year, Hanoi felt compelled to use military force to dislodge the visceral Khmer Rouge and to install a friendly regime – the People's Republic of Kampuchea – that it propped up throughout the 1980s.

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[5] Within the African continent the debates and concerns about hegemony have been played out primarily at the subregional level, for example, surrounding Nigeria's position within ECOWAS and South Africa's position within SADC.

[6] Thailand was also viewed as seeking sub-regional leadership when the Third Indochina War was coming to an end.

Although Jakarta spent many years addressing concerns among neighbouring countries about its perceived penchant to establish sub-regional predominance, not least by deliberately placing its policy in the context of ASEAN, Indonesia's vision of an autonomously managed regional order has not been fully shared by other ASEAN members. This was illustrated by the preference of the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore as well as Malaysia to develop their bilateral security and/or defence relations with Washington. Vietnam's claim to political leadership over Indochina, repudiated in stringent form by ASEAN and an international diplomatic and informal military alliance involving China in the 1980s that successfully reversed Hanoi's intervention in Cambodia, has not been overtly revived. Opting for self-restraint in the context of its pursuit of economic renovation, Hanoi adopted an omni-directional foreign policy, joined ASEAN in 1995, and generally focused on ways to improve regional and international cooperation (Thayer and Amer 1999; Dosch 2006; Dosch et al. 2005).

After the 1997-98 Asian financial and economic crisis and the demise of the New Order regime, Indonesia has slowly sought to reassert its regional leadership ambitions – exemplified by Jakarta's proposals for the ASEAN Security Community (now ASEAN Political Security Community, APSC). In the event, however, Indonesia initially saw several of its ideas to strengthen the region's collective conflict management mechanisms rejected by fellow ASEAN members, including the call for an ASEAN peacekeeping force (Weatherbee 2005; Haacke 2005). However, ideas and proposals in relation to Southeast Asia's political development that were promoted at the time above all by Jakarta have subsequently been more comprehensively integrated into the agenda for the APSC.

In short, while there is no open struggle for regional hegemony within Southeast Asia today, ASEAN countries remain keen to curtail presumed sub-regional hegemonic ambitions. The means used are varied. Smaller ASEAN states have emphasised the importance of abiding by regional norms. At the bilateral level diplomacy as well as military-military cooperation have been designed to promote mutual confidence. In some cases, there has also been an element of military balancing, understood as the build up of national capabilities. Singapore's efforts in this area have perhaps been the most conspicuous (Huxley 2000; Tan 2004). In this context, outside powers have been welcomed into wider regional multilateral institutions formally led by the Association.

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Addressing the issue of regional preponderance has been an important but unstated function of SCO cooperation. Among the regional arrangements studied here, the SCO stands out because it involves two great powers with nuclear weapons status. In addition, Central Asia occupies an important space in Russian nationalism. Russia has therefore watched China's post-1991 embrace of Central Asia with some wariness, not least because of Beijing's superior economic muscle. Generally, Russian nationalists, who wield considerable influence over Moscow's Eurasia policy, identify three scenarios for Central Asia: Russian political domination, chronic instability or Chinese preponderance (Laruelle 2008). China has also worried about regional instability in Central Asia and has also been keen to arrest Moscow's efforts to reassert regional dominance by strengthening political-military relations with Central Asian countries. Amid mutual suspicions, and despite significant cooperation between them, Beijing and Moscow thus both use the SCO to constrain the perceived ambitions of the other.

From the perspective of Central Asian governments the political competition between China and Russia, as expressed for example in the contest over the SCO's future direction, has the advantage of making available countervailing impulses within the organisation. The Central Asian states appreciate the significance of Moscow in upholding regional stability and security. However, there remains a large Russian diaspora whose defence and possible repatriation to stem Russia's depopulation has been a key issue of debate during Putin's premiership (Laruelle 2008). There are also concerns about 'Russian adventurism and extra-territorial retaliation' (Swanström 2008: 4), which have been exacerbated by Moscow's military campaign against Georgia in 2008. Although bilateral security cooperation with Moscow tends to be extensive and generally effective, questions about Moscow's commitment to the non-interference principle would appear to have arisen for Central Asian states as a consequence of Russia's recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, especially in the context of irredentist positions held among Russian nationalists. Central Asian states and China are more clearly in sync with respect to issues concerning self-determination and non-intervention. Not surprisingly, therefore, the SCO thus failed to endorse Russia's actions towards Georgia. Notably, dealing with China in the context of the SCO is also easier for Central Asian republics than it would be in a strictly bilateral context. As a rising power, China inspires a measure of trepidation on the back of its policy of closer economic engagement, its vision for future cooperation, and the managed and unregulated migration of its people. While positive about the economic gains that greater cooperation within the SCO may afford them, the Central Asia countries in part rely on Russia to avert China's domination of the regional agenda.

The issue of hegemony has also emerged at the sub-regional level with Uzbekistan's competition with Kazakhstan. This builds on a low-level personal competition between Uzbekistan's president Islam Karimov and President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan (Allison 2008: 187). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have all embraced multilateralism to offset Uzbekistan's perceived sub-regional hegemonic designs.

Intramural Conflict and Disputes

Regional arrangements differ in terms of how they respond to conflicts and disputes among members. At one level, they differ over whether member-versus-member disputes make it onto the formal or informal agenda of the regional arrangement. Regional arrangements also differ in the techniques and instruments used to address intramural conflict and disputes.

The list of potential instruments of conflict management is considerable and regional arrangements will naturally seek to draw on different techniques as appropriate to the specific conflict in question. The list of instruments includes the use of force and coercion, the imposition of economic sanctions, as well as diplomacy and other confidence-building measures (Crocker et al. 2007). Arguably the most common conflict-management technique used by regional arrangements is peacemaking through mediation, although they differ over the extent to which this is best carried out bilaterally by individual members or collectively by representatives of the arrangement.

1. African Union

The AU has continually emphasised the importance of avoiding bilateral disputes that might escalate into armed conflict and has stressed the need for its members to engage in the peaceful resolution of any that emerge. The Union has delegated authority to its Peace and

Security Council, under Article 9(1) of its Protocol (2002), to take action in potential conflict situations. To this end the AU has developed a range of instruments and institutions that allow it to engage in mediation, facilitation and peacekeeping (largely through the construction of an African Standby Force of some 22,000 troops by 2010), as well as quiet diplomacy and sometimes public criticism of conflicting members (Franke 2009). So far, the Union has refrained from using force to intervene in an inter-member conflict. In practice, the AU has engaged in numerous inter-member disputes, including its long-standing involvement in the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. More recently, the Union helped implement the Tripoli Agreement (February 2006) between Chad and Sudan designed to overcome tensions between the two states particularly concerning the Darfur region of Sudan. In particular, the AU looked into ways in which its peacekeeping force in Darfur, AMIS, could support the agreement's implementation (AU 2006a). In relation to the conflict between Rwanda and the DRC over the presence of Rwandan genocidaires in eastern DRC, for instance, the AU has called upon both parties to exercise restraint and dampen a situation that it says threatens 'regional peace and security' (AU 2004: para. 3) The Union has also attempted to facilitate a summit bringing the presidents of Rwanda and the DRC together with the AU, UN and other stakeholders, as well as calling for a strengthening of the UN's peacekeeping force in the DRC (MONUC). This eventually resulted in the Goma Agreement signed between Kigali and Kinshasa in December 2008.

It should be noted, however, that the AU has not always played the leading role in managing intramural disputes. For example, it was the UN that played the primary role in addressing the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in large part because of Eritrean suspicion that Ethiopia could unduly influence the OAU/AU. A similar situation occurred in relation to the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea when the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1862 (January 2008). Among other things, this demanded that Eritrea withdraw its forces and materiel to the *status quo ante* position, acknowledge its border dispute with Djibouti, engage actively in dialogue to defuse the tension and find a mutually acceptable settlement. In addition, African states have sometimes resolved their disputes through the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as occurred recently in the so-called Bakassi peninsula dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria (IPI 2008).

2. ASEAN

As a grouping ASEAN has generally avoided dealing with bilateral disputes or territorial conflict between members. Instead, there has been a distinct preference for the parties concerned to enter bilateral negotiations to address the issue at stake or to allow for the involvement of third parties from within or even outside the region (Caballero-Anthony 2005). The 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), which provides a code of conduct governing intramural relations that retains validity to this day, also allows for the constitution of an ASEAN High Council to take cognizance of disputes or situations likely to disturb regional peace and harmony when negotiations of parties concerned fail. While Indonesia has attempted to invoke the TAC over a territorial dispute, the High Council has never been constituted. Even the passing of rules of procedure for the High Council in 2001 has not provided new impetus for its invocation. Instead, members have repeatedly reaffirmed, for instance, their commitment to desist from using or threatening to use force. Notably, when ASEAN countries have felt sufficiently comfortable, they have submitted territorial disputes

to the ICJ. Relevant cases include those over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh (Singapore and Malaysia),[7] as well as Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan (Malaysia and Indonesia).

Agreement by members on the establishment of the ASEAN Security Community (ASC, now ASEAN Political-Security Community, APSC) has also not translated into new initiatives as regards strengthening ASEAN's conflict management capacity. The 2003 Bali Concord II vaguely states that the High Council shall be an 'important component in the ASEAN Security Community since it reflects ASEAN's commitment to resolve all differences, disputes and conflicts peacefully' (ASEAN 2003). The ASEAN Charter, ratified by all member states in 2008, reinforces traditional principles of dispute settlement wherein member states 'endeavour to resolve peacefully all disputes in a timely manner through dialogue, consultation and negotiation' (ASEAN 2008: chap. 8). Unresolved disputes are in future ultimately to be referred to the ASEAN Summit, but it remains to be seen to what extent this will happen. The ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint issued in 2009 formulates an action plan to develop measures in the areas of conflict prevention, confidence-building measures, conflict resolution, the pacific settlement of disputes, as well as post-conflict peace building (ASEAN 2009a). The proposed measures do not signal a major change to ASEAN's actual conflict-management practices, however.

Despite the continuity in ASEAN's declared approach to conflict management in relation to inter-state disputes and situations, members have demonstrated a willingness to introduce some flexibility to its practice. For instance, in line with previous cases the Indonesia-Malaysia spat over Ambalat and East Ambalat (also referred to as blocks ND6 and ND7) in February/March 2005 met with ASEAN's silence. By comparison, when in 2008 a longstanding border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand erupted over the listing of Preah Vihear as a World Heritage Site and prompted a quite significant build-up of forces, ministers offered to facilitate a diplomatic solution by establishing a contact group because they recognised that the border dispute could result in the use of force and disrupt regional peace and stability. Notably, this followed Phnom Penh's attempt to internationalise the issue by, first, seeking an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council given what Foreign Minister Hor Namhong called the 'imminent state of war'; and, second, requesting the urgent establishment of an ASEAN inter-ministerial group, composed of Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam and Laos. Thailand had rejected this proposal, however. But ASEAN then convened an impromptu informal discussion following unsuccessful talks by the Thai-Cambodian general border committee. The Thai delegation participated in the discussion on the condition that the meeting had no official agenda and would produce no outcomes (Yeo 2008a, Yeo 2008b).. Although it was only a small step, assuming this role collectively still constituted something of a new departure for ASEAN. In October 2008, following a prolonged exchange of fire that led to casualties on both sides, Cambodia warned Thailand to withdraw troops from the disputed area or risk 'large-scale armed conflict'. This led to offers by other ASEAN countries to mediate individually, but conflict parties dismissed these in favour of bilateral talks.

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Having grown out of the cooperation among the so-called Shanghai Five, a number of border agreements have been signed by China with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. However, Central Asian states have been left with the consequences of the Soviet era in the

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[7] The maritime boundaries around Pedra Branca still need to be delineated, which the Malaysia-Singapore Joint Technical Committee is charged to do.

sense that the administrative boundaries were hardly drawn to create homogenous states and were not properly demarcated. The most complicated border issues relate to the Ferghana Valley, which is shared by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and boasts seven sizable enclaves (ICG 2002a). Bilateral tensions also derive from several other factors: the occasional outbreaks of interethnic violence; the use by some armed extremist groups of neighbouring territory to launch armed attacks as well as the disregard for sovereignty when states are carrying out their security response; or the failure to appropriately manage water flows (ICG 2002b; ICG 2008: 13).

The SCO has consciously avoided addressing bilateral disputes, although some analysts do not exclude that this approach might change over time (Matveeva and Giustozzi 2008). It has instead positioned itself as a unique diplomatic platform for regional confidence building, and is primarily a forum for security and defence consultations (Oxford Analytica, July 6, 2005). As such, the SCO has positioned itself as a vehicle of cooperative security in that it has allowed regional states to build confidence through dialogue and norm building. In 2006, members affirmed they would support each other 'in their principled positions on and efforts in safeguarding sovereignty, security and territorial integrity' (SCO 2006). They also committed to prohibiting activities by organisations or gangs in their territories that are detrimental to the interests of other member states. These commitments are to translate into a multilateral legal document on long-term good-neighbourly relations, friendship and cooperation.

Intrastate Conflict

Where the government or state borders of a member are contested, regional arrangements again differ in whether such conflicts make it onto their agenda. This is a particularly important issue because the majority of contemporary armed conflicts around the world are intrastate.[8] If these conflicts do not make it onto the formal agenda, they may either be ignored by the regional arrangement in question or be dealt with by other actors like the United Nations.

1. African Union

For most African states, internal challenges remain more serious than external threats. The AU has thus defined a wide range of internal issues as security challenges and has devised new instruments to deal with them.[9] In practice, the AU has responded to unconstitutional changes of government (defined primarily as coups d'état), civil war, 'insecurity', threats to electoral processes and atrocities committed by former Heads of Government. Since the end

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[8] The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) distinguishes between three types of intrastate conflict fought between a government and a non-governmental party: 1) civil wars where the incompatibility concerns the type of political system, the replacement of the central government or the change of its composition; 2) secessionist or state formation conflicts concerning the status of a particular piece of territory; and 3) internationalised intrastate conflicts which occur within a country between a government and a non-governmental party but one or both parties receive troop support from other governments which actively participate in the conflict. See http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/.

[9] The AU's *Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy* adopted in February 2004, refers to the following intrastate conflicts/tensions as posing security challenges: grave circumstances (genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes), lack of respect for the sanctity of human life, unconstitutional changes of government, improper conduct of electoral processes, lack of commitment of the parties to abide by elections conducted in their country, absence of human rights, poverty and inequitable distribution of natural resources and corruption, and political, religious and ethnic extremism as well as racism.

of the Cold War, Africa has experienced more intrastate conflicts than any other region.[10] Between 1999 and 2006, however, one analysis estimated that the number of armed conflicts on the continent more than halved (Human Security Brief 2007). In spite of this trend, intrastate conflicts have continued to occupy a majority of the Peace and Security Council's attention and have been the sites for all the AU's peacekeeping operations (in Burundi, Sudan, the Comoros and Somalia) (Williams forthcoming 2009). Among the most significant intrastate conflicts addressed by the AU have been the ones in Sudan, the DRC, Somalia, Liberia, Burundi, Chad and Côte d'Ivoire. Even in these cases, however, it is rarely the case that the AU has played the sole role in addressing them. It is more common for the UN and external donors to play a significant or even leading role in the international response to these conflicts. Indeed, at the time of writing a majority of the UN's peacekeepers are deployed in Africa: especially in Sudan (Darfur and the southern region), the DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Chad.

It is important to note, however, that not all intrastate conflicts make it onto the AU's agenda. Some, such as the Tuareg rebellions in Mali and Niger or the efforts of Cabinda's separatists in Angola, might simply not be considered large enough to warrant continental attention. But in other cases, such as the conflicts in Nigeria's Delta region or the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, it is clear that Africa's most powerful states have the ability to keep their own domestic conflicts off the AU's official agenda.

2. ASEAN

ASEAN's commitment to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference has severely limited the number of instances in which it has collectively even commented on domestic political strife. Since 1997, ASEAN countries have slowly developed a more flexible understanding and practice of the non-interference principle (Haacke 1999; Acharya 2004). Above all, it has become more legitimate for members to raise transnational and even domestic issues if these have regional implications. However, the Association's general approach to intra-state conflict has not changed. Members remain agreed on the importance of respecting territorial integrity, sovereignty and the unity of member countries. They also remain committed to prevention of the use of their territories as a base for any activities against the security and stability of neighbouring countries. These commitments have been rearticulated in the ASEAN Charter, which was ratified by all members in 2008 (ASEAN 2008: Art. 2k).

The explicit restatement of these commitments is important not least because the state practices of individual ASEAN countries have not always fully coincided with the grouping's rhetoric. Along the Thai-Myanmar border, for instance, ethnic armies fighting the State Peace and Development Council were still able to find refuge at a time when Bangkok had already repeatedly vowed to end its de facto buffer-zone policy. There was also criss-crossing by local Muslims of the Thai-Malaysia border, which in the context of the renewed eruption of the insurgency in southern Thailand in January 2004 at least temporarily complicated relations between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur (Jalil 2008). In a step possibly designed to signal greater openness about dealing with the ethnic insurgency in its deep south, Thailand released a press statement on the bilateral meeting of the Thai and Malaysian foreign ministers organised on the sidelines of the 14th ASEAN Summit in February 2009. However,

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[10] Despite the colonial role in constructing Africa's state borders, it is noticeable that relatively few of Africa's intrastate conflicts have been secessionist wars (Englebert 2007).

it is important to note that even now no ethnic insurgency taking place in a member state features on ASEAN's formal collective agenda.

If ethnic conflicts remain off-limits for the Association, so do most struggles for political power within ASEAN countries even when political instability has regional repercussions. However, ASEAN, as a grouping, has sought to involve itself somewhat in the domestic politics of Myanmar, not least because the situation in Myanmar has important regional and international implications (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2008; Haacke 2008). ASEAN offered a very strident response to the crushing of demonstrations by the military junta in September 2007. At the most recent summit in February/March 2009 ASEAN leaders 'encouraged the Myanmar government to facilitate the national reconciliation process to be more inclusive', and called again for the release of political detainees and the inclusion of all political parties in the political process leading to the 2010 elections (ASEAN 2009b).

Significantly, the case of Burma/Myanmar is not representative of how ASEAN responds to domestic political strife or turmoil. Indeed, though the 2004 ASEAN Security Community Plan of Action states unequivocally that ASEAN states 'shall not condone unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government' (ASEAN 2004), ASEAN did not offer any collective response to the 2006 coup in Thailand. Thailand's bitter political feud between forces loyal to former Premier Thaksin Shinawatra and the latter's detractors has also failed to elicit ASEAN's opprobrium or collective commentary. In reaction to the closing down of Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports in November 2008, it was left to individual ASEAN countries like Singapore to call for a peaceful resolution of differences. Meanwhile, both Manila and Kuala Lumpur made clear that they would not offer political refuge to Thaksin.

Whereas the Association, as a grouping, has played a limited role in the management of intra-state conflict occurring in member states, individual ASEAN countries have allowed or been involved in third-party conflict management. For instance, when the Aceh Monitoring Mission was established to oversee the implementation of the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), participants were drawn from the EU and selected ASEAN countries (Teo 2008). The Philippines allowed for the establishment of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in 2004 to observe and monitor implementation of the agreed cessation of hostilities between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. This primarily involved Malaysian peace monitors.[11]

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

As regards intrastate conflict, SCO governments have faced two key inter-connected threats: one involves the activities of particular anti-government groups; the other is a broader lack of domestic legitimacy. For instance, Beijing has been concerned about Uyghur separatism and the activities of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which Beijing (among others) has considered a terrorist organisation. In Central Asia, a plethora of radical Islamist groups have formed, including Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that are bent on the overthrow of secular government and society and the creation of an Islamic state (Baran et al. 2006). While some claim to be committed to peaceful means for the time being (e.g. HT), others do not (e.g. IMU); in essence they and other organisations form part of a transnational network and are therefore also addressed in the section on transnational challenges (see below).

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[11] Also involved in the IMT are Brunei, Libya and Japan. The Malaysian peace monitors were withdrawn in November 2008, as the peace process had stalled.

Importantly, radical Islamist groups seek to exploit the weakness of Central Asian states and the potential for serious instability due to broad public discontent about poor governance and often desperate socio-economic circumstances. In 2007, concerns about internal stability focused particularly on Kyrgyzstan. That country had undergone a 'colour revolution' in 2005, involving the political ouster of President Akayev, following earlier such revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine. Islamists keen to overthrow the existing order under the guise of a 'colour revolution' also staged an uprising in Andijan, Uzbekistan in May 2005, which the Karimov regime suppressed with force. Against this backdrop, incumbent Central Asian political leaders are determined to ensure their grip on power as well as that of their respective political entourage.

Interestingly, by the 2006 Shanghai Summit the SCO addressed the issue of instability by members committing themselves to immediate consultations in the event of threats to regional peace, stability and security. Leaders have also hinted at the possibility of establishing a regional conflict-prevention mechanism within the SCO framework. As SCO leaders met again the following year, 'vital significance' was accorded to preventive measures to check sources of instability. In addition, members have favoured expediting the process of establishing a mechanism of joint response to situations threatening regional peace, stability and security (SCO 2007). The idea has yet to translate into agreement on the practicalities involved.

In this context, it is important to recall that the scenario for Peace Mission 2007, possibly inspired by events in Andijan, involved the need for SCO intervention to face down a local uprising (de Haas 2007). For the moment, however, the prospects of Chinese troops assisting other SCO members in putting down ethnic or political dissent would seem very distant, judging by Kazakhstan's refusal in the context of Peace Mission 2007 to allow foreign military personnel to even cross through the country. Meanwhile, in support of members' political legitimacy, the SCO has also embarked on the monitoring of national elections in member states, which it routinely endorses.

Transnational Threats

In large part because of the increasing relevance of non-state actors and forces, regional arrangements face an increasingly complex array of transnational security challenges such as organised criminal activities as well as health and environmental issues.[12] Such challenges permeate all the world's regions to a greater or lesser degree, but have proved to be particularly influential in parts of the world where regional arrangements and local governments lack the capabilities to respond effectively. Nonetheless, transnational challenges continue to receive different levels of attention from regional arrangements around the globe. Put another way, transnational challenges have been securitised unevenly by regional arrangements (Haacke and Williams 2008). Regional arrangements also considerably differ about which transnational challenges are perceived as connected to the sources of conflict within the region.

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[12] The Princeton Project on National Security defined transitional security threats as being 'characterized by an event or phenomenon of cross-border scope, the dynamics of which are significantly (but not necessarily exclusively) driven by non-state actors (e.g. terrorists), activities (e.g. global economic behaviour), or forces (e.g. microbial mutations, earthquakes)' (Princeton Project on National Security 2005: 3).

1. African Union

The AU's official statements would appear to indicate that the organisation considers terrorism and HIV/AIDS to be the most important transnational threats facing the continent. The Union has, however, addressed a much wider range of transnational challenges in its recent declarations and meetings, including cross-border crimes such as drug and human trafficking, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, mercenarism, food insecurity generated by drought and plagues of locusts, and most recently avian influenzas and climate change (Williams 2008; AU 2009). This is at least in part because different parts of the continent suffer unevenly from these threats: while HIV/AIDS is most severe in southern Africa, for instance, food insecurity issues have been most acute in the Horn, while the regional arrangement in West Africa, ECOWAS, has devoted considerably more attention than the AU to issues of organised criminal activity, especially in relation to the trafficking in weapons, narcotics and people (Cawthra 2008; Khadiagala 2008; Mazzitelli 2007).[13] As a result, it is also noticeable that most practical action in response to these issues has taken place at the bilateral or sub-regional level.

In order to help counter the threat of terrorism, in 2004 the AU established the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, headquartered in Algiers. This is designed to develop and maintain a database on issues relating to the prevention and combating of terrorism, as well as to disseminate information and analysis about these issues so as to help implement the AU's counterterrorism activities. Beyond this, however, most practical counter-terrorism initiatives take place at the state level, often in conjunction with external powers, notably the US, France and the UK (Ewi and Aning 2006). In relation to HIV/AIDS, the AU has not engaged in significant collective action but has instead acted as an arena for standard- and norm-setting to encourage member governments to take appropriate action.

2. ASEAN

ASEAN has also focused on transboundary challenges as well as transnational crime, terrorism and other cross border issues (Caballero-Anthony 2009). The recurrent haze phenomenon gave rise to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, which entered into force in November 2003. However, Indonesia has to date failed to ratify this legally binding document (Tay 2008). This is particularly problematic as Indonesia is the source of the fires inducing the haze. As regards communicable diseases, ASEAN in 2003 quickly responded to delimit the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which nevertheless resulted in an estimated economic loss of many billions of dollars for the region, before turning its attention to build sufficient regional capacity for members to cope with a possible pandemic avian influenza outbreak. This has involved setting up a regional network of antiviral drugs stockpile and training exercises to contain the virus. Like SARS, avian flu has been considered a potential threat not only to human security but also to the regional economy and incumbents. Meanwhile, ASEAN health ministers have also sought to develop regional responses to combat HIV/AIDS, although unlike SARS and avian flu the former is not generally perceived as a potential threat to regime or state security.

ASEAN states have also devoted considerable effort to add a regional dimension to their national, bilateral, trilateral, as well as sub-regional efforts to counter transnational crime and terrorism. Following the initial emphasis to counter terrorism through the exchange and flow

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[13] That said, at its 12th Ordinary Session, the AU Assembly adopted a Decision on the Threat of Drug Trafficking in Africa (AU 2009).

of information and intelligence and the sharing of best practices, as well as national capacity building (ASEAN Secretariat 2005; Chow 2005), ASEAN's more recent practical counter-terrorism focus has involved greater efforts to develop appropriate regional frameworks. The annex to the 2004 ASC Plan of Action suggested a likely embrace of three such frameworks: an ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement, an ASEAN Extradition Treaty, and an ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism. In the event, ASEAN countries signed but have yet to ratify the first. The ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism was signed in January 2007, but requires six instruments of ratification to enter into force. The convention specifies cooperation in conformity with the domestic laws of the parties involved with respect to a considerable number of areas, including early warning and prevention of terrorism and developing regional databases (ASEAN 2007). Its Article XIII deals with extraditable offences. Notably, the convention is subsumed to the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity and non-interference. While this shows that these principles also shape ASEAN's response to transnational challenges, they do not necessarily prove an insurmountable obstacle to inter-state counter-terrorism cooperation. The same point applies to transnational crime more generally. The 2009 APSC Blueprint identifies a wide array of transnational issues and challenges on which ASEAN countries intend to concentrate in the future. It put renewed emphasis on building capacities to combat illicit drug trafficking.

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The stated rationale for establishing the SCO was to combat the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Although defined in the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism (Article 1), it has not been made explicit whether these threats are conceived of as purely internal threats or domestic threats with a transnational dimension. However, the transnational nature of terrorism, separatism and extremism in Central Asia is generally accepted. The HT may still be most active in the Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley, but its members and activities have spread across Central Asia. Similarly, the IMU has operated from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The scenario underlying Peace Mission 2007 further underscores the transnational nature of the threats facing the SCO.

As regards transnational terrorism, the SCO has organised two further operational exercises involving all six members: East-Antiterror 2006, in which special services from all SCO countries defended critical infrastructure; and Issyk-Kul Antiterror 2007, which brought together intelligence services and special law-enforcement agencies (De Haas 2007: 12). In addition, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), based in Tashkent,[14] has the stated purpose to assist, coordinate and interact with the relevant agencies of SCO member states in relation to fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism. As Bailes and Dunay (2007: 25) argue, RATS's work has evolved beyond the analytical into operational directions (e.g. forging a databank on terrorist, separatist and extremist organisations; and contributing to training).

Problems of political will have apparently affected the work of RATS, not least as regards the consolidation of a list of wanted terrorists and organisations. However, there are also accounts of how this structure has played a role in facilitating 'extraditions' (renditions) of suspected terrorists, separatists and extremists outside normal procedures, despite different understandings of the 'three evils', not all of which may in any case be listed in national

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[14] China apparently provided the initial funding and headquarters, while Russia took only a perfunctory interest (Oxford Analytica, June 20, 2006).

criminal codes. Russia apparently returned 19 suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir to Uzbekistan in 2006 (Borogan 2008). The basic beneficiaries of RATS are said to be China and Uzbekistan. Indeed, some have considered SCO cooperation in relation to intelligence sharing and counter-terrorism cooperation important in depriving ETIM of cross-border support (McGregor 2007). At heart, RATS remains an institution that lacks capabilities, making for a contrast with the CSTO, which has Collective Rapid Reaction Forces stationed in Kant, Kyrgyzstan.

The narcotics trade, which helps sustain the 'three evils' in that it finances terrorists, separatists and criminal gangs, is also very much a concern to SCO members. In Central Asian countries, narcotic trafficking dominates the illegal market, which some analysts see as making up between 10 and 70 percent of the economy (Swanström 2005: 5). However, practical cooperation among SCO states on drug trafficking seems for the most part to be undertaken at the bilateral rather than multilateral level, although anti-narcotics powers have been delegated to RATS; at the very least it is difficult to assess just what activities and decisions have been organised or taken at the multilateral level. That said, the SCO members have tasked their anti-narcotics agencies to offer analysis and advice on a possible systematic approach to tackling drug trafficking. In the context of narcotics trafficking and consumption further weakening the state (particularly Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), the idea of putting an anti-drug security belt (i.e. strong border controls and zones of coordinated enforcement) around Afghanistan has been advanced (also see next section). In addition, the SCO has vowed to crack down on illegal immigrants and to address the issue of migrant workers within the SCO region. Enhancing information security has also become a serious objective of SCO governments, especially given the perceived link with anti-regime activity. Less emphasis has been placed on dealing with the burgeoning HIV/AIDS problem.

Geographic Scope and Out-of-Area Missions

Although most regional arrangements are preoccupied with events within their own region, some have engaged in conflict-management activities beyond their own borders. Such out-of-area activities range from issuing communiqués and statements on extra-regional issues (e.g. the Israel-Palestine conflict or UN reform) to the deployment of regional peacekeepers to conflict zones (e.g. the EU in the DRC, or NATO in Afghanistan). Although it is only the EU and NATO that have collectively deployed soldiers beyond their arrangement's respective boundaries, the AU has also said that its Standby Force might, in principle, operate outside Africa. The desire to engage in out-of-area operations has tended to stem from three main concerns: 1) in direct response to external aggression (e.g. the ISAF deployment in Afghanistan); 2) an attempt to deal with issues 'downstream' before they escalate (e.g. EU operations in the Balkans); and 3) to support UN Security Council objectives (e.g. EU in DRC, ISAF in Afghanistan).

1. African Union

To date, the AU has not taken any steps to address security issues outside its borders beyond the use of diplomacy. That is, the Union has issued a range of declarations and communiqués staking out positions on issues of global significance such as UN reform, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the apparent abuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction by certain non-African states (especially France). Although it has yet to conduct any out-of-area peacekeeping missions, it has stated that '[N]othing precludes the ASF from deploying outside Africa, either as a contribution to a UN force or as a rapid reaction capability' (AU 2006b: chap. 5, para. 12c). Given the Union's stated commitment to the importance of non-

interference and anti-imperial norms, any attempt to undertake out-of-area operations without a UN mandate or consent of the local government would be unlikely to gain much support within the organisation.

2. ASEAN

ASEAN countries regularly comment on international issues that are considered to affect Southeast Asia, such as developments on the Korean Peninsula or in the Middle East. Individual ASEAN states have also taken part in UN peacekeeping activities. Some have also contributed to the war effort of the US-led coalition against Iraq. More recently, Malaysia and Singapore joined internationally sanctioned maritime patrols off Somalia to stem the problem of piracy off the Horn of Africa. However, ASEAN countries have still not participated as a grouping in security operations outside of their region.

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The SCO has also not taken any steps beyond diplomacy to address security issues outside its region. Its members formed a SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group in 2005 to address the problems associated with the flow of drugs from Afghanistan. However, efforts to date have not resulted in the imposition of the proposed anti-narcotics belt around Afghanistan. By contrast, the CSTO has already reinforced joint capabilities to deal with this particular challenge (Antonenko 2007). For the time being, the likelihood of SCO troops being despatched into Afghanistan is considered remote (Matveeva and Giustozzi 2008: 22).

Conclusions

The preceding comparative analysis has highlighted areas of both similarity and difference in how the AU, ASEAN and the SCO perceive and respond to six important security challenges. The first point to note is that all three regional arrangements are deeply suspicious of penetration by external great powers. In practice, however, accommodation strategies are more common than explicit resistance to US power. A second conclusion is that although none of these regional arrangements are dominated by an obvious internal hegemon, all three seek to guard against this possibility arising in a variety of ways, including designing decision-making structures based on consensus.

Although these regional arrangements face a range of similar threats and conflicts, it is clear that they have adopted quite different approaches to conflict management. On the one hand, the AU gets involved in many cases of both intramural and intrastate conflict. Indeed, the majority of the AU's collective activities are taken up responding to intrastate conflicts. On the other hand, neither ASEAN nor the SCO have been keen to get collectively involved in intrastate conflicts, with the partial exception of the Association's contemporary engagement in Myanmar. Only the AU has contemplated using force against one of its members and has regularly imposed sanctions on what it considers to be illegitimate authorities after an 'unconstitutional change of government' has occurred. ASEAN is reluctant to get embroiled in interstate disputes between its members, favouring in the first instance (bilateral) diplomacy between those involved. The same point applies to the SCO.

In relation to transnational challenges, it is clear that these are becoming more prominent in all of the regions surveyed in this paper. As a result, they are receiving more attention in all three regional arrangements. Nevertheless, it is also clear that all three arrangements have so

far developed only rudimentary collective mechanisms to deal with the intensifying challenges posed by transnational forces. That said, the SCO has been able to organise counter-terrorism activities that would be considered very difficult to implement by ASEAN or AU states. While all three regional arrangements promote comprehensive security, the emphasis that state and regime security are accorded over human security is common to all, albeit most explicitly so in the case of the SCO. Finally, when it comes to out-of-area missions, it would appear that NATO and the EU remain the only organisations to collectively deploy soldiers beyond their borders. In contrast, although the AU has stated that it might in principle deploy its Standby Force in a peacekeeping operation overseas, the three arrangements surveyed here have restricted their out-of-area activities to the realm of diplomacy.

Our comparative framework offers what we hope is a useful addition to other attempts at comparing regional security institutions. Since we focus here only on substantive practices, the comparative framework outlined in this paper is distinct from earlier efforts, such as those developed by Duffield (2006) or Acharya and Johnston (2007). As noted above, the former is interested in comparing international security institutions with reference to particular approaches to International Relations, while the latter are primarily interested in comparing the origins and impact of institutional design on the effectiveness of regional organisations. Given our emphasis on being analytical rather than theoretical in the first instance, we tend to see greater parallels between our work here and that of Acharya and Johnston. At the same time, we have suggested elsewhere that there is a range of factors that might explain the variation in the security practices adopted by different regional arrangements (Williams and Haacke forthcoming). These include: (1) the exercise of power; (2) the dominant prevailing political constellation and the dynamics underpinning domestic politics in member states, such as the pursuit of regime security; (3) security culture, understood as habits of responding to particular developments and challenges, if shared broadly at the regional level; and (4) resources and capabilities available to regional arrangements or their members.

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