I. Introduction

We live in an era of increasing complexity and risk, an age prone to a wide array of political, social, economic and environmental crises that threaten our security in one way or another. These range from “traditional” security issues such as military confrontations to “non-traditional” ones such as financial crises and suddenly emerging pandemics. The management of crises is particularly vital as we seek to contain their worst effects and eventually develop ways to try and foresee and perhaps avert them in the future. The task before scholars and policy makers is to attempt to understand, anticipate and respond to the problem of “inevitable surprises” - that is, crises that in hindsight we might have expected and prepared for had we but gone about the task systematically.¹

Our central objective here is to prepare the ground for just this.

By definition, crises have a number of common characteristics:

- They pose a severe threat to human security by severely disrupting systems or relationships;
- They involve a high degree of uncertainty about their ramifications and their potential consequences;
- They are imbued with a sense of urgency and the need for policy makers to respond quickly; and
- They are dynamic processes in which the interactions between their constituents are both complex and unpredictable.

In this paper, we undertake a brief study of four historical crises in order to identify patterns that are useful in attempting to understand and respond to crises. They fall into two categories. In the traditional category, we examine two sets of Asian crises: the twin crises that occurred between China and the Soviet Union during their border confrontation in 1969.

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(mainly to examine Chinese behaviour) and the successive crises that pitted India and Pakistan against each other in 1999 and 2001-02. In the non-traditional realm, we analyze the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the crisis caused by the advent of the SARS pandemic in 2003. How did the diverse actors in their very different situations attempt to manage these crises? The paper identifies responses to both types of crisis by breaking them down into three levels of analysis: the macro level or systemic; the meso or intermediate level, and the micro or decision-making level of individual leaders and small groups. It discerns similarities and differences among them, asks the critical question whether Asian approaches to crisis management are unique, and concludes with some broad implications for policy making.

II. Crisis Management in Traditional Security


 Barely a decade after the communist revolution in 1949, China’s alliance with the Soviet Union deteriorated into bitterness and deep hostility. The tension had historical roots: Russia had participated in the colonial slicing of China into spheres of influence, and during the civil war in China, the communists received tepid support from the Soviet Union. After 1949, Soviet technical and economic assistance was limited,
especially toward the building of the promised atomic bomb. During the Korean War, the Chinese received little backing from Stalin. Khrushchev’s programme of De-Stalinization and his “adventurism” in the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) further alarmed Mao Zedong and his colleagues. As Mao sought to portray China as an alternative model of socialism, the rivalry grew, until the Soviet Union withdrew all its assistance to China in 1960. Thereafter, the relationship took a turn for the worse. The border issue became increasingly tense and was marked by regular local confrontations, especially from 1966. It eventually erupted into fighting in March 1969 and a series of skirmishes took place till October.

The fighting was initiated by China on the orders of Mao. There is some dispute over Mao’s intentions. Some scholars argue that he wanted to provoke a conflict with the Soviet Union in order to send a signal to the United States in a classic exercise of balance-of-power politics. But in a well-argued

paper, Yang Kuisong shows that in fact Mao’s motivation was connected with his domestic political objectives: he wanted to use the external tension to mobilize support at a time when there was an intense struggle for power within China during the Cultural Revolution. However, “the situation at the border quickly got out of hand and created, for Beijing, a perceived danger of war that Mao had never intended.”  

As both sides mobilized their forces and engaged in a war of words, the tension rose sharply. In August, a series of skirmishes occurred along the length of the border in Xinjiang province. Soviet leaders were so furious that they discussed the possibility of using nuclear weapons. Minister of Defence Andrei Grechko is reported to have favoured a massive attack, while others preferred a limited strike against Chinese nuclear targets. In the end, Brezhnev settled for nuclear deployment and did not go further. But what the threat did was to create a visceral fear of preemptive attack among Chinese leaders, who decided to make preparations for the worst. On August 28, an order for general mobilization was approved by Mao, though it was implemented only in the three northern provinces.

Chinese fear of preemption by the Soviet Union was so strong that it was felt negotiation would be used as a cover for attack.

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6) Ibid, p. 22.
When Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin came to negotiate on September 11, military forces at Beijing airport were placed on high alert. The moment passed uneventfully and talks were held which should have brought a semblance of stability as border fighting ebbed. To the contrary, the crisis atmosphere went up a notch. China conducted nuclear tests in symbolic warning, including a 3-megatonne thermonuclear test on September 29. Intelligence reports fed Chinese anxieties. Misinterpretations added to the nervousness. When three Soviet missile regiments deployed along the border went on semi-alert, this was interpreted as a full-scale alert, indicating preparation for war. With Lin Biao convinced that a Soviet negotiating delegation due in Beijing would arrive in an aircraft carrying nuclear weapons for a surprise strike, preparations were made for a full alert. At this juncture, fissures in centralized control emerged in two ways. First, orders went out for the Second Artillery (a missile corps) to go on full alert without proper vetting of the directive by the Chief of the General Staff (who was asleep). Second, the orders covered DF-3 intermediate-range missiles when in fact these were still in their test phase.

The crisis was ultimately managed in the sense that nothing went seriously wrong. But it did carry a number of important lessons. First, it reflected the dynamic of an action-reaction

process. Though the crisis was deliberately started by Mao for domestic political purposes, it nearly escalated into war as mutual tensions fed on actions and reactions: angry rhetoric, mobilization, and skirmishes. Second, despite the hostility generated, neither side breached an amorphous “red line” that would have brought large-scale conventional combat between them. Every one of the numerous military engagements remained localized. Third, the adversaries also cooperated in agreeing to and engaging in talks, though it was some time before they bore fruit. Fourth, despite the effort to prevent escalation, the Chinese perception of a Soviet plan to launch a preemptive strike was strong owing to erroneous intelligence (made more “real” by intimations of Soviet discussions to do precisely this) and because of Lin Biao’s personal conviction that such an attack was highly likely. Fifth, the Chinese command and control system was clearly weak even though the final launch authority remained with Mao. Significantly, the incident represented a high probability of nuclear weapons being used when the actual fighting had petered out.

On the surface, the crisis appeared to have been successfully managed. Both sides displayed caution and engaged in tacit as well as explicit cooperation. Yet it is also true that a major war involving the use of nuclear weapons was not averted by rational thought and action alone, but with a measure of good fortune contributing. The chief lesson is that, like the “fog of war” - the truism that in war there is no certitude because of the complexity and uncertainty surrounding the situation - there is
such a thing as the “fog of crisis” when high tension, lack of clarity, and urgency combine to make the process of crisis management difficult and uncertain.

2. The India-Pakistan Crises of 1999 and 2001-02

Like the preceding case, this one also had historical roots. After two centuries of British rule, India at independence was split into two and Pakistan was created as a “homeland” for the Muslims of the subcontinent. The partition was embittered by a massive wave of violence between Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and Muslims on the other. Within weeks, the two countries went to war over the disputed territory of Kashmir. Three wars in 1947-48, 1965 and 1971 left a legacy of deep hostility and distrust, while the Kashmir issue remained unresolved, the region having been divided in 1949, with about two-thirds under Indian control, the rest under Pakistan. The last of these wars ended with the bifurcation of Pakistan and the creation of a new state, Bangladesh - an episode that left Pakistan both weak and troubled. Determined to secure their country more effectively, Pakistani leaders embarked on a covert programme to obtain nuclear weapons, which they eventually succeeded in doing by the mid-1980s. This gave them the new...

confidence to put pressure on India by means of an innovative use of the “stability-instability paradox.”\textsuperscript{13} The original concept held that between nuclear weapons powers, conventional war is possible because neither side would dare to use its nuclear weapons. In the present case, Pakistani leaders took the use of force down a step to a subconventional strategy, i.e., to sponsoring secessionist groups seeking to detach Kashmir from the Indian state.\textsuperscript{14} The resultant tension between the two countries produced a crisis in 1990, a second and more intense one in 1999, and after a short interregnum, a third in 2001-02.\textsuperscript{15} In this section, the latter two are discussed as a single two-phase event.\textsuperscript{16}

A major internal political upheaval in the Indian-held portion of Kashmir (known as the state of Jammu and Kashmir)

\textsuperscript{12} Ashok Kapur, Pakistan’s Nuclear Development (London: Croom Helm, 1987).
\textsuperscript{14} S. Paul Kapur, Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).
\textsuperscript{16} For detailed review, see Rajesh M. Basrur, Minimum Deterrence and India’s Nuclear Security (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), Chapter 4.
commencing in December 1989 gave Pakistan the opportunity to lend active support by way of shelter, money and training to terrorists groups that wreaked havoc in India. The strategic temperature rose sharply in the summer of 1998 when India and Pakistan each conducted a series of nuclear tests. In the winter of 1998-99, as Indian forces vacated the snowbound heights of Kargil along the Line of Control (LoC) that divided Kashmir for the winter, Pakistani troops in civilian guise began occupying strategic points. Ostensibly “freedom fighters,” they were sent in order to generate a limited crisis and put India under pressure both directly and indirectly (via the international community) to negotiate on Kashmir. India responded in May 1999 with a major military counter-thrust that was at first costly in terms of infantry casualties, but eventually drove the Pakistanis back. With the United States and other countries putting it under tremendous pressure, Pakistan agreed to a full withdrawal. But the problem did not end. A summit at Agra between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan in 2001 failed to bring agreement. As the flow of terrorists from across the border continued unabated, Indian opinion increasingly veered toward the assertion that the presence of nuclear weapons did not rule out a “limited war.”

The post-9/11 environment, with the US launching its “war on terrorism” in Afghanistan, was conducive to a military response

against terrorism.

On December 13, 2001, terrorists attacked the Indian parliament in New Delhi and came close to inflicting a major disaster because many members were in attendance. India responded angrily, calling for an end to cross-border terrorism and threatening to go to war. A massive mobilization followed, with Pakistan responding symmetrically. The first peak of the crisis occurred in January and a second in May when terrorists attacked and killed family members of army men in Kashmir. As the rhetoric grew stronger, both sides carried out nuclear tests. Ultimately, the crisis passed when India decided to withdraw its forces in October.

As in the earlier case, each component of the crisis was initiated as a calculated move. In both, the idea was to exercise bilateral as well as trilateral coercive diplomacy (via the United States and others) to obtain definite political objectives. Pakistan sought negotiation on Kashmir, India wanted an end to cross-border terrorism. In both instances, the two sides took care not to transgress self-imposed limits designed to prevent war from breaking out. The two sides made efforts to talk and control the crisis even as it intensified. In addition, the United States was deeply involved in trying to restrain them and prevent war. Both exercised considerable restraint. On the border/LoC in 1999, neither mobilized its offensive forces and the fighting was limited to the LoC region and did not extend to their long border. The Indian campaign to oust the intruders was considerably slowed down because the air force was under
strict instructions not to cross the LoC. On its part, Pakistan all but abandoned its forces as they retreated under heavy fire and suffered significant losses. In 2001-02, the mobilization was more aggressive, but there was no fighting. The limited objective in each case threatened to go out of control. In 1999, India took Pakistan by surprise by launching a major counter-offensive instead of agreeing to talk. In 2001-02, there were at least two instances when senior military officers, a lieutenant general on one occasion and an air marshal on another, were punished for taking undue risks that might have spun the crisis out of control.18)

The India-Pakistan crises reveal a pattern in many ways similar to that of the Sino-Soviet crisis discussed above. First, the initiator’s objective was rational and limited, but had unexpected results. In 1999, Pakistan found itself at a dead end because it could not back up its retreating forces owing to the risk of escalation. In 2001-02, India was caught between Pakistani intransigence and the fear of losing face, so the crisis stretched into a long and expensive one that did not yield the unexpected benefit since cross-border terrorism persisted (though on a reduced scale). Second, the adversaries were careful not to violate fairly clear red lines. Pakistan did cross the LoC in 1999, but only in a small way and with its forces

18) The general moved his troops too close to enemy forces; the air marshal let his aircraft inadvertently cross the border and was hit by Pakistani fire.
pretending to be civilians, so they could receive virtually no logistical and other support. Third, the two sides engaged in negotiations in the course of the crisis (including a major summit at Agra in the interval between its two phases) - a process in which the US played an active role. Fourth, notwithstanding the practice of restraint, there was, as noted above, considerable risk of actual war breaking out even though neither side wanted it.

III. Crisis Management in Non-traditional Security


Economic security has always been a key pillar in the security policy of most states in Asia. For instance, all the ‘relatively young’ in Southeast Asia consider economic security as a sine qua non for state and regime stability. There was a shared understanding among political elites in the region that internal threats, stemming from poverty and inequality could exacerbate ethnic and religious differences, and were thus more worrying than any form of external military threats. This kind of security thinking was encapsulated in the ideology of ‘national resilience’ widely shared among regional states-which advanced the notion that economic development and security were two sides of the same coin.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997 clearly reinforced such
notions. By most accounts, the first symptoms of the crisis started with the attack of foreign currency speculators on currencies of states in Southeast Asia. In Thailand, for example, the inability of the Thai government to defend the baht led to its rapid decline in value. This phenomenon, described as the so-called 'tom yam effect', triggered similar currency devaluations in other ASEAN states. Initially, Thailand and Indonesia took a beating with the values of their currencies falling and causing their stock markets to crash. Soon, Malaysia and the Philippines followed. Although the severity of the impact was comparably less for these two latter countries, the effects on their respective economies were nevertheless significant. In a span of twelve months, the range of depreciation of regional currencies against the US dollar ranged from between 39%, as in the case of the Malaysian Ringgit, to 84% for the Indonesian Rupiah. With the onslaught of the crisis, a host of problems ensued in a short period of time. These included massive private sector debt, a credit crunch, decline in economic production, decline in consumption, falling investments, high unemployment, inflation, labour migration, rising social problems, and political unrest. As these countries geared up for economic recession, it soon became clear that they were up against not merely a financial crisis, but-particularly for badly hit countries like Indonesia and Thailand—a social and political crisis as well.

To be sure the crisis and its aftermath resulted in untold misery to many states and societies in East and Southeast Asia and further underscored the symbiotic relationship between
state security and economic security. The Indonesian story mirrored the gravity of the economic crisis and its impact on human, state and regional security. As a consequence of the financial crisis, its economy went into a tailspin. There was hyper-inflation and unemployment with rates that ballooned from the pre-crisis level of 10% to 24%. This resulted in about 15 million people in the country rendered unemployed at the height of the crisis. Poverty rates consequently increased with the International Labour Organisation estimating that in mid-1998, about 37% of the population, or 75 million people, were reduced to live below the poverty line (defined as U.S. $1 per person per day). This dire economic condition was in stark contrast to the pre-1997 period when Indonesia was cited by the World Bank as the only country in the world that had remarkably improved its Human Development Index (HDI), after having started from a very low base in 1975. In effect, the crisis reduced the country’s economy to a shambles.

The crisis also triggered political unrest. The government’s IMF-led economic restructuring policies, which included the foreclosure of 16 banks and the steep price hike of basic commodities such as the 71% increase in petrol prices, led to a number of student protests and public demonstrations staged in the several cities. The ten-day student demonstration at Trisakti

University in Indonesia that saw four students killed sparked a wave of violent riots that raged through the country’s capital, leading angry mobs to loot and burn buildings indiscriminately. Hundreds of deaths were reported and people who could fled the country as the capital came to a standstill.Outside Jakarta, there were reports of ethnic and religious conflict, which came as a great shock to a country that was known for its religious tolerance. The violence that shook the country eventually led to the fall of President Suharto after 33 years in power.

The other countries in the region were not immune to the political turmoil that happened in Indonesia, particularly those that were badly hit by the crisis. In Malaysia, palpable cleavages emerged among its political elites, especially after the ousting of the former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim who was perceived, among others, as having endangered the state’s economic security with his pro-IMF policies, which he introduced during the early stage of the crisis. In Thailand, the government of Chaovatal Choonhavan was forced to resign when political confrontation deepened as the country’s

21) Before his unceremonious dismissal, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was also the Malaysia’s Finance Minister. He played an active role in stemming the economic crisis in the initial stages before he was sacked from all his official position. For more on the Malaysian crisis, see for example, Jomo K.S., M Way: Mahathir’s Economic Legacy (Kuala Lumpur: Forum, 2005) and John Hilley, Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition (London and New York: Zed Books, 2001).
currency collapsed and as the devastation brought on by the crisis continued to wreck havoc to its economy. The impact of the economic and political events in badly hit economies reverberated across the region and dashed hopes for early economic recovery for the rest of ASEAN. It also exacerbated the loss of confidence in the region that was once the darling of foreign investors and other financial institutions. More importantly, the events brought a number of uncertainties to regional security, including bilateral frictions among ASEAN members resulting from the effects of economic recession.\(^\text{22)}\)

The economic crisis was indeed a wake-up call to the states in the region. At the very least, it re-affirmed the close nexus between economics and security. It reinforced the idea that the economy had to be ‘securitised’ if regime security were to be ensured. Yet, ironically, one of the lessons learnt at the height of the crisis was that no matter how convincing the arguments were for regime and economic security through rapid economic development, these approaches had become dismally inadequate against the new types of security threats that

\(^{22)}\) As recession began to bite in Thailand and Malaysia, both countries began deporting hundreds of foreign workers, most of them illegal, back to Myanmar and Indonesia. Some quarters in Indonesia had expressed disquiet over the timing of the repatriation of these workers given the volatile labour situation in the country. See, Mely Caballero-Anthony, “Challenges to Southeast Asian Security Cooperation,” and Rizal Sukma, “Security Implications of the Economic Crisis in Southeast Asia,” in Guy Wilson-Roberts (ed), \textit{An Asia-Pacific Security Crisis? New Challenges to Regional Stability}, (Wellington: Centre for Strategic Studies), op.cit.
transcended borders. In the case of the Asian financial crisis, the ‘threats’ were coming from outside state boundaries. For instance, the massive depreciation of Southeast Asian currencies was reportedly caused largely by currency speculation, which was further exacerbated by parallel stock market meltdowns and capital flight from the region. What the crisis revealed was that against a rapidly changing global economic environment, the state authority was under threat and its capacity to handle an increasing number of security threats has been stretched to the limits. To be sure, the relationship between territory and security has now drastically changed.

Despite the volatility of the regional and national situation caused by the crisis, states in the region did try to respond to the economic crisis. In response to falling regional currencies, ASEAN central banks attempted to work at increasing financial cooperation to strengthen the region’s capacity to combat currency volatility. It was reported that the ASEAN banks had in fact provided large-scale support for the Thai Baht in May 1997, when it was being attacked aggressively by currency speculators. However, against the massive capacity of currency speculators, the ASEAN central banks found themselves defenceless.\(^\text{23}\) ASEAN also convened several meetings at three

levels (Heads of State/Government, Economic and Finance Ministers and Representatives from the private sectors) to work out an ASEAN response. The meetings came up with several measures. The key elements of these included:

• The Bilateral Swap Arrangements (also known as the Chiang Mai Initiative) which were a mechanism that allowed for stand-by emergency funds to assist economies badly affected by the crisis, aside from the financial assistance provided by multilateral financial institutions like the IMF.
• The promotion of trade within Southeast Asia and East Asia using local currencies.
• The establishment of a regional surveillance mechanism which was essentially aimed at promoting a more effective surveillance over the economic policies and practices of ASEAN members, facilitated by fuller disclosure of relevant economic data.  

2. The Threat of Infectious Diseases: Asia’s Experience with SARS

Despite the dictum that health is an integral part of state and human security, this is one area which has received less

24) This idea was later on expanded within the ASEAN plus Three (APT) framework in the establishment of the APT early warning systems. See the Asian Development Bank Asian Economic Monitor, July 2002, p. 24.
attention in regional security discourses in Asia—at least until the onset of SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, in 2003. However, this is a trend that is not only unique to the region but indeed an important point that was highlighted in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) 2006 Global Risks Report. While the Report ranked pandemics as among the highest in the list of risks currently confronting the international community, it also concluded that despite the interplay of a number of global risks and their combined ripple effects, which can be potentially devastating, “disaster planning and crisis management suffer from a number of shortcomings.” Among these are limited investments of resources in health systems and varying responses to different assessments of threats.25)

The lack of preparedness and differences in threat perceptions stem from the lack of appreciation about the linkages between health and human security. In this era of globalization, infectious diseases have the capacity to detrimentally affect the security and wellbeing of all members of society and all aspects of the economy. This was best illustrated in Asia’s experience with SARS where the extent of the perceived risk not only seriously disrupted the economy of the affected states, but had tremendous repercussions on regional security.26) Within just two

26) For a more detailed analysis of the SARS crisis and its impact on the region, see Mely Caballero-Anthony, “SARS in Asia: Crisis, Vulnerabilities and Regional Responses,” Asian Survey, 45:3, June 2005.
months after its reported outbreak, SARS had infected close to 6,000 people and killed 200 in at least 26 countries. By the time the World Health Organisation declared that SARS had peaked, the total numbers came up to 8,402 infections, 772 deaths in 29 countries. SARS turned out to be one of the most devastating and feared diseases in modern history, and the events that followed after its first detection in February 2003 demonstrated that the ‘pandemic’ could have devastating consequences. Accounts from both print and broadcast media, and from narratives of people affected by SARS reveal that the impact of SARS was not limited to the loss of lives alone, but also extended to socio-economic, psychological, political, and security spheres of affected countries.

The panic was also compounded by the fact that there was no known cure for SARS. And, while the death toll taken by SARS was much lower than the quarter of a million casualties of the Boxing Day tsunami, many of the victims were health-care workers. The psychological impact was therefore significant. In


28) The tsunami that hit many parts of Southeast Asia and states along the Indian Ocean on 26 December 2004 had a death-toll of over 250,000 people and displaced roughly about 1 1/2 million people, not to mention the massive devastation of properties and sources of livelihood. Estimated cost of the Asian and/or Indian Ocean tsunami (whichever way this was referred to) was about US$10 billion. See Preliminary Assessment of the Macro-economic Impact of the Tsunami Disaster on Affected Countries, International Monetary Fund, 4 February 2005, at http://www.imf.org/external/np/oth/2005/020405.htm.
the words of one medical scientist from the University of Hong Kong’s Centre for Behavioural Health at HKU, “when doctors and nurses cannot take care of themselves-[become victims], the whole community panics.” 29) To be sure, the onset of this ‘unknown’ disease placed the region’s medical capability to test.

The Asian countries most heavily affected included China and Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam. The extent of the SARS crisis had been clearly reflected in the sudden disruption of economic activity in several economies in Asia. Starting with the fall in consumer confidence, drop in domestic demands and poor business sentiments, many businesses were on the brink of collapse as the cost of SARS started to rise. The WHO had placed the cost of SARS to Asia at US$ 30 billion, while a health expert of BioEnterprise Asia projected that the cost stood at US$ 50 billion for the region and up to US$150 billion globally. In Hong Kong, for example, which recorded the second highest number of SARS cases, government estimates placed the cost of SARS to about US$ 1.7 billion while in Singapore, the government forecast indicated that SARS could shave as much as a half to one percentage point off its GDP growth forecast. 30) During the crisis, the tourism and travels sector hit an unprecedented low as people began to shy away from travelling to SARS-affected countries like China, Hong Kong, Singapore

and Vietnam. Tourist arrivals in Hong Kong, for example, fell by 70-80%; while a huge slump in the retail industry saw a fall by 20%-50% in business for many countries.31)

While the health crisis got a lot of media attention, information about the responses by countries in the region were however sketchy. Singapore and Hong Kong were able to deal with the health crisis in a reasonably effective manner, but other countries like China and Vietnam had experienced a range of challenges in coping with the problem. Aside from the complex problems faced by states at the national level, such as the lack of contingency planning and coordination among state agencies, there has also been very little institutionalized regional cooperation in the area of public health policy—even in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

SARS also caused political ripples and had the potential to weaken popular confidence in a state’s general custodial function—negatively impacting on the government’s legitimacy and perceived ineffectiveness. A case in point was China, which was initially blamed for mismanaging the outbreak. Its credibility was seriously undermined by poor handling of SARS in the epidemic’s early stages, which galvanised domestic and international criticism of the leadership and brought unprecedented calls for more transparency and accountability. For instance, the WHO’s former Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland remarked in a press statement that had Chinese
authorities acted earlier and with more openness, the outbreak of the disease would have taken a different course.\textsuperscript{32} To win back confidence from the international community, Chinese health officials had consequently held press conferences on a daily basis to assuage concerns about SARS transmission in the country and assure the international community that the situation was under control.

There was also the palpable socio-psychological impact. For SARS-stricken countries, an uneasy atmosphere of fear and apprehension prevailed. Within a short but significant period, SARS had drastically altered people's lives. People's mobility within their environment had suddenly changed as the psychological fear of being exposed to other people and possibly get infected in public places loomed in people's mind. Even travelling from one's home to other places became problematic due to tremendous concern about not having adequate protection. Moreover, there were the unspoken stigma suffered by people who were afflicted by SARS and the emotional distress suffered by families of victims. The other significant impact was how crisis management measures, particularly the mandatory quarantine, were viewed as a curtailment of civil liberties. Anecdotal incidents of people resisting and violating quarantine laws were reported in several countries and the question of how far authorities could go to impose quarantines became a nagging issue because

governments tended to revive quarantine laws that in many countries predate World War II. \(^{33}\) Furthermore, other measures such as home surveillance and monitoring of quarantined people adopted in Singapore, China and to some extent Hong Kong were viewed as draconian and had serious repercussions on civil liberties.

SARS was certainly a wake-up call for many states in the region. To their credit, the responses by countries particularly by the ASEAN member countries \(^{34}\) and China that worked closely to stem the tide of infection were commendable, considering that the unfortunate delay from Beijing that happened earlier had exacerbated the problem of cross-border transmission. To be sure, SARS has generated unprecedented coordination among countries in the region. At the ASEAN + 3 Health Ministers Meeting and the ASEAN Special Summit on SARS, several measures have been outlined to put in place regional mechanisms to address the multiplicity of issues related to SARS. These measures involved the exchange of information and best

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33) There had been reported incidents in Hong Kong, for example, of authorities meeting stiff resistance when police tried to get information to trace the whereabouts of people who were exposed to SARS patients and those who were issued home confinement orders. See, “Hong Kong Police Take on Expanded Role in Fighting SARS,” The New York Times, 24 April 2003; “Macapagal Bares Tough Measures to Fight Sars,” Inquirer News Service, 25 April 2003, “Laws Not up to SARS Epidemic,” Washington Post, 26 April 2003.

34) ASEAN member states comprise Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
practices in containing infectious diseases; strengthening of cooperation among front line enforcement agencies such as health, immigration, customs, transport and law enforcement; and harmonisation of travel procedures to ensure proper health screening at the points of origin.\(^{35}\)

The other key measure being considered at the regional and national level is deepening the cooperation between regional states the WHO. More importantly, ASEAN countries are also exploring the possibility of developing a regional framework for rapid response to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Malaysia, for example, has already proposed the setting up a regional centre of disease control (CDC), while efforts are underway to develop further the ASEAN-Disease Surveillance Network (ADSNet), which coincidently was set up in April 2003 at the height of the SARS crisis. The significance of these initiatives cannot indeed be understated considering the importance that disease surveillance mechanisms play in identifying and crafting rapid responses to emerging health threats. Hence, instituting surveillance systems in the region represents our best chance in reducing such threats.

The measures toward instituting a regional surveillance

mechanism would do well to enhance the region’s early warning systems for disease control. But for these to be workable and credible, this would also require building local surveillance and laboratory capacities among states in the region. Inevitably, this raises the core issues of providing more resources to building good public health systems and the political will to make infectious diseases a matter of national priority.

IV. Conclusion

The crises and their management reveal certain common overarching characteristics despite their differences in terms of time, actors and content. No doubt there were important differences between the traditional and non-traditional crises. These were at least three. First, traditional crises were essentially military in character, whereas the non-traditional crises were entirely non-military. Second, the former resulted from deliberate action taken by the initiator of crisis and only subsequently threatened to get out of control. In contrast, non-traditional crises were not planned or initiated by political decision makers but were thrust upon them by the occurrence of “external” events, i.e., events that had their origins outside their proper knowledge and expectation. Finally, though the first category of crises were essentially bilateral, i.e. between states (though the US was a significant side player in the India-Pakistan case), whereas both the Asian Financial and SARS cries
were transnational and non-state in nature.

Yet there is a remarkable similarity between the two types of crisis. First, both types of crisis had systemic roots. The traditional crises were typical of the early stages of rivalry between nuclear-armed states, when the very process of the nuclearization of an antagonistic relationship in an anarchic system generates high levels of tension and crises.36) The non-traditional crises were also systemic in that they were produced by transnationalization processes, i.e., by poorly regulated flows of money and inability to health services to fight and control the spread of virulent pathogens. Second, both sets of crises were unanticipated, resulting from unexpected developments. In the traditional category, the actual onset of crisis was planned by the initiator, but in practice, the crisis tended to (or threatened to) elude control and develop into a major disaster. Third, both types of crisis did have significant negative consequences. These consequences were wide-ranging: they involved the loss of lives (not excluding the 2001-02 portion of the India-Pakistan crisis, in which, though no fighting occurred, the death toll exacted by the process of mine laying and clearing ran into three figures). Other negative consequences included significant economic costs and political strains.

Fourth, every crisis demonstrated a high degree of interdependence between/among the players involved. Had any

of the crises not been controlled quite soon, the consequences could well have been catastrophic. Fifth, the management of the crisis could occur only through cooperation between/among the relevant players. Even in the political confrontations discussed here, the belligerents cooperated in two ways by consistently avoiding escalation from crisis to war; and explicitly by talking to each other and attempting to come to agreements on resolving the crisis (with varying degrees of success). In the non-traditional cases, cooperation was less problematic and more immediately overt. And sixth, the management of each crisis involved efforts (again, with varying degrees of success) to set in place a system of institutionalized control to prevent the recurrence of crisis. There was a difference, however, between the two broad categories of crisis. The traditional crises were followed by prolonged processes of negotiation toward resolution (the India-Pakistan relationship is still in the early stage of such a dialogue), whereas the process worked much faster in the non-traditional category.

The chief lesson for policy makers is that prevention is better than cure. It makes eminently more sense to avert crises than to manage them. In the realm of traditional security, no one wants war any more. The cost of war has shot up so high that any prolonged bout of armed combat is likely to bring on severe economic and political crisis, as has been evident in all the armed conflicts of the past quarter of a century. Moreover, in the age of globalization, every state has to be globally competitive in attracting investment. War or the recurrent threat of it
provides an inhospitable climate for investment. On the non-traditional side, crises such as the crippling of financial systems and the outbreak of serious pandemics similarly portend seriously damaging effects. The key responses to the growing threat of crisis are anticipation and cooperation.

With regard to anticipation, as a recent recommendation advises, it is necessary to follow five cardinal rules for a “mindful infrastructure” 37):

1. Preoccupation with failure - treating even small lapses as potentially systemic;
2. Reluctance to simplify - continuous awareness of complexities and nuances in a complex system so as to ensure analytical depth and rigour in understanding what is happening;
3. Sensitivity to process - the “big picture” is important, but situational awareness (and wider implications) even more so;
4. Commitment to resilience - readiness to adjust and to make early adjustments (by implication, political adjustments as well) are vital
5. Deference to expertise - let those engaged in operations decide how to prevent, manage and resolve crises because they understand technical issues best.

Here, with respect to the last point, we may adapt what is essentially an organizational perspective to our broader concerns here. Political will is more fundamental than technical expertise since it is the source of policy support, organised response, funding allocation, and oversight. This is true for both traditional and non-traditional security, but especially so for the former. To reiterate an old saw: war is best not left to the generals.

To conclude, in the age of increasingly complex interdependence, the management of crises lies not so much in reacting to events as in preparing advance responses for them by way of attitudes and institutions to minimise their scope for occurring in the first place. Once they do occur, flexible response systems are required and, for worst cases, disaster management systems that can respond quickly. Above all, no nation is an island and inter-state cooperation is essential. This in turn requires political leadership and will.