The Six-Party Talks: Opportunity or Obstacle?

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I. The Argument

The long-term goal of the United States and of the nations of Northeast Asia should be the development of a security community. As defined by the American scholar, Karl Deutsch, a security community is a system of nations within which there is real confidence that force will not be used as a way of settling disputes in their mutual relations. A security community thus defined is not unlike Kant's federation of peace except that Kant placed more reliance on shared democratic value systems. That condition may not exist in Northeast Asia for decades.

An institutionalized method of acting together is useful in the development of a security community, because it instills habits of cooperation. In Northeast Asia, cooperative actions should take place across a broad front to promote regional security and cooperation. Long-term geopolitical trends argue for this, as do shorter-term considerations arising out of the current nuclear crisis in North Korea.

If and when a multilateral mechanism is created to promote security and cooperation, it should eventually include, at least, China, Japan,

North and South Korea, Russia and the United States. Its tasks would be to:

- promote the peaceful resolution of disputes
- resolve misunderstandings and prevent miscalculations
- encourage transparency in the mutual relations of the member states
- enhance regional economic cooperation within the larger framework of the global economy
- raise the living standards of all the people living in the area to the levels of the most advanced nations
- promote the free movement of people, information, and ideas among their nations
- foster an improved mutual understanding of each other's histories and cultures

New organizations do not arise spontaneously. Someone in a leadership position has to decide that a problem or a challenge can best be handled with the aid of an international organization. An opportunity may now be at hand to begin building a multilateral structure since relationships among nations are more fluid than in the recent past. The peace and security of Northeast Asia will depend on whether this opportunity is seized.

The best solution would be to expand the six-party talks to broader subjects after an early and successful resolution of the nuclear issue. But those talks have not prospered and as things stand now, a resolution of the Korean nuclear predicament stands in the way of any expeditious building of a security community. The nuclear issue is urgent and a failure to resolve it would have very serious consequences, not only in Northeast Asia, but globally. No artificially-imposed delay should be allowed to disrupt whatever progress may still be possible in the six-party talks. But it is equally clear that the five nations that have tried to persuade North Korea to roll back its nuclear weapons program would benefit greatly from cooperating together in a systematic way on a wide variety of issues, with or without North Korea. They have not been inclined to do so prior to solving the North Korean

issue — and there are good arguments for that position. But if they fail, a nuclear-armed North Korea may, perversely, be a polarizing rather than a unifying force among them. In any case, to allow North Korea a veto over constructive cooperation among the five nations is not even in North Korea's interests, not to mention their own. And thus the five should consider the possibility of creating an organizational structure in parallel with the six-party talks, dedicated to promoting peace and security in the region. The five parties should be prepared to proceed without North Korea although that might prove not to be necessary.

Whether or not a new organizational structure can be created, cooperative actions should include a network of "a la carte" programs in Northeast Asia, some of which already exist. These should proceed without delay and should include transport and energy infrastructure development. A multilateral overlay, perhaps in the form of a coordinating committee, would be a useful reminder of the long-term goal. Jean Monnet's vision of a united Europe, after all, not just economic efficiency, inspired the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community.

The statecraft of this generation will be judged by whether this moment in time is used to create the basis for an enduring peace in Northeast Asia. The United States, in particular, is in a position to take the lead in this enterprise. Its patterns of relations with all the countries of the region have not been irrevocably shaped by the experience of centuries of history. Its diplomacy works best through steadiness and long-term commitments. And the United States has much to gain from consolidating its presence in Northeast Asia. But this must be a shared effort and much of the energy must come from within the region itself.

II. A Solution in Search of a Problem?

The idea of a regional forum for security and cooperation has been on the list of "things to do" in Northeast Asia for several years. Through its diplomacy, the Republic of Korea, with a remarkable degree of consistency, has kept the idea alive in the face of indifference

and skepticism. From time to time, but unfortunately at different times, officials from Japan, Russia, China, and the United States have spoken favorably about the idea of a Northeast Asia regional forum. Their interest has waxed and waned and no concerted effort has ever been launched to bring the idea to life. With the exception of South Korea, national leaders have invested little time and no political capital in organizing a security community in Northeast Asia. And so today, unlike any other part of the globe, Northeast Asia has no permanent organization dedicated to the promotion of peace and progress in that specific region. It is no coincidence that remnants of the Cold War and attitudes forged in the even more distant days of World War II still shape inter-state relations in Northeast Asia.

Two seminal North-South Korean agreements concluded in 1991-92 might have changed the course of history. One required the Korean Peninsula to be free of nuclear weapons. The other, the "Basic Agreement," provided a blueprint and mechanisms for what might have developed into enduring peace on the peninsula. But the goals laid out in those agreements, tragically for the world, were never realized. And these were not the only failed attempts to rid Northeast Asia of the legacy of the past. Powerful currents of animosity persist in the region and cause the idea of "community" to seem naive and unreal.

The tradition of a dominant nation and an ingrained habit of dealing bilaterally with other nations on really sensitive matters also have worked against proposals to establish a multilateral forum to deal with important issues of security and cooperation. The US-Japan and the US-Republic of Korea security treaties, the twin cornerstones of those nations' security policies in Northeast Asia, responded well to Cold War threats. The United States provided a nuclear umbrella for Japan and South Korea and powerful U.S. air, ground, and naval forces were there to deter any serious military threats. China and Russia were absorbed with other issues and North Korea did not count for much, except when a crisis erupted. All the interesting international action involved relations between the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. The absence of a Japan-Soviet Union peace treaty to end World War II and the failure to replace the 1953 Korean War Armistice Agreement with a permanent settlement did not seem to matter very

much.

On the economic front, for a long time the United States was Japan's number one trading partner. South Korea's trade relations with Japan and the United States were key drivers of that nation's growth. Soviet and later Russian, trade in the region grew very slowly. The economic infrastructure in the region by and large was not a matter of international interest. Transportation networks were mainly national concerns, as were oil and gas pipelines. Asia-wide economic mechanisms, like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), served to encourage the opening of markets and free trade.

In this environment, why should national leaders see a need for multinational machinery to help them manage their affairs in the region? The idea of a permanent organization to promote security and cooperation sounded good in principle, but there was no generally perceived need for such a thing and certainly no grass roots demand for it.

III. A Hinge Time

As one looks at Northeast Asia today, the familiar picture does not look so familiar after all. China has reentered the world of Northeast Asia in a big way. China is now Japan's largest trading partner and has assumed diplomatic leadership in searching for an answer to the long-lasting North Korean nuclear crisis, a security issue of major interest to the whole world. Russia's Far East has awakened economically and is doing business with both Japan and China. South Korea has passed through a generational change in its leadership. The global economy is having a major impact on the patterns of relationships. Except for North Korea, the region is well integrated into the global economy.

Today, with the possible exception of the United States, no one nation exercises the clear and unchallenged prerogative of being the dominant power. China aspires to that position but has not yet achieved it. A jockeying for position among the five nations already has begun and balance-of-power politics is becoming a more complex

game. Japan seems to be edging even closer to the United States to balance the growing power of China. South Korea and China have strong differences of view on some things but they share a similar perspective on others, including their sensitivities regarding the management of North Korean issues. Russia is maneuvering to protect its interests vis-a-vis both China and Japan. China is steadily building up its military strength while quietly staking out a more high-profile posture regionally and globally. Tensions rise and fall over the issue of Taiwan, periodically putting China at odds with Japan and the United States.

Is the United States still the mover and shaker in Northeast Asia that it became as early as the 1940s or 50s? Yes, but the "voice from the castle" has diminished in comparison with what it once was even though what it says still carries great weight. Both South Korea and Japan, for example, have obliged the Bush administration by sending troops to Iraq. However, the United States is reducing its military presence in South Korea. It is encouraging Japan to take on additional roles and missions within the US-Japan security alliance. Political and security issues between China and the United States continue to cause frictions while on the crucial economic front, US-China trade and financial problems are multiplying. All three of the major economic powers of Northeast Asia — China, Japan, and South Korea — are talking about diversifying their currency holdings, looking to have relatively fewer dollars in their reserves. All three are thinking about a trade bloc of Asian nations.

IV. Managing International Systems

The scene is somewhat reminiscent of the 19th century, in the sense of a system in which nations that have the capacity to wield great power in one form or another struggle to maximize their freedom of action and hedge against future threats from their neighbors. It recalls Theodore Roosevelt's support for Japan in the early 20th century to block Russian imperial expansion in Asia. The famous, and short-lived, Concert of Europe after the Napoleonic wars was another

answer to how nations accommodate to one another in such a fluid system. Its purpose was to smooth off the rough edges of their relationships and, where possible, to harmonize their policies. England's traditional preference for detachment and power balancing soon put an end to the idea, which required almost constant involvement in the affairs of the Continent. Some have suggested an off-shore power balancing role for the United States but it is not compatible with the American culturally-imposed style of diplomacy.

Another answer in Europe, later in the 19th century, was Bismarck's diplomacy of overlapping alliances and ententes which like the Concert of Europe, required restraint in order to work. As Kissinger and others have pointed out, without a Bismarck to manage this intricate system of relationships, restraint went out the window and World War I ensued. But it was a clear alternative to the English preference for power balancing in that it required engagement on many fronts, as opposed to splendid isolation.

Northeast Asia in the 21st century may not have much to learn from the experiences of other times and other places. History and geography and culture create unique circumstances within which nations develop and act. But so long as nation-states are the basic building blocks of the international system the behavior of these units within that system is not likely to be radically dissimilar. History suggests that autonomous behavior by powerful nations—behavior that ignores the interests of others—sooner or later leads to disaster. The corollary of this lesson is that some mechanism has to be found, be it implicit or explicit, to allow for policy accommodations and for self-imposed restraint within a system of nations. To fail to do so is to make a collision almost inevitable.

Three nations linked by security treaties — Japan, South Korea and the United States — have created a trilateral mechanism for security policy coordination within a limited scope, that of coordinating policy on North Korea. Only on one issue, North Korea's nuclear programs, do all of the six nations engaged in those talks join together in an attempt to work out common policies. This arm's-length attitude perpetuates national rivalries and reinforces adversarial relationships. This is a time for inclusiveness and engagement, rather than exclusive-

ness and detachment, if the nations are to gain some control over a rapidly changing system.

The security mechanisms created during the Cold War do not need to be scrapped. They need to be augmented by broader mechanisms that include rather than divide. They need to be supplemented by all kinds of interlocking bilateral and multilateral inter-state and non-state arrangements. Otherwise, the security structure that served the cause of peace so well during the Cold War could turn into an instrument of division and dispute. Security should be one element of a comprehensive program of cooperation but other elements of national well-being, like the economy and the full realization of each person's potential also should be included. A security community, after all, is a community in which internal security concerns have been alleviated and the community is free to deal with other issues that enrich human life.

V. Resolving the North Korean Nuclear Issue

If a strategic vision like this is not convincing enough to political leaders who face elections in the here and now, let them consider the case for multilateral cooperation to resolve the long-running nuclear crisis in North Korea. The six-party talks have failed, so far, to solve the problem. Blame can be assigned to various parties, certainly to North Korea, but it is possible that the framework for negotiation has been too constrained to meet the challenge. Twice before, in 1991 and 1994, agreements have been reached which were designed to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. The first, already cited above, was between North and South Korea, the second, the Agreed Framework, was between North Korea and the United States. Both were supposed to lead to a process of gradually improving relations between North Korea and its negotiating partners. This hope was not fulfilled. With the detachment that history will ultimately provide, it may be concluded that the parties failed to invest the agreements with the political support necessary to withstand the pressures such agreements inevitably face. Or it may be said that the scope of those negotiations and the initial implementation processes were not broad enough to

provide a safety net when one element failed. What is known now is that the North-South agreement failed to realize its potential, which is why another nuclear negotiation began just a few years later. The result of that negotiation, the Agreed Framework, yielded a freeze on North Korea's plutonium program which lasted for eight years, a significant accomplishment, but then it too collapsed.

North Korea may have been simply trying to buy time with these agreements so that its progress toward acquiring a nuclear arsenal would be unimpeded. If so, a gradually improving relationship with the rest of the world, except on their own terms, may never have been part of the game plan of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. But if there is even a slim chance that Kim Jong-il might come to believe that the survival of his regime would be better served by giving up his nuclear weapons program than by keeping it, that chance should be seized. If this scenario has any merit to it, the lessons of the past suggest that a settlement of the outstanding issues on the Korean Peninsula and assurances regarding the relations between North Korea and the great powers will be necessary underpinnings of a denuclearization agreement. If that assumption is proven wrong, because Kim Jong-il is determined to have nuclear weapons whatever the cost, the experience of five of the parties to the negotiations should at least convince them of the necessity of working together.

A multilateral forum, which would allow for talks in various configurations ("variable geometry," as it is often called) is required because a comprehensive settlement of issues left over from the Korean War (1950-53) will require the participation of all of North Korea's neighbors, plus the United States, in one way or another. All will be needed for security assurances; all will be required in differing ways for economic cooperation, of which energy and transport cooperation would be major components, along with freer trade. A peace treaty to end the Korean War would involve fewer nations, just North and South Korea and the United States.

Whether a multilateral forum that might consider issues other than a Korean peace treaty would negotiate a comprehensive treaty or a politically binding accord, or whether it would proceed by parallel, reciprocal moves without a formal agreement, or all of the above, is

not relevant to this discussion. Nor is the question of whether the current six-party talks would segue into the comprehensive negotiations advocated here, or whether a new forum should be created. The basic point is that a conclusive end to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is likely to be achieved only within the framework of a multilateral forum, which would have the scope to deal with a very broad agenda simultaneously, or very nearly so.

Whether one looks to long-term geopolitical trends or to short-term needs to end the perpetual crisis in North Korea, a multilateral forum of broad scope is part of the solution. But could a Korea-focused forum become permanent or assume broader functions beyond those required to resolve the current issues? If it works, and if current geopolitical trends persist, the need for a permanent organization with broader functions will likely become self-evident, and the six-party formula has many advantages as the launch pad for the effort, as will be discussed under "Alternative Paths to a Permanent Northeast Asian Security and Cooperation Organization."

VI. What about Other International Organizations?

Several international organizations already have functioned in Asia for several years. None of these mechanisms is suitable for the kinds of tasks that a permanent multilateral mechanism focused on Northeast Asia should undertake. But other organizations can provide lessons regarding the creation of a new regional multilateral mechanism. Appendix 1 provides background information regarding the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO); Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF); ASEAN+3; the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO); and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). A few comments are in order here:

The experience of KEDO suggests that a similar organization, or perhaps KEDO itself in an adapted form, could oversee and enhance multinational cooperation in Northeast Asia on fairly technical and

complex subjects. As the operating arm of a political-level organization, it could coordinate the implementation of economic infrastructure projects, for example. An interesting feature of KEDO is that it is open to membership by nations and other entities outside the Asia-Pacific region. In the economic sphere, this might be a useful way to associate the European Union with projects in Northeast Asia. Rail lines between Europe and Northeast Asia are excellent examples of projects that would benefit Asian as well as European nations.

The ASEAN model resembles the kind of structure that might be established in Northeast Asia. It is based on a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the nations of Southeast Asia form its core group. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) includes many other nations and it is empowered to discuss security issues. Its strengths, however, are more in the arena of building connections and airing ideas, rather than concrete projects or problem-solving.

The ASEAN+3 forum seems to be gathering momentum and could turn out to be the most influential of the Asia-Pacific international organizations. A series of bilateral free trade agreements are being negotiated within the area covered by ASEAN+3 and the region gradually will become linked in this way, if in no other. In time, the activities of this group might extend beyond the promotion of free trade, and security might become an implicit part of its agenda.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) also is relevant for the methods and processes used, and to some extent for the specifics of the substantive programs. South Korea and Japan are observers in the OSCE. The OSCE is an example worthy of consideration by anyone contemplating the establishment of an international organization. It was based on:

- an agreement successfully concluded despite very different motivations and interests among the major negotiating partners
- a politically binding accord, not in treaty form, which nevertheless has exercised a significant influence in Euro-Atlantic affairs for thirty years
- procedures that required no permanent organizational support from 1975 to 1990 but was transformed thereafter into a structure

requiring regular high-level meetings and permanent support organizations
- a scope which covered most of the activities in which governments engage but also upheld the rights of citizens of those governments
- specific provisions relating to military confidence-building, economics, and the human dimension which could provide a template for an accord in Northeast Asia

VII. The Mandate: Broad or Narrow?

Circumstances usually dictate whether the mandate for a multilateral organization will be broadly or narrowly focused, whether it should concentrate on one area of international interest or several and whether it should be relatively fixed or capable of expansion. APEC's mandate is limited to economic affairs. ASEAN's is political and economic, with some security issues grafted on to it, and it has shown a capacity for flexibility and expansion. KEDO is primarily an implementation oversight organization with a fixed mandate. No expansion was envisaged. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization started out with a narrow focus on military confidence-building and then expanded into an essentially open-ended umbrella agreement for all sorts of cooperation. The OSCE started out with a very broad mandate which became more explicit and detailed as time went on, but was faithful to its original scope as defined in the Helsinki Final Act. Of course, when the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union disintegrated, the security part of the agenda became less relevant and those parts relating to the transition from authoritarian to democratic governments became more so.

In the case of Northeast Asia, the case is strong for a broad mandate, similar to the original Helsinki Final Act. Trade, investment, and financial cooperation is a major driver of relations among these countries. ASEAN+3 and APEC already deal with these subjects, of course, but their focus is on reducing barriers to trade within the region. A wide array of other economic issues could benefit from positive cooperation, for example, in the energy and transportation infrastructure in North-

east Asia. Energy, historically a source of friction between countries, could become an agent for encouraging cooperative behavior. Transportation links, particularly railways, would promote regional economic growth.

Other elements of a broad agenda would include security. Quite apart from issues on the Korean Peninsula, there is work to be done in counter-terrorism, anti-proliferation, mutual military transparency, and improved crisis communications. If mutual confidence grew in response to the experience of working together, more sensitive matters could become part of a cooperative security program. These more sensitive areas might include topics like early warning of ballistic missile flights and ballistic missile defense cooperation.

Humanitarian concerns and cultural activities should be included. This would include public health, prevention of drug smuggling, anti-crime programs, family reunification, human rights and cultural and educational exchanges.

Linking all of these activities in a statement of the objectives to be pursued could be accomplished through an agreement like the Helsinki Final Act. An important feature of that should be a renunciation of the use or threat of force in the mutual relations of the member states, a model for which can be found in the CSCE Stockholm Document of 1986, which inaugurated an expanded program of military confidence-building measures in Europe.

VIII. Alternative Paths to a Permanent Northeast Asian Security and Cooperation Organization

To realize the organizational structure of a security community, three general strategies are available:

1. Build on the six-party talks.
2. Create a new structure including all the elements of a broad program of cooperation. The substance of the six-party talks might be incorporated within this new structure.
3. Proceed incrementally, sector by sector, to build through accretion a network of cooperative activities. A coordinating mechanism -a

clearing house, in effect- could be set up in the near future.

Strategy 1. *Build on the six-party talks*

This approach has the advantage of an agenda already defined: denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, security assurances and economic programs to assist North Korea in becoming integrated into the regional and global economy. Related to this program is the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) which could be adapted to the task of overseeing new agreements on energy cooperation and, perhaps, infrastructure development in Northeast Asia.

A distinction should be made, however, between (1) building on an agreement already reached, perhaps along the lines that were discussed in the six-party talks in June 2004, and (2) building on the procedural framework of the six-party talks to alter the scope or objective of the talks prior to a resolution of the nuclear issue. The former is far preferable because of the time imperative: North Korea's nuclear weapons program is a ticking time bomb in more ways than one. It deserves priority attention. An alternative approach, however, would be to embed the six-party talks in a larger framework by building an economic and humanitarian affairs structure around the present six-party talks. Those talks, as presently constituted, would continue as one of the elements within the larger organization.

In the case of a successful outcome to the six-party talks, the central core of the new organization would be security, probably tied to economic assistance to North Korea, and some requirements for more "normal" diplomatic relations. This base would have the potential for expansion but a multilateral cooperation program exclusively focused on North Korea would be too narrow a basis for promoting peace and economic progress throughout the Northeast Asian region. It would have to be enlarged in the next phase of the talks.

If the six-party talks begin to make progress, it is likely that this route to a permanent institution for security and cooperation in Northeast Asia is the one that would be followed. It would become the path of least resistance. But the six-party talks have not prospered and at some point, the end of the road may be reached. In that event, the par-

ties might decide to discontinue the framework altogether. This would be the most likely outcome if, for example, North Korea began the explosive testing of nuclear weapons.

In the improbable event that all six parties decided to retain the framework, despite everything, at least two methods for transforming the six-party talks into a broader, more comprehensive forum could be imagined. One would be to simply enlarge the agenda so that several major topics are under discussion simultaneously. The other would be to reorganize the structure of the talks so that the six participants would provide themselves with a different charter, one aimed at establishing a framework for security and cooperation in Northeast Asia. Under the conditions just postulated, this is not a likely scenario.

Strategy 2.
Create a new comprehensive organizational structure

This would be the most direct route to a permanent organization for security and cooperation in Northeast Asia, and the most rational. It is also the least likely, even though this was the route followed in establishing other regional organizations. The advantage of constructing the architecture for a Northeast Asian institution in this way is that it would be more balanced in its initial focus than an organization that arose out of the six-party talks. Its agenda would provide for broad economic cooperation among the major powers, rather than one heavily skewed toward North Korea. Its organizational structure could be designed to deal with security, economic cooperation and humanitarian concerns, rather than grafting new appendages onto a structure designed to facilitate a Korean settlement.

This would be the cleanest and most elegant way to go about creating a permanent mechanism for security and cooperation in Northeast Asia. But it would be very difficult to do. First, it could be a distraction from the urgent business of dealing with North Korea's nuclear program. Second, there is not an overwhelming desire among its potential members to create such a structure. Third, China and South Korea appear reluctant to proceed on any wide-scale cooperative program in Northeast Asia if it could be interpreted as freezing out North Korea.

Russia leans that way. This position, if continued, would block any effort to put a program in place that did not include North Korea from the outset.

This last point deserves more reflection: first, to give North Korea a veto over useful regional cooperation in Northeast Asia is not even in North Korea's interest because it retards regional economic development and reduces potential economic aid to North Korea; second, if the states that have interests in Northeast Asia — and that includes members of the European Union — can organize a vigorous program of economic cooperation, North Korea might very well choose to join it; third, China, South Korea and Japan have no reservations about joining ASEAN+3 even though it does not include North Korea (or Russia or the United States), thus isolating Pyongyang from one of the most important potential economic developments underway in Asia.

If at some point, the end of the road in the six-party talks really is reached, the five nations should resolve to establish a regional cooperation without North Korea, leaving the door open for Pyongyang to join it under certain conditions. It would be a sad commentary on their statecraft if paralysis prevented them from cooperating, initially, on a five-party basis.

Strategy 3. *The process of accretion*

In the absence of real pressure coming from governments for a more direct route to a multilateral mechanism and with a deadlock in the six-party talks, a gradually developing network of cooperative programs is the only way to proceed. There is no need to wait and no need for unanimity. And practical steps in the economic field, for instance, have merit in themselves. Existing examples, admittedly with mixed results, include the UN Development Program's Tumen River Development Program, re-linking of Korean railways, and the Gaesong Industrial Park.

There are potential areas for cooperation where the presence or absence of North Korea as a political entity is not a major factor. These include:

- certain sectors of economic cooperation such as development programs in Siberia, where North Korean labor could contribute
- programs that could enhance transportation and energy cooperation
- cultural programs especially those that encourage closer collaboration in interpreting historical events
- certain security programs might be developed such as cooperative anti-proliferation and counter-terrorism activities

The individual programs could be knitted together into a fabric of regional cooperation under the guidance of a regional steering committee.

There are limits: In the absence of an agreement on North Korea's nuclear programs, the United States, and probably others, would refrain from participating in programs that would provide major benefits to North Korea. In fact, the United States would be likely to try to block such cooperation.

A systematic and coherent policy or at least a compelling vision of the future, is needed if sectoral cooperative efforts, like those cited above, are to grow into a genuine institutional framework to deal with fundamental national interests and objectives.

Unless the nations involved in Northeast Asian affairs come to share a vision that enables all the conceivable programs of cooperation in Northeast Asia to be seen as steps on the way to a larger goal — a community or a concert, for example — the individual programs will be valuable, but not *transformative*. A corrective to this problem would be to organize a multilateral "clearing house" for economic and other programs in Northeast Asia. This could act as a kind of steering committee to promote cooperation and community interest. More significantly, it could remind all the nations of the long-term goal of a security community.

IX. Latent Interest Shines through Skepticism

Unless and until each potential member of a Northeast Asia multi-

lateral mechanism concludes that there are advantages in joining such a body that outweigh any potential disadvantages, no multilateral mechanism will be established. To say that each nation must feel that it would be better off with than without this innovation is not to say that the group as a whole must necessarily have common or shared or even overlapping interests. To illustrate the point: the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe concluded an accord in Helsinki in 1975 in which the main protagonists, the Soviet Union and the United States, had hardly any shared interests. Each was betting, in effect, that history would vindicate its particular expectations about the long-term results of the agreement. To get something like this started, the only requirement is that each player sees a net advantage.

Present attitudes are roughly as follows:

China. Beijing has shown an interest in the idea of a permanent multilateral organization in Northeast Asia and appears to believe that it must flow from an agreement in the six-party talks. China probably hopes to use such a mechanism to extend its influence and consolidate its role as a major player in all aspects of Northeast Asian affairs. That particular motivation is not an impediment standing in the way of a permanent multilateral mechanism because it is one that other governments would probably share, with respect to their own nation's prospects.

Japan. Tokyo has recently been cool toward a permanent multilateral forum, probably because it suspects why China might have an interest in it. But Japan has supported the idea in the past and has not rejected it even now. If a multilateral mechanism emerged in the context of a six-party deal that rolled back North Korea's nuclear weapons program and if the United States endorsed the idea, Japan very likely would embrace the idea.

China's initial opposition to a seat for Japan on the UN Security Council may soften in time. For now, it should be noted that the creation of a mechanism to deal with security and other issues in Northeast Asia is quite compatible with a UNSC seat for Japan and the two should be mutually reinforcing. The Northeast Asia organization

probably would become a Regional Organization of the United Nations, under Chapter 8 of the UN Charter, and would be the "court of first resort" for that region.

South Korea. The government of South Korea has endorsed the idea of a permanent multilateral organization in Northeast Asia with varying degrees of enthusiasm for over a decade. Its main concern now is that nothing be done to damage whatever limited prospects there may be for a successful conclusion of the six-party talks. South Korea, like China, would not want to be seen as excluding North Korea from a seat at the table. This is consistent, of course with Seoul's policy of nudging North Korea to moderate or end its isolation.

Russia. Moscow seems to support Seoul and Beijing in thinking that North Korea must be part of a Northeast Asia forum from the beginning, on the grounds that a forum that did not include North Korea would leave one of the major security issues in North Asia unresolved. But Russia can be expected to readily accept a Northeast Asia forum if other parties accept it.

United States. Washington has encouraged the notion that the six-party talks could evolve into a permanent forum. In years past, U.S. administrations have endorsed the idea of a permanent multilateral mechanism in Northeast Asia, but without putting any political muscle behind it. As current policy has been stated, progress toward a multilateral organization to promote peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia is held hostage to the success of the six-party talks. There appears to be some interest in a five-party forum, leaving the door open for North Korea's membership under certain conditions.

North Korea. Kim Jong-il probably would join in a permanent Northeast Asia multilateral mechanism if his terms were met. These would include security assurances, an end to trade restrictions and energy assistance. Whether he would do so if membership required him to give up his nuclear weapons program is another matter, and this has to be one of the key considerations in the whole enterprise of a

multilateral forum. Although North Korea's abstention from a multilateral forum would pose serious obstacles to the creation of a multilateral organization, it need not become an absolute barrier.

This survey of national positions shows that the outlook for a permanent multilateral mechanism depends heavily on progress in the six-party talks. But there is a latent interest in each of the nations that, given favorable circumstances, could coalesce to generate enough momentum to push the idea forward. Perhaps China, South Korea and Russia would support some form of multilateral organization if it did not arbitrarily exclude North Korea. Japan apparently is wary of the idea at the moment, but has a history of supporting it. The United States, judging by its publicly-stated positions, would probably join a mechanism like this unless one of its allies strongly objected. If the United States took the lead in creating a security community in Northeast Asia, many things would become possible and Washington ought to have an interest in consolidating its position in Northeast Asia.

X. The Time is Now

The logic of the present situation in Northeast Asia suggests that the foundations for what, in retrospect, was a long period of relative stability in Northeast Asia, are being weakened. Those foundations rested on broadly shared assumptions as well as on military strength. The U.S. military commitment has not weakened, although it is harder to sustain because of Iraqi requirements and changing strategic concepts in Washington. But all the nations, without exception, now see themselves playing new roles on the Northeast Asian stage and so shared assumptions are being questioned and sometimes discarded. Immobility, for better or worse, has given way to a situation which is much more fluid, perhaps more so then at any other time since President Nixon's "opening to China." This is a time for governments to shape the environment of the future. Otherwise drift and equivocation will shape it for them, and not to their liking.

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APPENDIX 1
Relevant International Organizations

The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO)

The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization was established on March 9, 1995 by Japan, South Korea and the United States to implement the building of the nuclear reactors and the shipment of heavy oil provided for in the 1994 US-North Korean Agreed Framework. The provisions of that agreement called for the financing and construction of two light-water reactors in North Korea. Five hundred thousand metric tons of heavy fuel oil was to be furnished to North Korea each year pending completion of the first of these reactors. Membership in KEDO was open to other nations and several joined, including the European Union, on condition that they provide funds, goods or services. Russia and China have not become members to date, although both supported the efforts of KEDO. The Agreed Framework broke down late in 2002 after the United States accused North Korea of secretly building a uranium enrichment facility. Despite that, KEDO has remained in business while suspending construction of the reactors and the oil shipments to North Korea.

It is governed by an executive board, with Japan, South Korea, the United States and the EU as members, and is run on a day-to-day basis by a secretariat, headed by an executive director. A general conference of all KEDO members meets once a year. By all accounts, the collabo-

ration worked well and the multilateral management of the energy project has been judged a success. The target date for completion of the first reactor had slipped by the time the Agreed Framework collapsed, but that was caused by factors other than the operations of KEDO.

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

Except for North Korea, APEC includes all of the nations that might form a Northeast Asia permanent organization for security and cooperation and many more besides. In fact, there are 21 countries in APEC, which functions to promote economic growth. One of its main tasks is to reduce trade barriers within the region and increase the flow of trade. The mechanism works through the device of goal-setting and periodic meetings at various levels to monitor results. Its work is entirely voluntary and non-binding. There is an APEC secretariat, permanently established, which supports the many committees and working groups.

In principle, APEC could establish a special program to enhance economic cooperation in Northeast Asia. Fitting North Korea into such a program would be difficult, however, since the thrust of APEC since the beginning has been to support free trade among relatively open economies. That Vietnam is now a member proves that a country like North Korea might be able to make the leap from isolation to cooperation in APEC. APEC's mandate does not include security issues.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

As its name implies, ASEAN was founded by five Southeast Asian nations: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. After its creation in 1967, ASEAN expanded between 1984 and 1999 to include Brunei Darussalem, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Its original charter, the ASEAN Declaration, contains a broad agenda for cooperation in economic and security affairs of the region. In February 1976, the heads of government of the five original members signed a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation that endorsed six fundamental principles to guide their mutual relationships:

- mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations
- the right of every State to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion or coercion
- non-interference in the internal affairs of one another
- settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful manner
- renunciation of the threat or use of force and
- effective cooperation among themselves

ASEAN has a well-defined organizational structure which is guided by decisions of an annual summit meeting, and ad hoc meetings of ministers responsible for several areas of governmental activities and national life. Many committees and working groups provide support for summit and ministerial meetings. A Secretary-General and a secretariat provide day-by-day support and advice.

As will be shown below, additional methods of cooperation were established which bring it even closer to a model that might suit Northeast Asia, or could be adapted to Northeast Asia.

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

In 1994, ASEAN decided to establish the ASEAN Regional Forum to deal with confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. The forum includes ten "dialogue partners" as well as all the ASEAN member states, plus North Korea, Mongolia and Pakistan. Papua New Guinea is an observer. Thus, the participants are: Australia, Brunei Darussalem, Cambodia, Canada, China, E.U., India, Indonesia, Japan, North and South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, United States and Vietnam.

ASEAN+3 (APT)

Since 1996, ASEAN has developed a close relationship with three Northeast Asian countries: China, Japan and South Korea. The purpose has been to promote regional economic cooperation. Summit

meetings are held annually and additional meetings at various levels have been organized. APT appears to be headed toward a free trade area in East Asia, and China is leading the effort by negotiating a free trade agreement with ASEAN. This development would move East Asia toward a trading group loosely resembling the North American Free Trade Area. It would not have, of course, the degree of integration of the European Union.

On April 11, 2005, the ASEAN foreign ministers announced that the first East Asian Summit would be held in Kuala Lumpur later in the year. The participants would be the ten ASEAN nations plus China, Japan and South Korea — APT. Others may be invited, although signing ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation might be a precondition. At the same time, the ASEAN foreign ministers decided to appoint a group of eminent persons to draft a charter for ASEAN's future.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

Lessons may also be found in the way the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established. Its origins lay in the desire to build confidence among China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through troop reductions and transparency in the regions where these countries had common frontiers, primarily in Central Asia. From this beginning, in 1996, the scope and organizational structure expanded so that, in 2001, joined by Uzbekistan, the member states signed the "Declaration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," which contained a kind of code of good behavior among themselves. In 2002, the members signed additional documents that provided the basis for regional cooperation in counter-terrorism and prevention of smuggling of drugs and weapons. A basis was also laid for cooperation in a broad array of national concerns, not unlike the economic and security "baskets" of the CSCE/OSCE. And in another similarity to the OSCE, the member states established regular summit and ministerial meetings, a regional anti-terrorist center and a permanent secretariat located in Beijing. The SCO explicitly is charged with opposing "separatism and extremism," which may be assumed to be aimed at religious and

ethnic separatist movements in the region of Central Asia. In historical terms, the SCO resembles the Holy Alliance of the European 19th century more than the Concert of Europe of the same era, or the OSCE of contemporary times.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The background to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe would suggest that an accord could never have been reached. The Soviet Union wanted a surrogate peace treaty to perpetuate the division of Europe and of Germany. Consolidating their grip on Central and Eastern Europe was the main motivation of the Soviet leaders. The Western nations rejected the permanent division of Europe and strongly favored freer movement of people, information, and ideas between East and West. Despite these sharp differences, it was possible to reach agreement.

None of the Western powers had an interest in a treaty, even though commitments affecting international security were involved. The Helsinki Final Act was signed by 35 heads of states and governments as a politically binding document. Implementation was monitored by periodic review conferences of the total membership and through bilateral channels. Although implementation was far from perfect, the review conferences exercised pressure on governments to comply. In Eastern Europe, in particular, citizens' groups also pressured their governments to comply.

The CSCE managed to do without an international bureaucracy through the first 15 years of its existence. Meetings were arranged by the governments of host countries. These meetings involved not only major review conferences but also important conferences designed to expand on several areas outlined in general terms in the Helsinki Final Act. In 1990, the Paris Charter for a New Europe created regular inter-governmental meetings at summit and ministerial levels. Thereafter, the CSCE was re-named the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and was endowed with a permanent secretariat and a Forum for Security Cooperation based in Vienna. An Office for

Human Rights and Democratic Institutions (OHRDI) was established in Warsaw. A High Commissioner for National Minorities was created, with headquarters in The Hague.

The CSCE/OSCE was established with a mandate that covered three main areas: security, economic affairs and human rights. The unique feature of the Helsinki Final Act was that it committed governments to accept international accountability for the way they treated their citizens. That idea, fairly novel when it was built into the Helsinki Final Act, has increasingly become accepted in mainstream international common law.

Aside from that, the Helsinki Final Act included ten principles of international behavior similar to those included in ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. The Final Act provided for military confidence-building measures, later expanded substantially to provide enhanced transparency and improved communications among the governments and the military forces of the participating states.

APPENDIX 2
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