

Prospects for Security Cooperation and  
Community Building in Northeast Asia

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*(Draft – Please do not quote)*

## *1. Introduction*

**D**espite some progress on economic regionalism and increasing regional dialogues at the governmental and nongovernmental levels, the efforts of multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia lack approaches to institutionalization, particularly in the political and security field. With no visionary leaders like Robert Schumann and Jean Monnet in Europe designing a scheme to guide regional integration and no regional powers actively taking on central coordination responsibilities in the cooperative process, Northeast Asian states have not built formal institutions and instead have sought rather loose political arrangements to exploit the options of regional relationship.

The difficulty in developing security regionalism and community building in Northeast Asia is explained by several inter-related factors: the nationalistic tension and mutual distrust caused by the past colonization and war experience; confrontational political and ideological legacies extending from the Cold War; continual US foreign policy in East Asia on the principle of bilateralism; emerging political tension and region-wide concern related to the recent rise of China and possible Sino-American contention for regional hegemony; and renewed disputes over territorial ownership among regional states. Furthermore, both policy makers and the public in the region have perceived political and security issues as a matter of competition and confrontation, rather than cooperation and compromise. Mainstream international relations scholars in Northeast Asia also tend to examine foreign and security relations from the realist power politics perspectives.

Indeed, institutionalizing security cooperation in northeast Asia seems to be a complicated and implausible task, as any discussion on the creation of regional community or institutions requires fine-tuning of national interests and priorities, as

well as broad inquiries of policy options among the countries involved. How to manage the regional reality where a peaceful coexistence and mutual interdependence at the socioeconomic layer conflict with disturbing confrontation and mutual suspicion at the political and security layer also poses a tremendous challenge both to the governments and people of Northeast Asian states.

Still, it is worth noting that discussions on regional cooperation in various agendas, including security cooperation, have been pursued, as shown in the case of the Six-Party Talks concerning North Korean nuclear issues. The Talks, involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia, is a special multilateral mechanism that has raised an expectation of creating an institutional framework for security cooperation in Northeast Asia, although depending on whether or not the talks produced a fruitful outcome. In addition, there have been increasing awareness of a broader concept and scope of security which deal with not only military and political issues, but also non-military and nontraditional security concerns. Accordingly, there have been serious discussion and discernible cooperative efforts, both at the inter-governmental Track I and nongovernmental Track II levels, in dealing with transnational environmental problems, communicable disease, financial crisis and other human security matters facing the region.

Yet, any regional efforts to institutionalize multilateral security cooperation efforts would necessitate a thorough evaluation of diverse national interests and positions, fine-tuning the conflicting policy orientations and strategic choices of individual countries. For this, networking various actors other than governments, including multinational corporations, societies, and individuals is an alternative, which would allow Northeast Asian states to “act and interact loosely within its [security] realm”<sup>1</sup> in response to current and potential emergencies.

Then, how can Northeast Asian countries promote and institutionalize multilateral security cooperation? Can regional cooperative endeavors in nontraditional or ‘soft’ security issues among the countries in the region serve as a catalyst or at least supplementary impetus for the establishment of regional security community building? Can a networked approach in pursuit of East Asian or

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<sup>1</sup> Katsuhiko Mori, *Institutionalizing, Marketizing and Networking Asia-Pacific economic cooperation*, International University of Japan Research Institute Working Paper, Asia Pacific Series, No. 10. <http://www.iuj.ac.jp/research/archive/wpaper/wpap010.htm>.

Northeast Asian community building offer the region an opportunity to utilize the options of institutionalized collaboration? In light of these inquiries, this paper is to explore the historical development of regional order and the evolution of regionalism, and discuss the challenges and opportunities that security cooperation will bring to Northeast Asia, with particular reference to cooperation among China, South Korea, and Japan.

## **II. Historical Transformation of Regional Order in Northeast Asia**

For over 2,000 years, East Asia was dominated by the Sinocentric hierarchical regional order on the base of geopolitics of the tribute system. Korea and Vietnam were tributary states, while part of Japan and several other Asian states were under the influence of Confucian civilization and Chinese ‘suzerainty.’ They paid tributes to Chinese emperors to be granted economic incentives of trade and the recognition of their authority and sovereignty in return.<sup>2</sup> This imperial tributary system broke down after the Opium War between the British Empire and the Qing Dynasty in 1839, which opened the modern East Asian system led by West European states who championed the principles of sovereignty that is based on international law and relations among equal states.

East Asia became highly volatile in the 19th century, as Japanese expansion in the region was conducted in the midst of active Western European and Russian imperialistic penetration into China, Korea and other Asian states. Russia’s attempt to build the Trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Vladivostok in the 1890s by increasing its activities in Manchuria, China, and Korea clashed with Japan’s desire to expand to these areas. After the victory of the Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-05, Japan actively pursued and justified the establishment of Japan-centered regional order.<sup>3</sup>

The significant transformation of the regional order from the tribute-to-China system to Japan’s colonialism was epitomized by conflict between the power states in East Asia in the form of wars and colonial domination. In particular, Japan’s aggressive wars against neighboring countries shattered traditional regional relations, and through the course of the

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<sup>2</sup> Fangyin Zhou, “Equilibrium Analysis of the Tributary System,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Spring 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Jong Kun Choi and Chung-in Moon, “Understanding Northeast Asian Regional Dynamics: Inventory Checking and New Discourses on Power, Interest, and Identity,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, April 2010.

Manchurian Incident, the China-Japan war, and the Pacific War, the region was restructured under a Japan-initiated ‘Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.’ Imperial Japan claimed that this initiative represented the aspiration to build a self-sufficient bloc of Asian states, under the leadership of Japan, China, and Manchuria, to drive out western colonialism and domination, as well as achieve independent political and economic coexistence and prosperity in the region.<sup>4</sup>

However, it was one of many political slogans and concepts used by the government and military of the Empire of Japan who tried to justify its aggression in the region from the 1930s till the end of World War II. Some argued that this initiative was more than rhetoric and motivated actual exchange and cooperation in the fields of rail transportation, reorganizations of ports, vitalization of trade, and the abolition of trade tariffs.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the regional economic network of that period was merely a part of the “impure” Japanese intention to pursue dominance of the Asian continent. The plan was for Japan to exploit the resources and manpower of colonized states, as well as oppress any independence movements.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the new order led by Japan lacked ideological, ethical, and practical justification since it was a result of Japanese aggression on neighboring states. This has remained a legacy that is still filled with historical distrust and animosity.

The United States replaced Japan’s dominance and became an unrivalled hegemonic power in the geopolitical landscape of East Asia after the Pacific War in 1945, and particularly since the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951. The American containment policy applied to East Asia and bilateral security arrangements between the United States and the anti-communist coalition were at the core of Japanese and Korean foreign policies during the Cold War period.<sup>7</sup> These two countries remained ambivalent

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<sup>4</sup> “The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” The Official Statement of the Japanese Government, August 1, 1940,” <http://www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Japan/Japan-1940.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Kyujin Song, “Seonman Relations and Seonman Ilyoron Under the Japanese Colonial Rule,” (in Korean), (Seoul: Asiatic Research Institute, 2011, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda: The art of persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Yong-Pyo Hong, *State Security and Regime Security: President Syngman Rhee and the Insecurity Dilemma in South Korea, 1953-60* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Ki-Jung Kim and Myonogsob Kim, “The United States and the East Asian Regional Order: Historical Recasting and Forecasting,” in G. John Ikenberry and Chung-in Moon eds, *The United States*

about the strategic value of participating in regional community building, as the confrontational regional order was consolidated by the hostility and confrontation between ‘southern’ trilateral (the US-South Korea-Japan) and ‘northern’ trilateral (the Soviet Union-China-North Korea) blocs. Both sides had their own self-fulfilling ideologies. The former advocated democracy, anticommunism, and market-driven capitalism, while the later embraced socialist ideas and revolutionary inspirations. China’s strong opposition to the US’s bid for regional supremacy facilitated the Sino-Soviet alliance and its intervention into the Korean War, which defined and shaped international relations of Northeast Asia during the first half of the Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

This bipolar-type antagonism underwent a major transformation with the Sino-American rapprochement in 1970-72. As Sino-Soviet disputes throughout the 1960s escalated to military clashes and border war in 1969, Moscow sought to organize an anti-China united front by proposing the creation of the Asian Collective Security System,<sup>9</sup> while Beijing tried to establish a strategic alignment with Washington to balance against the Soviets. Despite being occupied with the devastating Vietnam War, US President Richard Nixon and his advisor Henry Kissinger decided to exploit the split between two rival powers of the communist world to win advantages for the United States.<sup>10</sup> Soon after establishing a détente with China, Nixon flew to Moscow to ease tension with the USSR and started on the first series of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I). Such efforts became known as triangular balance of power diplomacy, or triangular diplomacy in the Cold War era.<sup>11</sup>

The ascension of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 shortened the road towards ending the global and regional order of the Cold War. His political and economic reforms, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, were arguably major causes of the dissolution of the Soviet Union,

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*and Northeast Asia: Debate, Issues, and New Order* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Ki-Jung Kim and Myonogsob Kim, *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Arnold L. Horelick, “The Soviet Union’s Asian collective Security Proposal: A Club in Search of Members,” RAND Paper, P-5195, 1974, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P5195.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China Since 1972* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Lowell Dittmer, “The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game Theoretical Analysis,” *World Politics* 33, No. 4, July 1981; Robert S. Ross, ed. *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union: Tri-polraity and Policy Making in the Cold War* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

the upheavals of Eastern Europe in 1989, and the fall of the Cold War structure. The years that followed the end of the Cold War have represented a new era in Northeast Asian states' pursuit of regionalism. Although bilateral security alliances remain crucial to their foreign policy agenda and strategic thoughts, the post-Cold War geopolitical landscape has facilitated cross-bloc, inter-state exchanges at various bilateral, triangular, and multilateral levels, which were prohibited or discouraged under the Cold War bipolar system. Ideology no longer being the core value in foreign policy decision making, the increase of people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges, enthusiasm for directing the pattern of regional economic integration, and the mounting imperatives of regional security stabilization have reflected changing regional and global dynamics, thus making Northeast Asian countries ripe for developing a collective identification of the region and seeking joint leadership to build a regional community or institution. In other words, the region faced another transition in regional order, one that encouraged greater cooperation and interdependency, albeit coupled with contradictory uncertainty, mistrust, and rivalry among the nations.

### **III. Northeast Asia in Search of Regionalism**

#### *1. Concepts and Types of Regionalism*

The term 'regionalism' used in world politics refers to *de facto* agreements or *de jure* arrangements by nation states, sometimes in concert with non-state actors, to develop a cohesive inter-state association or groupings within a defined geographical region in terms of economic, social, political, and security linkages.<sup>12</sup> Regionalism is the essence of regional cooperation and multilateral diplomacy, by which a limited number of regional neighbors share a common sense of identity and interests, acknowledge mutual interdependence, and shape collective actions.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gregory W. Nobel, "Explaining Regionalism," ISS Comparative Regionalism Project, Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo, May 2005; Louise Fawcett, "Regionalism in Historical Perspective," in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell eds., *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Christopher M. Dent, "Introduction: Northeast Asia-A Region in Search of Regionalism?" in Christopher M. Dent and David W. F. Huang eds., *Northeast Asian Regionalism: Lessons from the European Experience* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *International Regionalism: Readings* (Boston: Little, Brown and company, 1968).

Within a world of globalization that aims to undermine the borders of countries, regionalism can be seen as a negative idea intended to draw the line between different regions. However if regionalism is pursued openly, compared to exclusive regionalism, it can actually facilitate the spread of globalization. Open regionalism can also be expected to contribute in finding solution to worldwide problems such as the North-South divide, as well as reducing the harmful consequences of globalization. For regionalism to fully come into fruition, both a realist and historical institutionalist perspectives are required. Above all, a great power balance among the states is necessary for regionalism to be durable, as was evident between the U.K., France, and Germany in the case of the European Union (EU). Also, regionalism can gradually develop only when there is a sustained effort and commitment toward the various forms of regional networks and institutionalization.

There are several types of regionalism in international relations. First, ‘hegemonic regionalism’ largely responded to the interest of the hegemon who defined the boundaries of regions and shaped regional order, regionalization, and regional institutions. This type of regionalism prevailed in the polarized Cold War era when a state chose one side and relied overwhelmingly on its patron. Multilateral Cold War alliance systems, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Warsaw Pact, and the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), were greatly directed by a hostile rivalry of global hegemonic influence between two superpowers, i.e., the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

Second, with the advent of the post-Cold War period, hegemonic regionalism was replaced by ‘strategic regionalism,’ as the modality of regional interaction or economic integration did not necessarily require ‘universal’ interest defined by the hegemon, but the interest of the respective states or economic bloc. This is contrary to ideas and practices of unilateralism.<sup>15</sup> Countries in the region need to seek

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Amitav Acharya, “Regional Worlds in a Post-Hegemonic Era,” *Cahiers de SPIRIT*, *SPRIT Working papers*, June 2009, [http://www.durkheim.sciencespobordeaux.fr/Cahiers%20de%20SPIRIT/Cahiers%20de%20SPIRIT\\_1\\_Acharya.pdf](http://www.durkheim.sciencespobordeaux.fr/Cahiers%20de%20SPIRIT/Cahiers%20de%20SPIRIT_1_Acharya.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Khatchik Derghougassian, “Regionalism in Crisis? Europe and Latin America in a Comparative Perspective,” Paper presented the annual meeting of the International Studies Association 48th Annual Convention, Chicago, USA, February 28, 2007, [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p178865\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p178865_index.html).

regional consultation and cooperation in dealing with common challenges and managing relations with neighboring states. In recent years, a sort of strategic regionalism has emerged among the United States, Japan, and China, as these key regional actors have recognized the importance of “collective or converging approaches to joint leadership over certain foreign policy actions within a specific regional context.”<sup>16</sup> The United States can no longer afford to play a predominant role in constructing (or reconstructing) the strategic and economic architecture of East Asia without collaboration with regional powers, i.e. China and Japan.

Third, ‘institutional regionalism’ advocates institutional political arrangements for regional cooperation and integration. As exemplified in the successful European integration process, regional cooperation through institution building processes or endowing specific institutional entities, seems to have been perceived as the desirable way for states with different capabilities and preferences to effectively define their shared interest and goals, and to coordinate inter-governmental relations. The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 was a groundbreaking opportunity, not only to overcome the dangers of nationalism and hostilities among war-stricken European states, but to continuously seek the enlargement of member states and further develop supranational institutions like the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Atomic Energy Community in 1958, and the EU in 1993.<sup>17</sup> Throughout these processes, the EU grew into a formal, legalistic, and supranational institutional entity to facilitate economic regionalism and integration, while retaining a rather loose, intergovernmental, and coordinating framework to address political and security agendas.<sup>18</sup>

Fourth, ‘networked institutionalism’ represents the “networking processes that can be found widely across different cultures, and attempted by a variety of actors, states, multinational corporations, academics and others.”<sup>19</sup> This type of regionalism

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<sup>16</sup> Julie Gilson, “Strategic Regionalism in East Asia,” *Review of International studies*, No. 33, 2007, p. 151.

<sup>17</sup> EUROPA, “The History of the European Union,” [http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm).

<sup>18</sup> requited from Lay Hwee Yeo, “Institutional Regionalism versus Networked Regionalism: Europe and Asia Compared,” *International Politics*, Vol. 47, 3/4, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Katsuhiko Mori, *Institutionalizing, Marketizing and Networking Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation*, International University of Japan Research Institute Working Paper, Asia Pacific Series No. 10.

can fit in the case of East Asia, where with a history of strained intra-regional relationships as a result of colonization and war, continued political and diplomatic rivalries, and a significantly different stage of economic development and liberalization, the governments in the region are leery of working cooperatively towards institutional building. Moreover, regional integration in East Asia has derived from informal production and manufacturing networks, as market integration in the region was facilitated by globalization and increased production networks. Therefore, the countries in the region “did not build strong formal institutions and instead rather fluid mechanisms to exploit the options of cooperation flexibly.”<sup>20</sup>

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), a forum for 21 Pacific Rim countries that promotes open trade and practical economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region, entails the characteristics of networked regionalism, since its organizational dynamics has been influenced “by political and economic variables rather than a preliminary stage of institutionalization or an expression of Asia’s cultural aversion to formalization.” The essence of networked processes includes openness, consultation, coordination, voluntarism, and the involvement of various players including non-state actors.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. *Evolution and Prospects of Regionalism*

Regionalism based on the idea of a community first originated in East Asia (and Northeast Asia in particular) from the common fear that western society, with the EU in Europe and NAFTA in North America, would fortify its economic bloc and discriminate against Asian exports. The catchphrases, ‘East Asianness,’ and “Asian value,’ reflected a new Asian political and cultural assertiveness, which came out of their confidence in economic achievements and in response to the Western predominance in international relations. This concern was increased by the frustration and anger caused by tepid US response during the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, as well as US opposition toward the establishment of the Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) suggested by Japan. It can be said that both fear and resentment increased when the American image during the Cold War of ‘Uncle Sam’ (possessing more than 20% of world production as well as more than 50% of

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<sup>20</sup> Yeo, *ibid*, p. 331.

<sup>21</sup> Mori, *ibid*, p.12, requited from Yeo, *ibid*. p. 337.

military expenses) disintegrated with the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup>

As for economic regionalism in Northeast Asia, South Korea, China, and Japan have witnessed an immense increase in trade, investment and economic interdependence, but they still possess distinctive institutional features that hinder full-scale economic integration. It is encouraging to note that the three states have actively explored the possibility of institutionalizing regional economic cooperation through free trade agreements (FTAs), and in reality each state has concluded FTAs with several countries. It is widely believed that economic integration between South Korea, China, and Japan is a precondition for successful regional economic integration as a whole. For this to happen, FTAs among the three countries will act as a catalyst, while also reducing the possibility that China, which has a different set of rules and regulations, will impose unilateral terms on the other two countries.

While maintaining the firm bilateral alliance partnership with the US, Japan has been a major proponent for regionalism and multilateral institutions even during the Cold War era. For example, Japan was one of the very few states that officially supported the creation of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. The increasing salience of multilateral approaches in the post-Cold War period has stimulated Japan's enthusiasm for directing the pattern of regional economic integration and enhancing greater national dignity, together with the aspiration to be a 'normal state,' to actively take regional initiatives for multilateral cooperation and strengthen relations with other East Asian nations.<sup>23</sup> However, without proper historical reconciliation, the Japanese proposal for East Asian regionalism either in the form of economic integration or an East Asian community has brought about suspicion and concerns that it might mean the return to its past dominance.

The post-Cold War regional landscape also enabled South Korea to pursue regionalism. Although bilateral efforts like the South Korea-US security alliance and inter-Korean dialogues remain crucial to its strategic calculation, South Korea has sought hard to promote its regional position by strengthening economic ties with its continental neighbors, i.e. China and Russia. It has also attempted to deepen and widen multilateral cooperation in regard to not only its North Korean policy, but

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<sup>22</sup> Noam Chomsky, "How the cold War Worked," *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*, 1993, <http://books.zcommunications.org/chomsky/sam/sam-3-1.html>.

<sup>23</sup> G. V. C. Naidu, "Japanese Security at the Crossroads: Challenges and Initiatives," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, Issue 4, 2004.

also its initiatives for realizing the vision of an East Asian community (EAC), which is a proposed East Asian regional bloc that may derive from either ASEAN+3 or the East Asian Summit (EAS).<sup>24</sup>

China's participation in regional matters through multilateral talks and negotiations was related to its strategy of a 'peaceful rise,' which emphasized regional economic integration and multilateral confidence building in an effort to lessen global and regional fears during its ascendance as a major economic and military power.<sup>25</sup> China's power competition with the US and Japan in the region, however, sets limits on China's involvement in regional cooperation and has forced Beijing to opt for an informal approach, which emphasizes gradual regional consensus building rather than legally binding resolutions and institutional arrangements.<sup>26</sup>

Another point to consider is while the US has been preoccupied in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, China has risen as a leader with 'good' intentions for East Asian regionalism. China's strategy towards regionalism rests on four pillars: active participation in regional organizations, establishment of strategic partnerships as well as intensified bilateral relations, expansion of regional cooperation, and diminution of concerns and mistrust regarding security issues. It is hard to criticize Chinese efforts regarding these areas. However, if China is only bearing in mind the ASEAN+3 framework, it will inevitably face US opposition implementing its regional policies.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, states including the US, Australia, and India will be able to contribute to East Asian regionalism, and more generally a cooperative Asia-Pacific region, whether in a limited or unabridged capacity, but in this case states will have to overcome Chinese reluctance and assuage concern from Southeast Asian states that advocate for ASEAN centrality in East Asian

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<sup>24</sup> Shin-wa Lee, "Korean Strategic Thinking on Regionalism," in Gilbert Rozman, In-tack hyunh and Shin-wa Lee, *South Korean Strategic Thought toward Asia* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Thomas J. Christensen, "The Advantages of an Assertive China: Responding to Beijing's Abrasive Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Suisheng Zhao, "China's Approaches toward Regional Cooperation in East Asia: Motivations and Calculations," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 20, Issue 68, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Hongying Wang, "Multilateralism in Chinese Foreign Policy: The Limits of Socialization," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 3, May-June 2000.

cooperation.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it is obvious that regardless of whether the states advocate East Asian regionalism or Asia Pacific regionalism, they need to emphasize dialogue and cooperating in order to create multilateral arrangements in East Asia, while also developing a regional identity.

At the intra-regional level in Northeast Asia, regional differences and rivalries between China and Japan should be resolved in the process of creating an EAC. The two countries have failed to agree on the definition and scope of the East Asian region, attributable to their contrasting ideas of how to coalesce membership into the EAC. While Japan has advocated an open and inclusive concept to include Australia, New Zealand, and India, China has insisted on constructing an East Asian community with exclusively ASEAN+3 member states. China has criticized Japan's position as 'institutionalism' that is largely affected by the US and has emphasized 'Asian-styled gradualism' in the process of regional community building.<sup>29</sup>

#### ***IV. Challenges and Prospects for Northeast Asian Security Regime Building<sup>30</sup>***

Over the past two and a half decades have been numerous proposals and initiatives for regional multilateral security cooperation in Asia, including the 'All-Asian Security Forum'(1985) promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union, the 'Conference on Security and Cooperation in Asia (CSCA) proposed by Gareth Evans, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Several attempts were also made to

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<sup>28</sup> Takashi Terada, "ASEAN+3: Becoming More like a Normal Regionalism?" GIARI Working Papers, Vol. 2010-E-4, Waseda University Global COE Program, Global Institute for Asian Regional Integration, February 28, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey Sachs and Wing Thye Woo, "China's Transition Experience, Reexamined," Beyond Transition, The World Bank Group, 2001; David Kerr. "Greater China and East Asian Integration: Regionalism and Rivalry," *East Asia*, Spring 2004, Vol.21, No.1.

<sup>30</sup> Portions of this section are drawn from the author's previous works, "Northeast Asian Security Community: From Concepts to Practices," in Martina Timmermann and Jitsuo Tsuchiyama, *Institutionalizing Northeast Asia: Regional Steps towards Global Governance* (Tokyo and New York: United Nations University Press, 2008), and will be revised after the presentation of the international conference on May 28, 2011.

create Northeast Asia-specific organizations such as Northeast Asia Security Dialogue (NEASED), which aimed at security cooperation among Northeast Asian states. At the Track II level, the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACE) is a forum limited to the security matters of the Northeast Asian region, while Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) deals with multilateral security cooperation in the entire Asia-Pacific region.

However, historical animosity, political confrontation, military build-up and an economic developmental gap, as well as long-standing preference for nation-to-nation alliances, have been impediments to developing a multilateral cooperation regime in the region. Even after the end of the Cold War, the US-Japan alliance has dominated the strategic structure in Northeast Asia. With the rapid rise of China and the discernible decline of US power as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, the region is becoming accustomed to a more complex regional dynamic based on the G2 system between the US and China. In other words, with growing Chinese global influence, a system of competition between Korea, Japan and the US against China and North Korea is emerging (or reemerging). This has been evident in cases such as power struggle between Japan and China, and China's enfoldment of North Korea on issues such as its nuclear program and provocations against South Korea.

Given this complex and uncertain regional strategic environment, it is certain that developing a coherent and viable regional security cooperation regime is immensely difficult. The states in the region, through self-reflection of the historical background of international relations in Northeast Asia, must first recognize that regional peace and stability are backbones of national security and prosperity, and work to increase inter-cooperation and promote regional institutionalization accordingly. For this a number of old and new challenges facing the region need to be addressed.

To begin with, shared identity, values and goals of common security and cooperation among the countries involved are important. But the greatest barrier to the establishment of a recognized framework for regional integration or community is the confusion about regional identity: Are we talking about the broader Asia-Pacific region or a narrower East Asian (or even Northeast Asian) region? Those who promote a broader regional cooperation such as the Asia Pacific are hesitant about the East Asian Community movement.

On the other hand, there has been growing recognition for a need to develop a regional framework which is limited to the Northeast Asian region separated from ASEAN countries. Currently, the ARF provides the only formal multilateral institutional framework for security cooperation both in the Southeast and Northeast Asian region. But, the ARF proves insufficient in effectively dealing with sensitive and thorny issues that belong to Northeast Asia as the ARF still remains a loose forum for dialogue, not to mention the fact that it is an institution that was established under the initiative of ASEAN. So, in order to address various security issues in the Northeast Asian region, including the Korean question, it would be worth considering the possibility of creating a sort of 'Northeast Asian Security Cooperation Regime' that is either independent of ARF, or a sub-regional entity under the framework of the ARF. In the case of Europe, there was, until lately at least, much less argument over defining a European community vis-à-vis an Atlantic community.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, nationalism has continuously risen based on the complex mixture of a dispute over history, territory and struggle for regional (political and environmental) leadership, posing a strong deterrent to regional security cooperation. Here, Japan's relationship with the neighboring countries needs to be mentioned. In the post-World War II world, Europe has had to struggle with the German issue. Likewise, Asia had to deal with the Japan issue. The German issue has been more or less settled with the development of the European Union and Germany's "repentant" foreign policy, whereas there are still furious debates over the past between Japan and its neighbors in Northeast Asia. Despite several apologetic attempts of successive Japanese governments, they seem to have failed to gain their neighbors' full approval. Furthermore, Japan's "unapologetic" foreign policy, manifested in the controversial Japanese history textbooks, renewed attention to the disputed island Dokdo (Takeshima in Japanese), and Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine posed an important barrier to the intra-regional reconciliation process.

In recent years, there have been numerous regional initiatives that have raised the necessity of a regional identity over nationalistic sentiments. Regardless of the type of

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<sup>31</sup> Han Sung-Joo, "East Asia in the 21st Century: Trending Toward Community – or Disunity?" Paper presented to Trilateral Commission Plenary Session, Washington, DC, and April 17, 2005.

institutionalized regional cooperation, a change in thinking is required to reduce the gap between individual national identities and overcome state-centric interpretations of history. In particular, states must be careful to not allow the political agendas or national interests of each country influence the identity, nor allow populist leaders abuse the regional identity.

Meanwhile, preference among the regional powers for a regime is important to develop a regional security regime.<sup>32</sup> The region lacks leadership in facilitating and coordinating the community building process. Neither China nor Japan, which both seek regional hegemony in constructing a multilateral security cooperation regime in the region, could take the initiative in the establishment of such a regime. Nor is South Korea capable of playing a balancer role considering its geopolitical position between China, Japan and other relatively limited regional powers.

Yet, there are reasons to be hopeful. Because countries in the region value economic growth as one of the most important objectives in their national policies, regional peace and security will be an indispensable condition for trade and continued economic growth. Accordingly, countries including China will continue to move toward promoting multilateral security cooperation in the region. Also, countries that had been hostile towards each other during the Cold War period have worked towards normalizing their diplomatic relations and are currently seeking to promote military cooperation and exchange efforts. Though countries in the Northeast Asian region have been competitively working towards expanding their military capabilities, this competitive relationship could also provide the opportunity for states to increase their awareness of the need for multilateral security cooperation in the region. The increasing economic interdependence, people-to-people contacts, and transboundary non-traditional security concerns such as environmental problems and communicable diseases have been also an important impetus for countries in the region to cooperate and integrate for advancing a community, however its term and scope are defined.

However, such 'functionalist approaches' may not prove effective in the case of Northeast Asia where geopolitical complications and urgency prevail. Indeed, intensifying economic and social interdependence and transboundary environmental problems alone have not generated the necessary conditions for a regional

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<sup>32</sup> Jervis, *ibid.*

community as it did in Europe. Therefore, consolidating confidence building measures in a 'more traditional' political and military sector seems to be more crucial at least in advancing Northeast Asian security cooperation. For this, the role of political leaders with strong commitment and will to make a political breakthrough is most important.

Still, the efforts of institutionalizing multilateral cooperation on the issue of non-traditional security should not be abandoned, rather be continued as an important process of building a sustainable and effective regional security regime. Such process is expected to be long and tedious. During this process, non-traditional and 'soft' security issues will not be able to receive the same amount of attention as traditional security issues. Nevertheless, the whole process itself would be able to increase the habits of dialogue and the exchange of views, ultimately contributing to setting the stage for political dialogue. Once a multilateral security cooperation regime is established, regardless of whether or not it succeeds in addressing and resolving particular security issues, the regime itself will have the authority to promote inter-state cooperation efforts.

## ***V. Concluding Thoughts***

This paper has discussed the prospects and expected development of regionalism in Northeast Asia based on the ideas presented above. First and foremost, which type of regionalism the Northeast Asian region must pursue should be decided first in order to specify the process to a successful regional arrangement. In order to achieve such an agreement, the region in general must decide on the scope of the region. Academics and policy makers alike have different opinions on whether 'Asia' should be defined as the Asian continent in its entirety, as sub-regions such as either east or Northeast Asia, or as part of the greater Asia-Pacific region. Reduction or enlargement of the geographic area to which regional cooperation and interdependency is significant, as it will be an important factor in determining which type of regionalism arises. Furthermore, redefining the geographic criteria

will also affect how the region will understand and respond to changing dynamics such as the rise of China and India.

Regardless of how the region is defined, there seems to be two central issues currently discussed within the region. The first issue is regarding ASEAN centrality in the process of redefining Asian regionalism. ASEAN states have looked to maintain their influence in enhancing regional cooperation, even when the scope expands outside of Southeast Asia. Secondly, how and to what extent the US should be included in all talks regarding Asian regionalism is also important to note. The dilemma lies in the fact that certain Asian states, namely China, will prefer a lesser role on the part of the US, whereas the US has keen interests in maintaining their traditional influence in the region.

Regarding the abovementioned aspects, Asian regionalism needs to promote greater cooperation both in the already thriving economic field, but also on security issues. Development in security cooperation is inevitably more difficult to achieve than economic cooperation. Therefore, there are four inter-related prerequisites, or the '*four I's*', that must be achieved for sustainable progress: *Interest, Idea/Identity, Image, and Institutions*. First, states in the region must build on obtaining a consensus regarding national interests. This can be realized through cooperation on common agendas, such as responses to regional and transnational threats as well as promoting prosperity. Through this process, policy makers will identify strategical interests on both national and sub-regional levels that lay the foundations to successful regionalism. The second requirement is a common identity. Shared values and ideas, mostly shaped and guided by opinion leaders and the epistemic community, will accelerate regional development, and value-based or value oriented regionalism will provide states with a framework in which each country benefits from increased reciprocal regional communication. Third, images of what the ordinary people of the public have towards other countries will be pivotal in the establishment of regional cooperation. Positive images will not only help overcome traditional differences and historical animosity, but will also enhance mutual trust which will prove vital in other areas such as common interest building.

The last condition to a successful sustained development of regionalism is institutions, or the institutionalized cooperation among states. It can be expected that institutions will provide the norms, rules and regulations which states will be expected to abide by to achieve

regional peace and common prosperity. However, it seems as though such institutions are only possible, and in some aspects only meaningful, if the other three prerequisites are satisfied. If not, the region may have the option of opting to promote networked regionalism as a concept more befitting for the region. But even in this case, it is important to note that even a loose idea of regionalism can only be sustained if the other three conditions are met to some extent.

Finally, the pursuit of regional multilateral cooperation aimed at peace and security requires that all participating nations share the same rights and obligations; hold regular talks and meetings under the same rules and regulations; strive to build trust and to control and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. For this, the decision makers and opinion leaders of the states in the region must present a common regional vision, along with goals and rules while displaying leadership so that strategic communication and adequate negotiation skills will be able to coordinate the various concerns and interests of states in the region. At the same time, private exchanges and cooperation must supplement the efforts of the governments toward an integrated regional community.