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**Regional security partnership: the concept, model, practice,
and a preliminary comparative scheme**

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Abstract. Building cooperative security systems at the regional level is new practice in international politics. The concept of regional security partnership is presented here, and a descriptive model is applied to the study of the practice. Five cases of regional security partnership in Europe, East Asia, Central Asia, Africa, and the EU Neighbourhood are separately analyzed. Similarity and difference of the five cases are assessed in the concluding section, in which a comparative scheme is presented.

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In international studies and practice, military alliance is viewed as the most important form of international cooperation created by governments in order to deal with threats to the security of the states. However, military alliance is only one of the forms of security cooperation among states. Data analysis proves that the number of military alliances and their size (i.e., the average number of members) have been changing over the last two centuries. Such a change has taken regular form, and such regularity has been explained by military alliance formation as dependent on system polarity and great power competition (Attinà, 2003a and 2004). System polarity influences security cooperation because, in addition to other factors, great powers encourage the formation of military alliances either to consolidate or change and subvert the existing political order. Security cooperation is influenced also by culture because values and norms about security, stability and peace make national governments inclined to change the forms of military cooperation in harmony with the prevailing values and norms.

The analysis of current security cooperation presented in this paper takes into account both the current state of global power competition, that is, no polarized competition between the American hegemonic power and other great powers; and the predominant security culture of the current international system, that is, the emergence of cooperative and comprehensive security principles together with the traditional principles of national military doctrines based on the so-called security dilemma. More precisely, the paper calls attention on a specific form of security cooperation of current international politics, named *regional security partnership*, which is consistent with those characters of the world system.

The paper is organized as it follows. The first two sections introduce the concept and model of regional security partnership. The other sections present the practice of regional security partnership in different areas of the contemporary world, namely in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Last section presents a preliminary comparative scheme for the analysis of the five cases here examined.

The study of regional security systems

Interesting changes are taking place in the practice of security cooperation in contemporary international system. The most important feature of these changes is the simultaneous declining prominence of military alliances and rising importance of composite security frameworks at the region level.

The number of defense pacts was very high in the after-World War Two period, but decreased ten years later because many states reacted to the pressure of the great powers to create opposite security alignments. Close to the present time, the number of defense pacts increased again but remained lower than that of the Cold War period. Furthermore, the percentage number of defense pact members on the total number of the states of the international system has been decreasing quite steadily for the last thirty-five years. As mentioned above, the current de-polarization of the international system has affected the cooperative behavior of the governments in the field of security. Briefly, they are less inclined to form military alliances. However, the average size of military alliances doubled after 1955, when the most intense period of the Cold War came to an end, and did not change much in the following years (Attinà, 2003a and 2004). One can conclude that membership in large cooperation networks is preferred by the governments that want to increase their state security. The present study investigates whether such a preference is present also in other forms of security cooperation of the present phase of world politics of great power de-polarization and rising cooperative security culture.

The assumption of this study is that security practices change over time. New measures are invented, experimented and gradually consolidated into security practices, and added to the existing ones in agreement with new security culture features. In addition to self-defense and national military power, various forms of security cooperation agreements (such as neutrality pacts, *ententes*, coalitions, written defense pacts, and formal defense alliances) have been invented in the history of international relations. A recent study suggests that security cooperation is primary concern also of the current practice of trade agreements at the region level (Powers, 2004). In fact, this study maintains that regional security agreements are taking side along with other forms of security cooperation in the function of providing security to states. In such a perspective, the present study forwards the study of security

regionalism by reviewing some selected cases, and presenting a preliminary comparative scheme.

Though different approaches already emerged, security regionalism is not a wide developed field of study. Buzan introduced the concept of regional security complexes to define conflict relations in geographic groups of states, but failed to recognize the existence of cooperation patterns and trends at the region level (Buzan, 1991). Others classified regions as zones of peace and zones of war according to the level of conflict and security among the states of different areas (Singer and Wildavsky, 1993; Kakowicz, 1998) and the relation between conflict, integration and democracy (Gleditsch, 2002). Adler and Barnett (1998) adopted Karl W. Deutsch's concept of security community, and, largely relying on the study of the formation of the European security system following the so-called Helsinki Process, updated Deutsch's approach according to constructivism in order to propose a model for the analysis of current security-building processes in regions. Also the security culture school relies on constructivism to study regional security cooperation in Asia and Europe (Krause, 1993). Constructivism (Bilgin, 2005) and traditional analysis (Maoz, Landau, Malz, 2004) have been applied to study security cooperation in the Middle East. The perspective of the present study is close to the security community perspective, but adopts the concept of regional security partnership, and proposes a descriptive model apt to catch the features of a large number of current security cooperation processes.

Defining the object: regional security partnership

Regional security partnership is the security arrangement of an international region that originates from inter-governmental consensus to cooperate on dealing with security threats and the enhancement of stability and peace in the region by making use of different types of agreements, instruments and mechanisms such as formal security treaties, international organizations, joint action agreements, trade and other economic agreements, multilateral dialogue processes, peace and stability pacts including confidence-building measures, measures of preventive diplomacy, and measures dealing with the domestic environment.

All the countries of a region and in some cases also extra regional powers compose a regional security partnership, which is based on one or few fundamental

agreements and a number of related operative agreements. In the fundamental agreement(s), the partner governments declare principles of peaceful relations, commitment to avoid power confrontation, sources of conflict and instability in the region, and the resolve to use cooperation for the management of regional security problems. In the fundamental agreement(s), governments agree also to create mechanisms needed to implement co-operation and keep the common security problems under control. They sign operative agreements also to create multilateral offices and new international organizations to deal with perceived security threats. In addition to the existing ones, these offices and organizations fill the function of warning about security threats, and carry out collective actions and policies. In such a condition, a certain extent of security de-nationalization and, in the long-term, also the constitution of a security community can emerge from the establishment of a regional security partnership.

From this concept, a model of regional security partnership has been defined for analytical purposes (see Attinà, 2003a and 2005). It assumes that governments come to the agreement of co-managing security problems when (a) the countries of the region are aware of reciprocal interdependence and common dependence on transnational problems, and (b) international relations in the region are not polarized by great power competition. In such situation, governments put in place instruments and mechanisms of security co-management inspired by the principles of cooperative security - that is, based on exchange of information, dialogue, collaboration, and the pooling of resources - and comprehensive security – that is, dealing with various domestic and international security issues, and making use of different resources, including economic, military, technical, and cultural ones. Briefly, the security arrangement of the region is an arrangement of co-management, and all the countries contribute as partners within a composite framework of institutions and practices. As long as a security partnership develops, the security cultures and policies of the countries of the region will come closer to one another, and a security community can emerge. But, the current state of

security cooperation in concerned regions does not fill the conditions for the transformation of the existing practices into security communities¹.

The main features of the model of the regional security partnership can be summarized as it follows.

Pre-conditions

- awareness of the countries of the region for interdependence and the local effects of global problems,
- relaxed or no power competition in the international politics of the region and restrained use of violence in international conflicts.

Conditions

- consensus of the governments of the region on building security cooperation by reducing violence in international relations, improving international and domestic stability, and promoting peace and economic growth,
- no opposite military alliances.

Structures and means

- written fundamental agreements,
- operative agreements, multilateral offices and international organizations,
- a set of international and internal measures and mechanisms of conflict management and prevention,
- involvement of extra-regional powers (very probable).

Consequences

- reduction of the gap between the security doctrines and cultures of the countries of the region,
- increase of security and defence policy de-nationalization,
- development of security community (possible).

The formulation of the model is largely based on the knowledge of the European case, which is the case of security partnership that came to life as the first in time, and presents the most developed set of instruments and practices. More precisely, the model has been constructed having in mind the European security partnership of the early Nineties. At that time, European international relations were unstable, and the European governments decided to overcome the uncertainties of the time by strengthening the positive elements of security cooperation that had been developed by themselves in the Helsinki Process, i.e. the principles of cooperative, comprehensive,

¹ A security community is a group of contiguous countries bound together by high level of transaction and communication flows and the perception of being a community. This “we-feeling” is essential to establish institutions for peaceful conflict resolution that is specific of a security community (Deutsch et al. 1957).

and progressive security². However, other projects and initiatives in East Asia on the initiative of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Central Asia on the initiative of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Africa on the initiative of the African Union (namely, the Peace and Security Council of the AU), are further cases of security co-operation that can be analyzed with the model of regional security partnership. The European Union policy aimed at creating an area of stability on her borders - i.e., the European Neighbourhood Policy – is also a case of regional cooperation that can be fruitfully analysed with the tool-kit of the regional security partnership model. A further security cooperation process to mention as potential case of regional security partnership, is taking place in North-East Asia. This case is not here analysed, but a study (Yu, 2004) convincingly demonstrates that multilateral cooperation is taking over bilateral cooperative relations in promoting security management in the region. As far as the on-going six-party talks over the North Korean nuclear issue leads to an institution, and the countries involved in the region (North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States) make further steps towards establishing instruments for the co-management of the local security issues, a cooperative security system could emerge in Northeast Asia.

In the following chapters, the main aspects of the five selected cases are separately presented, and, subsequently, a brief comparative analysis is suggested by using a matrix of the five cases by the fifteen items that are the main features of the security partnership model.

The European security partnership

The European security partnership developed after the launching of the Helsinki Process in the early 1970s, and matured in the 1990s. It includes all the states of Europe and the non-European members of the OSCE, i.e. the United States and Canada. The five former Soviet countries of Central Asia and OSCE members (i.e., Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) can hardly be considered as current members of the European security system. Though formal members of OSCE, the security policies of these countries are tightly linked to the

² The Helsinki Process led to the creation of the CSCE (Conference on security and cooperation in Europe), later OSCE (Organisation of security and cooperation in Europe)

Central Asia security complex. At the exception of Turkmenistan, they are members of the Central Asia security partnership project, which is presented later in this analysis. However, the membership of these countries in the OSCE can be seen as a case of overlapping of regional security arrangements, which is worth of future analysis³.

The fundamental agreements of the European security partnership are the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Charter of Paris for A New Europe. Many operative agreements have been signed within the Helsinki Process, which gave birth to the offices, mechanisms and activities of OCSE, former CSCE. The OSCE structure includes the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and a good number of Mission and other Field Activities in member countries (Gheballi and Warner, 2001; Hopmann, 2003). The OSCE security mechanisms have been added to a number of security structures, organisations, and agreements signed by the European governments during the past fifty years. All these agreements and structures complement one another in carrying out the European security partnership. In sum, they have the function of operative agreements for the implementation of the governmental consensus solemnly proclaimed in the above mentioned fundamental agreements (Attinà and Repucci, 2004). This is the case of NATO and NATO's Eastern projection mechanisms known as the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the EU's mechanisms for military and civilian crisis management created within the European security and defence policy or ESDP, and the EU's economic cooperation programs (such as Phare, Tacis, Cards, etc.) that have been launched in the Nineties to sustain the peaceful transition of the Eastern and Central European countries from communist to liberal-capitalist regimes.

The European security partnership has been put to a test during the late Nineties, namely in the former Soviet states and the Balkans. Performance has not been always good, sometimes deceptive. However, the role of the security mechanisms was important in several cases in which the direct intervention of peacekeeping forces helped to restrain violence, and multilateral relief and rehabilitation programmes helped to restore civilian conditions in countries ravaged by internal violence.

³ On current OSCE action in this countries see Freire, 2005.

Since the late Nineties, the European security partnership has been challenged by new worldwide conditions of *in-security*. Accordingly, the European governments' preference for cooperative and comprehensive security has been tempered by the so-called new discourse of threat and danger. To cope with the problem of containing the policies of governments perceived as aggressive, irrational and unreceptive of cooperative mechanisms, and the problem of dealing with the threats of terrorism, the European governments have been increasingly concerned with upgrading their military preparedness. This policy change has many aspects including the development of the ESDP for worldwide use and, in some cases, the enhancement of the Euro-Atlantic strategic preponderance as condition for international stability and peace. These aspects make today's European countries' security policies somewhat different from the regional security partnership of the Nineties.

The East Asia security partnership

In the present analysis, the East Asia region includes the countries of Southern East Asia and China. In this region, the building of security partnership started in 1994, at the initiative of the governments of the ASEAN countries, and is centred on the ASEAN Regional Forum, ARF. ASEAN is party in all the initiatives for building security cooperation and dialogue in the East Asia region. Its leading role in regional security cooperation is widely recognized (See Kivimaki, 2001; Jin, 2004; Men, 2004; Narine, 2002).

The creation of ASEAN in 1967 was conceived as against perceived or imagined threats from Maoist China under the cultural revolution. Later, it has been recognized as an effective instrument for enhancing economic and security cooperation in the region. Today, ASEAN consists of ten countries – Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Vietnam, Lao, Cambodia and Myanmar (former Burma). They have great differences in ideology, political system, culture, religion, economic development, and also security problems and concern. Vietnam and Lao are socialist governed states; Myanmar is run by a military regime; Cambodia, a former communist country, has now a mixed political structure. The political structure of the remaining countries is labelled as Asian democracy.

Created to foster economic growth and also support peace and stability in the region, in 1971 ASEAN proposed a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality. In 1987, Indonesia launched the idea of a denuclearized zone in South–East Asia. Both proposals were difficult to implement at that time. Lastly, the project of the ASEAN Regional Forum was launched in 1993. A group of dialogue partners was invited to join the initiative. It included the United States, Canada, the European Union, Australia, Japan, Russia, China, India, and South Korea. Today, ARF counts with 23 members.

The security partnership model applies to ARF-centred East Asia for two main reasons. First, the Forum received by the consensus of the member parties the mission to act as a broker of peace in the region by issuing proposals concerning confidence building measures in order to prevent escalation of possible conflicts and promote negotiations between parties. The consensus of the founding parties is clearly stated in the First ARF Chairman's Statement, issued on 1994 in Bangkok. For this reason, this document is the fundamental agreement of the East Asia regional partnership. It defines ARF objectives as fostering constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest, and making significant contributions towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the region so that resort to military means would not occur.

Second, in harmony with the regional security partnership model, the member countries acknowledge two basic premises: (a) domestic and international factors are interconnected in bringing security and peace to the region; and (b) interdependence of the political, economic and social dimension must be taken into due account to enhance individual and common security. Such orientations became clear with the end of the Cold War when the activity of ARF was concentrated on proposals such as exchange of military information and observers, attendance at military manoeuvres and dissemination of information about them, participation of the members in the UN register for conventional arms, creation of regional training centre for peacekeeping operations, and sponsoring of seminars on specific security questions and educations.

However, neither operative agreements have been signed nor permanent offices and new measures and institutions created in the region. At present, only generic confidence building measures, loose preventive diplomacy, and traditional practices of

peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict resolution without proper mechanism are the pillars of the East Asia security partnership. In order to prevent resurgence of conflicts, only some traditional measures have been envisaged for the domestic environment, such as providing humanitarian assistance, implementing human resources development, and reducing tensions through education and reconciliation. It would be important that new measures are introduced concerning, for example, the development of an early warning system, which would be useful both to prevent escalation of international conflicts and improve regional cooperation against terrorism and trans-national crimes. In fact, the need of common action against non-traditional forms of in-security is strong in the East Asia region, which has been so far abstaining from developing cooperation in such area of problems.

Serious obstacles to furthering the security partnership building process exist in the sovereignty area, that is, the Taiwan issue which involves also the United States, and the China-Japan territorial dispute on the Diaoyou Islands. However, the governments of the region are active in strengthening regional economic cooperation with a view of establishing a regional free trade area. Economic cooperation and security cooperation are explicitly seen as complementing each other: consolidation of economic ties among the countries of the region will enhance mutual understanding, eliminate differences, build reciprocal confidence, and promote security cooperation (see, for example, Jin, 2004; Men, 2004). Such an economic strategy to international security, which played a decisive role in Europe, could be the major characteristics of the "Asia-Pacific way" to regional security partnership. As a matter of fact, many economic cooperation initiatives are flowering in the Asia Pacific area at the present time.

The Central Asia security partnership

Central Asia is commonly seen as including the countries of the Caspian and Caucasian areas plus China and Russia. Recent developments in the Caucasian area, however, demonstrate that Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have no important economic and political relations with the countries on the Eastern border, while the foreign relations of these countries are increasingly attracted towards the area on the Western border, the Black Sea and Europe. Also, in terms of security issues, the three

Caucasian countries have high concern for developments in the wider area surrounding the Black Sea. Therefore, in the present analysis, Central Asia is the area centred on the countries east and north of the Caspian Sea.

The meeting of the representatives of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, in Shanghai, on April 1996, is the founding event of the process that can give life to the Central Asia security partnership. The meeting launched the Shanghai Five Initiative, which turned into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on June 15, 2001. Uzbekistan's admission, on that occasion, brought the number of SCO member states to six. Lastly, in June 2002, the heads of SCO member states signed the SCO Charter. This document is regarded here as the fundamental agreement of the Central Asia security partnership. It contains the SCO purposes and principles, organizational structure, form of operation, and cooperation orientation (Allison and Lena, 2001; Attinà and Zhu, 2001; Bakshi, 2001). In July 2005, India, Iran, and Pakistan added to Mongolia as observer countries to SCO.

The main purposes of the Organisation are defined as strengthening mutual trust, good-neighbourliness, and friendship among the member states; developing cooperation in various fields (such as politics, economy and trade, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transportation, and environmental protection); maintaining regional peace, security, and stability; and promoting the creation of a new international political and economic order. The principles of cooperation are defined as: respect for the Charter of the United Nations, and the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the member states; refusal of the use and threat of use of force; settlement of all questions through consultations and all forms of dialogue.

Immediately after the 1996 meeting, two operative agreements - the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions, and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions - were signed. They contain practical measures of cooperation aimed at advancing confidence-building in the international domain (Moiseyev, 1999; Yuan, 1998). At the 1998 Almaty summit, the Shanghai Five leaders expressed concern for shifting interest from confidence building measures for the management of international conflict, to cooperation measures for dealing with religious extremism, ethnic separatism, and terrorism, named as "the three forces" in the SCO jargon. The new orientation on threats to domestic security resulted in the signature of

two operative agreements aimed at building cooperation for dealing with trans-national aspects of threats to domestic security. In fact, on June 2001, they signed the Shanghai Convention Against Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, and one year later the Agreement on Counter-Terrorism Regional Structure. In August 2003, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan held the SCO's first and, for the time being, only anti-terrorism exercises.

The signature of operative agreements has been sided with the creation of cooperation institutions. In January 2004, the SCO's secretariat office was inaugurated in Beijing, and the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) opened in Tashkent. The Secretariat is the standing executive organ that provides organizational and technical support to implement SCO documents. The Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure coordinates SCO activities against terrorism, separatism and extremism. Beside these structures, the institutional structure of SCO consists of permanent organs, and the meeting mechanism. The highest organ is the Council of Heads of State, which meets yearly. It identifies the priority areas and basic directions of SCO activities, and decides on matters of internal set-up and operation, and on cooperation with other countries and international organizations. The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs prepares the regular meeting of the Council of Heads of State, which is held once a year, adopts the SCO budgets, and decides on cooperation in specific areas. The Conference of Heads of Agencies is another organ conceived to resolve specific questions of cooperation in specialized areas. At present, the meeting mechanism has been established for attorneys (or procurators) general, and ministers of defence, economy, commerce, transportation and culture as well as heads of law-enforcement, security, emergency and disaster-relief agencies. Lastly, the Council of National Coordinators is the management organ of routine activities.

The creation of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure made definitively clear that cracking down on international terrorism, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal migration and other forms of cross-border crimes is regarded by the member governments as the most urgent task of the Organisation. It remains to be seen whether this first step, inspired by the need presently concerning SCO countries the most, will be the engine of the "Central-Asian way" for building an effective regional security partnership.

The two powers of the region, China and Russia, share interest in combating terrorism (against the East Turkistan Islamic Movement and in Chechnya, respectively), illicit weapons trafficking and other forms of trans-border crime. They have also important stakes in the development of the region's economic cooperation. Furthermore, China and Russia face very similar problems and challenges in the domestic environment such as stabilising and mastering the market, neutralising the social cleavages, and balancing the interest groups that cluster around the state in the current phase of change. Briefly, each state is aware of the risks that internal instability within either country could badly effect the security of the other. For this reason, each state seems disposed to assist the self-strengthening process of the other (Olcott, 2000). In harmony with this, on 2003, the two governments framed their bilateral relationship in the so-called Strategic cooperative partnership.

As to the international dimension, the prospects of cooperation are quite good because China and Russia view themselves as being in a 10-20 year window where social and economic self-strengthening take precedence over strategic politics (Kerr, 2005). As Wang (2005) remarks, the two countries have similar strategic thinking and similar strategic goals to promote a multi-polar world, and become one of the poles and an influential global power in the future. Lastly, a good and friendly relationship with Russia can ensure China peace and stability in the north and northwest regions, so as to concentrate itself on dealing with any eventualities across the Taiwan Strait. At the same time, both states have divergent and even competing interests that could lead to conflict if mutual suspicions of each other's long-term political, military, and economic objectives is not contained by strategic reassurance and mechanisms for addressing disputes. At present, however, the political elites of Russia and China believe that whatever geopolitical challenges each country may face it will not come from the other as long as their present partnership endures. This attitude is exemplified by the successful negotiation on the demarcation of the common border that initiated with the above mentioned agreements in the Nineties, and has been completed in June 2005 with the signature of the definitive agreement. In such a perspective, SCO appears as a venture aimed at consolidating the principle of geopolitical stability, enlarging it from the relations between the two major regional countries to the multilateral relations dimension by including the remaining countries of Central Asia. In conclusion, there are

good reasons to see SCO change into the first multilateral organisation of a regional security partnership that, sided by existing and new security agreements, will embed Central Asian relations in a comprehensive security system.

In the economic sector, the advantage of cooperation between the two countries is huge. Russia has abundant natural resources and is potentially a big market. For this reason, Russia is of great significance to China's "go global" strategy and projects of revitalizing the North-East and west regions. Also Russia's shortage of labour can become an opportunity for China's export of labours service (see Wang, 2005). On the reverse side of the coin, two pitfalls are present. First, the level of economic relations between the countries of the region is very low. The fast growing Chinese economy can increase economic flows, and overcome the restrictions of the present condition. But such opportunity depends on the second problem, the domestic conditions of the partner countries. Some positive changes in economic development rates are countered by persisting restrictive factors (Shi, 2005). Domestic political instability, authoritarianism, repression, and internal political unrest afflict Central Asian countries, possibly at the exception of Kazakhstan, and, as recent violence in Uzbekistan demonstrates, can turn the region into a crisis area and a fertile ground for fundamentalist movements and terrorist activities.

Lastly, it is to remind that the United States have strong concern in the region. Over the last fifteen years, the American armed forces readjusted their allocation in Euro-Asia by retreating in the west, and advancing in the east. To counter terrorism, the United States increased military presence in Asia. US military bases are located in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. China has not negative attitudes towards the anti-terrorism stance of American military presence in Central Asia (see, for example, Jin, 2004), but dislikes United States become a major player of the regional security system. Russia attitude, instead, is negative towards United States presence in Central Asia. According to Shi (2005), an *all-round competition between US and Russia in Central Asia* currently exists. It is worth to remind that the final declaration of the last meeting of the Council of Heads of State in Astana, July 5, 2005, after saying "we will support the international coalition, which is carrying out anti-terror campaign in Afghanistan", called for a timetable for the US-led anti-terror coalition troops to withdraw from the region "as the active military phase in the anti-terror operation in Afghanistan is nearing

completion". Though United States' involvement in the SCO process is unconceivable, it can be expected that Washington's influence in the region will not have destabilizing effects if the United States accept to play the constructive and moderate role that an external partner is expected to play in a regional security partnership. As the regional security partnership model maintains, and the two cases of Europe and East Asia security system demonstrate, external actors can contribute to shaping and sustain the rules of regional security cooperation.

The *projected* Africa security partnership

The African Union (AU) organization has recently produced the project of the largest regional security partnership. Its membership is as large as the 53 states of the organisation. In the past, AU took some initiatives to foster the development of security cooperation among the member countries, and carried out peacekeeping operations. However, the signature of the *Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, on 9 July 2002, is the true founding stone of the formal process for building a new security system, and can be regarded as the fundamental agreement of the projected Africa regional security partnership. The process is in its very early stage, and has to prove how much able is to put into practice the Protocol.

The document established the Peace and Security Council as the standing decision-making organ for prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. The Council is mandated to create instruments for putting in place a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient responses to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. These instruments would make the Council able to perform the specific functions of the main institution of a regional security partnership, such as promotion of peace, security and stability; exercise of early warning and preventive diplomacy; execution of peace-making, including the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation and enquiry; implementation of peace support operations and intervention; execution of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction; humanitarian action and disaster management.

A network of offices and structures, including the Commission, a Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System, an African Standby Force, and a Special Fund, will support the action of the Peace and Security Council.

The seriousness of international and domestic conflicts in Africa, and the fragility of the economic and political conditions of many African states authorize cautiousness about the early operation of this project, and restraint on assessing its potentialities. Aware of the hugeness of such an endeavour, in July 2003, AU requested the European Union to fund peace support and peacekeeping operations. The European Union responded creating the 'African Peace Facility'. Such an early recourse to the involvement of an external actor in the security building process is to take into positive account, but also to assess once it has been put in place.

The *EU-planned* security partnership in the EU-neighbouring area

On 2003, the European Union launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), a programme aimed at developing a zone of prosperity and a *ring of friends* with whom the EU can enjoy close, peaceful and co-operative relations. EU neighbouring countries are defined as the countries on the EU borders who are not present and future candidates to formal EU membership. Namely, they are four Eastern European countries (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova), ten Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and the Palestinian Authority), and three Caucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). These countries have not been invited to join into a formal structure together with the EU institutions and member countries, but received the EU's proposal to be partners in the European cooperation programme that the EU policy-makers defined, made known, redefined, and probably will update as many times as circumstances demand.

Neighbouring countries are invited to take political and legislative measures to enhance economic integration and liberalization, and measures to promote human rights, cultural cooperation and mutual understanding. Besides these measures, which are coherent with the European view of regional security, EU's neighbouring countries are explicitly invited to make steps towards regional security co-management and participate in initiatives aimed at improving conflict prevention and crisis management,

and strengthening co-operation to prevent and combat common security threats. In such a perspective, it is apparent that the Neighbourhood Policy approach to security consists of the classical concepts of the European regional security partnership of the last thirty years, that is, comprehensive security conceived as interdependence between the political, socio-economic, environmental, cultural and military dimension, and cooperative security conceived as the constant exercise of dialogue and exchange of information, knowledge and expertise.

ENP is not an EU brand new programme towards neighbouring countries. In fact, it has incorporated the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) programme, also known as the Barcelona Process. In 1995, the European Union and the representatives of 12 Mediterranean countries convened in the Spanish town to launch that programme aimed at putting Euro-Mediterranean relations on a new path with the explicit goal of creating a free trade area in 2010 (Attinà, 2003b; Attinà and Stavridis, 2001). Differently from ENP, EMP has an institutional structure, which has not been cancelled by the EMP incorporation into the ENP. Furthermore, it developed a regional security cooperation project that underwent difficult and ineffective negotiation. In the late Nineties, the project reached the stage of discussing the draft of a Mediterranean Charter of Peace and Stability. But negotiation was confronted with obstacles such as the derailment of the Middle East Peace Process, the post-9/11 anti-terrorism policies of the Western governments, and the Iraq and post-Iraqi war problems. Finally, it has been abandoned also on acknowledgement of the persisting security culture divide between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

It is acknowledged that the EU initiative for building comprehensive cooperation, including cooperative security, in the wide region formed by all the European, Northern Africa, South-Western Caucasian, and Middle Eastern countries, however ambitious it is, has not been formally rejected by any government of the involved countries. It must be said also that the EU has made clear that this project is a flexible, diversified, and multidimensional one. The EU conduct also made apparent that dialogue and negotiations for building common security mechanisms are not on the frontline of the process, but heavily depend on achievements in other cooperation dimensions, i.e. on the reforms needed to increasingly harmonize the economic markets and, eventually, the political systems of all the partner countries.

Comparison and conclusions

The governments of Europe, East Asia, Central Asia, and Africa have put in place their own cooperation process with the goal of building a stable framework of common security. Important differences and significant similarities exist between all these processes. The fact that such processes are contemporary to one another, and deal with new practices of security cooperation suggests that security politics is undergoing a change in current world system, and this may reflect other changes in international politics, namely in great power competition and the attitudes of governments towards the management of security issues. On such observation, a model has been proposed for the study of such practices and processes moving from the empirical observation of some recognized cases.

In Table 1, a preliminary comparison of the five cases is proposed by assessing the level of correspondence of each case to the main characteristics of the model of regional security partnership.

Table 1: A comparison of the five case of regional security partnership

	Europe	East Asia	Central Asia	Africa	EU-planned Neighbourhood
Pre-conditions					
Awareness for interdependence	High	High	High	High	High
Restrained use of violence	High	High	Medium	Medium/low	Medium but absent in the M.E.
Relaxed or no power competition	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Unclear
Conditions					
Consensus on reducing international violence, improving international stability, and promoting peace	High	High	High	Medium	Medium/low
Consensus on improving domestic stability	High	High	High	Medium	Diversified
Consensus on improving economic growth	High	High	High	High	High
No system of opposite military alliances	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, at the exception of M.E.

Structures and means					
Written fundamental agreement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only among EU and the Med partners
Operative agreements and multilateral offices	Yes	No	Some	No	No
Measures and mechanisms for international conflict management and prevention	Yes	No	On border areas	No	No
Measures and mechanisms for domestic conflict management and prevention	Yes	No	On terrorism	No	No
Involvement of extra-regional powers	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Consequences					
Reduction of security culture difference	Yes	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Increase of defence de-nationalization	Among EU and NATO members	No	No	No	No
Development of security community	Possible	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

As shown in the Table, the regions are not on the same foot at the starting line of the *pre-condition*. In all official declarations, awareness for interdependence is recognized as the moving reason for opening negotiations on security cooperation. However, violence is present in international relations and domestic politics in Africa. In East and Central Asia great power competition has not been overcome, but is moderately relaxed. In the latter, the proclaimed strategic cooperative relationship between China and Russia signals the good will of the parties to overcome previous competitive relations. In the former, China-Japan and China-US relations still have the taste of power politics competition. On the whole, Central and East Asia needs further dialogue in order to make intergovernmental consensus a consolidated feature of regional security cooperation. Lastly, the EU-planned neighbourhood region lacks the pre-condition of the restrained use of violence because of conflict in the Middle East and the Southern Caucasus. At the same time, it is hard to define the state of the

condition of relaxed or no power competition. On one hand, the Israeli-Palestine conflict is hiding the true nature of the United States presence in the region. Is it for the contingent objective of the security of Israel? or for the long term objective of ensuring the hegemonic power interests in the region? If the latter case is true, power politics competition could be avoided by bringing the United States in the number of the members of the security partnership building-process, an objective neglected and so far even opposed by the European and Arab governments in the negotiations on security building in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the Israeli-Palestine conflict is hiding also the potentialities of power politics among Arab countries that would undermine regional security building efforts. Furthermore, on the East European side of the EU neighbourhood area, one must take into account the dilemma of how much the Russian political class and society are sincerely committed to play down traditional power politics in the region.

In terms of *conditions*, the items of the Table show a better state in all the five processes. This is not contradictory with the negative state of the *pre-conditions* features. In fact, although not all pre-conditions are positively filled, as the security community model would request, governments decide to create co-management security mechanisms because they acknowledge the advantages of restraining from violence, and attempt to build security partnership. However, such strategy will be successful only on condition that also the requisites of *pre-conditions* are met in a non-distant future.

In the meantime, the difficulties of fulfilling the *pre-conditions* requisites are reflected in the state of the implementation of the consensus, that is in the items of the third sector of the Table, which concern the capability of putting on the ground the structures and instruments that make the regional security partnership operative. On this regard, at the exception of Europe, and to a small extent of Central Asia in the specific areas of borders and terrorism, the remaining regions are in rather poor conditions.

In conclusion, de-polarized world politics allows a large extent of dynamism at the region level in the area of security cooperation. Interdependence is the reason for developing regional cooperation, especially on condition that global problems concern the countries of the region in rather similar ways. Furthermore, cooperative and comprehensive security is increasingly accepted in the security culture of many states and societies because government have developed awareness for multidimensional

strategies and policies, i.e. for intervening simultaneously on the social, economic, and political aspects of common problems.

In Europe, all these changes came to the surface a bit earlier than in other regions, and the existing circumstances made possible to form intergovernmental consensus on a wide range of instruments for the co-management of security problems. For this reason, the model of regional security partnership has been built by taking into account the most developed case of regional security partnership at the time of its highest performance, i.e., the European security system in the early Nineties. In such a perspective, although in other parts of the world, local circumstances influenced the governments in organizing different security cooperation arrangements, the model must not be considered as Europe-biased, but as an empirical model that can serve the function of guiding analysis. Finally, the model raises good research, as for example questions on what factors and circumstances explain the peculiarities of each case and the differences among the cases, and what future development can be expected from the circumstances existing in each region.

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