

Work Together to Improve Regional Security Architecture and Address Common Challenges

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Since the end of the Cold War 26 years ago, the trend of multi-polarity, globalization and regional integration has grown ever stronger. The Asia-Pacific has been peaceful and stable in general and is becoming the most dynamic region with the biggest potential.

At the same time, our region faces increasingly complicated security issues, often trans-national, and inter-linked. Traditional hot-spots flare up from time to time, and non-traditional security challenges are posing severe threats to the security of regional countries and regional stability.

In this context, the building of a regional security cooperation architecture in the Asia-Pacific is lagging behind. Currently, there are five types of security mechanisms in this region. First, the alliance system led by the United States and relevant bilateral and multilateral arrangements; Second, the ASEAN-centered security dialogue and cooperation frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+); Third, special mechanisms on hotspot issues such as the Six-Party Talks on Korean Peninsula nuclear issue and the quadrilateral coordination mechanism on the Afghanistan issue made up of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the US; Fourth, regional security cooperation mechanisms including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA); Fifth, Track 1.5 or Track 2 security dialogues such as the Shangri-La Dialogue, Xiangshan Forum and the Asia-Pacific Roundtable. These security mechanisms reflect

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underlying disconnects in our region: problems left by the Cold War, lack of coordination among sub-regions, and differences on security concepts.

Economic cooperation and political and security cooperation, as two wheels driving Asia-Pacific cooperation, should complement each other and move forward in parallel. In the economic sphere, a relatively mature and stable framework has been cultivated to effectively promote regional economic integration. In the security area, in contrast, the fostering of a security cooperation architecture has lagged behind, making it more difficult to deal with growing security challenges in a timely and effective way. This calls for the building of an Asia-Pacific security architecture consistent with regional conditions and the interests of all parties.

In recent years, relevant parties have made valuable explorations in this regard and proposed some new visions and initiatives. At the Fourth CICA Summit in 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping provided a Chinese vision, that is, to update our security concept, establish a new regional security and cooperation architecture, and jointly chart a course for security that is by all and for all. This vision reflects the collective wisdom and consensus of regional countries and creates new prospect for security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

As an important member in the Asia-Pacific family, China has been a contributor to regional peace and defender of regional security. China is willing to work with all other parties to explore and build a regional security architecture for the building of the Asia-Pacific community of common future. A new regional security architecture should have the following elements:

First, it should be guided by a new security concept. Actions are based on concepts. A security architecture that fits regional reality must be built on an updated security concept. Old security concepts, such as the Cold War mentality and zero-sum game, are increasingly out of touch with the trend of globalization. Win-win cooperation has become the new spirit of the times. Tackling global challenges through common efforts is now the only viable choice for all countries. Asia-Pacific countries should enhance dialogues and cooperation, and explore new concepts and new approaches to safeguard regional security.

China has initiated the security concept featuring common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, which advocates consultation and dialogue, openness, inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation. This security concept is in line with the trend of our times. It is built on existing concept of regional security cooperation, and has injected new vitality to the development of Asia-Pacific security architecture. China is ready to promote and implement this new security concept together with other regional countries, and push forward the building of an Asia-Pacific security architecture featuring wide consultation, joint contribution, shared benefits, and win-win outcome.

We believe that countries in the region should handle differences properly and peacefully through dialogues and friendly consultations and negotiations. This is in line with our regional norms of mutual respect, seeking common ground while shelving differences and peaceful coexistence. With efforts spanning 60 years, China has properly settled boundary issues with 12 out of its 14 land neighbors. The negotiations on boundary issue between China and India, and between China and Bhutan are moving forward steadily. With the joint efforts by China and ASEAN countries, the situation in the South China Sea has cooled down, and the regional rule and framework prevailed once again, which emphasizes the management, control and resolution of differences by consultations and negotiations.

Faced by heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula, China strongly urges the DPRK and other parties concerned to exercise restraint, truly comply with Security Council resolutions and work hard to resume dialogue. Applying military pressure and undermining the strategic balance in the region will only deepen the security concerns of relevant parties and harm the prospect for resolving the Peninsula issue.

China actively supports and facilitates cooperation in non-traditional security areas. Every year we sponsor more than one third of the cooperation projects under the ARF, the East Asia Summit (EAS) and other regional frameworks, which has effectively promoted the non-traditional security cooperation in the region.

Second, the regional security architecture should be based on the rule of law and international norms. Without rules and norms, even a family would fall into disorder, not to say a country. Rule of law and norms are thus essential elements in the building of the Asia-Pacific security architecture. At the same time, the rules should be based on consensus and universally recognized international and regional norms. The will of a few countries can't be equated to international or regional rules, nor taken as the sole basis for "a rules-based order." International law should not be interpreted out of context, and such interpretation should not be preached as so-called rules of law in international relations.

To be specific, the new Asia-Pacific security architecture should comply with the following rules: First, the UN-centered post-war international system and international order, and the fundamental principles of international law and basic norms of international relations enshrined in the UN Charter. Second, the universally recognized rules of international law, including the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, the 1982 UNCLOS and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. Third, codes of conduct jointly formulated by countries in the region, such as the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the future Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). Fourth, the consensus reached by regional countries through interactions, including the "ASEAN Way" of handling issues, which advocates consensus and accommodates the comfort level of all parties.

China has been a firm defender and active contributor to the international rule of law, norms and orders. As early as in 1954, China, Myanmar and India initiated the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. To conform to the new international order for the seas, China and ASEAN members jointly formulated the DOC in 2002, and have made best efforts to implement it fully and effectively. This is a great contribution to peace and stability in the South China Sea. In July this year, China and ASEAN members issued a Joint Statement on the Full and Effective Implementation of the DOC. We are steadily pushing forward negotiations and working for early conclusion of the COC on the basis of consensus. We hope countries outside

the region could respect and support the endeavors of China and ASEAN countries to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Third, the security architecture should be held together by partnerships. To a large extent, progress in building the Asia-Pacific security architecture depends on the relationships among regional countries as well as interactions among major countries in the Asia-Pacific. All countries should abandon the Cold War mentality, and work together to pursue a new path of dialogue and partnership, instead of confrontation, alliance, and enmity. We should build an Asia-Pacific partnership featuring equality, mutual trust, inclusiveness and mutual benefit through consultation and mutual accommodation.

China is committed to promoting sound interactions with other major countries, which has contributed to stable relations among major countries in the Asia-Pacific. China is actively pushing forward a new model of major-country relationship with the US based on no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. The comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between China and Russia is showing a strong momentum. China is actively implementing partnerships for peace, growth, reform and civilization with Europe. China is actively strengthening the strategic partnership of peace and prosperity with India, and developing a closer partnership for development. And China is also endeavoring to improve its strategic relationship of mutual benefit with Japan based on the spirit of taking history as guidance and looking into the future.

Fourth, the security architecture should be supported by a comprehensive and multi-layered network. Given the diversity in the Asia-Pacific, a unified security framework in this region is not foreseeable in the near future. In fact, the building of the new Asia-Pacific security architecture is not meant as the start of a new venture, rather, it will be based on the further coordination, upgrading and improvement of existing mechanisms. It will be normal for various mechanisms to advance together and form a multi-layered, wide-ranging and comprehensive Asia-Pacific security framework.

All parties should continue to respect the ASEAN centrality in East Asia cooperation, encourage the SCO and the CICA to play bigger roles, and

support the development of Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogue platforms, such as Xiangshan Forum. Bilateral military alliances should be more transparent and play a constructive role for regional peace and stability. China will as always support and promote the development of regional security dialogue and cooperation mechanisms, actively participate in them, and improve regional security architecture together with other parties.

Fifth, the security architecture should draw strength from common development. Achieving common development and prosperity is the common aspiration of all countries in the Asia-Pacific. The Asia-Pacific security architecture should also serve this aim. Countries should vigorously promote social and economic development, improve living standards, and narrow the development gap within the region. At the same time, we should pay close attention to sustainable development, and create conditions to enable all countries and people of all social backgrounds to access the fruits of development and achieve inclusive and mutually beneficial development.

To promote common development, China has proposed and actively advanced the Belt and Road Initiative, and initiated the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund. To help narrow the development gap within ASEAN countries, China and Mekong countries jointly set up the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism. With China's efforts, the G20 Hangzhou Summit reached important consensus on inclusive and interconnected development.

As an issue of strategic importance for the Asia-Pacific, the building of a regional security architecture has drawn attention from all sides. Under the framework of the EAS, relevant countries have held five workshops on this theme. China actively supports and promotes relevant discussions. In June 2016, China and Lao PDR co-hosted the 5th EAS Workshop on Regional Security Architecture in Beijing. Next year we will host an additional Track 2 workshop. We welcome more countries to actively take part in this discussion and jointly promote the improvement of regional security architecture. 🌐