

Building a Security Community in Northeast Asia: Options and Challenges

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Abstract

Northeast Asia remains fraught with numerous security challenges. Not only is it where two of the world's Nuclear Weapons States (Russia and China) are found, territorial and maritime disputes between Northeast Asian states also abound. However, it is the division of the Korean peninsula into two states (the North and the South) along with the denuclearization of the peninsula that are most cumbersome. This essay examines the challenges and prospects of creating a security community in Northeast Asia in the context of the current security challenges. The Deutschian concept of security community is used in this essay to provide a starting point to develop a security community in the region. The essay argues that the presence or availability of a multilateral security dialogue mechanism is the key step in facilitating the creation of a security community in Northeast Asia. This security community is attained when the Northeast Asian states would no longer be expecting or preparing to use military force in dealing with each other or when there is real assurance that they would rather settle their disputes in another way rather than fighting.

Key Words: security community, denuclearization, Korean peninsula, security dialogue mechanism, six-party talks

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Introduction

Northeast Asia has diverse security challenges.¹ The region is where two of the established Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) of Russia and China are located and it is also where the last vestiges of the Cold War remain. The Korean peninsula remains divided despite the end of the Cold War almost two decades ago.

The sub-region waits to see how the relationship between North Korea and South Korea will evolve and conclude. In addition, it is also confronted with the issue of how China and Taiwan will eventually relate to each other. Alongside these political divisions are the historical issues of how Northeast Asian states will deal with Tokyo in regard to their past experience with Imperial Japan. Northeast Asian countries have yet to resolve historical antagonisms. Past visits to the Yasukuni Shrine dedicated to the soldiers who have fought for the Japanese emperor by past Japanese Prime Ministers have triggered contempt and disdain from South Korea and China whose citizens were among the victims of Japanese atrocities.

Other disagreements in Northeast Asia include the territorial and maritime disputes between Northeast Asian states. Japan is in conflict over the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands, Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and the Northern Territories with South Korea, China, and Russia respectively. China further finds itself embroiled in a territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea with five other claimants that include Taiwan. Meanwhile in the Korean peninsula, there is conflict over the

¹-Kadir Ayhan, *Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism from South Korea's Perspective*, 2008 [PDF document], http://www.bilgesam.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=129:northeast-asia-peace-and-security-mechanism-from-south-koreas-perspective&catid=92:analizler-uzakdogu&Itemid=137.

Northern Limit Line on the Yellow/West Sea.²

Northeast Asia is a very diverse region. Contending political systems has also been adopted and has further contributed to the regional diversity such as the strange hybrid that are capitalism and socialism.³ The prevailing disparate conditions have been exacerbated by increased military spending among countries in the region amid an overall decline in global military spending. In the 1990s, “Japan’s real military spending jumped by 20 percent, South Korea’s by 25 percent, and Taiwan’s by 80 percent, while North Korea’s by 11 percent. [Except for North Korea], these states’ spending may be in line with the economic growth they have been experiencing [although the figures are] quite [high] especially in light of the general decline in world military expenditures since the end of the Cold War.”⁴

Given the “fundamentally distrustful, conflict-ridden, and power and interest-centric” situation in Northeast Asia,⁵ the development of a security community among Northeast Asian states including the U.S. would be a most welcome development. Yet, creating such sense of security community among the states in Northeast Asia would be difficult

²- See Samuel S. Kim, “North Korea and Northeast Asia in World Politics” in Samuel S. Kim and Tai Hwan Lee (eds.), *North Korea and Northeast Asia* (England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2002), pp. 3-58.

³- Shi Yuanhua, *A Brief Analysis of the Security Environment of Northeast Asia*, <http://www.peacedepot.org/theme/toyota/Shi%20Yuanhua.htm>.

⁴- Hun Park, “Paradigms and Fallacies: Rethinking Northeast Asian Security and Its Implications for Korea” (Prepared for Delivery at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 2006) [PDF document], http://www.all-academic.com/one/apsa/apsa06/index.php?cmd=apsa06_search&offset=0&limit=5&multi_search_search_mode=publication&multi_search_publication_fulltext_mod=fulltext&textfield_submit=true&search_module=multi_search&search=Search&search_field=title_idx&fulltext_search=Paradigms+and+Fallacies%3A+Rethinking+Northeast+Asian+Security+and+Its+Implications+for+Korea.

⁵- *Ibid.*

given the issues outlined above. Of note is that the foremost concerns in Northeast Asia (at least in the near future) are the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and relatedly the reunification of the two Koreas. It is in this context that this essay focuses on the issue of the denuclearization of the peninsula and the related issue of the North and South division of Korea.

This essay examines the challenges and prospects of creating a security community in Northeast Asia. The essay utilizes the Deutschian concept of a security community as the beginning for a new theoretical exposition on the security community and reviews how such an idea has evolved. It argues several directions toward developing a sense of security community in the Northeast Asian region and highlights both the attendant challenges as well as the prospects in fostering a security community. The argument that the presence or availability of a multilateral security dialogue mechanism is emphasized as the first step toward the creation of a security community in Northeast Asia.

Conceptualizing “Security Community”

The idea of a ‘security community’ goes above and beyond being merely a military alliance, where each state in that alliance can rest assured that its allies will come to its aid when attacked by a common or perceived threat. The preparation for war and declaration of war by allies is an option that is used to deal with external threats to the group. A security community compels members not to prepare for war against each other; in addition, the members of a community come together

and espouse a “peaceful change” in resolving common social problems. Instead of the usual employment of large-scale physical forces and violence, institutionalized procedures take the place of war as a means to resolve interstate conflict.⁶ A “sense of community” is also adopted wherein states have “mutual sympathy and loyalties; of ‘we-feeling,’ trust, and mutual consideration; [and] of partial identification in terms of self-images and interests.”⁷ It is then believed that a “sense of community” and “peaceful change” results in the absence of interstate war or even the decrease of its likelihood in a particular region.⁸

Deutsch et. al. are credited for the illustration of how security communities are formed, arguing that security communities come in two types: (1) amalgamated and (2) pluralistic.⁹ Amalgamated security communities, such as the U.S., are created when a common government is formed by two or more previously independent political units while pluralistic security communities have as members formally independent states.¹⁰ While pluralistic security community members retain the distinction as individual sovereign states, “members share the same identity, values and intentions.”¹¹ Furthermore, the “members enjoy many direct contacts and interactions between each other; and such a community shows some reciprocity that is produced in face-to-face

⁶- Karl W. Deutsch, *Security Communities, International Politics and Foreign Policy* (NY: New York Free Press, 1961), p. 98.

⁷- Andrej Tusicisny, “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2007) [PDF document], p. 429.

⁸- *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁹- *Ibid.*

¹⁰- *Ibid.*

¹¹- Wang Jiangli, “Security Community” in the context of non-traditional security [PDF document], <http://www.rsis-ntsasia.org/activities/fellowship/2007/wjl's%20paper.pdf>.

contacts and manifested through somewhat long-term benefits and altruism.”¹²

Deutsch advances two fundamental conditions that may facilitate the formation of a security community. First, participating political units or governments must have, “the capacity... to respond to each other’s needs, messages and actions quickly, adequately, and without resort to violence,” which is fostered through membership in “international organizations that favors mutual communication and consultation.”¹³ The utility of international organizations is that they encourage interaction between states, discover new areas of mutual interest, shape norms of state behavior, and construct a common identity with shared values among the states involved.¹⁴ All of these serve as viable alternatives to war.

Second is the compatibility of political decision-making such as political ideology.¹⁵ As Adler and Barnett stress, “a security community has ‘shared identities, values and meanings.’”¹⁶ Australia may serve as an example as it is considered part of the Western security community.

Values that states could share have to be identified and based on the “importance on the domestic politics of the participating units.”¹⁷ Although a practical consideration, geographic proximity is not neces-

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Andrej Tusicisny, “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2007) [PDF document], <http://ips.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/28/4/425>, pp. 426, 428.

¹⁴ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Security Communities* as cited in Tusicisny, “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously,” p. 428.

¹⁵ See Tusicisny, “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously.”

¹⁶ *Op cit.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

sarily a prerequisite of security community building. A state may consider itself belonging to a security community as long as the two conditions previously discussed are present.

It is important to remember that “Deutsch et al. did not consider the compatibility of values to be necessary for the creation of security communities.”¹⁸ Until there is an absence of mutual needs and mutual concessions, “even a high degree of similarity in institutions and of likemindedness in outlooks would not produce any particular progress toward either integration or amalgamation.”¹⁹ It seems that “the crucial issue leading to the emergence of a pluralistic security community is not cultural similarity [but] ‘the increasing unattractiveness and improbability of war among the political units concerned.’”²⁰

A security community results when, “there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.”²¹ Rosemary Foot suggests that a security community is composed of “states that do not expect or prepare for the use of military force in their relations with each other.”²² However, the improbability of interstate wars in recent years does not automatically mean that a security community has emerged. As long as

¹⁸ – *Ibid.*

¹⁹ – *Ibid.*

²⁰ – *Ibid.*

²¹ – Deutsch, K. et. al. (1957), “Political Community and the North Atlantic Area” as cited in Joseph M. Grieco, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism” in David A. Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 139.

²² – Rosemary Foot, “Pacific Asia: The Development of Pacific Dialogue” in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrel (eds.), *Regionalism in World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 233.

“large-scale violence is still seen as a possible means of regime change, national liberation, or oppression of political opponents,” any region adopting the security community framework may face difficulties.²³

Amitav Acharya adds another dimension to understanding the concept of a security community. For Acharya, “the core concept of a security community views international relationships as a course of learning from each other and forming a common identity driven by bargaining, interaction and socialization, [thus], international relationships can be re-conceptualized as ‘a world society of a political community, including social groups, the course of political communications, compulsory measures, and the submission to the most popular practices.’”²⁴ The concept of security community is no longer exclusive to the realm of military affairs and hard politics. Wang Jiangli states, “researches about security communities have extended from NATO to other regions in the West, and then to the regions outside the West in terms of ranges; and as with security goals and contents, they have been spread from simple military security or political security to the fields of economy, trade, and even to the peaceful transformation in the international community.”²⁵ In addition, non-traditional security concerns have gradually been brought within the ambit of the discourse on security community.

The concept of security community (while originally within the purview of the discourse on integration) has evolved. From being based on a military alliance, to an emphasis on peaceful change and sense of

²³- Tusicisny, “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously,” p. 427.

²⁴- See Amitav Acharya A., *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2001).

²⁵- Wang Jiangli, “Security Community” in the context of non-traditional security [PDF document], <http://www.rsis-ntsasia.org/activities/fellowship/2007/wjl's%20paper.pdf>.

community, until the most recent adoption of non-traditional security matters within the sphere of the security community discourse.

The Troubled Region of the Korean Peninsula

The most difficult challenge confronting Northeast Asia outlined in the introductory section of this essay is the division of the Korean peninsula into two states. This division dates back to 1945 after the Second World War, when the Soviet Union and the U.S. came to an agreement to divide the peninsula temporarily along the 38th parallel. The Soviet Union took charge of the Northern part and the U.S. administered the Southern portion. Three years later, the two Koreas established their respective governments with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DRPK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) becoming the official names of North Korea and South Korea respectively in August and September of 1948. Both Koreas wanted to reunify the peninsula based on their respective system of government, a war resulted in 1950 when the DPRK with a superior military and the tacit support of the Soviet Union and China moved into the demarcation line and attacked the South, which eventually came to be defended by the U.S. and other allied countries. While a truce eventually came to be forged through what is now known as the Armistice Agreement of 1953, the conflict never ended.²⁶

With the support of the U.S. and Japan, South Korea managed to

²⁶-See Wayne Kirkbride, *North Korea's Undeclared War: 1953* (New Jersey: Hollym International Corporation, 1994).

rebuild its economy with increased production and exports that dramatically improved working and living conditions. On the other hand, North Korea has stagnated to remain in relative isolation and refused to associate itself with the economic reforms of either China or the Soviet Union.²⁷ South Korea is known for economic prosperity, while North Korea is associated with famine and nuclear weapons.

The North Korean economy is in shambles. When the Soviet Union started to collapse in the late 1980s, the North Korean economy went into a steep decline, culminating in one of the worst famines of the 20th century. As many as one million people (or 5 percent of the population) perished in the mid-1990s because of the famine.²⁸ Worse, the adoption of a military-first politics by the North Korean regime resulted in allocating resources in favor of the military amid growing economic difficulties for the rest of the population.

North Korea is now known for its nuclear weapons program, although its nuclear program was initially undertaken in the 1970s in order to make the country's energy self-reliant given the oil crisis at that time. There is another reason why the DPRK has been fixated in pursuing nuclear weapons development out of the nuclear program; North Korea believes that nuclear weapons are the only effective means of deterring an attack from the U.S.²⁹

²⁷-See "North Korea," *World Factbook*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html#econ>.

²⁸-Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, "A Security and Peace Mechanism for Northeast Asia: The Economic Dimension," Peterson Institute for International Economics Policy Brief No. PB08-4 (April 2008), <http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/08030HaggardNoland.pdf>.

²⁹-Benjamin Friedman, "Fact Sheet: North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program," Center for Defense Information, <http://www.cdi.org/nuclear/nk-fact-sheet.cfm>.

In the 1970s, North Korea established a civilian 5-megawatt reactor in Yongbyon and placed it under the supervision and monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as an apparent assurance that it would not be utilized for weapons development. However, the North soon started constructing another reactor that could be utilized for weapons production. Pyongyang was prodded to become a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, the agreement binds signatories to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and guarantees that those countries that pursue nuclear programs for peaceful civilian use will be assisted by those with nuclear technology and material.

There have been occasions when North Korea did not provide IAEA inspectors access to nuclear facilities or rejected inspections despite North Korea having signed agreements with the IAEA to ensure that it complies with safeguards and safety standards, as well as assure the international community that it would allow inspectors from the IAEA to monitor nuclear activities. The Agreed Framework between North Korea and the U.S. was signed after the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994 and the transfer of power to Kim Jong-il. With this framework, Washington would provide Pyongyang with new reactors and fuel in exchange for North Korea agreeing not to withdraw from signed treaties and agreements.³⁰ The Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO) was formed to provide energy alternatives for North Korea. However, North Korea continued to test ballistic missiles. To complicate the issue, Pyongyang admitted in 2002 to a “clandestine program to enrich uranium

³⁰- Daniel B. Poneman, Joel S. Wit and Robert L. Gallucci, *Going Critical: The First North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2004), p. 4.

for nuclear weapons.”³¹

Pyongyang declared that it would “restart plutonium production” and “eject the IAEA inspectors” after the U.S. terminated the Agreed Framework of 1994 and suspended oil shipments to North Korea.³² In 2003, the DPRK withdrew from the NPT and informed the world of a nuclear weapons and a delivery system; in addition to ability to demonstrate the capability of the weapons system.

The North Korean nuclear weapons development program places constant attention on Northeast Asia and compounds the issue of a divided Korea. This attention is the result of the “hard-line” stance North Korea has with regard to its nuclear weapons program and how it relates with South Korea and a U.S. foreign policy that is involved in issues related to the sub-region.

The stability of the sub-region rests on the fragility of North Korean efforts to become a nuclear power. Regional insecurity is exacerbated by the incessant build-up of the nuclear arsenal of Pyongyang. Reports about its newly changed constitution assert a “military-first” stance, which means that North Korea still believes that “economic recovery is more likely if the country maintains its nuclear arsenal rather than cashing it in for economic assistance and integration into the global economy.”³³ North Korea can only focus on economic recovery after it is secured militarily.³⁴

Compounding the economic difficulties of North Korea and

³¹—“Nuclear Weapons Program,” <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke?>

³²—Friedman, “Fact Sheet: North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons Program.”

³³—International Crisis Group, *North Korea: Getting Back to Talks*, 2009, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6163&t=1>; and Jill McGivering, “North Korea constitution bolsters Kim,” *BBC News*, September 29, 2009, [http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8279830.stm?ad=1](http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8279830.stm?ad=1).

³⁴—*Ibid.*

concerns over its nuclear weapons program is the uncertainty of the current regime retaining power. Observers note that Kim Jong-il's failing health and eventual succession, "could unleash instability, or it could result in a much more belligerent or isolated military regime. The transfer of power after Kim Jong-il is far less clear than when his father died in 1994."³⁵ The indicators of an impending succession have become manifested as Pyongyang is seen to have taken a hard-line stance.³⁶ It is reported that Kim Jong-il has appointed his son Kim Jong-un as successor. Some observers speculate that "the recent nuclear test and the April 5 attempted satellite launch are being attributed to Kim Jong-un [and] elements of the state apparatus are being mobilized to upgrade his credentials."³⁷

The Prospects of Security Community Building in Northeast Asia

It is easy for some observers to dismiss the idea of creating a sense of security community in the sub-region in regard to the Northeast Asian situation. Creating such a security community may be difficult, but not impossible. The first key step would be the establishment of a multilateral security dialogue mechanism underpinned by good bilateral relations among the Northeast Asian states, including the U.S., which while geographically not a part of the sub-region is a de facto politically part of the sub-region given its political and military

³⁵ - *Ibid.*

³⁶ - *Ibid.*

³⁷ - *Ibid.*

involvement in regional issues and affairs.

A positive development is that cooperation (particularly in regard to the economy) among the Northeast Asian states has been taking place. Japan and China became each other's largest trading partners even overtaking the U.S. South Korean exports and investment capital have China as the biggest market with total bilateral trade amounting to \$168.3 billion (of which \$91.4 billion are exports).³⁸ At the end of 2008, cumulative total of South Korean investments in China amounted to \$37.6 billion.³⁹ These states have also begun to promote cooperation among their central banks and finance ministries through the 2001 Chiang Mai Agreement.⁴⁰

Cultural cooperation has also been fostered through exchange programs, specifically student exchanges between Japan, South Korea, and China. In 2002, Japan and South Korea co-hosted the Soccer World Cup and even agreed to declare 2002 as "The Year of Japan-ROK National Exchange."⁴¹ In the same year, the Japan-Korea Cultural Exchange Council was also founded "to discuss plans to enhance cultural and artistic exchange between the two countries."⁴² During the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Agreement in 1999, the Takarazuka Revue Company performed in Beijing and Shanghai while the Chinese Film Week took place in

³⁸–Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Republic of Korea, http://www.mofat.go.kr/english/regions/asia/20070730/1_275.jsp?

³⁹–*Ibid.*

⁴⁰–See Park, "Paradigms and Fallacies: Rethinking Northeast Asian Security and Its Implications for Korea."

⁴¹–Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-Republic of Korea relations," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/index.html>.

⁴²–*Ibid.*

Tokyo.⁴³ These developments manifest a growing cooperation by states in the region that go beyond economic relations.

In the area of political relations that address issues pertaining to the Korean peninsula, the key states have previously demonstrated the possibility of sitting together in a political dialogue. Although the Six-Party Talks may have failed to produce the results most observers wanted and expected, the dialogue manifests the possibility of bringing the six parties together. What originally started as tripartite talks among North Korea, the U.S., and China initially focused on negotiating a potential solution to the regional nuclear crisis, the talks have evolved to espouse the resolution of other regional issues such as territorial and maritime disputes and possibly the unification of the Korean peninsula.⁴⁴

Creating a security community within Northeast Asia has to proceed through a confluence of bilateral and multilateral efforts. The bilateral relationship between the various states in Northeast Asia could serve as the foundation for developing a security community in the region. The bilateral relationship needs to be complemented by a multilateral security dialogue mechanism as the key step toward the creation of a sense of security community among the Northeast Asian states that includes the U.S.

Other sub-regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) could provide a set

⁴³- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-China relations," <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/index.html>.

⁴⁴- Koen De Ceuster and Jan Melissen, *Ending the North Korean Nuclear Crisis: Six Parties, Six Perspectives* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'), http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2008/20081022_cdsp_korean_nuclear_crisis.pdf.

of practices that could contribute to security community building in Northeast Asia. Although the security environment in the Northeast Asian sub-region is different from that of Southeast Asia or Europe, ASEAN and the EU could provide a model or a set of best practices that could serve as the takeoff point for Northeast Asia.

The creation of a security community in Northeast Asia could be undertaken through what other scholars have deemed concentric circles of interaction.⁴⁵ At the innermost circle are the bilateral relations between the Northeast Asian states. Next to this circle is the multilateral interaction among the parties to the Six-Party Talks. Beyond this circle is the multilateral relationship of the Northeast Asian states through regional institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. Being concentric circles, these modes of interaction among the Northeast Asian states are not exclusive of each other but often overlap.

Bilateralism Being the Foundation of Security Community Building

A security community, almost by default, is founded on the principle of multilateralism, for a community presupposes the involvement of several actors. However, a good bilateral relationship between any two prospective members of a community provides a positive start. Bilateral relations could serve as the foundation for a stable multilateral relationship in the future in consideration of the unique circumstances

⁴⁵ The concept of “concentric circles” is borrowed from Carolina G. Hernandez, “ASEAN Post-Cold War Security Strategy for the Asia-Pacific,” *Kasarinlan*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (First Quarter 1995), pp. 63-66.

underpinning the relationship of any two states in the Northeast Asian region.

Bilateralism refers to a principle for coordinating relations between two states based on the “belief that state behavior is best carried out through one-on-one relationships.”⁴⁶ Given the security interests of states, their capabilities and the context within which they operate, they see that dyadic relationships will be the most effective. It is important to note the exclusionary character of bilateral relationships. States separate their relationship with another actor such that State A would prefer to sustain *State A-State B* and *State A-State C* relationship rather than to form a *State A-State B-State C* arrangement.

It is ironic that the bilateral relationship of the U.S. (which as previously pointed out is politically part of Northeast Asia although not within the geographic footprint of the region) with Northeast Asian states seems to be in a good state; with the exception of North Korea whose bilateral relationship with the U.S. has been strained more than ever.

The bilateral relations between the U.S. and Japan as well as between the U.S. and South Korea have been generally stable, particularly because Japan and South Korea are military allies of the U.S. As the Japanese Ambassador to ASEAN Yoshinori Katori stated, “the bilateral security alliance that the U.S. maintains with Japan is the foundation of Japanese and American relations.”⁴⁷ While multilateral security dialogue is welcome

⁴⁶ - This discussion is based the conceptualization of bilateralism by Brian L. Job in his “Multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific Region.” Paper presented at the 4th Workshop on the Bilateral System of Alliances in the Changing Environment of the Asia-Pacific, Tokyo, Japan, June 10-12, 1996.

⁴⁷ - Dialogue between the author and Ambassador Yoshinori Katori, Japanese Ambassador to ASEAN held at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines on October 22, 2009.

given the transnational character of security challenges facing the region, Japan still puts prime value on the security alliance with the U.S.⁴⁸ Of course, as in any bilateral relationship, problems have been encountered but generally, the bilateral relations are in good shape.

The prospects of a U.S.-China partnership are also positive. A once confrontational and adversarial U.S.-China bilateral relationship has apparently improved particularly after September 11, 2001.⁴⁹ Recently, the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Russia is also positive. The agreement between U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to further reduce their nuclear warheads is considered a manifestation of the relatively stable relationship of the two powers.

However, there remains territorial issues such as the dispute over The Liancourt Rocks between South Korea and Japan and over seabed resource extraction (e.g. the Chinese-Japanese disagreements over Chunxiao and other gas and oil fields in the East China Sea).⁵⁰ Moreover, they have not also been able to address historical antagonisms. When the Japanese government approved history textbooks that disregarded Japanese war crimes, South Koreans and the Chinese were dismayed and protested

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Eric A. Mcvadon, "Northeast Asian Security: A New Paradigm," *China Brief*, Vol. 8, Issue No. 16 (2008), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=5100](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5100).

⁵⁰ In February 2005, for instance, the Japanese Ambassador to South Korea while in Seoul publicly claimed Dokdo as part of Japan's territory, calling it Takeshima. In March 2005, Shimane prefecture on Japan's west coast adopted an ordinance designating February 22 as "Takeshima Day" to mark the date in 1905 when Japan first claimed the islets in the midst of Japan's usurpation of Korean sovereignty. The claim and the ordinance infuriated South Koreans, and the South Korean government fulminated that the acts were tantamount to an invasion. See Mcvadon, "Northeast Asian Security: A New Paradigm."

arguing that this simply manifests the attempt by Japan to let the younger generation forget about the atrocities of Japan during World War II.⁵¹

It is also disturbing that a third state could see robust bilateral relations between two states as a threat to national security thereby straining an already brittle security environment in Northeast Asia. A clear example would be how China considers national security threatened by a renewed U.S.-Japan alliance, especially with regard to the Taiwan issue.⁵² Suspicion also lingers as to the possibility of Japan's old militarism re-emerging as Tokyo becomes more active in joining the U.S. global war on terrorism.⁵³ As Hun Joo Park notes,

Historically-embedded tensions, rivalries and nationalist passions would rise further in Northeast Asia especially if the United States as the only superpower is viewed as encouraging Japanese militarization in the process of enforcing its increasingly unilateral foreign policies.⁵⁴

The most problematic bilateral relationship is between that of the U.S. and North Korea. Washington's bilateral dealings with Pyongyang have deteriorated despite the seeming progress in the bilateral relationship of the U.S. and the other Northeast Asian states. The U.S., for example, demands that North Korea end its nuclear weapons program equating this with the thrust of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. An impasse has resulted because North Korea argues that the

⁵¹- See Park, "Paradigms and Fallacies: Rethinking Northeast Asian Security and Its Implications for Korea."

⁵²- *Ibid.*

⁵³- *Ibid.*

⁵⁴- *Ibid.*

U.S. should remove nuclear weapons directly aimed at North Korea claiming this as the first step toward the denuclearization of the peninsula.

The bilateral dyads have been developing at different rates and have not led to sub-regional confidence-building measures.⁵⁵ This shows that while bilateral relations among the Northeast Asian states may have helped in improving the security situation, they are not enough. They need to be integrated into a wider multilateral set-up.⁵⁶

Going Multilateral

Bilateralism is not enough, even though it is considered as the foundation for creating a security community. While good bilateral relations may pave the way for the creation of a security community in the region, the difficulties in the bilateral relations between Northeast Asian states still necessitate moving on the multilateral track. This of course rests on the assumption that bilateral problems will not totally obstruct multilateral cooperation on the one hand and that multilateralism would at the minimum induce the parties involved to set their respective set of bilateral problems on the sidelines in the meantime. As Romberg points out, “none of the interstate relations exist in isolation from each other and [thus] ‘properly weaving them together greatly enhances the prospects of peace.’”⁵⁷

Multilateralism could be seen in a nominal or substantive way. Nominally, multilateralism simply refers to any arrangement involving

⁵⁵– Akiko Fukushima, “Multilateral Confidence-Building Measures in Northeast Asia: Receding or Emerging?” <http://www.stimson.org/japan/pdf/fukushima.pdf>.

⁵⁶– *Ibid.*

⁵⁷– Alan D. Romberg, “Rethinking Northeast Asia,” 2008 [PDF document], http://www.stimson.org/Presidential_Inbox_2009/ARomberg_Inbox_FINAL.pdf.

three or more parties.⁵⁸ Substantively, multilateralism involves the “multiplication of channels of dialogue on ... issues at both governmental and non-governmental levels.”⁵⁹ Multilateralism can also be conceived as a “belief that activities ought to be organized on a universal basis” at least for the group concerned.⁶⁰ On a more substantive level, multilateralism is “an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct: that is, principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence.”⁶¹

The first step toward multilateralism is the revival of the Six-Party Talks. It is the closest to a multilateral security dialogue mechanism the region has had. Its revival is believed to jump-start the creation of a dialogue mechanism that could contribute toward the creation of a security community in the Northeast Asian region. The Joint Statement on the proposed Northeast Asian Security Mechanism was a result of the Fourth Round of the talks on September 19, 2005.⁶² The Joint

⁵⁸- Anne-Marie Burley, “Regulating the World: Multilateralism, International Law, and the Projection of the New Deal Regulatory State” in Helen Milner and John Gerard Ruggie (eds.), *Multilateralism Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 126-127.

⁵⁹- See Jing-dong Yuan, *Conditional Multilateralism: Chinese Views on Order and Regional Security* (Center for International and Security Studies, York University, 1996), p. 1.

⁶⁰- James A. Caporaso, “International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations” in Helen Milner and John Gerard Ruggie (eds.), *Multilateralism Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 55.

⁶¹- John Gerard Ruggie, “Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution” in Helen Milner and John Gerard Ruggie (eds.), *Multilateralism Matters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 11.

⁶²- See Ayhan, K., *Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism from South Korea’s Perspective*, 2008.

Statement's Fourth Article specifically states that the parties are committed to seek "ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia" for "lasting peace and stability" of the region.⁶³ In addition, two years after the statement was issued (on February 13, 2007), and the first tangible action toward the goal of having a security mechanism was realized with the establishment of the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism Working Group.⁶⁴ Prospects have also increased since North Koreans have expressed the intent to rejoin the talks after declaring that the negotiations were finished in April 2009.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, this would still be dependent on bilateral talks with the U.S.⁶⁶

The seeming presence of support both from within and outside the region is important to note. China has espoused a multilateral approach in regard to promoting regional security.⁶⁷ This is a stark contrast to the policy of adopting a bilateral approach in dealing with the disputes in the South China Sea. It has actually been consistent in expressing hope that "North Korea will adopt a responsible attitude ... and come back to resolving the issue through dialogue and consultation instead of taking any actions that may further escalate or worsen the situation."⁶⁸ China is perceived as the only Northeast Asian state to exercise influence over North Korea and has actually been prodded

⁶³ - *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ - *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ - "North Korea may return to talks," *BBC Online*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8291882.stm>.

⁶⁶ - *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ - Pang Zhongying, "Beijing seeks multilateral Northeast Asian security," *Asia Times Online*, April 9, 2004. Retrieved from <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FD09Ad03.html>.

⁶⁸ - Mcvadon, "Northeast Asian Security: A New Paradigm."

to exercise its influence in getting Pyongyang show more substantive support for the talks. Russia, Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. have urged North Korea to accommodate the Six-Party Talks.⁶⁹ Outside, Australia has proactively asked for a more Northeast Asian-orientated regional security forum.⁷⁰

One major constraint of the Six-Party Talks in serving as the platform for creating a security community in the region is the apparent tendency of the forum to overlook the necessity of establishing a peace regime through the reunification of the Korean peninsula. This is created by the fact that the focus of the talks is actually to discourage or prevent North Korea from furthering its ambition to become a nuclear power.⁷¹ Secondly, while the Six-Party Talks could serve as a start for a security mechanism in the region, it may confine the parties involved in merely dealing with non-proliferation issues, making it the sole agendum of the talks in utter disregard of the other equally important issues in the region. Ironically, while preventing North Korea from furthering its nuclear weapons program is the main thrust of the Six-Party Talks, the talks have not been effective in convincing North Korea to forego its nuclear program. This is because Pyongyang believes that nuclear weapons are “the only thing that can provide it with some semblance of deterrence against the military might of the world’s only superpower [The U.S.].”⁷²

⁶⁹-Gennady Chufrin, “The North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” 2005, <http://northkorea.ssrc.org/Chufrin/>.

⁷⁰-Australia calls for Northeast Asian security, 2008. Retrieved from <http://www.abc.net.au/ra/programguide/stories/200804/s2205827.htm>.

⁷¹-R. Michael Schiffer, “Envisioning a Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism,” http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/publications/other/US-ROK_chpt_3.pdf.

⁷²-See Park, “Paradigms and Fallacies: Rethinking Northeast Asian Security and Its Im-

Beyond the involvement of the six parties involved in the Six-Party Talks, the participation of states outside of the geographical area of Northeast Asia but still within the wider Asia-Pacific region may help keep the momentum as far as the process of creating a security dialogue mechanism in Northeast Asia is concerned. Take the case of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is the most criticized for simply being a forum for security dialogue, is actually indicative of the efforts by Asia-Pacific states to promote political and security dialogue in the region. All the parties to the Six-Party Talks are also part of the ARF. This includes North Korea whose joining the ARF in 2000 was seen as a sign of a change of position by Pyongyang in regard to international engagements, from one of self-imposed isolation to a gradual participation in international affairs.

Northeast Asian states can possibly learn from their Southeast Asian neighbors on how to keep the sub-region peaceful and become engaged in security dialogue despite the presence of bilateral disputes among ASEAN members. Despite the presence of disputes between its members, these issues have been buried through ASEAN. For ASEAN, it appears that a security community has actually been developed, particularly when one subscribes to the argument that a security community results when none of the parties involved is actually preparing to go to war against each other. A security community among the Southeast Asian states has resulted through ASEAN despite the mistrust that prevails among its members.

While there may be doubts as to the applicability of the ASEAN

lications for Korea.”

model as far as Northeast Asia is concerned, the path ASEAN has taken is worthy of consideration considering that the animosity among Northeast Asian states that may be stronger compared to what the Southeast Asian states have. ASEAN as a security community was accomplished despite the prevailing mistrust between various societal groups and little peaceful interaction between them.⁷³ In the meantime, ASEAN itself (despite the challenges that it faces in promoting Southeast Asian security) could serve as a facilitator of dialogues among Northeast Asian states. The case of the ASEAN Plus Three could be an example of where ASEAN in effect is the hub that brings together Northeast Asian states of Japan, South Korea, and China for economic cooperation.

The initial three members have increased the level of their co-operation by strengthening their trilateral ties in the three-nation summit held in Beijing in October 2009. Leaders from South Korea, China, and Japan were led, respectively, by South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, and Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama reviewed past accomplishments and discussed future joint efforts to combat financial crises, climate change, and pursue the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. As Premier Wen Jiabao stressed, “it [the summit] is essential for mutual political trust and promoting mutual cooperation for the development of Asia.”⁷⁴ The three states (through their officials) have agreed to work toward the early resumption of the Six-Party Talks “so as to safeguard peace and stability in Northeast Asia.”⁷⁵

⁷³ See Tusicisny, “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously,” pp. 425-449.

⁷⁴ “China, Japan, South Korea deepen trilateral cooperation,” CCTV.com. Retrieved from <http://english.cctv.com/program/news-hour/20091010/102701.shtml>.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The way forward for Northeast Asians is to develop a sense of security community through a security dialogue mechanism in the sub-region. Given the complexity of the issues, the process may be cumbersome; yet is possible. While bilateral relations remain the foundation of inter-state relations among countries in Northeast Asia including the U.S., a multilateral security dialogue mechanism would be most useful. The revival of the Six-Party Talks would serve as the multilateral security dialogue and assist in developing a sense of security community in the Northeast Asian sub-region. It is noted that while the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a pivotal point in the Northeast Asian security discourse, there are other longstanding issues that need to be simultaneously and immediately addressed.

Northeast Asia can learn from the Southeast Asian project of security community building, noting that creating such a community is still possible amid contending bilateral issues among community members. In the meantime, while the ASEAN experience cannot be replicated in Northeast Asia, ASEAN could help facilitate the process of security community building in Northeast Asia by serving as the hub for promoting a security dialogue in Northeast Asia.

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