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**Session II: The Role of ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand in
Strengthening Regional Security**

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This paper seeks to address two specific issues pertaining to regional security. First, what does New Zealand perceive to be its role in enhancing regional security and, secondly, how can New Zealand help to moderate rivalries among the major regional powers.

As a small state, with obvious constraints on the power attributes and ability to exert influence available to it, there are clearly limitations on what New Zealand can do, or, for that matter, can be expected to do by its regional neighbours. Nonetheless, New Zealand sees its contemporary role in the enhancement of regional security as being a fourfold one.

First, and most importantly, through the provision of support for and participation in those multilateral regional organisations and fora which seek to maintain stability and generate regional order. This obviously includes ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) itself – which has long been regarded as playing a major role in contributing to regional stability – as well as ASEAN-led institutions such as the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) and the more recent EAS (East Asia Summit). Indeed, full participation in “ASEAN-inspired political and security structures” has been a central tenet of New Zealand’s overall policy towards East Asia since 1990.¹ Despite its “modest” progress to-date, New Zealand has attached some significance to the ARF, believing that it “fosters a much-needed defence and broader security-related

¹ Mark G. Rolls, “New Zealand and East Asia: An Area of Priority”, in Roderic Alley (ed.), *New Zealand in World Affairs IV 1990-2005* (Wellington: Victoria University Press/NZIIA, 2007), p.225.

dialogue".² New Zealand has also actively participated in the International Institute for Strategic Studies' Shangri-La Dialogue and supports ongoing Track II initiatives too.

Secondly, through the pursuit of practical defence and security co-operation; whether in a multilateral framework such as the FPDA (Five Power Defence Arrangements) or on a bilateral basis with individual regional states. This sort of co-operation includes the traditional idea of defence diplomacy along with more recent developments that have seen the involvement of the New Zealand Police in various ways in combating trans-national crime and, unsurprisingly, in New Zealand's support for regional efforts to counter international terrorism.

Although the decision to scrap the air combat wing of the RNZAF (Royal New Zealand Air Force) undeniably hampered New Zealand's ability to contribute fully to the FPDA, New Zealand has remained committed to the Arrangements and has certainly supported the expansion of its "remit ... to cover responses to non-traditional maritime security challenges."³ In addition to the maintenance of long-established defence relations with Malaysia and Singapore, and the restoration of full ties with the Indonesian armed forces, the NZDF (New Zealand Defence Force) has also been establishing "a capacity for dialogue with defence counterparts" with a range of new regional states including China, Japan, South Korea and Viet Nam.⁴ Such efforts are in keeping with the diplomatic strategy that New Zealand has pursued with its major Asian partners – China, Japan and South Korea – since 1990, and with its overall recognition of the utility of bilateral ties given the problems (most obviously in the economic arena) sometimes associated with multilateral level engagement.⁵ In 2005, New Zealand signed a Joint Declaration on Co-operation to Combat International Terrorism with ASEAN and set up an Asian Security Fund the following year "in order to boost support for regional counter-terrorism capacity." The New Zealand police contribute too to the South East Asia Region Centre for Counter-Terrorism.⁶

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Our Future with Asia* (Wellington: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2007), p.24.

³ Robert Ayson, "New Zealand and East Asia's Security Future", *Outlook Edition 03*, April 2006, Asia New Zealand Foundation, p.08.

⁴ *Our Future With Asia*, p.23.

⁵ Rolls, *op cit.*, pp.202 and 223.

⁶ *Our Future With Asia*, p.24.

Thirdly, and very much in keeping with one of the strands of ASEAN's own security thinking which holds to the belief that the best way of responding to internal security problems is to strengthen the state (particularly through the promotion of socio-economic development),⁷ New Zealand has continued to provide ODA (Official Development Assistance) to select regional states. New Zealand has helped with specific conflict prevention and poverty reduction programmes in Mindanao in the Philippines and Maluku in Indonesia.⁸ Long-standing efforts to assist peace-building in Timor Leste would be a notable example in this regard also.

Lastly, by acting in some way as an exemplar. New Zealand seeks to uphold and promote those values which can underpin strong (in the sense of their degree of socio-political cohesion) and effective states and assist in the creation and maintenance of a regional and, indeed, international society. These values, described as "assets" in *Our Future With Asia*, include those associated with a "modern and multicultural democracy" and support for multilateralism.⁹ They also include respect for international law and the promotion of human security.¹⁰

As to what New Zealand might reasonably hope to be able to do in the future then the answer is probably more of the same. The defence dialogue with new regional states could profitably be deepened and expanded upon. In tandem with this it would be useful too if New Zealand could further its engagement with ASEAN in the defence arena. Although the idea seems to have been dropped for the time being, the concept of an ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus would be an apposite one. New Zealand could, perhaps, participate in some way in the ADMM Work Programme looking at conflict prevention and resolution. Exchanges of personnel from the various defence ministries could help to further those vital personal relationships and ties and provide useful input into policy and planning processes. Though something akin to the proposed Australia-Indonesia disaster relief centre with one or other ASEAN state is almost certainly out of reach, some form of established co-operation in this area could be profitable given New Zealand's

⁷ See Mark G. Rolls, *Centrality and Continuity: ASEAN and Regional Security, 1967-2007 and Beyond?* (forthcoming).

⁸ *Our Future With Asia*, p.27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁰ Robert Ayson has attached some significance to the area of human security arguing that New Zealand could "reasonably aim to become a champion of human security issues in East Asia." He also contends that New Zealand's "reputation as a small country with a capacity to think and act *independently*" is an asset in the region. Ayson, *op. cit.*, p.11.

expertise and the fact that a natural disaster is almost certainly the greatest threat to New Zealand's security as it is to that of many of its ASEAN partners. In this vein, extending co-operative measures to deal with the growing range of perceived non-traditional threats is a must.

The issue of how New Zealand can help to moderate major regional power rivalries is the most difficult to address. This is partly because it is an issue that has been of comparatively minimal concern to New Zealand and, thus, about which little in the way of declared policy has actually been formulated. To a large extent New Zealand has been able to enjoy the luxury of strategic distance. Robert Ayson has observed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *New Zealand's Foreign and Security Policy Challenges* paper of 2000 showed a lack of concern about the balance of power in East Asia and noted that South Pacific and not East Asian "contingencies" determined the NZDF's shape.¹¹ More recently, *Our Future With Asia* states that the "relations between the largest players in the region are in reasonably good shape."¹² However, Ayson also argues that discussion about China, India, Japan and the US often "invokes considerations of a changing regional balance of power"¹³ and *Our Future With Asia* singles out the rise of China and India as being of some significance for New Zealand.¹⁴ It also states quite clearly that it's "imperative that the strategic environment in Asia remains stable to support peace and prosperity."¹⁵

Clearly, therefore, the moderation of major power rivalry and the maintenance of a favourable balance of power are of some significance. How can New Zealand, as a small state, help to bring this state of affairs about? First, though, it needs to be understood that although major power rivalry is sometimes derived from and manifest in various security issues in East Asia, it is shaped too by interactions at the higher system level about which New Zealand (even in conjunction with ASEAN and Australia) can realistically do little or nothing at all. At the regional level, however, and in keeping with its support for multilateral endeavours, New Zealand can certainly help to encourage the 'enmeshment' of the major powers in these institutions. In particular, the US should be persuaded to sign the TAC (Treaty of

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.07.

¹² *Our Future With Asia*, p.23.

¹³ Ayson, *op. cit.*, p.09.

¹⁴ *Our Future With Asia*, p.63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.23.

Amity and Cooperation) and participate in the EAS.¹⁶ The appointment of ambassadors by the major powers that have not yet done so should be encouraged also. Additionally, and very much in keeping with its traditional stance on nuclear proliferation, New Zealand should try to lobby the Permanent-5 members of the United Nations Security Council to sign the protocol to ASEAN's SEANWFZ (Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone) Treaty which ASEAN called for in 2007.¹⁷ Anything that New Zealand can do to help foster a sense of security interdependence in the region between the major powers themselves and between them and ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand will help to contribute to regional stability.

Ultimately, of course, New Zealand is no different from the ASEAN states themselves in having to earnestly hope that regional stability remains in the interests of the major powers as it has evidently proven to be thus far.

Views expressed in this paper are personal to the author and are not to be taken as representing the full delegation or the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

¹⁶ This seems a realistic prospect now with advisers of President-elect Obama signalling that it would be in the interests of the US to do so. *Channelnewsasia*, 'ASEAN-US ties set to expand if Obama wins', 31 October 2008, at: (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/print/386699/1/.html).

¹⁷ See Rolls, *Centrality and Continuity*.