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The Canadian initiative for a North
Pacific cooperative security
dialogue. --

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THE CANADIAN INITIATIVE FOR A NORTH PACIFIC
COOPERATIVE SECURITY DIALOGUE

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In speeches given in July of this year in Victoria (B.C.), Tokyo, and Jakarta, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, spoke of the need for improved dialogue among the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and offered suggestions as to how such a dialogue might be pursued.

The rationale for what has become known as the Canadian initiative for a North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue (NPCSD) is grounded in the concept of "cooperative security", as explained by the Secretary of State for External Affairs in his recent speech to the United Nations General Assembly, and specifically in examining whether recent improvements in East-West relations could contribute to improved relations among countries in the Asia Pacific region. Equally important is Mr. Clark's determination that, as events in the Asia Pacific region evolve, Canada contribute to the regional political process in a manner commensurate with its political and economic interests and its proven multilateral capabilities.

THE CONCEPT OF COOPERATIVE SECURITY

Mr. Clark has stated that security is more than the absence of war; it is the presence of a stable and prosperous peace. Security has ceased to be something to be achieved unilaterally or attained through military means alone and instead has become multidimensional. This is, fundamentally, the Canadian concept of cooperative security. To achieve this requires a shared sense on all sides that the survival of others is in the mutual best interest, and this in turn is dependent on building trust and confidence.

The Canadian concept of cooperative security accepts that links exist between threats; it requires dialogue and compromise, and builds on the link between stability and change.

Mr. Clark has suggested that one means of enhancing regional stability in the Asia Pacific region would be the establishment of a "system" of cooperative security which would be self-reinforcing through the fostering of habits of cooperation, negotiation, and compromise - in short, a habit of dialogue - across the broadest possible spectrum of issues.

A habit of dialogue is a process, not a forum or an event; to be effective it must be balanced and reduce animosity, must contribute to a common base of knowledge and understanding, and must strengthen confidence and build trust.

Dialogue is the foremost tool of diplomacy. It is in countries' individual and collective interest to strengthen our diplomatic resources, to replace the management of specific threats with the management of the risks to regional stability, and to replace issue control with issue resolution. Flexibility, adaptability, and realistic assessments are essential to this process.

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The concept of cooperative security that underlies the Canadian initiative is not intended to be an alternative to traditional security arrangements. Rather, it is intended to address all issues of regional concern, and then to focus on areas where progress in developing regional approaches is possible. The Canadian initiative takes into consideration existing bilateral and multilateral channels of discussion and is being developed and pursued in a manner to ensure that the emerging regional dialogue enhances rather than detracts from these channels.

The introduction of an ongoing Asia Pacific consultative framework has been a key objective of Canadian foreign policy. An essential dimension of the Canadian approach has been based on the contribution such arrangements make to the strengthening of regional stability. While formal regional consultative arrangements exist in South Asia, South East Asia and the South Pacific, no similar regional arrangements exist in the North Pacific, where there is a new opportunity for improved relations.

Mr. Clark's definition of cooperative security concerns is quite broad and includes, in addition to traditional military security issues, risks posed by environmental degradation, uncontrolled demographic flows, the causes and effects of terrorist acts and the international traffic in drugs, and economic deterioration.

The responses needed to deal effectively with non-military, unconventional security threats require a heightened degree of cooperation among states - a degree of cooperation which recognizes increasing interdependence and mutual advantage in developing joint policy responses to these threats.

The Canadian concept of cooperative security goes beyond the more limited approaches of collective and mutual defence against aggression or destabilization. As an approach to regional security, collective and mutual defence arrangements will remain central to the preservation of national sovereignty and the protection of national interests; yet, the security afforded by existing defence and alliance arrangements should allow regional states to engage in more cooperative efforts to deal with unconventional, non-military threats that endanger regional stability and national well-being.

The Canadian initiative has two tracks - a non-governmental and a governmental element - and focusses initially on the North Pacific countries of China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada. This approach was determined following an analysis of the four Asia-Pacific sub-regions: South Asia (where SAARC has the potential for developing regional consensus on a wide number of issues), South East Asia (where ASEAN continues to evolve), the South Pacific (with the emerging South Pacific Forum), and the North Pacific. Only in this last sub-region, where the interests of the two superpowers and two great powers interweave, where there is a significant concentration of conventional and nuclear forces, which is not fully represented in APEC, and where growing instability would have an

adverse effect on Canada's political, economic, social and environmental interests, is there no multilateral forum to allow the timely discussion of policy. Existing bilateral mechanisms in the North Pacific could be usefully complemented by a wider dialogue.

THE NGO TRACK

The NGO (non-governmental organization) track of the Canadian initiative, while encouraging an exchange of views by regional experts, is designed specifically to explore issues and prospects for dialogue and to focus knowledge and awareness on the North Pacific. Discussions have been held with York University in Toronto which has agreed to organize a series of international conferences to discuss the various options and approaches to developing improved relations among North Pacific countries. In addition to academic involvement, the participation of non-governmental organizations with relevant expertise in a number of areas will be sought. These conferences and related studies will have a direct influence on the development of the Government of Canada's policy agenda.

THE OFFICIAL TRACK

The official, or governmental, track of the Canadian initiative is an open-ended process intended to explore the merits of establishing a regional dialogue. Such a dialogue must not be the result of an attempt to transplant European models or institutions. The sources of tension and the nature of the regional challenges in the North Pacific do not lend themselves to such an approach. Rather, approaches to enhance stability must accommodate the specific traditions, history and geopolitical dynamics of the region. The continuing emphasis is on consultation, not negotiation.

To appreciate the differences between the Canadian initiative and those recently proposed by others (the USSR, Australia, Mongolia, South Korea), it is important for observers to understand that the Canadian initiative is not:

- an attempt to apply a copy of a European confidence and security building framework to Asia;
- a call for a multilateral negotiating session on land, air, or naval arms limitations in the North Pacific (such an exercise would be premature in light of regional security requirements, alliance structures, and current force deployments);
- intended to provide de jure recognition of existing borders or governments, or to challenge the de facto legacies of past conflicts (although the Canadian initiative, if successful, might provide a venue for participants to agree that disputed borders would be changed only through negotiation and not by force); or
- a call for a regional summit meeting of foreign ministers, or heads of governments or states.

REGIONAL VIEWS

Mr. Clark has discussed his views directly with the foreign ministers of Japan, China, the Soviet Union, the United States, South Korea, Australia and the six member states of ASEAN. More consultations are planned at both the ministerial and officials levels, with emphasis being placed on the Canadian initiative as something which will continue to be carried out with little fanfare. Its goal is the development of a regional dialogue to allow North Pacific countries to discuss ways in which regional relations can be improved, regional stability enhanced, and the habit of dialogue learned and practised in the interests of peace and prosperity.

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