The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) in the School of International, Political and Strategic Studies, College of Asia and the Pacific, at the Australian National University, is Australia’s leading centre for the study of strategic, defence and wider security issues. SDSC conducts research and teaching on the role of armed force in international affairs, especially as it affects Australia and its region. It aims to use good scholarship to illuminate strategic and defence policy questions faced by Australia and other countries. Its research therefore seeks to contribute to policy and public debates as much as to academic discourse. SDSC’s research and teaching priorities are the conceptual and historical foundations of strategy and policy, global and Asian regional developments that shape Australia’s strategic environment, and Australia’s defence policy, strategic posture, military capabilities and operations.

The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) was established as an autonomous organisation in 1968. It is a regional research centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environments. In addition to stimulating research and debate within scholarly circles, ISEAS endeavours to enhance public awareness of the region and facilitate the search for viable solutions to the varied problems confronting the region.

ISEAS Publishing, an established academic press, has issued more than 2,000 books and journals. It is the largest scholarly publisher of research about Southeast Asia from within the region. ISEAS Publishing works with many other academic and trade publishers and distributors to disseminate important research and analyses from and about Southeast Asia to the rest of the world.
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A volume of this magnitude also required significant institutional support from across the ANU. The College of Asia and the Pacific, the School of International, Political and Strategic Studies, and the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, have provided the intellectual and logistical space for this volume. Colleagues from across these enmeshed academic units, especially Professor Paul Hutchcroft, Professor Andrew MacIntyre and Professor Hugh White, were early and enthusiastic supporters of a festschrift to mark Des’ contribution to the university. Along with Paul Hutchcroft, Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb, Professor William Tow and Professor Robert Ayson — each longstanding friends and colleagues of Des — have provided invaluable guidance and advice along the way. We are also indebted to Darren Boyd, James Giggacher, Raoul Heinrichs, Ingram Niblock and Sarah Norgrove for their exemplary support as we have finalised this manuscript for publication, and to Olivia Cable for her superb stewardship of the logistics related to this and so many other projects.
1

INTRODUCING THE INSURGENT INTELLECTUAL

Brendan Taylor, Nicholas Farrelly and Sheryn Lee

Denis Healey, the former British Labour MP and one of the founding fathers of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), observed in his memoirs that "from the middle fifties Australia has contributed far more to international understanding of defence problems than any country of similar size". Healey was almost certainly referring here to the likes of Coral Bell, Hedley Bull, Paul Dibb and Robert O'Neill — all of whom Professor Desmond Ball has worked closely with at various times during the course of his illustrious career. Yet it would be difficult to contest the proposition that Des was actually foremost in Healey's mind as he made this observation, writing as he was in the late 1980s. As the Cold War began its unexpected retreat into the shadows of history, Des Ball stood as the leading Australian Strategic Studies scholar of his generation. Or as Brad Glosserman and Ralph Cossa more eloquently put it in their contribution to this volume, Des had by this time earned the respect of "every high church in the nuclear priesthood".

Those who know Des most intimately will readily anticipate how he would respond to such acclaim. On the one hand, he is a scholar who is quietly proud of his momentous achievements, and justifiably so. At the
same time, one can imagine the manner in which the man who colleagues affectionately refer to as a “gentle giant” would bashfully wince at such flattery. This is just one of the many contradictions to Des Ball, none of which are drawn out in this volume. Some of the contributors write, for example, of a scholar possessing a remarkable grasp of the ‘big picture’ who at the same time is almost obsessively preoccupied with the devil in the detail. Others characterise him as a realist and slightly hawkish scholar with strong idealistic, dovish proclivities. Some policy elites have routinely detested his work, while others describe him as an “academic gem” and have forged longstanding friendships with this “insurgent intellectual”.

Amidst these apparent contradictions, one constant in Des’ career has been his longstanding association with the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) at the Australian National University. As O’Neill details in the next chapter of this volume, Des was appointed at the SDSC in the early 1970s and became its first tenured academic in 1980. He has spent the remainder of his career at SDSC, including as Head of the Centre from March 1984 to July 1991. As a number of the contributors to this volume rightly observe, he has been the heart and soul of the SDSC throughout this period. And it has been his intellectual home. Consistent with this, the volume is structured around the three areas, which have traditionally provided the primary focus for the Centre’s research efforts — global strategy, Asia-Pacific security and Australian strategic and defence policy.

Former US President Jimmy Carter, with whom Des collaborated during the 1980s, offers the introduction to the section of this volume addressing Des’ contribution to the study of global strategy. In this introduction, President Carter discusses the positive contribution that Des’ work made during the 1980s to the collective goal of avoiding nuclear war. Glosserman and Cossa subsequently identify four main themes that are apparent in Des’ writings on global strategic issues — the influence of extraneous (i.e., non-rational) factors upon strategic decision-making; the dangers associated with failing to understand the practical concerns of warfighting; a fierce nationalism; and respect for the fundamental principles of democracy. Jeffrey Richelson then reviews Des’ contribution to the literature on signals intelligence — a substantial contribution that Richelson estimates extends beyond thirty books, monographs, academic articles and book chapters. Robert Ayson follows with an examination of Des’ scholarship on nuclear strategy, providing a detailed analysis of three key works produced by Ball during the early 1980s — a period where Ayson regards Des as having been at the height of his powers. Juxtaposed with Ayson’s chapter, Ron Huisken concludes the section on global strategy with a review of Des’ contributions to scholarship on arms control and arrives at the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that this intellectual giant in the field of Strategic Studies — an area of study traditionally dominated by realists, hawks and hardliners — is something of a dove.

The section dealing with Des’ even more extensive contributions to the study and practice of Asia-Pacific security is introduced by Australia’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer. Downer describes Des as both a generator and a challenger of ideas. Pauline Kerr then surveys the contribution to the study both of security and security architecture that Des has made over the last two or more decades. Kerr dissects the logic of his thinking about regional security, demonstrates how his distinctive analytical approach accounts for the significant contribution of his work, canvasses critiques of his approach and examines the implications of Des’ analysis for how we think about regional security architecture today. Focusing on a particular element of regional architecture, Brian Job and Anthony Milner examine Des’ practical efforts to build a stable and enduring Asia-Pacific region through his direct involvement in the establishment and maintenance of so-called ‘Track 2’ mechanisms for multilateral dialogue, such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). Euan Graham then reviews Des’ scholarly contributions in the area of maritime security, examining specifically his work on nuclear strategy at sea, naval arms racing, confidence building, and technical intelligence gathering. Drawing out the ‘arms race’ theme, Tim Huxley analyses the contribution of Des’ work addressing the dynamics of military procurement and capability development in the Asian region. Finally, Nicholas Farrelly and Phil Thornton each discuss Des’ contribution to the study and practice of security in Southeast Asia, paying particular attention to his more recent work along the Thailand-Burma border.
continue to resonate strongly in Australia’s contemporary defence debate. Ross Babbage and J. O. Langtry in the first chapter of this section recount the highly influential research they undertook with Des on the “Defence of Australia (DOA)” during the 1980s, focusing in particular upon his scholarly modes of operation, the key themes underpinning Des’ thinking on DOA and his personal style as a project leader. Richard Tanter discusses Des’ path breaking work on the United States’ strategic installations in Australia, which markedly expanded the contours of public debate on this subject. Gary Waters then highlights the more recent contribution that Des has made in raising Australian public awareness of cyber security issues. Finally, Hamish McDonald discusses Des’ interactions with the Australian media, particularly with reference to his collaboration with Des on a widely acclaimed book examining the killing of five Australian newsman in Balibo during the covert Indonesian invasion of Portuguese Timor in 1975.

Viewed in their entirety, the reader of these contributions honouring the work of Des Ball will begin to see that the apparent contradictions in his scholarship and approach are less paradoxical than first meets the eye. Instead, they are much more a product of Des’ uncanny capacity to transcend conventional academic, political and even personal boundaries. Huiskens chapter captures this wonderfully when he makes the point that “it is not easy to attach a familiar label to Des. He is not an ideologue of any kind and labels like hawk, realist, constructivist and so on seem quite out of place”. In similar vein, Ambassador Beazley observes that “he was and essentially is a man of the left. But he also transcended the left. His intellectual curiosity compelled him to seek a deep understanding of the global military distribution of power.”

Des’ crossing of these conventional boundaries is as much a reflection of his generosity — to which Babbage and Langtry refer in their contribution — as it is a product of the intellectual curiosity of which Beazley writes. As editors, we have and continue to be the fortunate beneficiaries of his immense intellectual generosity as, indeed, have each of the contributors to this volume. Yet as Ambassador Beazley astutely observes, we each remain destined to stand in the shadow of his remarkable career — a very long shadow, and one that has indelibly left a remarkably positive impression on our lives and individual academic careers. As we honour Des, we are reminded of President John F. Kennedy — whose administration proved formative in Des’ understanding of strategy and politics — when he observed that “as we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.”

Readers of this volume will almost certainly concur that Professor Desmond Ball’s life and work has been, and continues to be, the epitome of this proposition.

Notes
I first met Des Ball in 1975, at the Australian National University in Canberra. We have been comfortable friends ever since. Our careers diverged and we lost contact several times, sometimes for years, but it was the sort of friendship that never had to be restarted, it was always there. In 1975, I was into my fifth year with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and, in lieu of “home leave”, had been allowed to attend a conference on nuclear disarmament in Fiji. En route to Fiji, I dropped into the Australian National University’s (ANU) Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC) and, in addition to Des, met the then head, Robert O’Neill, and a bunch of other current and prospective doyens of the Australian strategic community including David Horner, Ross Babbage, Hedley Bull, Tom B. Millar, J. D. B Miller and Geoffrey Jukes. This could have turned the head of a young migrant economist from an (at the time) unfashionable extremity of the Commonwealth, and it did.

When, a year later, O’Neill asked me to join SDSC as a visiting fellow for a year, I jumped at the chance. Later still, I had the good fortune to have O’Neill and Des as supervisors for my Ph.D. After more than two decades with the United Nations and the Australian Public Service (intersecting occasionally with SDSC and the newer ANU Peace Research Centre),
I rejoined SDSC (with Des still at the heart of it) in 2001 until I retired in 2012. In short, Des has been something of a constant in my professional life (although he is still evasive when I ask whether he ever read any draft chapters of my thesis, let alone the final product). He also lured me into my one and only (scouts honour) experiment with a "prohibited substance", but that's another story.

It is not easy to attach a familiar label to Des Ball. He is not an ideologue of any kind and labels like hawk, realist, constructivist and so on seem quite out of place. Des is what I would call a forensic analyst with a work ethic of Dickensian proportions. Indeed, I know of no other student of security affairs that comes close to matching Des' consistent and absolute faith in the capacity of diligent scholarship to unlock all doors, especially those guarded by official secrecy. Des has never held a security clearance. Nor, to my knowledge, has he ever used information conveyed confidentially prematurely, that is, before he was able to locate corroborating open source information or before the source agreed to its use. Despite this iron discipline, on every issue that piqued his curiosity and engaged his sustained attention, he ended up being justifiably confident that there were very few people in the world that had a more complete picture than he had. Given the international status that Des attained on several broad issues in the field of security studies, I recall on more than one occasion urging him to step back and write the occasional reflective piece, something devoid of footnotes. He essentially ignored this advice. It simply was not in him to have a paragraph let alone a page or several pages that was not referenced to something that he had seen, heard, touched, photographed or read. This is only a slight exaggeration. A glance through his list of publications reveals "Reflections of a Defence Intellectual", "The Blind Men and the Elephant: A Critique of Bureaucratic Politics Theory" and a few other pieces that one can reasonably infer were exceptions to my generalisation. But the list of his publications is itself a publication and these pieces look rather lonely.

The theme I want to explore in this chapter is whether, behind that formidable figure and the penchant for the forensic assembly of information, there is some other predisposition that informed Des' professional output. Specifically, I will explore the proposition that the appearance of a hawkish security and defence analyst is just that, an 'appearance', and that Des Ball is in fact something of a dove. At one level, this is not hard to do. He dabbled periodically with the subject of arms control, including in publications like *Arms Control Today*, and the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and clearly not from the standpoint of a defence hawk seeking to highlight the dangers of arms control for an adequate and coherent defence effort. In the second half of the 1980s, Des, as Head of SDSC, developed an energetic and productive collaborative program with the ANU's Peace Research Centre headed at that time by Andy Mack, amongst other things, co-edited in 1986 a book on *The Future of Arms Control*. And all this was before the end of the Cold War when Des switched the focus of his work decisively toward the comparatively nebulous world of confidence building and multilateral security processes in East Asia.

But let's look more closely at the targeting of nuclear weapons, the theme that established Des' international reputation in the 1970s and did so much to put SDSC on the map. From the late 1950s, the United States strategic nuclear community had begun to look more critically at the posture of massive retaliation, America's first formal attempt to bring nuclear weapons into active service in support of foreign and security policy interests. It had been estimated that executing the massive retaliation plan in 1960 would have resulted in 360-425 million fatalities in the Soviet Union, China and other bloc states. Two decades later, when average warhead yields had declined and direct targeting of populations had fallen from favour, official United States estimates of fatalities from a full-scale nuclear exchange (including deaths from fallout in the first month after the exchange) were 50-150 million in the Soviet Union and 70-160 million in the United States. Des had reviewed "Armageddon scenarios" in a 2006 paper and recalled using these numbers to suggest that "nuclear winter" proponents in the early 1980s were exaggerating the number and size, and therefore the effects, of the warheads that would be exchanged in a United States-Soviet nuclear war, in his view, an analytical sin fully comparable to belittling the consequences of such an event.

The nuclear weapons area was particularly vibrant and dynamic in the 1960s and 1970s. Everything was on the move. For one thing, technological advances in the size, weight and yield of warheads and in the reliability and accuracy of delivery systems, and in early warning systems continually invited analysts to consider new missions or new ways of performing old ones. The thrust of technological change was inexorably in the direction of counterforce; that is, seemingly enhancing the ability to engage the opponent's nuclear forces rather than aspiring to simply crush the other side as a coherent economic and social entity. For another, it was clear that the Soviet Union was determined to become a formidable nuclear opponent, and with Sputnik in October 1957, looked
for a moment as though they might surge ahead. Thirdly, simply living through the standoff called the Cold War was tiring people that the black and white, good versus evil, scenario that the posture of massive retaliation seemed to require was utterly unrealistic. If things were to break down, it would almost certainly happen in a gradual, indirect and untidy fashion, adding further complexities to the deterrent signals that the nuclear arsenal should be tasked to emit. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 had also driven home the point that deterrence not only had to work perfectly it also had to work pre-emptively. Making deterrence work in a crisis, as was the case in October 1962, was not an experience that either side wanted or, as it turned out, dared to go through again.

Des had cut his teeth on these issues in his research for his Ph.D. thesis on the strategic nuclear policies of the Kennedy administration, exposing a singular talent for unearthing crucial and sensitive information and being accepted as a peer amongst a small group of American analysts determined to supplement the ocean of arm-chair strategic analysis with hard information about how what a President, National Security Advisor or Secretary of Defense said about America’s nuclear posture was connected to the way the deployed forces might actually be used if the President so instructed. In setting out to expose as far as possible the actual mechanics of nuclear deterrence, this group enormously enriched the strategic nuclear debate in the United States.

The Cold War nuclear competition was characterised by a curious discontinuity, an intellectual gap that was profoundly troubling but seemingly unbridgeable. The evidence suggested that, in a crisis, political leaderships found that nuclear threats became utterly compelling at the level of a single bomb on a single city. But this dread of the bomb also found expression in strong support for the development and preservation of nuclear capabilities that not only promised impenetrable general deterrence — that is, crushing retaliation in all imaginable circumstances of all out nuclear war — but which also endeavoured to preclude the enemy leadership making adventurous political moves in the belief that, on a particular issue in a particular place, it could generate a capacity to coerce and to prevail. This latter instinct, of course, the instinct to preclude crises, led to lavishly large and diverse nuclear arsenals that extended into every military domain and presented an existential threat to humankind.

The questions this group explored included the consistency of the relationship between declaratory policy and targeting practice, and whether

(1) ambitions to posture the nuclear forces to deliver more subtle and nuanced deterrent messages during as well as before a nuclear war or
(2) whether the associated notions of positive control of an unfolding nuclear war were in any practical sense realistic. Des himself concluded that it would be heroic to assume that the Soviet leadership could be relied on to distinguish many of the ‘limited options’ that the United States’ force had been programmed to deliver from an attempt to simply destroy that nation, and to react accordingly. The Soviet leadership, it could be noted, never conceded the slightest willingness to entertain notions of limited or controlled nuclear war. Similarly, in a particularly influential IBS Adelphi Paper published in 1981, and discussed at length by Rob Ayson in the previous chapter, Des presented a compelling case that the vulnerability of the sensors and communication links in both protagonists made notions of positive control quite fanciful. He concluded that beyond a few days or a few tens of detonations (whichever came first) the leadership could not expect to have reliable intelligence on damage inflicted or sustained nor reliable control over the residual forces. Whether intentionally or not, this body of work compellingly reinforced the view that beyond the nuclear threshold lay an abyss that would render reason and strategy, or notions of victory, nonsensical. Inevitably, of course, the same material provided powerful ammunition to the anti-nuclear movement, which zeroed in on the risks of nuclear war starting by accident, unauthorised use or faulty intelligence and the strong probability of escalation in addition to the spectacular possible outcomes like a nuclear winter.

A few years later, in a 1985 article in International Security, Des looked in particular at challenges for positive control posed by sea-based nuclear forces. Both superpowers, but especially the United States, deployed a major part of their strategic nuclear forces at sea. Communicating with submerged submarines is extraordinarily difficult and, as a result, the political and military leadership has been compelled to live with a greater measure of autonomy for these platforms than was the case with land-based missiles and bombers. Needless to say, the greater autonomy of and poor communications with such an important component of the nuclear forces reinforced the lack of confidence in a controlled nuclear exchange. Later still, in a 1989 article in the British Journal of Politics, he examined the prospects of controlling a theatre (or sub-strategic) nuclear war, reaching much the same conclusions.

These arguments point to a contribution on a vitally important theme that is difficult to overvalue. A measure of the status that Des attained in
this field is the calibre of the studies he was invited to contribute to. One example is the 1984 volume National Security and International Stability, edited by Bernard Brodie, Michael Intriligator and Roman Kolko, some of the giants in the development of United States nuclear strategy. Another would be Kurt Gottfried and Bruce Blair, who in 1988 gathered fifteen leading analysts to collectively consider the issue of crisis stability and nuclear war, with Des being the only participant not from an American institution. Similarly, when he and Jeffrey Richelson edited a volume on strategic nuclear targeting in 1987, they were able to attract contributions from figures like Lawrence Freedman, Colin Gray and George Quester.

The quite extraordinary database and contacts (especially in the United States) on strategic nuclear targeting, early warning, communications with strategic forces that Des had developed had an important by-product in the form of books on the two key American military installations in Australia, Pine Gap (1980) and Nurrungar (1987). These installations — but Pine Gap in particular — were highly classified both with respect to the nature of the operations conducted and the agencies involved in running them and naturally attracted a lot of speculation, some of it quite bizarre. I do not believe that Des was opposed in principle to the presence of these facilities nor to the alliance with the United States that provides the political foundation for their existence. Nor was he opposed to secrecy as a matter of principle, only to the use of secrecy to preclude democratic processes of accountability and reasoned evaluation. He also simply regarded secrecy as an irresistible challenge and is probably a secret admirer of the fact that the United States strives to live by the proposition that government activities should be transparent unless secrecy is absolutely necessary, a proposition that few governments around the world are prepared to live by. The book on Pine Gap, A Suitable Piece of Real Estate, put Des’ forensic skills on full display. Government took some time to catch up but in 1987-88 the Hawke Labor government saw political merit in demystifying Pine Gap and persuaded the United States to agree to say that it was a ground station for satellites that gathered intelligence useful to the Australian Defence Force (as well as the United States armed forces) and to the verification of international arms control agreements. This was not the whole story but it did not mislead. It was part of the real story, unlike the line that it was a space research facility that had been used for more than two decades. It would be hard to deny that this development had been facilitated by the fact that so much of the real story could be, and had been, pieced together from open sources.

Dipping selectively into Des’ publications in this way to explore our particular theme may give the impression that Des is a normal professional academic who, in the 1970s and 1980s, produced a rich body of work focussed on nuclear weapons. This would be quite misleading. Des is in many respects a ‘normal’ person but he parts company with most of us in how utterly he has dedicated himself to his professional interests for every one of the past 45 years or so.

From the late 1980s, the thesis of this assessment of Des’ output abruptly became something that was incontestable rather than something that could be (albeit readily) inferred. He remained focussed on the central strategic balance through to 1990 although, as intimated above, he had begun, occasionally, to dip his toe into the business of arms control. Just a year later, however, the thrust of his work changed dramatically. In 1991, he published pieces with titles like Towards Arms Control and Reduction in the Pacific, and (together with Sam Bateman) An Australian Perspective on Maritime CSBMs in the Asia-Pacific. This was not an aberration. Des had evidently determined that the apparent end of the Cold War would take the heat out of the strategic nuclear business and was attracted to the challenge of what greater East Asia would, could and should do to protect and strengthen stability and security in the still-amorphous post-Cold War era.

The Cold War ended dramatically in Europe. In the space of just 25 months (November 1989 to December 1991), the Berlin Wall fell, the Iron Curtain was lifted (through the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe), Germany re-unified and the Soviet Union dissolved into the Commonwealth of Independent States. It was readily apparent that two powerful multilateral agencies, the European Union and NATO, had been instrumental in keeping this compressed geopolitical transformation peaceful: not a shot was fired. Nothing comparable happened in Asia. Asia had not been hard-wired to the Cold War standoff to anything like the same degree as Europe. But as policy circles and academics began to survey the outlook for the newly liberated international system, it appeared to most that Asia could be headed for “interesting times” (to paraphrase that Chinese saying). A consensus developed that a major reason for the outlook being so indeterminate was the near complete absence of multilateral institutions and processes and the apparently weak instincts to put any in place.

Des launched himself into the slippery and indeterminate world of cooperative security, transparency and confidence building, publishing on
maritime CSBMs, strategic culture in the Asia-Pacific, preventive diplomacy, and the outlook for arms control. Conceptually, cooperative security aspired to constrain national military capabilities so that destabilising threats of large-scale military aggression were out of reach. Cooperative security therefore sought to obviate the need to deter and, if necessary, defeat such threats, including through collective security arrangements.

In any drive to nudge the region toward collective and collaborative solutions to security concerns, a key analytical question was to gauge the urgency of the requirement: as the basic parameters of the post-Cold War world began to take shape, what was happening to national security assessments and to what extent could this be inferred from military plans for capability development? This became an identifiable theme of Des’ work in the early 1990s. He pulled this work together in an article in the winter 1993/94 edition of International Security in which he concluded that while there was no arms race underway in East Asia, at least as measured against the quantitative and qualitative characteristics that the United States-Soviet Union competition had given to this term, there were disturbing aspects to the region’s defence acquisition programs that warranted urgent policy attention. These included emerging power projection aspirations, particularly on the part of China, and a region-wide aversion to transparency, particularly in respect of security perceptions and concerns. In a comparable net assessment a decade later he was less cautious, describing the Asia-Pacific region as in an “emerging complex arms race”.

In between these two assessments, there was a steady flow of papers on multilateral security cooperation, the emerging architecture of security in the Asia-Pacific and on Australian perspectives, including ramifications for ANZUS and developments like the trilateral United States-Japan-Australia security dialogue. The context for all this work was whether cooperative approaches were making any inroads on the traditional unilateral (or collective) solutions to security concerns and what could be done to improve the balance.

Towards the end of the 1990s, Des acquired a new interest: Burma and the Thailand-Burma border. This was to become a consuming preoccupation in the new century with Des spending so much time up there that an award of honorary dual citizenship from Thailand would surprise no one. He once said to me that some of the largest conventional military operations since World War II had been conducted on and near the Thailand-Burma border but no one had ever taken any notice. Even as Des transitioned into the hazy world of cooperation, transparency, and multilateral dialogue, he never left that “forensic analyst” behind. All his publications bore the trademark characteristics of comprehensiveness and meticulous documentation. But the Thailand-Burma borderlands constituted a virgin territory and presented the challenge of developing an entirely new body of information from the ground up, a challenge that he evidently found irresistible. Characteristically, when the nature of the Burma-North Korea relationship became the subject of high-level political speculation around 2009, particularly the improbable possibility that it included a nuclear dimension, it transpired that Des had interviewed the two defectors who were a primary source of this speculation.

I consider my case to be proven beyond any reasonable doubt. Des has never been an ideologue of any sort but neither has he been an agnostic. He much prefers to let facts and analyses speak for themselves rather than engage in conspicuous advocacy. He is not by any stretch of the imagination a pacifist but he has consistently displayed an instinct that addressing national security interests through giving full rein to national security programs cloaked in as much secrecy as can be sustained politically is likely to result in sub-optimal outcomes. As stressed at the outset, Des has been without peer in his commitment to the capacity of forensic scholarship to expose shortcomings and dangers and thereby set the stage for new ways of doing business, even if it remained for others to give substance to these new ways.

Notes

SECURING A NEW FRONTIER IN MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Nicholas Farrelly

INTRODUCING A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

After devoting the first half of his academic career to the specifics of missiles, antennae and targeting protocols Professor Des Ball shifted his research in what might appear an unlikely direction. Inspired by many years as a regular traveller to Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, and with a growing stable of Southeast Asia-focussed students, Des began a momentous pivot to this region. His earlier devotion to uncovering the details of sensitive strategic-level defence activities provided the analytical tools and mindset necessary for researching defence, security and political topics in mainland Southeast Asia. In this shift, which began in the early 1990s, Des de-emphasised his earlier academic interests in nuclear targeting, signals intelligence and Australian defence policy to focus, sometimes exclusively, on regional security issues. After beginning with analysis of Burmese military affairs, most notably the Tatmadaw’s signals intelligence capabilities, he grew to become the foremost expert on Thai security forces, especially its mind-boggling array of paramilitaries. From the 1990s, the strategist, long accustomed to global-level threat analysis, became a regional tactician seeking to clarify the smallest details of deployments, configurations and tasking in a wide-ranging effort to deliver insights about what is commonly described as “human security”. Increasingly he has seen his role as offering “broader perspectives on security…to try and come up with greater balance in looking at the whole spectrum of threats to human security”.2

During these years, Des has taken the study of security in mainland Southeast Asia in new directions. His close working relationships with officials from regional military and police forces have provided access that remains, in key respects, unique. These networks are reinforced and fertilised by his dogmatic commitment to regular field research.3 With a tempo of travel and field research that shames many other scholars, Des keeps up a heavy schedule of visits, especially to Thailand where he travels the length and breadth of the country to accumulate the obscure information that infuses the narrative of his books. Those books are packed with details not mastered by other scholars; they have become reservoirs of facts and analysis that serve to re-frame standard impressions of regional security dynamics. Lavishly illustrated with maps, photographs and tables they are encyclopaedias for interested students, scholars and journalists.4 Even Southeast Asian security practitioners — those whose day-to-day business is regional military and law enforcement affairs — can be overwhelmed by the scope of Des’ research on their specific professional concerns. There have been many occasions when Des has broken the ice with new, and sceptical, acquaintances by letting them flick through his draft manuscripts (which he habitually carries in hard copy). Even in their unfinished form these scholarly products provide ample evidence of his commitment to the task, and to his insights about tactical security issues in mainland Southeast Asia.

As other chapters in this volume indicate, Des’ career has spanned at least half a dozen separate spheres of knowledge and academic enquiry in Security Studies. It is, nonetheless, only in the most recent phase that Southeast Asia has provided a distinctive locus for the fusion of his intellectual and activist adventurism.5 To account for his work and output, this chapter begins with a general overview of Des’ approach to studying security cultures in Southeast Asia, and to the challenges of understanding the sensitive tactical issues that are involved. This is followed by analyses of his research on Burma and Thailand, the countries in this region that he has come to know best. Two key examples of his work are introduced in this
context — his analysis of Burma's nuclear ambitions and his exploration of Thailand's Border Patrol Police — to illustrate Des' specific approach to tactical analysis in mainland Southeast Asia. To flavour these reflections, I draw on my experiences as one of Des' recent collaborators and co-authors, and on an interview I conducted with him in May 2011.

**RESEARCHING SECURITY CULTURES**

In his earliest research Des tackled the challenges of strategic thinking and security cultures in the shadows of the Cold War. It was an anxious, uncertain time. After choosing to pursue the serious study of nuclear policy and politics, Des developed a methodology for research on secret and sensitive topics that he has persisted with ever since. And as the characterisations of that early nuclear research contained in this volume show, Des garnered novel insights by meticulously collecting copious empirical matter to serve an unflinching analytical mission. Others have already indicated that this is a daunting style of research that requires impeccable recall, stamina and patience. It is clearly not suited to everyone but, in Des' case, it usefully blends aspects of his personal, intellectual and professional qualities to provide the foundations for an effective, and consistent, methodology. As Des told me in the 2011 interview:

I keep very detailed files of all my overseas trips because a substantial part of my academic year is not sitting at home doing this writing: it's out in the field collecting information and collecting material. And unless I file that properly, I am going to forget it. I am going to get it confused with information that I have got on other trips. I spend quite a lot of time at the end of every overseas trip: I write up a full account of everyone that I have talked to, every place that I have been, every single person, and these trip reports now amount to many volumes of bound A4 on my bookshelves. So I can go back and check who I talked to on a trip to some part of the Thai-Burma border back in 1996 and I would have that correlated with a field file from that trip in 1996, where the scribbled notes from the meeting with that particular person would be kept. I probably over-file photocopying, I photocopy an enormous amount.7

For Des, this research is an idiosyncratically thorough process requiring long-term concentration and a constant awareness of how the pieces of the puzzle may fit together. In this process the weighing of evidence and the testing of hypotheses is an ordinary, everyday undertaking. I have observed over my recent years working with Des that he makes assessments of evidence almost constantly. If he can find value in a fragment of new information then it is assiduously filed away. If the information merely replicates something he already knows, or proves redundant for other reasons, then it is quickly discarded. This method, and its associated mentality, has proved crucial to Des' ability to build an enviable mastery of security developments in mainland Southeast Asia. In tracing the genesis of his interests in this part of the world it is relevant that, beginning in the early 1990s, Des became increasingly concerned with what he called "strategic culture in the Asia-Pacific region".8 This led to further consideration of the post-Cold War geopolitical order, the rise of new security threats, and the challenges for both government and non-government players in a rapidly changing regional context. Des' response to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the diminution of scholarly attention to great power rivalry, was to interrogate emerging security issues in Southeast Asia with equal measures of tactical insight and humane sympathy. His enthusiasm for developing grounded, enmeshed and embedded insights about the organisations tasked with security in the region, especially in Thailand's borderlands, has come to set a new standard. At checkpoint-after-checkpoint, base-after-base, Des is a familiar face. With his hulking figure, his camera, and his briefcase of notes, maps and business cards, he tries out his modest Thai. On these trips he is often accompanied by students, colleagues, friends and family. Des' touring parties are meticulously planned and are designed to uncover new information to fill gaps in his knowledge. In June-July 2012, for example, Des travelled to the restive southernmost provinces of Thailand, he also spent time along the Thailand-Burma frontier, and in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. In each location he sought to cross-check previously acquired details with current realities, ask questions about tasksing and command issues in the security units he met along the way, and endeavour to get as close as he could to the experiences of all of the police and soldiers, townsfolk and rebels, with whom he associated. Such a method for understanding the details of security in Southeast Asia requires commitment and consistency. Piece-by-piece he has built understandings that benefit from critical readings of all the available evidence and a prevailing scepticism about the practices, if not the policies, of security organisations.9 To sustain his active research agenda Des travels regularly, usually for 3-4 months each year, to Thailand and adjacent countries. This pattern ensures he has built up his contacts with political and social players. These range from prominent generals and intelligence
supremos, to shopkeepers and sentries. Many of these contacts have also become regular correspondents, filling his in-box with tips, photographs, links and data. When he is not on the road Des currently spends each morning in his office tending to the piles of files and printouts that wash across his desk. He also calls on sources in Thailand and elsewhere to help check facts and provide responses to what can seem like an endless stream of questions. The process is an intuitive one, reliant, at all times, on Des’ special ability to triangulate information from multiple sources. These sources often include the regional intelligence officials who remain part of his orbit. Some such figures are former students while others are long-term acquaintances met through Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) events, or other regional fora. At their request, Des is a frequent visitor to important national security installations in Bangkok, and elsewhere. He is invited for closed-door discussions and briefings, especially when there are concerns about sensitive border matters.

Along the Thailand-Burma border itself, Des has developed links with armed ethnic groups, local military and police commanders, and many journalists and activists. He has travelled frequently to Karen National Liberation Army and Karen Army bases, and has also worked closely with Shan and Mon groups along the border. Some of Des’ doctoral students, most notably Hazel Lang and David Scott Mathieson, have been influential in shaping his ideas about the borderlands. Des pays tribute to Lang in the following terms:

Hazel Lang... is another example of how PhD students have interested me in new areas, and indeed guided me in those new areas. She had invited me to join her in some of her fieldwork in Mae Hong Son, Mae Sot and most particularly, Sangkhlaburi, Three Pagodas Pass, which was the subject of her doctoral research. And introduced me to some of those ethnic organisations, the New Mon State Party in particular, but also in 1999 she came with me when we were involved in meeting the leadership structure of the Karen National Union, the KNU, and the Karen National Liberation Army, the KNLA, and she came with me to Mae Hong Son and we meet the hierarchy of the Karenni political and military organisations.

Mathieson has also been a key influence on Des’ work. He has spent the years since 2002 living in Thailand where he has gone on to become the senior Burma researcher for Human Rights Watch. Des is particularly proud of Mathieson’s human rights work; they remain regular collaborators and correspondents, and the similarities between them are, they would both accept, quite striking. Mathieson produces a steady stream of reports dealing with sensitive political and social issues inside Burma, many of which clearly take their inspiration, in method if not content, from the style of work that Des has pioneered. Other Burma watchers, including leading figures like Curt Lambricht, Andrew Seth and Ashley South, are also key members of Des’ orbit. Furthermore, he is a regular interlocutor and collaborator of important Thailand-based analysts such as Bertil Lintner, Brian McCartan, Paul Keenan and Phil Thornton (who has the next chapter in this volume). In their own ways they have all helped to shape his impressions of security in mainland Southeast Asia. For Des, research and its distribution is a collaborative, indeed social, activity.

It is also an activity that requires a certain generosity of spirit. Des’ sympathy for Burma’s ethnic minorities, many of whom have been subjected to human rights abuses during decades of civil war, infuses his interactions. His well-known support for those ethnic minorities campaigning for justice and peace in eastern Burma gives him extra credibility in refugee camps and among hardened fighting men. In 2012, as an example, Des was honoured by the Karen National Liberation Army with a special award recognising his contributions to their struggle. He also calls the political and social situation as he sees it. In one earlier publication he noted:

Thailand’s policies for dealing with these borderland security issues are confused and poorly coordinated. Some are misguided, especially those that require good faith on the part of the (Burmes) junta, and ultimately doomed to failure...further deprecating security for many people in the borderlands in the process.

His stature in the field of Security Studies means Des can be similarly blunt on many other issues in the Southeast Asian region. Those who know him well appreciate that it is with the long-term hope of rectifying unsatisfactory situations that Des has focussed on the borderlands between Thailand and Burma.

BURMA FOR A MILITARY JUNKIE

When he first began to wander through mainland Southeast Asia as a mature researcher, Des could not imagine how deeply enmeshed with regional security issues he would ultimately become. His first significant work in mainland Southeast Asia emerged, as it usually happens, as part of a much wider project. He was seeking to understand signals intelligence.
matters around the Asia-Pacific region: Burma was a relatively small part of that effort. His initial foray produced a book on Burma’s military communications systems. That book set the scene for a longstanding engagement to understanding Burma’s armed forces and their use of many different technologies. While it is now somewhat dated, it presented a thorough, state-of-the-field overview of how Burma’s armed forces communicate. As he said in the 2011 interview:

In the mid-1990s, as I was still interested in signals intelligence, no longer in the Soviet dimension, but what Southeast Asian countries were listening to, and what that indicated about their own security priorities, I had got involved in a project to look at Burmese communications, and Burmese signals intelligence which resulted in a book called, *Burma’s Military Secrets*, in the latter part of the 1990s. And to put that book together had got to know some of the ethnic insurgent organisations down the Thai-Burma border.

It is those links with groups along the border that have continued to motivate Des’ interest in Burma.

Regular trips to the border indicate just how strongly he has felt about seeking to understand border dynamics, the roles of ethnic armies and the conduct of civil war in easternmost Burma. That first book was followed by a working paper, published in 2004 under the auspices of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (SDSC), analysing the Burmese Army’s radio systems. As Des has said:

From there I got interested in not just Burmese Army communications, and the extent to which they were listening to the armed ethnic insurgents, but also the extent to which the ethnic organisations were listening to Burmese communications. And so from that very late part of the 90s and into the early 2000s, I suppose I was involved very much on the technical side of communications, communications security and, in the case of the Burmese how to break their communications security, breaking their codes, listening to their communications at the technical level.

Des continues these efforts to understand communications in Burma from all angles. His technical nous and capacity to explain complicated signals intelligence topics to uninitiated audiences provides him with a set of useful skills. In this respect he has taken engagement with the study of civil conflict in Burma to another level. In that 2011 interview he suggests that:

If I’m really such an expert in strategic and defence matters, as I am sometimes portrayed, then I think that I have an obligation to apply some of that expertise to assisting some of those ethnic armed groups which just face such overwhelming odds in terms of numerical inferiority, in terms of equipment which is battered second-hand amateurishly assembled weapons and communications gear. So where I think I have expertise that can help them, I believe that I have an obligation to apply it. And that’s really what I have been doing over the last decade up there.

What is intriguing about Des’ relationship with Burma is that he is “not a Burma scholar”. Indeed, in the 2011 interview we discussed these issues at length and he noted that:

I’m not someone who’s been intrigued by Burma’s history and culture, and desperate to see the insides of Burma. I’m a military junkie who has some expertise, some ability in areas of strategy and defence for which I can, or which I can use to assist those who have decided to militarily resist the junta in Burma.

For a self-confessed “military junkie” Burma has provided an incredible set of opportunities, none more so than in the analysis of Burma’s potential to produce exotic weapons. This is where his early efforts to understand nuclear weapons have come in handy. Some of my earliest conversations with Ball, after he had tested my awareness of Burma’s political and security scene, lurched into discussions of Burma’s prospective nuclear plans. Ball had been meeting with people on the Thailand-Burma border, including defectors, who were making explosive claims about the ambitions for exotic weapons at the highest levels. In 2010 he became a prominent international advocate for the idea that Burma was developing exotic weapon systems and, in particular, a nuclear weapon. Like in other cases, this academic analysis filtered out to a much wider public through journalistic write-ups. Des was, not for the first time in his long career, at the centre of an international story and his authority as a distinguished Security Studies scholar lent weight to the defectors’ claims. As he pointed out in his full account of the defectors and their testimony, “the subject of Burma and nuclear-related programs is surrounded by rumours, speculation, misinformation and probably deliberate disinformation.” He sought to come to grips with that context. In a spirit of collegial dissent his good friend Andrew Selth responded to Des’ claims. The conduct of discussion on this sensitive and emotive topic drew Des to a wider audience once again.
THAILAND AND THE BORDER PATROL POLICE

On Thailand, Des has gone on to write two books about Thai security organisations, with a third, on the Border Patrol Police, to follow soon. These studies provide the baseline for substantial social and political analysis. Nobody has worked more diligently to understand Thailand's plethora of security organisations than Des. His work on what he usually describes, somewhat off-handedly, as "paramilitaries" is a testament to almost two decades of close engagement.

The first of these books analyses Thailand's para-military border guards — the "Thahtan Phrae" as they are known in Thai. They are sometimes referred to, in English, as "Rangers". As Ball explains, their Thai name has an even more potent meaning: hunter-soldiers. In their black uniforms they are a presence on lonely roads and mountain passes, usually camped out in areas far beyond the ordinary patrols of Thailand's military or police. Drawn from poor villages the length and breadth of the country, recruits are generally from what could be described as different castes than the more established military units. Des was always fascinated by them and their place in Thailand's national security architecture.

This was followed by a book on another Thai paramilitary group — the Or Sor — authored with his protege David Scott Mathieson in 2007. In this book, Ball and Mathieson argue that Thailand's paramilitaries require significant reform. Consistent with this, in the 2011 interview Des sets out his "vision for Thai security, which is really going to be the ultimate product of this series of books". What he suggests is the need to get:

...rid of those paramilitaries, disbanning all of those organisations. Building up the professionalism of the army; getting the army back to the barracks and out of business and the corruption that infuses large parts of the army, and particularly in the case of the police drastic reform of the Thai police so that they can actually take responsibility for enforcement of law and order, rather than the very gross levels of corruption which infuse the Thai police today.

Issues of corruption and lack of integrity among the security forces have been a long-term preoccupation for Des. As he has said:

I think that if you had a professional army, a clean police force and a border patrol police force, which was responsible for border security. That those three organisations properly coordinated and one of the problems with these innumerable paramilitaries is that there is no coordination at

all between them. But [you need] proper coordination from the top down, then you would be able to address a large number of the security problems which currently face Thailand and allow Thailand to really fulfill many of the elements of democracy and peace and stability that we'd like to see in the future in Thailand.

It is the need for peace and stability that has ultimately motivated Des in this work. For Des, the Border Patrol Police may provide some of the answer. They first caught his attention when he was researching the earlier books on Or Sor and Thahtan Phrae. In his many visits to Thailand he began to accumulate details on the Border Patrol Police units that he regularly encountered along the borders.

Some of my earliest significant exposure to Des' work came with his study of the Border Patrol Police. In 2008, soon after I returned to Canberra from the United Kingdom where I had been a doctoral student, we started working together on aspects of his larger study. Our attention first focused on the nuts-and-bolts of the Border Patro Police organisation. Des was enthused by the task of determining overall command structures, and understanding the careers of Border Patrol Police officers. We worked closely to decipher the inner workings of the organisation. He made clear that accuracy was his overwhelming priority and that he sought to explain an otherwise opaque political and social history. For Des the Border Patrol Police was, I learned, yet another system to be understood and then explained. In the service of this goal he deployed remarkable efforts of memory, intellect and astute judgement. He eagerly embraced new information and dispensed with anything redundant or irrelevant. Constantly, he sought to build a clear and presentable picture of the Border Patrol Police.

Des has gone on to become the world's preeminent authority on this subject. This research endeavour will culminate in a book simply titled Thahtan Phrae (the Thai acronym for this police unit) that will likely be published in 2013. The Border Patrol Police are, in Des' eyes, the most professional component of the Royal Thai Police. Their responsibilities also mean that they align closely with the activities of military forces. Des has followed the history of the Border Patrol Police right back to its earliest days, and has tracked their activities along all of Thailand's borders, and elsewhere. There is no significant English language work on this organisation and the main Thai language texts are official (and thus somewhat stilted) in character. However, with a huge array of sources Des has sought to stitch
together a comprehensive narrative of the Border Patrol Police, including the only full account of the activities of its Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (PARU). It deals in what some might consider extravagant detail with the gritty reality of Border Patrol Police history, operations, personalities, culture, scandals and life. But, more importantly, it introduces an organisation that has, until now, been largely examined through the drama of occasional glimpses in Thai history. Des hopes to explain the broader issues that determine the centrality of this organisation.

As their name implies, Border Patrol Police are usually based in remote and otherwise inaccessible locations. He has set out to locate and visit these bases. To that end he has spent many months travelling along the borders of the country, in the southernmost provinces, in the east and in the north, and also along the border with Burma, in an effort to understand how this organisation fits into the broader security landscape. In the 2011 interview, Des told me that:

Thailand is going through a period today where there are major splits within the political fabric and the Border Patrol Police, or at least the Border Patrol Police leadership tends to be aligned with some parts of that factionalised political structure. It's very much aligned with the Palace and hence the leadership with the yellow shirts, the PAD. It takes sides when it comes to the various political factions demonstrating, protesting in Bangkok. Though you can't say that it is consistently aligned with anyone faction because while the leadership of the Border Patrol Police may well be very strongly aligned with the yellow shirts, there are very large elements of the Border Patrol Police at the lower levels, the lower ranks who see themselves as red-shirt supporters. There's no doubt about that.²⁰

It is this attention to the subtleties of political and security debates that provides Des with opportunities to interrogate subject matter which tend to escape other scholars.

To illustrate this commitment to broader contextualisation, Des' attention to songs about the Border Patrol Police requires explanation. As Des has discovered there are a large number of musical tributes, pop songs and romantic ballads devoted to the Border Patrol Police. When Des first stumbled across these outputs we had no conception that there would be dozens of songs, on hundreds of albums and compilations that have been produced over decades. These songs remain popular and after each trip to Thailand Des returns with even more to add to his collection. As ever, he stores details on the finds with great attention to detail and looks to understand these quirky cultural products as part of the broader story of the Border Patrol Police as a national security institution. Links between the experiences of ordinary officers, and those they serve, help to motivate Des' interest in these organisations. He wants to know how they fit into broader political and social currents.

When asked about some of these political implications, Des offers appraisals of Thai society that go far beyond the security sector. He has suggested that:

...if it wasn't for the relationship which red-shirts, for example, have with former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra then I would be on their side. Because I believe that the longer-term cause of justice, of fairness is on their side. The people who I am most personally friendly with are ones who I think are in a sense in the wrong. It is a great personal dilemma for me working very closely with some of these institutions in Bangkok when I've come to believe that rightness actually lays with the peasants, the rice farmers, the poor, in Isan in the northeast, and in the north, and that sooner or later if Thailand is to get through this traumatic period that it is going through now, it is only going to get through it once the demands, and not just the demands, the interests, the causes of justice are acknowledged in favour of those poorer people in these outer lying provinces. And unless that happens, and we don't see many signs of that happening at all, unless that happens Thailand is in real, real trouble.²⁷

As other contributors to this volume have explained, Des embraces progressive social values and is concerned to enunciate them through his research. His obvious appreciation for those who have yet to be fully embraced by Thailand's project of national wealth creation illustrates why he has sought to deal with tactical security concerns in mainland Southeast Asia.

LESSONS FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

Future generations of scholars will learn of Des through his books, monographs and articles. His works are scattered in libraries across the world and his special contributions to different areas of research activity will resonate for many years to come. But the challenge for students seeking to digest these contributions will be to understand some of the context in which the work has developed. He has developed an impressive range of contacts with Southeast Asian security officials, including soldiers, police officers and civilians. In all cases he has been particularly drawn to special
will shape the field in the decades ahead. In the future it will fall to others to come to grips with the powerful legacy of a scholar who constantly sought to secure new frontiers.

Notes
1. There remains contention about the appropriate name for the country now officially known as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In his work Des continues his long-standing practice of calling the country Burma. This chapter mirrors that presentation.
2. Many of the statements attributed to Des in this chapter are sourced from a 5-hour interview I conducted with him in May 2011. It was produced in conjunction with Martyn Pearce and Kim Beamish from the Australian National University’s Media Office. Their support with that interview is specially appreciated, as is the effort by Sheryn Lee to transcribe it. Throughout this chapter the interview is cited as, for example: Desmond Ball, interview by Nicholas Farrelly, The Australian National University Mentor Intervie Report, transcript, 18–19 May 2011, p. 22.
3. A careful reader of Des’ bibliography will note a publication from almost two decades ago: Panitan Wattanayagom and Desmond Ball, “A regional arms race?”, Journal of Strategic Studies 18, no. 3 (1995): 147–74. Panitan has gone on to take prominent academic and political roles in Thailand, including as spokesman for the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejajiva until 2011.
4. Even a cursory examination of Des’ major books on Southeast Asian security topics provides evidence of this. They often include hundreds of photos and scores of tables and maps.
5. Another of the earlier outcomes of this re-orientation to Southeast Asia dealt not with Thailand and Burma but with Indonesia and East Timor; see Desmond Ball and Hamish McDonald, Death in Balibo, Lies in Canberra (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2000).
I first came across Des Ball’s name in 2001 while interviewing Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers at a sniper camp in eastern Burma. It seemed like an unlikely setting to bump up against an esteemed academic — the hot jungle clearing was a long way from the Australian National University professor’s book-lined office in Canberra. At the time, reporting on Burma was difficult. Its isolation and a ban on international journalists made it hard to verify stories in time for news bulletins. By the time footage and witness reports were smuggled out the story had usually moved on to another international hot spot. Closed off and isolated from much of the outside world, the military regime had at the time stepped up its attacks on who it perceived as “enemies of the state” — its own citizens, ethnic minorities and the political opposition. I was in the sniper camp at the invitation of a KNLA officer and was on my way to interview Karen villagers recently displaced by the Burmese Army and now taking shelter in jungle hideouts.

A group of KNLA soldiers had just completed a series of morning drills and were making their way back to their small bamboo platforms to take rest and clean up before lunch. The hurried sound of food being readied could be heard above the soldiers’ banter. Werk-hardened men in singlets and shorts chopped meat and vegetables into tidy piles, their bare
INTRODUCTION

With the end of the Cold War — a period during which he had established himself as a preeminent and prolific scholar of international reputation on the primary security concerns of that era (strategic nuclear weapons, signals intelligence, missile defence) as well as on Australia’s military defence — Desmond Ball’s attention shifted towards the Asia-Pacific, where it has largely remained to the present. Ball was quick to realise the importance of establishing regional institutions that could promote security cooperation in the Asian region. Over the course of the last two-plus decades, Ball’s efforts as a scholar, policy analyst, advisor to governments and Track 2 diplomat, have had significant impact on the shaping of the institutional architecture of the Asia-Pacific. Indeed, with his abilities to operate simultaneously across academic and policy, and official (Track 1) and unofficial (Track 2) dimensions, Ball has occupied, and continues to occupy, a near unique role in the Australian and broader regional contexts.

This chapter focuses on one aspect of Ball’s efforts to advance towards a stable and peaceful Asia-Pacific security environment: that is, his work to initiate and sustain Track 2 regional, multilateral security dialogue mechanisms and institutions to facilitate security cooperation among the states of the region. Particular attention is focused on Ball’s central role in the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), which since its establishment in 1994 has been the only inclusive, region-wide Track 2 security institution with a broad agenda, productive working groups, and a relationship with its official counterpart the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

We organise our reflections on Ball’s contributions and achievements regarding CSCAP and its association with regional institutions across three dimensions: institution-builder on national, Track 1, and Track 2 levels; chronicler of regional institutionalisation; and innovator and critic of institutional achievement. Before addressing these dimensions, it is important first to take note of the key premises from which Ball’s Asia-Pacific agenda has proceeded, in effect revealing the continuity of thought and principles that have guided his institution building and security architecture agenda.

PREMISES

In retrospect, four foundational premises have underpinned Ball’s overarching efforts to enhance regional security cooperation in the post-Cold War era: a comprehensive knowledge of the security and defence policies, and deployments of Asian states; a perceptive realisation of the distinctive “security culture” of the Asia-Pacific; a conviction that multilateral mechanisms and processes were necessary to supplement existing bilateral arrangements, and that the establishment of formal institutions was required to ensure focus and continuity; and, finally, a conviction that unofficial (Track 2) institutions and processes have a critical role to play in supporting their official regional counterparts.

Any reader of Ball’s work on defence and security matters, be it the United States’ nuclear strategy and missile deployments, Asian states’ defence build-ups, Australian defence policy, or Burmese ethnic insurgencies, is impressed with his exhaustive and complete attention to empirical detail. Given the quantity and range of his writing this in itself is a formidable achievement. Ball always has all the facts, and his facts are always correct. In this way he has established a reputation for knowledge and credibility among regional officials and militaries — an important asset
when putting forward suggestions for policy change or for military-to-military cooperation across states. His empirical authoritativeness has also meant that analysts have had reason to follow closely Ball’s cautions about the implications of weapons proliferation and the destabilising effects of competitive arms acquisition.¹

Turning to the second premise, Ball differed from many other analysts steeped in the realist mindsets of bipolar, East-West nuclear strategy. With the Cold War drawing to an end, he quickly realised that the security precepts and institutional forms and practices of that era did not translate to the evolving security environment. As he put it in 1993, “understanding of the constraints and opportunities provided by three conditions: the end of the Cold War, geopolitical considerations in the Asia-Pacific region, and cultural factors — is a precondition for determining the tasks for security cooperation in the region”.²

For Ball, by the beginning of the 1990s there were already important signals as to the drivers of regional development and security. He saw an environment of “unprecedented pace and scope of change — produced by economic dynamism, superpower drawdowns, and defence modernisation”. The number of actors in the region “would certainly increase”, pointing specifically to India and China. Sounding a theme to be repeated often, he argued that the major arms acquisitions programs, particularly maritime and naval build-ups, were disturbing. For Ball, however, military concerns would “be increasingly supplemented by issues of economic and environmental security,” and the demand for resources. Indeed, he argued that the most important forces to shape regional security architecture were the economic.³

It is interesting to contrast Ball’s more immediate and nuanced grasp of the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific security environment to the more stark and simplified characterisations by other, mainly North American, analysts. Aaron Friedberg’s “Ripe for Rivalry”⁴ article published side-by-side with Ball’s “Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific”, in International Security is exemplary in this regard.⁵

In further distinction from many Western analysts of the era, Ball came to an early understanding that European models could not be transplanted onto Asia. Institutional agendas and modalities of interaction specific to regional conditions and security practices were called for. Ball adopted (and continues to adopt!) the principle that to achieve progress, proposed initiatives had to be sensitive to, and amenable to operationalisation within the security culture of the region. Always mindful of the position of analysts located on the regional periphery, Ball asserted, “sensitivity to Asian cultural dispositions will be necessary for Western participation in this dialogue”.⁶

Thus, and thirdly, Ball did not see the existing bilateralised, regional security architecture as adequate to cope with emerging regional challenges. He knew, however, that strong resistance would confront any advancement of multilateral initiatives within the region in the early 1990s. Regional experience with multilateralism was not regarded as positive, as exemplified by the demise of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). New multilateral mechanisms were deemed to be “a problem in search of a solution” by Washington, and regarded with suspicion in Tokyo, Seoul, and other capitals. This resistance — grounded in post-WWII security tradition and argued as being necessary in light of regional diversity and ongoing tensions — did not, however, prove immutable. Informal and ad hoc dialogues — largely sponsored through NGOs and national think tanks, and Asian militaries themselves — took hold and proliferated in what would appear to have been a spontaneous, natural reaction to the perceived need to come to terms with the complex issues confronting regional states and their militaries. Indeed, within several years, over two dozen confidence and security building (CSBM) initiatives were underway.⁷

Ball championed these developments, viewing them as “a significant new element of the emerging security environment”.⁸ He noted “a new era in confidence building”, with “multilateral approaches to security, manifested in the regional confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs)” now “indubitably on the regional agenda”.⁹ In 1991 Ball had published a monograph, Building Blocks for Regional Security, which took a bottom-up approach to regional security cooperation, identifying “bilateral and limited multilateral arrangements already in place” that might act as “building blocks” for a wider regional plan. Two years later, Ball wrote a further essay examining the range of regional confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs) that were being proposed, suggesting where emphasis might best be placed and urging the adoption of criteria that could be employed in such a focusing process.¹⁰ He was concerned to encourage security cooperation in the areas of intelligence exchange, joint defence exercises, Timor Sea issues and technology monitoring. In his writings and discussions Ball advocated a gradualist approach (one generally amenable
to key regional players such as the members of the ASEAN-ISIS group). His particular audience was the Australian government, including the then Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, as much as readers in the Asian region.

Certainly, Ball’s intuitive assessment of the prospects for the proliferation and scope of multilateral security dialogues proved to be on the mark. Indeed, writing shortly thereafter, Paul Evans pointed to the occurrence (in 1993) of over four such meetings per month along ten different dimensions, thus declaring the “ending [to] the allergy to multilateral discussion” within the region. By 1994, the numbers of Track 1 and Track 2 activities exceeded a hundred, essentially providing the momentum for the creation of formal, multilateral institutions on both official and unofficial tracks.

A primary feature, distinctive to the Asia-Pacific region, was the development of what became labelled “Track 2” multilateral security dialogue processes and institutions. Ball’s recognition of the importance of these processes was the fourth of his underpinning premises. His role in helping to define and shape Track 2 has been critical. The use of the term Track 2, in contrast to Track 1 activity had an established history. Within the Asia-Pacific context, “Track 2” assumed several distinctive characteristics: one was the direct involvement of governmental officials, but “in their private capacities”. That is, officials were encouraged to be present and to participate in an environment that facilitated the exchange of ideas without these ideas being tied to government policy. At the same time, the involvement of officials would presumably anchor discussions to policy-relevant, rather than abstract academic, considerations. A second Asia-Pacific feature was a concern to foster dialogue across established lines of division on issues, to be inclusive of non-like minded parties. Finally, the precepts of the ASEAN way were to prevail: soft institutionalisation (i.e. no significant bureaucratic or regulatory capacities): meetings with open agendas, operating by consensus decision making; and an overall gradualist approach within the sovereignty-protectionist comfort zones of East Asian states.

In the Asia-Pacific, Track 2 — if functioning according to these tenets — was seen to offer opportunities to advance security cooperation and resolve tensions. Thus, Ball and his colleagues referred to Track 2’s possibilities as a “useful source of advice to governments”, a “useful mechanism for building capacity”, “a laboratory for testing and generating new ideas”, and an “alternative diplomatic route when Track 1 is stalled”.

The speed with which multilateral security initiatives proliferated caught Ball and other regional Track 2 entrepreneurs by surprise. Tokyo and Washington were getting on board, albeit not to the extent of their Southeast Asian counterparts, and Beijing was beginning to show interest, particularly on the economic side. When cataloguing regional CSBs in 1994, Ball highlighted the official initiatives such as the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Consultation (PMC) process, the regular dialogue among regional militaries (particularly their navies) and the successful Track 2 workshops involving claimant states in the South China Sea. At the same time, he and others began to see that energy was being diffused across a very broad spectrum, with duplication, lack of continuity and accumulation, and insufficient attention to ensuring that agendas concentrated on the policy-relevant needs of regional governments. Ball had initially expected that “progress with the construction of new modalities for security cooperation will be slow and painstaking, that informal, pragmatic, and evolutionary arrangements will have much better prospects than formal structures and institutions.” But, his attitude and advice now changed. The problem, he now said, was to “focus and institutionalize the process so as to ensure that the most significant and fecund arrangements can be effectively implemented. Otherwise, the recent efforts will remain too diffuse and will waste both intellectual and official resources; momentum will wane and opportunities will be lost”. Ad hoc initiatives and informal processes, Ball observed, needed to be complemented by “some degree of institutionalized dialogue mechanism.”

In retrospect, the first half-decade after 1989 was remarkable. Regional actors at both Track 1 and Track 2 levels moved more quickly and more successfully to mitigate tensions and to establish principles of dialogue to foster cooperative security than the experts, particularly North American and European, could have envisaged. (The regional comparisons, particularly with Europe, are striking.) Ball’s judgments stand out well when reviewing the writings and reports of this period. From this point forward, Ball, along with a small coterie of officials, think tank leaders, and academics, devoted their attention and energies to building a focused and effectively functioning regional institutional architecture.

**Institution Building**

Building this architecture necessitated action on three fronts — motivating and supporting the Australian government’s efforts to establish and shape Track 1 regional institutions, creating effective Track 2 institutions at the regional level to both lead and support Track 1 counterparts,
and establishing a domestic network and forum to support Australian engagement in official and unofficial ventures at the regional level. Our discussion, in turn, is focused upon Ball’s engagement in advancing the formation of a specific institution addressing each of these dimensions: the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), CSCAP, and the Australian CSCAP Member Committee (AusCSCAP) — consideration of AusCSCAP being taken up near the end of this chapter.

The ASEAN Regional Forum

In 1991, Ball said Australia had two broad defence needs: first, to achieve "the minimal military capabilities required for self-defence" and secondly, to promote "a network of more or less institutionalized mechanisms" for enhancing regional security. This second, regional objective was very much a focus of deliberations at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre (Ball’s academic base at the ANU) in the 1987–91 period. Ball’s engagement with government officials in advancing Australia’s regional interests and goals concerning the ARF is a prime example of the productive relationship that he helped to foster between the academic and official communities in Canberra.

By 1991–92, planning for the creation of a region-wide institutional forum was gaining momentum. Australia looked to come on board a campaign being spearheaded by the ASEAN states (and no longer opposed by the Northeast Asian major powers and the United States). At the government level, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans proposed (in 1992) a “wholly new institutional process” that would evolve “in Asia just as in Europe” — a security architecture influenced by the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and stressing the idea of “common security”. Not surprisingly, this idea was not received well in many quarters of the Asian region with ASEAN-ISIS leaders communicating to Ball and others that the European experience was not relevant. Eventually, Evans himself listened to ASEAN advice, and Australia became a partner in the creation of the ARF, which stressed “cooperative security” (conveying a greater respect for national sovereignty and institutional minimalism) rather than common security.

Ball and his ANU colleague Stuart Harris (previously Secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) were in tune with ASEAN-ISIS thinking, and advocated this approach in Australia. They accepted the need to move carefully and not too ambitiously — to avoid grandiose schemes — and recognised the advantage of basing a new security institution on the Post Ministerial Conference (the annual meetings between ASEAN Foreign Ministers and the foreign Ministers of ASEAN Dialogue Partners, including Australia). These Conferences had begun in the 1970s and originally focused on economic issues. In the 1980s the Cambodian crisis became a topic, which some saw as opening up a potential for a regional security dialogue. From Japan, Yukio Satoh (later Ambassador to Australia, and then the United Nations) took a supportive and similar gradualist approach as Head of the Gaimusho planning office.

The first ARF meeting was held in Bangkok in 1993. In 1995, the ARF issued its Concept Paper, setting forth a three-stage process for action to move from confidence building to preventive diplomacy, and finally to conflict resolution. The ARF, therefore, emerged very much as an “ASEAN creature in both substantive and procedural terms”. ASEAN principles of non-confrontational dialogue, consensual decision-making, non-interference in domestic affairs, and minimal institutionalisation prevailed. A key decision was to extend invitations to the non-like-minded states of the region, including China, thus expanding the membership and potential scope of its agenda.

Ball and colleagues remained attentive to the development of the ARF, on the Track 1 front. At the SDSC, Paul Dibb (who had been Deputy Secretary at Australia’s Department of Defence) worked with Foreign Minister Evans on proposals for the ARF agenda — proposals that, in their words, “might be acceptable, both culturally and politically, to governments in the region in the years ahead”. This was precisely the type of approach Ball had been urging. Ball’s attention, however, had now shifted to the creation of a Track 2 institution to support the fledging ARF; this was, of course, CSCAP.

CSCAP: Des Ball, Present and assisting at the creation

“The establishment of CSCAP is one of the most important milestones in the development of institutionalized dialogue, consultation and cooperation concerning security matters in the Asia-Pacific region since the end of the Cold War. It represents a major achievement in the development of multilateralism in the region.”

94  Brian L. Job and Anthony Milner

95  Constructive Criticism and Track 2 Diplomacy
As detailed above, the rationale for creating a formal institution to provide leadership and focus to the Track 2 agenda had been building. ASEAN-ISIS, along with the Japanese Institute of International Affairs, Pacific Forum CSIS, and the Seoul Forum, set the process in motion by convening a series of meetings commencing in 1991. At this early, formative stage, no specific Australian institution was involved directly. Ball, however, was invited to join the handful of specialists that brought CSCAP into being. He, along with Paul Evans — the other individual present at the table not a representative of the four institutions named — have been recognised in the region for playing a significant role in these foundational deliberations.

Ball engaged in the intense discussions regarding the institutional form CSCAP would take and the membership it would have. His technical knowledge helped in developing a CSCAP agenda — identifying the security issues with which CSCAP would have to grapple.

CSCAP was officially established in Lombok (Indonesia) in June 1993 with ten founding institutions, including the institutional home of Ball (the SDSC). CSCAP’s structure involved Membership Committees from the then ASEAN states, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. It was to be directed by a Steering Committee, meeting biannually. CSCAP’s functional entities were to be its Working Groups — designated to operate on their own schedules, to focus on specific issues of regional concern (e.g. the Korean Peninsula, and maritime disputes), and to produce informative reports with policy-relevant recommendations for regional governments and institutions (specifically, the ARF). A General Conference was to be held every second year.

Ball has described three guiding principles as determining CSCAP’s structure and mandate. The first was the engagement of officials in Working Groups and the General Conference in their private capacities. This was seen as essential to gain the benefit of their understanding of national interests, “to attract government resources and to ensure the value and practicability of the NGO efforts secured official appreciation.”

Second was the modelling of CSCAP on the experience and practice of its Track 2 counterpart on the economic front, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC). PECC was regarded highly for engaging government, business, and academic communities; for providing advice on technical economic issues that has impact on official policy; and for providing a ‘comfort zone’ for officials to vet ideas freely and engage in open debate. Several of the founding leaders of CSCAP (for instance, Jusuf Wanandi for Indonesia, Nordin Sopiee for Malaysia) saw the relationship between PECC and APEC as instructive in planning Track 1-Track 2 interaction in the security area. On the Australian side, Ball and Harris were of similar mind and solicited advice from Peter Drysdale — a central figure in both PECC and APEC. Drysdale, however, cautioned “in the political and security space it was always going to be harder to engage the central government players than in the economic space.”

Third, mindful of the proliferation of think tanks at the national level and multilateral Track 2 mechanisms — as well as reflecting sensitivity to the ASEAN states’ desire to maintain their collective role and institutional norms of decision making — CSCAP’s founders sought to build upon existing institutional arrangements in the region. At the Track 2 level, this meant maintaining close relationships with ASEAN-ISIS institutions and locating the CSCAP Secretariat with one of their members, ISIS Malaysia. At the Track 1 level, this meant establishing a relationship to the ARF. Indeed, as Ball and other key figures (such as Wanandi) argued, the ultimate test of CSCAP’s relevance would be its utility to the ARF.

Thus, CSCAP was launched with defined and high expectations, and with significant enthusiasm among its members. Three immediate challenges were recognised. Chief among these was negotiating membership with China, which — because of the desire by key figures in CSCAP to sustain some role for Taiwan — had refused to join. But, there was also the matter of including the non-like-minded states such as Mongolia, North Korea, and Vietnam. The second challenge was the perceived need to get CSCAP’s Working Groups up and running and producing results; the third challenge was to gain notice and engagement with Track 1. Optimism was tempered by recognition of what would be “the inevitable problems of finance [and] organization” and “a legitimate worry that national committees will tend to favour particular political positions.”

Or, as Ball put it, “there is a real concern that connections with government might be inversely related to … intellectual independence. … It is likely that the strongest Member Committees will be those that toe their official government lines most closely.” These were perceptive observations about what subsequently came to be termed “the autonomy dilemma” confronted by all Track 2 institutions and what was certainly to become a continuing dilemma for CSCAP.

In the founding stages of CSCAP, and in much of its work up to the present, the role of personal diplomacy has been vital. Perhaps more so
than for other regions, in Southeast Asia much stress is placed on easy and trusting relationships among government leaders and associated, unofficial elites. The term ‘golf diplomacy’, while often used cynically, describes the informal atmosphere operating among regional leaders (most of whom overlapped in office for long periods of time) engaged in debate and the crafting of consensuses. To a significant extent, personal relationships among a subset of individuals were important in moving CSCAP forward as well, certainly in its initial decade. Here too Des proved effective. Although possessing a long-established reputation as a stern analyst willing to make a blunt, tough assessment where necessary, he also demonstrated — and continues to demonstrate — a striking capacity for establishing warm personal relations. Moving among ASEAN-ISIS leaders, Australian government officials and academic colleagues, he has offered not only strong expertise in security studies, but also a talent for sensitive diplomacy, as well as a commitment to gaining an understanding of the security and political cultures of the region. 98

Positive personal relationships that bridged Track 1 and Track 2 were also important. When communication lines are open and information can be shared in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, academics and officials are able to generate considerable synergism. Ball’s ability to foster such relationships over time and across communities in Australia has been remarkable. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the success achieved by Australia in advancing its official and unofficial agendas in the region owes something substantial to Ball’s operating at this interface for the past several decades. Numerous generations of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Defence (DoD) personnel have been involved, many of whom may well have been students of Ball’s before becoming officials.

**CSCAP: Des Ball as Institutional Historian and Activist**

Of the ten individual ‘founding fathers’ of CSCAP — that is, those present at the November 1992, Seoul meeting — Wanandi, Carolina Hernandez and Ball stand out as having remained consistently engaged with the Council, and as its most stalwart supporters.

A number of Ball’s particular contributions deserve to be highlighted. The first is as CSCAP’s historian and chronicler. He is responsible for assembling an accurate and detailed accounting of the Council’s activities and achievements. Ball’s hundred-plus page monograph, *The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP): Its Record and Its Prospects*, published in 2000 covers its formation and formative years. A decade later, the co-edited volume, *Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region: A CSCAP Reader* 99 provides a combination of narrative, critical assessment and recommendations for CSCAP’s future. In effect, these works constitute the ‘institutional memory’ for CSCAP — essential reading for those studying CSCAP, or the evolution of security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific, more generally. For those engaged in efforts to reshape the region’s security architecture, Ball’s accounting provides valuable ‘lessons learned.’

Ball, of course, was not an observer on the sidelines. He wrote as an insider. From its inception, Ball was engaged in addressing challenges facing the institution. Among the first of these was expanding CSCAP’s membership to fulfill its mandate as an inclusive, region-wide forum. Four additional members were brought on board with relative ease by 1996 (Mongolia, New Zealand, Russia, and Vietnam), with another five that followed by 2001 (the European Union, North Korea, India, Cambodia, and Papua New Guinea). Gaining Chinese membership was essential to the future of CSCAP. Wanandi and Ball (working together with Harris) played important roles behind the scenes, working between Steering Committee meetings to engineer a compromise arrangement bringing China into CSCAP in 1996. The issue of Taiwanese participation in Working Groups remained fraught, coming to a head at the 2004 Steering Committee meeting in Kunming. In what was a particularly tense session that threatened to deadlock the Council, Ball played an adept role in achieving a complicated, consensus protocol as to the involvement in Study Groups (only) of individuals from “Chinese Taipei”. 99

One of CSCAP’s most effective mechanisms for gaining regional attention has been its biennial General Conference. Every two years since 1997, the Council has orchestrated a gathering of several hundred persons for two-plus days, involving keynote addresses from senior officials and debate among expert analysts on the region’s most pressing security issues. Ball and Australian official and Track 2 supporters were responsible for the third General Conference held in Canberra in 2001. Since then, Ball and Anthony Milner (who replaced Harris as Co-Chair of AusCSCAP in 2002) assumed a key role in assisting CSCAP Indonesia with the coordination of the four subsequent General Conferences in Jakarta (2003, 2005, 2007, 2009), and then with CSCAP Vietnam concerning
the 2011 meeting in Hanoi. Arranging these major regional conferences, to include government ministers and senior officials, as well as leading specialists from member countries, involved much deliberation and planning. Ball and Milner worked with Wanandi (and Rizal Sukma and Clara Joewono at CSIS), Satoh (in Japan), Kwa Chong Guan (in Singapore) and others on the CSCAP front, as well as with Australian government ministers and officials, to secure high level representation and financial support from the Australian and other governments. This collaboration — moving back and forth between CSCAP member committees, negotiating with governments, all in classic Track 2 style — met with success. The General Conference meetings in Jakarta have solidified the role of CSCAP as the key Track 2 institution in the region’s security architecture.

Another example of Ball’s ongoing campaign to raise the profile of CSCAP and demonstrate the breadth and relevance of its coverage of regional security issues was his push for it to publish an annual security review. In his 2000 review of CSCAP, he argued this would be “the most reliable and effective way ... to adequately stay abreast of regional security concerns.” Although CSCAP members at that time were not ready to embrace the idea, Ball and Wanandi were determined. In his account of CSCAP’s development, Ball has reported how the proposal for publication of an annual CSCAP Regional Security Outlook was regenerated and how membership reluctance was overcome at the Wellington Steering Committee meeting of 2006.

Ball reports this, but (as is the case regarding many other CSCAP achievements) he neglects to note his personal role in the process that led to this decision. Prior to this Steering Committee meeting, a small group, including Wanandi, Ball, and Job met to strategise. The feeling among those present was pessimistic, anticipating objections from certain Member Committees. Most everyone, except Ball, was leaning towards the option of production of the report by a subset of member committees — a second-best in that it could not claim to be a CSCAP document, per se. Ball persisted, insisting that the issue be brought to the Steering Committee, where he suspected that the chances of its approval were not that bleak. He, of course, called the play correctly. Commencing in 2007, for the next five years under Job’s editorship, the CSCAP Regional Security Outlook was produced and widely distributed at General Conferences and at the ASEAN ISIS Round Table meetings.

Ball’s agitation that CSCAP sustain its viability and relevance is most apparent concerning its Study Groups (previously termed ‘Working Groups’). The output of the Study/Working Groups, is the “the most straightforward measure of CSCAP’s achievements is its utility to the ARF”. At its inception, CSCAP established four Working Groups, focused on CSIBs, maritime cooperation, security cooperation in the North Pacific, and cooperative and comprehensive security. Throughout the 1990s, these groups had more than 70 meetings and produced approximately 20 volumes of papers and proceedings. However, by 2000 there was a growing sense that changes were necessary. Ball was called upon to chair a Review Committee, which in turn led to a 2003 Co-Chairs’ report by Barry Desker and Job, calling for a significant reorientation to the Study Group model. In sum, the existing groups were seen to have run their course, variously having outlived their mandates, becoming too generally focused, and/or overlapping each other. In order to sustain relevance, and to parallel the trend of the ARF towards focusing on “non-traditional security” threats, CSCAP would have to broaden its coverage to a greater range of the spectrum of security issues affecting the region’s states and its populations.

Through the efforts of Ball and other reform-minded CSCAP figures, major changes were implemented in 2003–2004. The outcome was a move to the Study Groups, each limited to a term of one to three years, and each subject to closer scrutiny concerning its productivity. The results have been appreciable on several dimensions. In terms of numbers, commencing with six new Study Groups in 2004, more than ten additional groups were created by 2010. In substantive terms, the scope of CSCAP’s attention has expanded dramatically, bringing the institution more in line with the transformations of security concerns within the region itself. Noteworthy, as examples, are the Study Groups on human trafficking, energy security, climate security, the future of the ARF, security of offshore oil and gas installations, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Organisations to remain viable and relevant must change to reflect their environments. Failure to do so leads to institutional stasis and/or dissolution — the fate of many regional Track 2 initiatives over the years. Ball’s efforts have been instrumental in bringing the effective changes and progressive adaptation to CSCAP that have facilitated maintaining its role as the region’s primary Track 2 institution.
CSCAP: Ball as Constructive Critic

"CSCAP itself should be subject to regular review. Otherwise, it risks ossification." Ball simultaneously has been one of CSCAP’s strongest supporters and one of its most consistent and vocal critics. Operating “from inside the tent” has given him a crucial vantage point from which to observe problems, but also an advantage in terms of being able to target suggestions for reform. However, Ball has taken care to temper his assessments of CSCAP with three caveats. The first, and most general, is the difficulty of establishing causality for policy change particularly in a multilateral, and multi-actor context. Beyond counting communications and meetings, there are no easy metrics that can be applied to efforts to build trust and confidence. Seldom do policy-makers acknowledge the source of their ideas or the specific factors that led to a particular decision. Assessment of CSCAP’s impact, therefore, remains an imprecise undertaking. The second, as Ball and others have acknowledged, is that CSCAP confronts “inherent sources of tensions”—“both creative and debilitating”. The dimensions of diversity that prevail within CSCAP are daunting. Disagreements prevail between members regarding procedures, agenda setting, and the relationship between Track 2, national governments and regional institutions. While CSCAP has succeeded in softening these divisions, by adopting a pragmatic and incremental approach to institutional reforms and by avoiding what certain members regard as “internal” matters, there is a limit to the extent that a multilateral institution with an inclusive membership can overcome such tensions.

Third, CSCAP is constrained by the structural parameters of its regional environment. As Ball put it over a decade ago, “CSCAP is a doubly dependent subject in the overall calculus of regional security. Its success depends on both its contributions to the second track processes... [but] also on the extent to which the cooperative modalities are influencing regional security architecture.” Within this context, CSCAP is further constrained as discussed below by being tied, by default, to the ARF. Thus, “CSCAP’s limitations echo the ARF’s limitations.”

Ball characterises CSCAP’s institutional life as having three phases: a formative, institutionalisation phase from 1992–93 to 1996; a period from the late 1990s to mid-2000s of CSCAP reform and ARF-alignment; and the years since the mid-2000s oriented towards institutionalisation of CSCAP-ARF linkages. His perspective on CSCAP’s progress is seen in two previously noted monographs. Each reports on approximately a decade of CSCAP experience and anticipates its future. In both reviews, Ball charts the success of CSCAP, in part from an existential perspective—that is, celebrating its establishment and longevity—and in part because of what he regards, particularly in its formative years, as its “extraordinary achievements”. However, concerning the ensuing years, Ball’s tone has become decidedly more critical. Indeed, while acknowledging limited progress on certain fronts, mainly its relationship to the ARF, Ball in 2010 expresses some serious doubts about the ability of CSCAP to remain viable in the rapidly evolving contemporary regional security environment.

His concerns, as echoed by various others in the 2010 volume, fall into four categories. The first concerns the “autonomy dilemma,” that is, the difficulty to achieve open and independent debate among Track 2 participants and across Track 1 and Track 2. In CSCAP venues, officials are often unwilling or unable to engage in their “private capacities” or unofficial participants stick to their government’s positions; Member Committees are essentially government institutions and/or are financially dependent on government funding.

Second, is that CSCAP’s relationship to the ARF is and will remain complex. The dilemma is that it has been difficult for CSCAP to complement and support the ARF’s agenda, when the ARF itself has been largely stalled on the first step of its proclaimed agenda of moving from confidence building to preventive diplomacy. In this regard, CSCAP did accomplish one notable achievement. Through the concerted energies of its CSIM Working Group in the late 1990s, a “working definition of preventive diplomacy” was crafted and subsequently accepted by the ARF. Little, however, has been accomplished since then, with Ball acknowledging in 2000 and reiterating in 2010 that “progress with preventive diplomacy has been [and remains] very slow.”

Since then, CSCAP’s efforts since the mid-2000s have focused on aligning its Study Group agendas and outputs with those of the ARF’s various Intersessional Support Group (ISG) and Intersessional Support Meetings (ISM), and on producing CSCAP Memoranda to be forwarded to the ARF Senior Officials Meetings (SOMs). Initiatives advocated by Ball— including holding CSCAP Study Group meetings back-to-back with ARF ISM or ISG meetings and CSCAP Co-Chair attendance as observers to the ARF Ministerial—have been realised. The results are
seen as encouraging, insofar as they coordinate with ARF activities. The larger issue, of course, remains the relevance of the ARF itself in today’s evolving security architecture.  

The third and fourth questions centre on CSCAP’s adaptability and capacity to define a role within the currently transforming regional security architecture. On the one hand, this is a matter of CSCAP’s focusing its agenda on the security issues that “really matter” to the region’s populations. Intrastate conflicts and the threats posed by environmental change and natural disaster are arguably more immediate and life threatening to Asia-Pacific’s citizens than the traditional, interstate security preoccupations (and defence spending) of its governments. CSCAP has begun to address some of these issues through Study Groups, for example, terrorism, climate change, energy security. However, with the exception of a few tightly focused reports that have reflected substantial input from experts, either governmental or unofficial — for instance, on export-controls, or Responsibility to Protect — many others have largely repeated generalities already known and accepted.

Ball has made his opinion clear as to the necessity of CSCAP’s expanding the spectrum of its attention, citing the relevance of human security, and exhorting CSCAP “to pursue an agenda which incorporates a comprehensive definition of security”. He has observed that the “urgency of environmental problems demands that CSCAP procrastinate no longer.” In his view, “CSCAP cannot truly claim to be promoting real security in the region, unless and until the human dimension becomes a central feature of its activities”.

Finally, CSCAP is faced with the challenge of defining its identity and role in the future security architecture of Asia. While it is too soon to predict any precise shape that this architecture may assume, the direction of development of new institutional forms is being debated, for example regarding the East Asia Summit (EAS). Associated Track 2 mechanisms are burgeoning (as they did in the early 1990s, another period of regional transformation), leaving the relevance of CSCAP in its current status and its tied relationship to the ARF in question. Ball’s concern that CSCAP remain viable is palpable in his recent writings with colleagues. CSCAP, he says, lacks “the public profile that its capabilities and activities warrant”. He warns CSCAP of the danger of being the “victim of its own success.” There is a “drastic need for further improvements in the relationship between Tracks 1, 2, and 3”. Whether CSCAP is able to adapt accordingly — particularly in its further engagement with Asia’s civil society and its security concerns — remains uncertain for Ball.

AusCSCAP: Building a Track 2 Foundation at the National Level

Ball and his AusCSCAP colleagues — specialists from academic, business, think tanks, and official foreign policy and defence communities — have remained dedicated to advancing their country’s role within the region, as would be expected in the regional Track 2 process. Ball and Milner have described the national Track 2 agenda as having three components:

1. We have to relate to our government — build up relationships with key officials and where possible key ministers, and learn what are the issues that concern (or ought to concern) government. This has to be done at both the national and the regional level (in CSCAP’s case, particularly with the ARF). Secondly, relations of trust need to be established and developed with regional Track 2 partners — that allow for frank and productive discussion. Thirdly, Track 2 has to reach out to other areas outside government — to academia, the media, think tanks, the business world and so forth. It needs to assume a broker role — drawing people with relevant expertise into Track 2 deliberations, making sure that topics considered to be of regional or national urgency are examined by the best specialists available. A further aspect of the broker role entails informing the wider regional and national communities about the urgent issues identified by Government and Track 2.

Ball has worked in all of these directions as Co-Chair of the Australian Member Committee of CSCAP, initially with Harris and then (from 2002) Milner. Especially through the building of relations with government (as noted earlier), AusCSCAP has developed into one of the most effective Member Committees within CSCAP.

Most CSCAP Member Committees, apart from those that are simply extensions of officialdom, have relatively small, elite circles of active members, and confine their activity to a single campus or particular institute. AusCSCAP, however, is an exception. Influenced by a need to accommodate Australia’s federal structure, the decision was taken to hold AusCSCAP meetings outside of Canberra, on a regular basis, in the different state capitals. The goal, which was certainly attained, was to bring Canberra-based officials and other specialists into dialogue with the concentrations of expertise in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and
Adelaide — to broaden the knowledge-base, to give people in the states a better sense of thinking in Canberra." In this national strategy, Ball has advanced a model of Track 2 brokering — engaging with a range of people in business, politics, the media and academia — conveying the relevance of regional security to an Australian community extending well beyond usual CSCAP circles.

AusCSCAP has been innovative on another dimension, that is, bilateral engagement with other Member Committees. The pioneering and ambitious initiative that produced the widely read *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia* volume is worth noting here. The research process involved in his project was a bilateral AusCSCAP-CSCAP Indonesia collaboration. With the assistance of Wanandi and the Singapore Islamist specialist Sharon Siddique, Ball and Milner initiated a project that brought together material from jurists, women's and youth groups, poets, activists and journalists, as well as religious scholars and political leaders. The focus of the resulting book (edited by Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker) reflects the many facets of Islamic thinking in Southeast Asia, reaching far beyond narrow security issues to yield insights into the concerns that in some cases fostered extremism and terrorist acts.

*Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia* was produced at a time when both governments and wider publics in the region saw the vital importance of gaining a deeper understanding of aspirations and anxieties in Islamic community. The research itself helped to promote regional networks of trust and understanding extending beyond the normal Track 2 security community. Track 2 was reaching out, as Ball felt it always should, to people who had no previous Track 2 experience but who possessed valuable expertise and experience. CSCAP's role was as facilitator and broker. On a more personal note, Ball read diligently about Islamic social ideas, gaining genuine respect for the new points of view he encountered. He developed new friendships, and demonstrated again his flexibility and breadth of vision as a scholar and intellectual.

**Bridging the Conceptual-Policy Divide**

Despite the time and energy Ball has invested in building a Track 2 foundation to regional security architecture, he did not falter in his contribution to scholarship. Most individuals have difficulty in bridging what Ball and Kwa have termed the "conceptual/policy divide." Within the Track 2 community, certainly as discussed within CSCAP, the tension between what is seen as abstract academic scholarship and applied policy-relevant analysis certainly exists. Academics confront the criticism that theoretical work is distant from the realities of international affairs. Policy-oriented analysts, in turn, are characterised as lacking conceptual rigor and failing to question the underlying assumptions of their work.

On regional security architecture, and particularly Track 2's role within it, Ball has sustained a dual role, contributing works that have become touchstones for his academic colleagues, while also maintaining a "virtually continuous output of working papers and commissioned reports providing trenchant advice to policy makers." Ball remains dismissive of the notion that academic work and policy analysis are fundamentally at odds:

> Neither theoretical work nor good scholarship is incompatible with policy relevance. Indeed ... they could well have a symbiotic relationship. ... [P]olicy-related activity ... should inform conceptual study. On the other hand, conceptual activity should broaden the discourse, expose fundamental linkages ... and explore possible approaches to the resolution of fundamental security issues. ... [T]hey will, of course, be judged by different criteria — excellence of analysis and policy utility — but not ones that defy optimization."

Ball has, through his own work on regional security - and suggested in this chapter on Track 2 dialogues and institutions - fully met these criteria of excellence, challenging the rest of us to attain the same high standards.

**Notes**

3. Ibid., pp. 25-29.
4. Ball, "Arms and Affluence:"
5. Ibid.
6. Indeed, Ball (2012, p. 2) continues to emphasise this point today. He states 
“I am not persuaded that the purposes, structures, operational modalities and 
achievements of these organizations [NATO and the EU] are central to any 
consideration of a South East Asian Defence Model.”

3, no. 1 (1993), p. 44.


13. Security dialogue activity grew dramatically in the region through to the mid-
1990s, dropped significantly for about five years, and escalated dramatically after 
2001. For the record and analysis of trends, see: Brian Job, “Track 2 Diplomacy: 
Idiosyncratic Contribution to the Evolving Asian Security Order”, Assessing Track 
2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region, edited by Desmond Ball and Kwa Chong 
Guan (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National 
University, 2003/2010), pp. 112-61. Original article (2003) plus research note, 
co-authored with Avery Poole (2010).

14. For history and definition of the terms Track 1, Track 2, and Track 3 as employed in 
the Asia-Pacific context, the standard reference is: David Caple, and Paul Evans, 
The Asia-Pacific Security Lexicon (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian 
Studies, 2007).

15. Ball, “Strategic Culture in the Asia-Pacific Region”, p. 44.


18. Desmond Ball, Building Blocks for Regional Security: An Australian Perspective on 
Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSISMe) in the Asia-Pacific (Canberra: 

(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 112-14 and; Jusuf Wanandi, “ASEAN 
ISIS and Its Regional and International Networking”, in Twenty Years of 
ASEAN: origins, evolution and challenges of Track Two diplomacy, edited by 
Hadi Soesastoro, Clara Joewono and Carolina G. Hernandez (Jakarta: CSIS, 2006), p. 34.

20. Regional players and analysts appreciated Evan’s “sensitivity” on this matter. 

21. Desmond Ball, “Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: 
Prospects and Possibilities”, RSIS Working Paper 2 (Singapore: RSIS, 1999), 

22. Gareth Evans, and Paul Dibb, Australian Paper on Practical Proposals for Security 
Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs 

23. Ball, “A New Era in Confidence Building”.


25. Ball is recognised by the ASEAN editors of a history of ASEAN-ISIS — along 
with Paul Evans and Mely Anthony-Cardillo — as a ‘participant observer’ who 
have made ‘a valuable contribution’ not only to CSCAP but to the development 
of ASEAN ISIS itself. See: Hadi Soesastoro, Clara Joewono and Carolina G. 

26. The organisation and operation of CSCAP, details of membership, description 
of Study and Working Groups is set out in detail in Desmond Ball and Chong 
Guan Kwa, eds., Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region: A CSCAP 
Reader (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National 
University, 2010), which provides a detailed accounting of the Working Groups. 
Texts of the output of all CSCAP Study and Working Groups is available at 
www.cscap.org.

and Its Prospects (Canberra: Security and Defence Studies Centre, Australian 

28. Desmond Ball, personal communication with Anthony Milner, 18 March 
2012.


in Managing Security and Peace in the Asia-Pacific, edited by Bunnag Nagara 
and Cheah Swee Ean (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Strategic and International 

32. Herman Joseph S. Kraft, The Autonomy Dilemma of Track Two Diplomacy 

33. Note here his contributions to the Australia-Asia Perceptions Project of the 
Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (in the early 1990s) and his 
continuing, co-leadership of the Australian Research Council project, ‘The 
Languages of Security in the Asia-Pacific’.

34. Ball and Kwa, Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region, p. 43.

35. Personal recollection of Job, who was CSCAP Co-Chair at that time.

36. Funding also came from Japan and Singapore — and ministers and senior 
officials from these and other regional countries also accepted invitations to 
attend.


38. Ball and Kwa, Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region, 
pp. 43-45.
39. Job’s personal recollection.
40. Ball, The Council for Security Cooperation, pp. 58, 47.
42. Ibid., p. 31.
43. Ibid., pp. 33-41.
45. Ball and Kwa, Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region, pp. 232-54, which addresses the difficulty of assessment in more detail, as does Job, “Track 2 Diplomacy”.
55. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 252.
59. Desmond Ball, personal communication with Anthony Milner, 18 March 2012.

60. Business-sector leaders were involved in these meetings, and in a number of cases dinner meetings have been arranged to supplement the CSCP meeting. In some of the state capital visits AusCSCP has held a part or all of the meeting in collaboration with high-profile local institutions — such as Asialink in Melbourne, and the Lowy Institute in Sydney.
64. See: Ball, “Reflections on Defence Security Architecture in East Asia”; Ball, Milner and Taylor, Track II: Mapping Track II Institutions in New Zealand, Australia and the Asian Region, and his numerous Strategic and Defence Studies Centre Working Papers.
65. Ibid., p. 255.
other journalists on the way there from Dili to return east. They persisted
because they wanted to capture the story. There is no doubt they were
murdered by the Indonesians. It was a tragedy. Nothing can excuse their
cold-blooded murder but they would have been better advised to take the
counsel of those who fled the invasion.

Des Ball has been an academic gem. He has challenged, revealed, reviled
and argued his way through the foreign policy and security debates of
the modern era. Sometimes he’s been right, sometimes he’s been wrong.
But every successful society needs people of ideas and the courage to
challenge the establishment. The establishment may or may not be right.
That’s one thing. But they always have to be challenged.

Note
   C00695> (accessed 12 March 2012).

9

RUMBLINGS IN REGIONAL
SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

Pauline Kerr

One of the many reasons why Des loved his mother Dot was that she had
a knack for capturing complexity in a few sharp words and, even when
it was unpopular or controversial, speaking her mind. Certainly the local
lads in the dressing room of the Timboon football club could verify the
latter, especially if they were losing the game to another country town.
Des either inherited or learnt Dot’s knack because he applies it to his
academic world of strategic studies. The title of his famous Adelphi Paper,
_Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?_, captured a complicated and controversial
question of the nuclear age.\(^1\) Likewise the title for his book _A Suitable Piece
of Real Estate_\(^2\) made ordinary Australians aware that they had a dilemma
in their security relationship with the United States: to support the joint
United States-Australian intelligence and communications facilities in their
country and risk being a target in a nuclear exchange; or play a potentially
important role in deterring nuclear war by communicating early-warning
information to the guardians of the United States arsenal. Getting to the
essence of an issue and embracing the old adage of “speaking truth to
power” seemed to be in the bones of the Ball family.
For Des, the essence of security in the Asia-Pacific region is still to be found in Dot's view on the matter: that "good neighbours have strong fences". Shifting the maxim across to the theoretical language of international relations, a move Des colourfully rejects when it came to esoteric abstractions of theory, he nonetheless understands himself as a "realist", a believer in strong (de)fences. But he is, by his own admission, "a realist with a difference". It is this depiction of Des' thinking, activism and policy advice that I believe explains his significant contribution to the study of Asia-Pacific security and architecture over the last two or more decades.²

In the rest of this chapter I will do four things that substantiate this claim: first, explain in more detail the logic behind Des' thinking about regional security and the resulting "realist with a difference" conceptual framework; second, demonstrate how this framework helps to explain his analytical and practical contributions over time; third, canvass some possible critiques of his approach; and finally, offer some concluding thoughts about what all of this tells us about Des' contribution to the way we ought to think about the type of security architecture that will best enhance the security of regional states and peoples.

CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Des shares with the majority of his fellow strategic thinkers a profound pessimism about the behaviour of states in the international system: historically, contemporarily and in the future. The bottom line, putting aside abstract concepts such as self-help, relative and absolute gains, is that leaders of states pursue their definitions of their country's "national interests" and engage in power politics to achieve them. If economic resources allow, and often if they don't, political leaders will seek military forces to support their interests. States attempting to balance military power with others will often create action and reaction dynamics that can lead to competitive arms races, further insecurity and possibly war.

Des also shares with most of his strategic colleagues the view that when countries perceive themselves to be insecure in the international system many of them will seek alliances. The basis of insecurity may be perceptions of military threat, but, and here he may part company with some strategic studies scholars, states also form alliances to support other interests that may not pertain to their own security. The North Atlantic

Treaty Organisation (NATO), Des notes, is a military alliance of countries from North America and Europe first established through the North Atlantic Treaty of 4 April 1949 to provide collective defence to those countries during the Cold War.² NATO remains a military organisation with a military command but its 28 members have interests not just in protecting their own territory and population but in new types of operations, most recently the 2011 NATO 'humanitarian' intervention in Libya. Bilateral relationships, either in the form of alliances or outside of them, also remain fundamental to states' security. The more members involved in security arrangements the weaker the arrangement.

Where Des starts to part company with many of his strategic colleagues is his conviction that because he understands the international system of states in terms of national interests, power politics, balances of power (of which alliances can be an integral aspect) and bilateral relationships it is therefore essential that states also engage productively in multilateral institutions. Unless states try to ameliorate their in-built competitive and balancing tendencies, at least those tendencies based on perceptions of insecurity as opposed to expansionist inclinations, they will suffer the consequences of their ways: that is, become less secure and more likely to come into conflict with each other, militarily and politically. Multilateral institutions comprising states combined with multilateral "analogue" of Track 2 unofficial security experts provide a way of avoiding the security dilemma that follows from pursuing national interests through power politics and balance of power dynamics. The aim is to build confidence and reduce suspicion through routine dialogue that explains the strategic outlooks of states, makes their declarations believable through transparency of their military force structures and strategies, and negotiates regimes that set limits to or slows proliferation of particular weapons — such as, weapons of mass destruction — that destabilise relationships.

DESCRIPTIVE AND NORMATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Other chapters in this volume plus more than two decades of books and articles are testimony to the extraordinary contribution that Des' analysis makes to understanding of regional security and by implication the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific. In this section of the chapter the layers are explored in order to demonstrate the value of Des' analyses for understanding his views of what is and what ought to be the situation in
the region: that is, the empirically observable and the normative dimensions of his contribution.

**National Interests, Power Politics and Balances of Power Dynamics in the Asia-Pacific**

The depth of Des’ concern about the present security architecture in the Asia-Pacific is clear from his forthcoming book in the prestigious Adelphi Paper series. Northeast Asia, he argues, "is strategically the most worrisome sub-region in the world. It is wracked with inter-state tensions and disputes. The possibility of one or more of these degenerating into large-scale conflict is palpable. The consequences would be horrendous." He stresses that all the countries in Northeast Asia have inter-state tensions and that each of the five main parties (Japan, China, Taiwan, North Korea and South Korea) have disputes that vary in intensity but that all are "more or less" serious. All the disputes are bilateral and furthermore inter-connected, making actions by one country problematic for others. The historical issue of states making territorial claims (over sovereignty, legitimacy and borders) drive many of the tensions. Two examples of bilateral apprehensions are the following. Japan and Russia’s continuing claims on the southern Kurile Islands, which in recent times appear more intense following the power politics around the 2010-2011 visits to the islands for the first time by Russia’s leaders and then their approval of plans to expand their military’s presence. And Japan and China’s ongoing claims over EEZ’s around islands in the East China Sea, which appeared more volatile during 2010-2011. Beyond the many tense bilateral relationships, Des, like other strategic analysts, considers the major flashpoints in East Asia are the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea.

The essence of Des’ analysis of the regional architecture and his particular contribution is his focus on the military dimensions of power politics and balances of power between the states of East Asia. Most often his analysis has several distinguishing features. First, he examines the military activities of regional states in meticulous detail. For example, he traces such events as China’s intrusions into Japan’s EEZ emphasising the increasing number, the escalation of ‘oceanographic research’ and SIGINT collection ships as well as warships, among them submarines, and reports the nature of the aggressive behaviour, which often occurs. He catalogues dates, often times, the number of vessels, and the positions. And he reports

the political responses of Chinese and Japanese leaders to these events. For example, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman’s statement after the September 2010 incident between a Chinese fishing trawler and two Japanese Coast Guards vessels near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands that, “Japan’s action have violated international law and rudimentary common sense in international matters”, and that “they are absurd, illegal and invalid”. Second, his analysis reports the evolution of countries’ defence expenditures. Northeast Asia, he argues, “accounts for the great bulk of the total defence expenditure and acquisitions in Asia, including most of the more disturbing new capabilities... China accounted for about 46 percent of the total Asian expenditure in 2006 and in 2010”2. His main argument is that in Northeast Asia there is evidence of a changing acquisition process that exhibits “substantial...action-reaction dynamics [and an] emerging complex arms race... principally involving naval acquisitions”. He carefully documents the type, number and capabilities of the acquisitions that substantiate his argument that there is “serious maritime strategic competition” in East Asia. Third, his analysis also includes examination of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Northeast Asia, which he considers to be another site for action-reaction dynamics. Again he notes the tenuous nature of many bilateral relationships and considers that “a nuclear arms race between India and China...is a real possibility”. Fourth, another component of Des’ analysis of the regional situation is his focus on the intelligence and electronic warfare (EW) capabilities of states. Most countries in East Asia are “rapidly developing their electronic warfare capabilities” and in Northeast Asia “there is evident action-reaction with respect to naval EW capabilities”. Fifth, analysis of countries’ information warfare (IW) assets comprise another part of Des’ picture of the region and the action-reaction dynamics that he argues are so worrying. Internet monitoring and manipulation and strategic deception capabilities are just two of the developments that show there is growing interest in establishing cyber-warfare units in, for example, China, Japan, Taiwan, and North Korea.

In sum, examinations of the factors listed above typically feature in Des’ analyses of the regional dynamics that constitute part of the present architecture. In 2012, his view is that whereas in the past acquisition dynamics were driven by modernisation motives, today the region’s increasing capabilities are spurred in many instances by serious action-reaction and this is the essence of arms racing. The significance of the
argument is not just its explicit and clear warning but that it is based on detailed and robust empirical research, which is extensively sourced. This combination of meticulous scholarship, analyses of pertinent factors, and strategic judgment contributes in quite unique ways to our understanding of the regional architecture. Moreover, in addition to his assessment of empirical trends, there is a normative element in his analysis evident in his critique that “there are no arms control regimes whatsoever in Asia that might constrain or constrict acquisitions.”

However, although he is critical of present military dynamics and supportive of measures that regulate them Des is an advocate of strong military forces to defend territory and deter expansionist intentions. As far as his own country is concerned, Des is a strong advocate of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) being equipped with the most modern weapons platforms and systems available. Furthermore, he is not opposed to a force structure that includes limited strike capabilities as part of tactically offensive operations if deterrent and defensive postures have failed.

Multilateral Institutions and Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific

Des’ publications on this aspect of the regional architecture are as numerous as those on the military dimensions of competitive power politics and balance of power dynamics reviewed above. This is significant because it confirms his focus on cooperative elements of the regional architecture and this sets him apart from many of his strategic colleagues, whose pessimism about the prospects of states moving beyond competitive behaviours leads them to reject multilateral institutions as important reassurance mechanisms. Whereas Des’ pessimism about the dynamics in East Asia is unambiguous he combines it with a cautious, indeed a very cautious, degree of optimism that states, out of self-interest, will engage in multilateralism, perhaps enough to make a difference. Furthermore, he is compelled to quite stridently advocate that states participate in regional institutions because he thinks it is the only way of reducing the horrendous consequences he predicts will likely follow from the present situation.

Des’ advocacy is evident not just in his scholarship: in his numerous books, articles and presentations. He has been and continues to one of the region’s, certainly Australia’s, most energetic and dedicated activist leaders in establishing forums for security dialogue and measures for building confidence between regional states. His activism began before the end of the Cold War when he, along with his close ANU colleague, Professor Robert

O’Neill, worked with Thai associates to obtain Ford Foundation support for development of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Thailand. The objective was to create a think-tank that provided robust academic strategic analyses of the regional architecture from the perspectives of smaller regional countries and informed government policy. He was an early supporter, along with another ANU colleague Professor Andrew Mack, of Tan Sri Dr Noordin Sopiee’s inaugural 1987 ISIS Malaysia’s Roundtable, which in 2012 held its 26th annual meeting. As discussed in depth in the following chapter, by the early 1990s, Des’ zest for establishing Track 2 organisations was instrumental in setting up the first region-wide forum, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), and he was the first head of the Australian branch, Aus-CSCAP, a position he still holds with Professor Anthony Milner.

Des’ analysis and advocacy of multilateral institutions and Track 2 in the Asia-Pacific has several dimensions that contribute to our understanding of the region’s security architecture. The first is his focus on the military aspects of regional dialogue and practical measures. Whereas many other analysts, often from international relations and peace and conflict studies, usefully concentrate on political dialogue and diplomacy as means for improving security relationships — and although Des wholeheartedly supports their efforts, particularly on preventive diplomacy — his emphasis is on the role that militaries play in destabilising relations through inadequate transparency about their intentions and capabilities. His warning earlier about the action-reaction dynamics in East Asia and its likely consequences gives his advocacy for a robust agenda of military cooperation within the official forums — the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the various ASEAN military-to-military dialogues, and the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) — a sense of urgency.

For Des, the 1995 ARF Concept Paper provides a valuable foundation and future agenda for multilateral security cooperation processes in the Asia-Pacific region. The Concept Paper outlines “a gradual evolutionary approach to security cooperation” unfolding in three stages: stage one: promotion of confidence-building measures; stage two: development of preventive diplomacy mechanisms; and: stage three: development of conflict resolution mechanisms. Des, like many other security analysts, considers the evolutionary approach has taken too long and that there are some successes and some (perhaps more) failures across the three stages. But it is the development of the ARF’s “defence track” that is his key interest. His assessment is that since 1996-97 “several concrete steps
have been taken with regard to the participation of defence personnel (both civilian and uniformed) in the ARF’s Senior Officials Meetings (SOM), the Inter-sessional Groups (ISG) and the more recent ministerial meetings. Moreover, that substantial participation started when the 9th ARF Ministerial meeting in 2002 endorsed the ARF Defence Officials’ Dialogues (ARF-DOD) that are to be held at least three times a year. Nonetheless, Des suggests quite forcefully that more frequent meetings are necessary. Beyond dialogue, he endorses the practical cooperation among regional militaries that revolves around non-traditional security threats, including such issues as regional responses to mitigating national disasters and boosting military cooperation to cope with climate change.

So far as the ASEAN military-to-military dialogue is concerned, Des reports that the second ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) in 2007 (the first was held in 2006) approved an “ADMM-Plus Concept Paper” endorsing three-yearly meetings on engagement and interactions with ASEAN’s friends and dialogue partners around non-traditional security issues, such as natural disasters, pandemics, climate change and environmental problems. The aim of another important forum, the Shangri-La Dialogue, is for defence ministers to engage in dialogue aimed at building confidence between their military establishments, whilst at the same time fostering practical security cooperation. The 2010 meeting involved defence ministers from the 10 ASEAN countries, the US Secretary of Defense, China’s Minister of National Defence as well as other senior officials. Des’ judgment of the SLD is that it has had “considerable policy impact.”

Des’ overall assessment of the progress of defence cooperation efforts in the region is more circumspect and less dismissive than that offered by many of his strategic colleagues. Whereas some argue the various forums are “talkfests” and likely to remain so because states have competing national interests and cling to the principle of sovereignty, Des maintains that:

In this region, with its immense diversity and disparate security concerns, progress with the construction of new security architecture is invariable slow, gradual and tentative, and conditional on the formation of consensus.

Whereas many others claim there is little point in expending energy and resources on trying to develop meaningful military cooperation, Des advises persistence, reasonable expectations and urgency:

The challenge for the ASEAN-led processes will be to move faster, to increase the rate of their evolution and to be more adventurous with respect to the “Asian way” in order to meet emerging security issues of perhaps unprecedented scale, complexity and consequence.

Integral to the heavy emphasis he puts on robust military cooperation is the second distinguishing feature of Des’ analysis, namely the importance he attaches to institutionalising connections between Track 1 and Track 2 and to the development and delivery of practical policy advice from Track 2 to Track 1. The long-standing challenge of establishing links between forums for officials and forums for non-officials was eventually met with the establishment of back-to-back meetings between ARF officials involved in ISGs and ISMs and CSCAP study groups. Des’ activism, along with that of other regional colleagues, was instrumental in putting this connection in place. An example of a successful outcome from these types of meetings was the ARF’s acceptance in July 2009 of CSCAP’s recommendation that the ARF produce a Vision 2020 Statement “that would clarify the ARF’s objectives and provide specific benchmarks for its progress.” CSCAP’s recommendation exemplified its orientation towards delivering papers that were of “direct interest to the ARF” and were supportive of its policy focus. Claims that the links and policy relevant nature of CSCAP papers are evidence of its loss of autonomy and intellectual rigour and its possible co-optation by Track 1 are, for Des, to be taken seriously. His concern is that although the formal Track 1/Track 2 connection is vital, unless Track 1 has the political will to address the dynamics he describes then Track 2 is stifled.

The third aspect of Des’ contribution to the cooperative elements of the regional security architecture is his relentless critique combined with his reformist advocacy of the early and present structures and functions of both Track 1 and Track 2 in the region. Whereas many commentators damn the official and non-official forums for their limited outcomes and claim that in any case it is a pointless endeavour in a world of competing nation-states and interests, Des has concentrated on reforming both processes through constructive critique. A recent example is his argument that:

Track 2 organisations have been lethargic with respect to involvement in supporting or promoting Defence cooperation activities... there has been a virtually complete absence of informed dialogue concerning the identification of the most appropriate and productive sorts of cooperative activities to be accorded priority in the defence cooperative processes.
His forthright assessment is combined with recommendations for how CSCAP could contribute to the defence track in the ARF: such as establishing a CSCAP study group devoted to the defence track that could "develop and refine proposals for both live and exercise designed to strengthen practical defence cooperation". He also recommends institutionalising regular disaster relief exercises within the ARF, strengthening maritime exercises across a range of non-traditional security issues and regenerating traditional issues such as an "Avoidance of Incidents at Sea" agreement that was proposed in the original 1995 Concept Paper. Des' policy advice for many years has included broad defence cooperation through traditional exercises for armies, air forces and navies plus other activities that bring together senior and junior members of the different forces from different regional countries. As a consequence of his analysis of the action-reaction dynamics in East Asia he is a strong advocate of the ARF acting on conflict resolution (that is, stage three in the Concept Paper) and suggests the first step is "to study the most likely characteristics of possible conflict in the Asia-Pacific region — in terms of their scale, intensity, naval and air dimensions, level of technology and sorts of casualties".

POSSIBLE THEMATIC CRITIQUES

So far this chapter has presented a personal assessment of Des' contribution to our understanding of the regional security architecture. It suggests that his major impact is his meticulous, multifactor analyses, which are based on a conceptual framework that emphasises realist notions of national interests, power balancing, alliances and bilateralism and liberal institutionalist thinking about the value of multilateral forums and cooperation. His realist analyses reflect his perceptions of what is the situation in East Asia and his institutionalist examinations describe what is an embryonic form of regional security cooperation combined with his advocacy of what ought to be the normative objective of the regional security architecture, namely deeper defence dialogue and practical cooperation. Apart from these scholarly analyses Des' other contribution is his unifying activism in support of establishing and improving Track 1 and Track 2 forums and activities.

My next step is to raise very briefly some possible thematic critiques of Des' contribution to balance my own argument. As already indicated, Des' framework, empirical analyses and normative recommendations can be criticised. On the one hand there are realist perspectives that would in principle support his interpretation of the destabilising dynamics in East Asia but dismiss his view that the establishment of Track 1 and Track 2 multilateral arrangements have been and will be meaningful for regional order. His twologics may well appear contradictory from realist perspectives. Des' advocacy for arms control measures across the conventional and non-conventional spectrum will find both limited support and outright condemnation from realist perspectives. Des' standpoint differs from these partly in terms of his optimism (albeit cautious) that arms control regimes can regulate action-reaction dynamics and partly because he holds the conviction that there is no other option, if action-reaction dynamics are to avoid ending in conflict.

On the other hand, Des' approach can be critiqued from a host of liberal perspectives. For example, liberal institutionalist perspectives would find that the balance between Des' realist and liberal institutionalist favours the former. That is, his assessments of the dynamics in East Asia do not give sufficient weight to the ameliorating role of the growing number of regional institutions and arrangements as well as the increasing density of economic interdependence between Asia's great powers. Furthermore, his relative neglect of political and societal community building in favour of material structures for military cooperation may well be criticised from other liberal perspectives for leaving aside the role that community socialisation plays in setting the broader context for cooperation.

Interestingly, from a policy perspective Des' approach is likely to receive fewer criticisms insofar as it reflects the practical objectives of governments to have both cooperative and competitive options in the security architecture. However, Des' advocacy of the cooperative elements is clearly much stronger than that of most regional governments.

CONCLUSION

What does Des' extraordinary contribution outlined in this chapter tell us about the way we ought to think about the regional security architecture? The answers are not found entirely within this chapter's examination of Des' state-centric analysis, surprisingly. Rather they are located in another of Des' scholarly and activist contributions: namely his work on human security and in particular the human in-security of Burmese minority groups. The implication of his critique of the Burmese state and its treatment of its people is that his conception of security involves more
than the state-centric focus of this chapter and that the regional security architecture ought to comprise both state and human-centric dimensions. Indeed, Des’ normative prescription for security, that “good” states are the key means for protecting people, further confirms that he is “a realist with a difference”. Dot would be proud.

Notes

3. Although Des is the first to add that he does not write explicitly about architectures per se, nonetheless I believe that the conceptual framework he adopts is directly concerned with the descriptive and normative features of the regional security architecture. My arguments about Des’ contribution are based mostly on past and recent conversations with him as well as two of his forthcoming publications which he kindly gave me drafts of and which I believe capture his thinking over many years (see endnotes 4 and 6 below). Nonetheless, he may disagree or agree with my arguments.
4. Desmond Ball, “Defence Security Architecture in East Asia”, paper for lecture at the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (SHIBIDSS), Brunei Darussalam, 8 March 2012. (Copy of manuscript provided by Des Ball to author.)
6. Ibid., p. 2.
7. Ibid., p. 7.
8. Ibid., pp. 10–14.
9. Ibid., p. 3.
10. Ibid., p. 10.
11. Ibid., p. 12.
12. Ibid., p. 23.
15. Ibid., p. 32.
16. Ibid., p. 31.
17. Ibid., pp. 38–39.
18. Ibid., p. 39.
19. Ibid., p. 40.
23. Ibid., p. 13.
25. Ibid., pp. 15–16.
26. Ibid., pp. 16–19.
27. Ibid., p. 19.
28. Ibid., p. 21.
29. Ibid., p. 21.
30. Ibid., p. 22.
31. Ibid., p. 22.
32. Ibid., p. 22.
33. Ibid., p. 22.
34. Ibid., p. 23.
35. Ball and Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement*.