

## Chapter 4

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

As the previous chapter shows, there is a wide variety of approaches to integrating PD into an organization's efforts to prevent, mitigate and resolve violence throughout the conflict cycle. Our survey of other organizations shows that often the most difficult part of the process is creating the political will to act. The following represents our collective conclusions regarding the practice of PD and some specific recommendations for the ARF based on the best practices and lessons learned by other organizations.

- There are a growing number of international multilateral organizations that have explicitly taken on a PD role and others that have become gradually involved in this activity without it being part of their formal mandate. All possess a shared commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict.
- Different organizations have different definitions of PD but all contain a few key common elements, including respect for the principle of non-interference, the voluntary nature of participation by all parties, and a common desire to avoid conflict or to prevent tensions from escalating. These principles are all consistent with the working definition and statement of principles of PD adopted by the ARF.
- Almost all institutions surveyed acknowledged a role for PD not only in avoiding conflict between or among member states but also within member states, provided the involved government and other concerned parties agree. In fact, some (like the PIF) place their greatest emphasis on stability within rather than between states. While PD principles have clearly been applied in East Asia in this context – the case of Aceh being a recent prominent and successful example – the ARF definition at present appears to limit PD to actions between and among but not within states. This limits the opportunities for and the potential utility of ARF PD efforts.
- There are a number of common tools or vehicles for promoting and achieving PD within the institutions studied, including some type of early warning and/or investigation function, a good offices approach, an experts and/or eminent persons group (EEPG), mediation or arbitration services (including in some instances a judicial settlement mechanism), a conflict prevention center, and provisions for special fact-finding or mediation-oriented missions.
- While PD does not necessarily require deep institutionalization, structural approaches to prevention that attempt to address underlying sources of conflict are common. An institutionalized approach may require a significant investment in manpower and financial resources to create a credible response capability. While many of the organizations studied have elaborate conflict prevention and conflict resolution rules and mechanisms, they do not always work as envisioned. Nonetheless, they provide an institutional framework from which to begin engaging disputants.

- Most organizations provide a legal basis for PD either in their charters or through specific resolutions which, while respecting non-interference principles and state sovereignty, include a specific commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes. In the OAS case, in the event of disputes between states, both are expected to agree to some “peaceful procedure” if, *in the opinion of one party*, the problem cannot be solved through normal diplomatic channels.
- For most regional organizations, the definition of PD has been less important than the institutionalization of norms designed to discourage a resort to military means; building of crisis response capacities (both diplomatic and institutional), and early warning/early intervention to prevent crisis escalation were key elements related to the task of PD.
- Organizational capacity to carry out PD depends on the breadth and depth of consensus among participating states regarding the core principles that the regional or inter-governmental organization is committed to uphold. The greater the degree of consensus among participating states and acceptance of core principles, the greater the capacity for organizations to accept and implement robust capacities to implement PD. This was especially true among organizations with a strong commitment to promoting, achieving, and/or maintaining “good governance” among the member states. Several institutions specifically listed good governance and the promotion of democratic values among their core objectives, even while acknowledging each state’s right to choose its own form of government free from outside pressure or coercion.
- Quiet diplomacy was one of the most important and recurring attributes among institutions, organizations, and individuals empowered to conduct preventive diplomacy. PD tends to be more effective when done in a quiet environment that is less politicized or that is buffered from outside political pressure.
- Advance agreement on principles and criteria for such a role in the abstract appears critical to advancing a PD capacity that might otherwise be subject to political interference in the heat of the moment. For example, the OSCE’s High Commissioner for National Minorities retains a PD capacity that remains outside the political sphere. However, such a requirement can never empower regional organizations to conduct activities without consensus and approval among member states and especially among the parties to the actual or potential conflict.
- The key to promoting diplomacy in the face of rising conflict is to empower and maintain capacity to engage in effective dialogue and persuasion to address the main actors engaged in conflict. By requiring member states to accept dialogue through commitments to resolve conflicts by peaceful means as part of membership, an expectation is created that regional actors have legitimacy and respect state sovereignty. Most regional organizations have strong sovereignty/non-intervention norms and, in reality, regional organizations can do little or nothing without the consent of member states or other protagonists involved in the dispute or conflict.
- While virtually all organizations recognize that PD may apply within as well as between

or among states, the bar for regional organization intervention into domestic or internal conflicts is usually higher than for inter-state conflicts. Regional organizations may be allowed to assist in promoting certain capacities or mediation services to help defuse internal political crises when invited by the state in question to do so.

- Most commonly used tools for promotion and implementation of preventive diplomacy involve commissioning of reports on situations of concern, the sending of investigative missions, or the appointment of a special envoy empowered to interact with the parties in conflict. A special envoy is often chosen based on his/her prior experience with the parties and leaders concerned in specific conflicts. Often, the secretariat of the regional organization will be expected to provide staff support for the special envoys in the course of carrying out their tasks.

- Most regional organizations have a limited staff capacity designed to support communications with field offices, provide confidential analysis/early warning to the head of the regional organization or to support effective diplomacy by the organization's representative, and to assist in internal communications among actors and foreign offices of member states. The need for mediation training or for a listing of potential interlocutors with proven mediation skills was cited by many specialists. EEPGs can be helpful in this regard although not all EEPs are skilled mediators and those who are must also be viewed as "honest brokers" in order to be effective.

- Although some regional organizations have units devoted to conducting early warning through the routine gathering of information from governments, concerned citizens, media, or civil society groups involved in areas of rising tension, other organizations focus on building technical crisis-response capacities among staff rather than devoting staff time to analysis of potential sources of conflict, given the availability of wide varieties of open-source information from multiple sources. Others have established mechanisms for information sharing or a venue in which a state's concern about a potential or impending crisis can be vetted in advance.

- One dilemma associated with the conduct of preventive diplomacy at the regional level is that the involvement of the head of the regional organization or the appointment of a special envoy may by definition suggest that a conflict has already moved from the prevention to the conflict management phase. A standing institutional capacity to focus on and contribute to the prevention of potential sources of conflict before they arise can be one means by which to preempt politicization of potential conflicts that would otherwise require preventive diplomacy/conflict prevention responses.

- In most organizations, the distinction between PD and conflict management is blurred since classic definitions of PD (including the one adopted by the ARF) acknowledge that the role of PD is not only to prevent conflicts from arising, but also to prevent escalation in terms of the level of violence or the geographic area involved. Most institutions see the various definitions as more academic than practical and do not feel inhibited to apply PD techniques where needed.

- Most regional organizations have institutional capacities to respond using PD mechanisms through the entire cycle of conflict, including not only conflict prevention, but also conflict resolution and post-conflict stabilization. PD capacities often are emphasized in post-conflict recovery situations as a means by which to prevent the recurrence of conflict.

- In comparing other institutions with the ARF, it should be noted that the ARF has already served as an important and successful vehicle for promoting security cooperation and building confidence among its members while also taking some important steps toward achieving its stated goal of evolving from promoting confidence building measures (CBMS) to promoting PD measures and the elaboration of approaches to conflict.

- ARF initiatives such as the EEPG, the Friends of the ARF Chair, the establishment of the ARF Unit, and the examination of an expanded role for the ARF Chair are all consistent with mechanisms being utilized by other institutions and, with proper focus and adjustment, can facilitate progress toward PD within the ARF as well. The production of voluntary Annual Security Outlooks (ASO) can also help in the identification of potential crises and thus serve an early warning function if it is focused in such a direction. This will require standardization of its content and some sort of examination process, either by a track two institution such as CSCAP or by the EEPG.

- The ARF EEPG can be an important PD tool. At present, it does not appear to have a clear mission or mandate and has only met twice, with limited expectations or results. The EEPG could become involved in helping to draft the ARF 2020 Vision Statement and could also provide an “early warning” function while serving in an advisory capacity. Attention should be paid to cataloguing qualifications of EEPs, with focus on areas of expertise and also on mediation skills and experience. The EEPs should be available to the ARF and to individual member countries to encourage the use of this resource both multilaterally and bilaterally.

- In examining the role of the EEPG, the ARF might also want to make a distinction between experts and eminent persons. The latter, having political weight, are capable of playing a political role, while experts appear better suited to working behind the scenes on particular issues. Experts could brief the ARF and the eminent persons. They should be familiar with the ARF and the role it is expected to play. Given the size of the EEPG – five participants from each country – consideration should be given to forming an EEP Advisory Council or vision group, consisting of one EEP from each member committee, for a renewable two-year term. This group would deal with questions such as the ARF’s future PD agenda, including the presentation of options.

- One important first step for the ARF would be to further endorse and institutionalize its PD role through the identification of specific PD-related objectives. Ideally, this would be done in the context of a broader ARF Vision Statement. CSCAP has recommended the creation of an ARF 2020 Vision Statement to refine and further clarify ARF objectives and provide specific benchmarks for progress, consistent with and building upon the

1995 ARF Concept Paper. Such a Vision Statement could better define the ARF's PD role and objectives.

- The ARF should also reexamine the current Working Definition and Statement of Principles of PD, recognizing that, in practice, PD can also be applied within states, as long as it is "employed only at the request of the parties involved or with their consent."

- While PD has traditionally been applied to prevent traditional disputes or conflicts from arising or escalating, PD mechanisms and procedures may also have a role in dealing with non-traditional security challenges. This may provide a less controversial method of developing and refining PD practices and procedures, but should not distract the ARF from responding to more traditional (and more potentially destabilizing) security challenges.

- Effective PD requires effective early warning, which could be accomplished through the establishment of a Regional Risk Reduction Center or RRRC (as envisioned in the ARF Concept Paper). The EEPG could also be given an early warning mission, and a more standardized ASO that focused on emerging security challenges could serve as a vehicle for providing early identification of potential challenges against which PD measures might be successfully applied. Additional details and lessons learned regarding the establishment of an RRRC are provided below, given that this is the one PD element that has received the least amount of attention or analysis by the ARF to date.

- An RRRC or early warning center appears to be an important component of most PD programs. Its roles would include: gathering, storing, and disseminating information; analyzing information; flagging issues that require the attention of the ARF or individual member states; cultivating public awareness; and promoting ARF action on potential or emerging crises. An RRRC would gather information from official and unofficial sources and should not serve as a mere clearinghouse for information, but should also become actively involved in disseminating information through public awareness campaigns. It would play a key role in drawing the attention of ARF leaders to urgent issues and promoting ARF action on them. In addition, the RRRC should work closely with the EEPG.

- Since PD methods are most effectively employed at an early stage of a dispute or crisis, the creation of early warning mechanisms could help facilitate PD actions by the ARF, provided there is a willingness to act upon the information once received. Without a willingness and ability to act, there is little value in early warning. However, institutionalized early warning also helps to prod action by making it difficult, if not impossible, to ignore formal notices of impending crisis. Concerns about interference in another country's internal affairs or possible threats to national sovereignty further complicate the issue, especially when the troubled states (or internal elements within a state) resist a helping hand (or try to deny that a problem even exists). This is where a neutral, objective early warning mechanism can be potentially the most helpful, in highlighting a problem that might otherwise be ignored or denied until conflict erupts.

- In developing an early warning mechanism, attention must be given to its various components. The first component is information. Here the challenge is separating good information from bad information, i.e., separating actual facts from perceived facts or myths, and then putting the good information into proper perspective. This requires objectivity and, preferably, verification by neutral observers. Once information has been collected and verified, it must then be communicated to policymakers who are hopefully empowered to act upon the information. Timeliness and accuracy are both keys, as are the willingness and ability to respond once the problem is duly recognized and transmitted. The action itself may be nothing more than a proposal to place the issue on the ARF agenda or to submit the issue to the EEPG for follow-up investigation. The most that can be expected initially would be an offer, on the part of the ARF Chair or some other emissary, to seek further information (a fact-finding mission) or to offer ARF good offices to negotiate or mediate, if all the parties involved are willing to engage in the preventive diplomacy process.

- Other general observations about successful PD efforts generated from our study and earlier CSCAP research suggests that: failure is never final (it provides lessons learned and a basis for subsequent efforts); a commitment to find a solution (including a willingness to compromise) is essential on the part of all concerned parties, and this requires strong, bold leadership; non-governmental organizations can and have played a useful facilitating role and can be helpful during the implementation phase, but the real work must be done by the involved parties themselves; reaching agreement is not the end of the process, follow-through is critically important and never-ending; and buy-in by other involved parties is essential – a failure to ensure legislative support has undermined or caused dramatic revision of some otherwise effective PD efforts.

- Other general suggestions emanating from the October 2007 CSCAP Workshop on PD and the Future of the ARF in Brunei aimed at further reinvigorating the ARF process include: clearer definition of the role of the EEPG, ASO, Friends of the Chair, and the expanded role of the Chair itself; more emphasis on a pro-active (vice responsive) role for such initiatives, to include the institution of fact-finding and goodwill missions, and "good offices" or mediation services; increased willingness to examine more sensitive or controversial regional security issues; examination of the "responsibility to protect" principle and how this affects the long-standing principle of non-interference; provisions for the calling of emergency meetings to respond to impending crises or conflict; examination of a "full consensus minus x" approach for routine ARF decisions; enhanced cooperation and coordination with other (including track two) organizations; greater encouragement and support of non-ARF bilateral and other regional CBM and PD efforts, including the encouragement of such efforts along the sidelines of (but separate from) ARF gatherings; greater participation of not only defense officials but also officials from other ministries in ARF deliberations; and greater refinement and explanation of the ARF's niche, i.e., what the ARF brings to the table and how it distinguishes itself from the growing number of other regional multilateral institutions and organizations (the Vision Statement would help in this regard);

- Other CSCAP suggestions toward further institutionalization of the ARF include:

creation of an ARF Secretariat (through elevation of the ARF Unit); appointment of an ARF Secretary General with clearly defined role and mission; the previously identified suggestion of the eventual establishment of a Regional Risk Reduction Center; and the establishment of a regular ARF Summit, perhaps back-to-back or rotating with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting, East Asia Summit, or other high-level gatherings.