

SYNERGY BETWEEN THE ARF AND ADMM-PLUS TO AVOID DUPLICATION OF EFFORTS

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1. Colleagues, any discussions on the regional security architecture cannot take place without examining the strategic landscape at that particular point in time.
2. Over the years, a matrix of overlapping and multilayered structures – comprising multilateral security fora and groupings – has emerged as a result of the changing geopolitical landscape and new security environment.
3. At the broadest level, we have large multilateral security fora like the Shangri-La Dialogue and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) that bring together all stakeholders that can make useful contributions to regional security. Then there are sub-regional groupings such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation with more select membership and specific focus areas.
4. Functional groupings, such as the Malacca Strait Patrols and the Five Power Defence Arrangements, have a niche membership and are formed to address specific challenges. The last layer is the web of bilateral defence relations that countries have established with one another that underpin the multilateral relationships.
5. Each layer serves a specific purpose and facilitates progress and development of the other layers, strengthening the overall security

architecture and helping it to move forward. The objective is to create a robust regional security architecture that is able to respond to any emerging security challenges in an effective and efficient manner.

6. This web of old and new constructs is not static. In fact, it is highly adaptive. Some fora were established in the past and have adapted to the new realities, while the others were formed with an eye towards future realities. The key issue is how each forum can bring something useful to the table which contributes to our overall goal of enhancing regional peace and stability.

7. The establishment of the ADMM-Plus in October last year has prompted many observers to compare the ADMM-Plus with the ARF. They are concerned about the areas of overlap because both forums address security issues. While seemingly similar, the ARF and the ADMM-Plus are actually different – from how they were born, their membership, and their mandate. Let me explain.

8. The genesis of the ARF lay in the uncertain security environment following the end of the Cold War. Against this backdrop, the primary objective of the ARF is to promote transparency and to build confidence through dialogues and activities so as to avoid any miscalculation of actions that may lead to an increase in tensions.

9. Correspondingly, the membership of the ARF is broad-based and it includes participants that have a “geographical footprint” in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and Oceania. In 1994, the ARF was inaugurated with 18 participants, but there are 27 participants today.

10. Over the years, the ARF has played a useful and important role in facilitating dialogue and confidence-building. Countries are able to share their perspectives and listen to the viewpoints expressed by others.

11. The strength of the ARF also lies in its ability to muster a multi-agency approach to confront a diversity of threats that are multi-dimensional, such as HADR, non-proliferation, energy and maritime security. The ARF allows us to explore how to bring to bear the subject matter expertise and capabilities of a plethora of agencies that can value add to addressing each security concern.

12. The ADMM-Plus, on the other hand, was only established in October last year. Arguably, the ADMM-Plus had a relatively “easier birth” as it was created at a time when countries in the Asia-Pacific saw the need for cooperation and desired to come together to forge concrete and practical cooperation to address the wide spectrum of transnational security challenges.

13. The ADMM-Plus was also created at a time when engagement and cooperation amongst ASEAN and its major security partners was already fairly mature. It was in this context that the membership of the ADMM-Plus is focused in its configuration, with an appropriate size to be open and inclusive, and yet nimble enough to respond quickly to emerging security challenges. Hence, the ASEAN Defence Ministers decided to establish the ADMM-Plus with an ADMM+8 format.

14. Given the favourable political and geo-strategic conditions surrounding its inauguration, the Defence Ministers were able to take a collective decision at the inaugural ADMM-Plus meeting for the ADMM-

Plus to launch straight into practical cooperation in areas where we have shared interests. The ADMM-Plus decided to focus on five areas including counter-terrorism, peacekeeping operations, maritime security, military medicine and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. In this connection, Singapore is pleased that five Experts' Working Groups have been set up to focus on these areas of cooperation.

15. And of course, the final difference is that the ARF is led by foreign affairs' officials while the ADMM-Plus is led by defence officials. And when defence officials meet, it is quite natural for us to gravitate towards action rather than dialogue. In this regard, the ADMM-Plus Ministers currently only meet once in three years, and in the intervening years, the focus will be on the five Experts' Working Groups.

16. Notwithstanding the differences, Singapore is of the view that the ARF and ADMM-Plus serve different but complementary purposes, as they have unique characteristics that reinforce each other.

17. From our perspective, it is inevitable that the agenda of the ADMM-Plus and the ARF will overlap. This may not be a bad thing because this ensures that there are no gaps in our ability to address the increasingly trans-national security challenges we face. Both the ARF and ADMM-Plus also afford us flexibility in deciding which tools to employ in addressing each security challenge.

18. We also believe that the ADMM-Plus should be allowed to develop at its own pace and we should not constrain the role and agenda of the ADMM-Plus. Instead, we should let the ADMM-Plus develop organically at a pace comfortable to all, and find its place in the regional architecture,

which will be different from the ARF, as the ADMM-Plus' key focus is to hold cooperative activities including joint exercises.

19. Over time, the ADMM-Plus and the ARF will naturally evolve in a way that allows each of them to contribute in niche areas in the regional architecture where they can best promote regional peace and stability.

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