

## THE ASSOCIATION OF South-East ASIAN NATIONS

Analyzing the CSCE's experiences with arms control, disarmament, confidence-building and verification has been a relatively simple and straight forward task. This has not been the case in relation to the experiences of ASEAN. The ASEAN experience in this policy area have not produced any examples of arms control, confidence-building or verification which have been as obvious, structured or straight forward as those produced by the Helsinki process.

That is not to say that ASEAN has not attempted arms control or confidence building. It may be argued that there have been five such examples in ASEAN's development: 1) the confidence-building nature of the ASEAN regime itself; 2) the attempted arms control process of ZOPFAN and SEANWFZ; 3) intelligence sharing; 4) joint military exercises and; 5) development of the Post-Ministerial Conferences with ASEAN's six external dialogue partners.

The first example of confidence-building can be found in the establishment of ASEAN itself. "If confidence building is defined in a broad sense to mean any measure that builds confidence, then ASEAN has, for a long time, been a confidence-building regime."<sup>48</sup> The formation of ASEAN came about with the common realization that confrontation and conflicts which existed among the countries of the region in the past were counterproductive and that security could best be guaranteed by the establishment of a regional order which promoted avoidance of conflict and positive co-operation. In a concrete form, 1976 The Treaty of Amity and Co-operation in South-East Asia, laid down the rules of conduct for its members, by which they would refrain from threatening one another and would settle their disagreements peacefully and without outside interference. The habit of consultation and consensus-building has reinforced the process of conflict avoidance.

The 1976 Treaty stressed political, economic and socio-cultural cooperation, in part, in the hope that it would assist in the development of mutual confidence as well as a sense of community among the South-East Asian states in which the role of force would be minimized or eliminated. As a result, bilateral relations, which were riddled with conflict in the mid-1960's, have become considerably stronger. The Association has been a

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<sup>48</sup> Kusuma Snitwongse, "South-East Asian security Issues and Confidence-building" in Disarmament Topical Papers 6 Confidence-building Measures in the Asia-Pacific Region, in New York, United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, 1991, pg 144.