East Asian Regional Security

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"Partnership for Peace: Building Long-term Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia"
The Second Collaborative Workshop on East Asia Regional Security Futures

by Satoshi Morimoto**ABSTRACT**

Asia is now relatively peaceful and calm, although there is a broad consensus that the potential for uncertainty and instability is significant. The challenges to peace and stability in the region consist of two types. One is inherent sub-regional problems and the other comes from common regional issues of a transnational nature. The other aspect of dynamism in the region is the positive factors of opportunity and expectation, of which there are three elements. Northeast Asia is the only region in which the complexly interrelated interests of all four major powers overlap. On the other hand, each of the bilateral relationships between major powers has a different aspect and dimension. So far, the Korean Peninsula issue and the security in the Taiwan Strait are the most serious and common sub-regional concerns that involve the national interests and security of major actors. The Japan-US relationship will play a major role in maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The Japan-US cooperation in the area of security must be considered not only from the bilateral viewpoint but, from the broader perspective of security in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. The Japan-US Security Arrangements remains an indispensable precondition for the security of Japan even in the post-Cold War security environment and the range in which Japan and the US can cooperate for the security of Asia-Pacific is expected to widen.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN EAST ASIA

Almost ten years after the end of the Cold War, the international community has moved into the 21st century. In the past decade, the international community has been trying to catch up with fast changes and establish a viable theory for a new international order in the post-Cold War era. However, drastic changes in the world have made it impossible for human wisdom to keep up with reality. The world has seen both hegemonic and nationalist behavior by nations to enhance their individual power and influence, and multilateral cooperation among nations to enhance political security and economic stability.

The East-West Cold War confrontation started when the Soviet Union sought world hegemony on the basis of communist ideology. During the half-century of the Cold War era, theory stayed ahead of reality. As proposed by US diplomatic expert George Kennan, Western nations pursued a solidarity and cooperation through the containment of the Soviet Union to win the Cold War. For the past decade, experts have been trying in vain to formulate a theory for a post-cold War order comparable to Kennan's containment theory. US political scientist Samuel Huntington's theory on "The Clash of Civilizations" attracted wide attention, but most experts agreed that it had many logical flaws and was far from viable On the other hand, the UN is unlikely to become the exclusive principal base on which a new international order is established, although it is likely to continue to undergo a reform that strengthens its role and function. The international order that has emerged so far is built around nationals that share common value systems, especially with the United States. Foreign relations seem to be controlled not only by value systems, but also by a combination of value systems and the national interests of each nation.

Asia is now relatively peaceful and calm, although there is a broad consensus that the potential for uncertainty and instability is significant. There are two aspects to the region's dynamism in the post-Cold War period. The first is the dynamism of challenge, which means destabilizing factors. The challenges to peace and stability in the region consist of two types. One is inherent sub-regional problems such as the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the China-Taiwan relationship, the East Timor and Indonesia's domestic situation in Northeast Asia, the South China Sea issue in Southeast Asia, and the Kashmir conflict in Southwest Asia. Another type of challenge to peace and stability comes from common regional issues of a transnational nature. These include nationalism, the imbalance in military modernization programs, international organized crime, terrorism, ethnic conflict, narcotics trafficking, territorial issues among national, the NMD-TMD issue, the proliferation of WMD (especially the development and transfer of nuclear weapons and missiles), the international movement of labor and refugees, instability in areas adjacent to SLOC and piracy incidents, and the widening of the economic gap between post-modern, modern, and pre-modern states. An energy and food crisis due to increased population and economic growth is a potentially destabilizing factor in the future.

The regional framework and organization for security cooperation has not been well developed due to the diversity of the security environment, national interests, and the policies of individual nations in Asia. However, since the end of the Cold War, Asia has faced the potential for instability in not only economics but also in security. Most nations in the region share common concerns about the potential for instability and uncertainty and seek to manage and minimize them through dialogues and cooperation in the region. The ARF was established in 1994 in order to improve multilateral security dialogues and cooperation among nations and to prevent destabilizing factors from turning into armed conflict. Multilateral security dialogues and cooperation for this purpose, such as AFR, ASEAN+3, and ASEM, have been developing significantly in recent years. Unfortunately, they have stalled momentum to some extent due to the economic crisis in 1997 and the nationalistic approach of some participants.

The other aspect of dynamism in the region is the positive factors of opportunity and expectation, of which there are three elements. The first element is the presence and commitment of the United Sates. the Japan-US alliance is unquestionably critical for the peace and stability not only of Japan, but also of the entire Asia-Pacific region. Japan and the US have made significant efforts to maintain their alliance in the post-Cold War period, putting priority on exploring and promoting common national values and interests. During the cold War period, the Japan-US alliance contributed to deterring Soviet military intervention in Asia and to preventing the transfer of Soviet forces from the Far East Asia to the European front. While continuing to do this, the alliance has expanded its role to managing destabilizing factors in the Far East, including military confrontation and confusion on the Korean Peninsula, in the Taiwan Strait, and other incidents. Both Japan and the United States have made serious efforts to strengthen their bilateral security ties in the areas of Japan-US defense cooperation, the effective use of US bases in Japan, and the BMD join research program. The Japan-US alliance is the most significant factor for peace and stability in the region as a whole.

The second element of opportunity is the multilateral cooperation and exchanges among the nations in the region. This was manifested in the dialogues and the cooperative approach that led to the steady strengthening of APEC in matters of economic development and cooperation and of the ARF on political and security issues. In July 2000, the ARF held the seventh ministerial conference since its establishment in 1994, and there have been remarkable progress in dialogues and cooperation on regional security in the past several years. Two major factors lie behind these developments in the security dialogue in Asia. The first is the region's economic development and growth, which has infused its countries with confidence and sparked moves to seek a collective identity for Asia as a whole. The second is the growing recognition of the many potential elements of instability that exist there and of the need to build a framework for dialogue within the region to prevent escalation of disputes into conflicts. An indication of this recognition was given at the second ARF conference, where agreement was reached on a three-step approach to the pursuit of regional stability through confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy, and approaches to conflict resolution. Since then, multilateral security cooperation and dialogues have concentrated on CBM. A new focus is now expected to be conflict prevention, or 'preventive diplomacy.' CBM and preventive diplomacy in this region both exhibit some typically Asian characteristics, including a realistic and gradual approach toward consensus. Therefore, development is slow and it is still difficult to reach agreements that include binding obligations to comply. However, regional security cooperation through CBM and preventive diplomacy has played a significant role in promoting mutual understanding and confidence among national in the region. These measures contribute to peace and stability in order to compensate, not to offset, the roles of the alliances.

Third, the improvement in the bilateral relationships among the four major powers in the region- the US, Russia, China, and Japan - is also a significant and positive indication. In the post-Cold War period, the relationship among the major powers has been characterized, in general, as a 'concert of war,' in contrast to the balance-of-power nature during the Cold War. However, relations among the major powers still exhibit some elements of power sharing and a nationalistic approach, as most major actors put a higher priority on national interests than before. In any case, China's future and the relationship among the four major powers are still key factors in shaping the regional security structure and in securing peace and stability.

MAJOR SECURITY AGENDA IN THE NORTH-EAST ASIA

Northeast Asia is the only region in which the complexly interrelated interests of all four major powers overlap. On the other hand, each of the bilateral relationships between major powers has a different aspect and dimension. So far, the Korean Peninsula issue and the security in the Taiwan Strait are the most serious and common sub-regional concerns that involve the national interests and security of major actors.

The North-South Dialogues and relationship in the Korean Peninsula are encouraging. The US, the ROK, and Japan have closely coordinated their policies through deterrence and dialogue in order to persuade North Korea to open to the international society. Japan-North Korea normalization talks have been stalled due to differences between both sides. Japan sent a half million ton of rice as food aid to North Korea, effectively paving the way for an aide program Japan hopes will add impetus to normalization talks. However, the situation in the Korean Peninsula continues to be one of the most acute security problems in the region. From the Japanese point of view, there are three challenges and potential risks concerning North Korea. First is the nature of the North Korean leadership, which is perceived as a military-oriented dictatorship. North Korea seems to operate on the principle that it must threaten other countries in order to get them to comply with its requirements and wishes. North Korea launched ballistic missiles over Japanese territory in 1998 and sent undercover intelligence ships into Japanese territorial waters in 1999. Japan has clear evidence that North Korea is responsible for the abduction of Japanese citizens and knowledge of their current whereabouts and is also involved in drug trafficking to Japan. The reasons for these hostile actions are not known with certainty but it is speculate that they were intended to frighten other nationals into agreeing to North Korea's terms. Otherwise, North Korea would have explained these actions and apologized for them. Japanese society stands adamantly against its government's allocating funds to provide large amounts of food aide to North Korea, whose illegal activities have terrified them.

The second challenge North Korea poses for Japan is its nuclear development program. The background and intention of North Korea's nuclear development program is not clear. So far, the program has been frozen by the implementation of the US-North Korea Agreed Framework. There is serious concern that if North Korea successfully produces nuclear weapons and mounts them on medium and long-range ballistic missiles, the security environment in Asia will absolutely change. In this sense, the KEDO project is critically important not only for maintaing the freeze on North Korea's nuclear development program, but also in keeping open the channels of dialogue with North Korea.

The third challenge is North Korea's missile-development program. While its nuclear weapons program has been frozen for the time being in accordance with the US-North Korea agreement, the progress that North Korea has achieved in missile development is more worrisome, as it is thought to be tied to the country's nuclear weapons program. To date, North Korea has deployed more than 100 No-Dong missile on its own soil, but it is speculated that the number will reach almost 200 in three years. North Korea has a history of selling ballistic missiles and missile-related technology to countries in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and South Asia for hard currency. The No-Dong and Taepo-dong ballistic missiles can be armed with chemical, biological, or nuclear warheads. North Korea already possesses an adequate arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, and the possibility that these missile could, in the future, be tipped with nuclear warheads is a serious threat. It is clear that North Korean missiles are able to strike anywhere in Japanese territory. While the US is concerned with the proliferation and development of the Taepo-dong missiles, Japan is concerned about the deployment of the No-dong missiles. So far, an agreement between the US and North Korea has put a moratorium on North Korea's launching of ballistic missiles. However North Korea has to develop these missiles to earn foreign exchange from their sale ant to demonstrate its political leadership. In any event, the development of ballistic missiles by North Korea cold decisively upset the military balance in Northeast Asia, and the combination of North Korea's missile development and nuclear weapons programs has very serious implications for the security of Northeast Asia.

Japan wishes to take a flexible and positive approach to negotiations with North Korea by offering economic assistance settlement for the property claim issues in return for the resolution of the abduction, missile development, launching and deployment, and drug smuggling issues. So far, the standpoints of both sides are quite different and it seems be difficult to work out a compromise.

Japanese negotiators are facing pressure not only from the positive developments between North and South and the US-North Korea relationship, but also from domestic politics. Japan intends to provide economic assistance through a social infrastructure program, which the ROK plans to manage, making its economic aide available through Japan-North Korea normalization talks. On the other hand, North Korea's approach seems to be to de-link with Japan, the US, and the ROK in order to pressure Japan to accept its claims for war reparations. Japan thinks the time has come for its side and that it should adopt a realistic approach to seeking its national interests.

In this context, Japan, the US, and the ROK have closely coordinated their policies and approaches toward North Korea through deterrence based on trilateral security and defense cooperation and through dialogues with North Korea in order to open it up to the international society and to get it to accept economic reform. North Korea's missile deployment, launching and development is a more serious threat to Japan's national security than the kidnapping issue. However it is not reasonable to criticize North Korea on this missile issue because there is no legal framework banning the testing, deployment, and development of ballistic missiles except the START agreement between the US and Russia and the MTCR. However, the development of ballistic missiles pose a very serious threat to peace and stability in the region. Japan expects to explore the possibility of missile arms control initiatives to restrain the launching, testing, deployment, proliferation, and development of ballistic missiles to manage North Korean missile development within this framework, if possible. In this sense, Japan can use the TMD program as a leverage against North Korea's missile development program.

The security of the Taiwan Strait relies on the movement and direction of politics in China (especially the relationship between the PLA and the political leadership of China), Taiwan's approach to Mainland China, domestic politics in Taiwan, and US engagement policy and its reaction to the bilateral relationship between Taiwan and China. People in China have been frustrated due to the bad shape of their economy and some anti-American, nationalistic sentiment has emerged since the mishap of the NATO attack on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. The PLA has the strong support of the people in China to take action against Taiwan if necessary. So far, no serious tension has been arose since the presidential election in March 2000. It is expected that US engagement policy encourages China to take peaceful settlement of Taiwan issue. However, the possibility of tension turning into conflict between Taiwan and mainland China cannot be excluded.

JAPAN'S SECURITY POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD AND EAST ASIA

Japan's security policy consists of three pillars including (a) sustaining the credible Japan-US Security Arrangement (b) Maintenance of efficient and effective defense capability (c) Making diplomatic efforts for the peace and stability of the international society and Asia Pacific region.

The Japan-US Security Arrangements remains an indispensable precondition for the security of Japan even in the post-Cold War security environment. What is more, the range of field in which Japan and the US can cooperate for the security of Asia-Pacific is expected to widen.

In other words, the Japan-US relationship of cooperation in the area of security must be considered not only from the bilateral viewpoint but, from the broader perspective of security in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. In order to promote the Japan-US security Arrangement, both nations reviewed and re-defined the rationale of the alliance in the post-cold War period and issued the Joint Declaration of Security in April 1996. In the Join Declaration, Japan and the US reaffirmed that the Japan-US Security Treaty would remain the cornerstone for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century. It also states that Japan would continue to make appropriate contributions to the maintenance of US Forces in Japan by providing them with facilities and areas as well as host nation support, and also to review the Guidelines for the Japan-US Defense Cooperation, which concluded the new Guidelines in September 1997 and to promote the BMD joint research program since FY 1999. Since then, Japan made a significant political effort to pass the declaration through the domestic legislation in order to implement the Japan-US Defense cooperation Guidelines. The legislation for the situation in areas surrounding Japan passed the Diet in May 1999. Now, Japan is studying and rafting another legislation in the case of contingency of the nation. Both Japan and the US governments have also tried to solve the US base issue in Okinawa for the last few decades in order to improve the reliable use of the areas and facilities for US forces in Japan.

Japan's defense policy has many conditions. However, Japan has been making efforts on its own initiative to build a modest defense capability under the Constitution in accordance with the fundamental principles of maintaining an exclusively defense-oriented policy and of not becoming a military power that might pose a threat to other countries, while adhering to the principle of civilian control of the military and observing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, together with firmly maintaining the Japan-US security arrangements under the "Basic Policy for National Defense." Japan, which has been enunciating these policies at home and abroad during several occasions in the past, is currently availing itself of various opportunities to have the nation's defense policy understood by neighboring countries.

Japan adopted the National Defense Program Outline in 1976. Japan reviewed it after the end of the Cold War and revised it into the National Defense Program Outline in and after FY1996. Now, it is the time to make a second Mid-Term Defense Program after FY 2001. The major agenda now for Mid-Term Defense Program is the roles and structures of the Self Defense Maritime Forces. Japan's Self Defense Forces are effectively and efficiently capable. However, it has many legal and political conditions to exercise and carry out its own roles and missions. Japan has expanded its contributions to UN PKO operation after the Gulf War and has sent the Self Defense units for PKO operations in Cambodia, Mozambique and the Golan Heights.

In the Asia-Pacific region, multilateral security cooperation and dialogues have concentrated on CBM. Japan has been participating actively on these security dialogues and cooperation concentrated on ARF and any other Track-1 and Track-II forums. Japan also took several initiatives to host ISG meetings of CBM, PKO seminar, Asia's Piracy conference, CSCAP WG meetings, and so on.

Japan also expands security and defense dialogues and exchanges with other Asia-Pacific nations including Russia, ASEAN, Australia, ROK, China, and NATO countries. Japan intends to enhance its contributions to the multilateral cooperation for conflict prevention.

Japan wishes to set up a six nation talk framework in Northeast Asia to discuss economic and political cooperation and a trilateral summit meeting among the political leaders of China, South Korea, and Japan. Japan also wants to promote multilateral security cooperation among Northeast Asian nations to improve joint patrol operation in the high seas and search and rescue operations, natural disaster relief operations and PKO activities in East Asia.

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