

the value of existing bilateral arrangements, and encouraged ad hoc, informal dialogues (habits of dialogues), and inclusive participation until conditions mature for more formal institution-building." As David Dewitt suggests, "institutions may evolve; they may indeed be the desirable goal, but more immediately and for the mid-term, multilateralism as process, structure, and regularized activities on an agenda of common concern is more important than multilateral [sic] as institution."<sup>7</sup>

As a result of the Canadian initiatives and similar efforts undertaken by Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the ASEAN, Asia Pacific has witnessed a tremendous growth of multilateral security dialogues since the early 1990s. There are a number of factors that underlie the gradual acceptance of multilateral approaches by regional actors. First is the recognition that region-wide problems/issues need to be addressed through regional and/or subregional efforts. Inclusiveness engages almost all important players in the region. Second, economic interdependence provides the condition for greater security cooperation and rule-based systems/framework. The APEC/PECC experiences certainly have been instrumental. Third, regional actors, in particular the lesser powers, realize the values of such frameworks as a hedge against the perceived decline of US role and as a mechanism to keep the US engaged. Fourth, the arrangements also aim at keeping the rising powers enmeshed in a networks of political, diplomatic, and economic interdependence. Finally, small powers are given greater control over the process and agenda-setting of these evolving institutions. As we have seen, the ASEAN-led ARF and the multitude of both Track I and Track II activities in the region are more "local" in character, with initiatives taken by regional powers and not even the major regional powers. The step-by-step approach, with inclusive participation and focusing on confidence building, has resulted over the past few years in a greater acceptance of multilateralism in dealing with security issues. The workshops on the South China Sea, on peacekeeping, and on other security-related issues testify to the usefulness of multilateral approaches. The question that should be more fruitfully raised is how the region could come up with multilateral approaches toward region-specific issues other than one that is concerned with whether or not (and even how) the European models can be applied in the Asia-Pacific context. China's co-sponsorship of the CBM workshop in Beijing in March 1997 certainly belie the somehow mis-perception that Chinese perspectives on, and involvement in, Asia-Pacific multilateral security dialogues have been cautious, passive, and even dismissive.

Within these broad contexts, Canadian political/security interests in Asia Pacific can be understood as of short-, medium-, and longer-term perspectives.<sup>8</sup> In the first, Canadian interests lie in managing and containing escalation of conflicts in regional hot spots such as the Korean Peninsula, South Asia; maintaining open sea lanes of communication and open skies; and stemming and stopping illegal trafficking. For the medium term, Canada

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<sup>7</sup> David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative Security," *The Pacific Review* 7:1 (1994), pp.1-15.

<sup>8</sup> Brian L. Job, "Canada's Foreign Policy in the Asia Pacific," paper presented at the Asia Pacific Security Forum, Maritime Forces Pacific, Esquimalt, BC, 18 February 1997.