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Session I: Security Challenges in Northeast Asia: A South Korean Perspective¹

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Introduction

Over the couple of decades since the end of the Cold War, except one flash point—the Korean Peninsula, the overall security environment of Northeast Asia has evolved into positive direction. There is little fear of major physical conflict. Confrontation and conflict have been replaced by competition and cooperation. Interdependency among the regional countries has drastically increased in various fields. Dialogue, either bilateral or other format, has become a fashion nowadays. Today Northeast Asia looks very stable, prosperous and dynamic.

However, if we go down below the surface, we can see that Northeast Asia is being faced with more concerns and challenges than ever before across different levels. Unless these concerns and challenges are properly addressed and handled, peace and stability in the region would be seriously constrained. Unfortunately, despite the fact that the idea of multilateral security dialogue or cooperation in Northeast Asia has been with us for more than 15 years, we still don't have proper mechanism(s) or venue to address these challenges. Security architecture of Northeast Asia still rests upon several bi-lateral relations primarily. Whether the current security architecture, or mechanism, is and will be able to handle the existing and emerging security concerns and challenges should be tested against the nature of those challenges.

From this regard, despite the differences between Europe and Northeast Asia, European experience has special implications for Northeast Asia in two ways: one is structural and the other is contextual. European security architecture has undergone a structural change from bloc-to-bloc bi-polar confrontation to multilateral security cooperation as being manifested in CSCE and later OSCE. Secondly, the concept of security has changed into “common security” and, accordingly, the agenda for peace and security has become more comprehensive to cover the so-called non-traditional security (hereafter NTS) challenges in the 21st century.

To test the applicability of European experience and to draw the lessons from it, we should assess the current security environment of Northeast Asia and identify the challenges ahead of us. Based upon that, we can think of ways to further peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

Assessment of Security Environment in Northeast Asia.

To assess the overall security environment in Northeast Asia, it would be desirable to look at two different dimensions: structural and contextual.

A. *Structural Dimension: Bi-polar, uni-polar and then what: G-2?*

Security architecture, or strategic landscape, of Northeast Asia is changing as power configuration and balance are fluctuating. Words such as transforming U.S., rising China, normalizing Japan, taking-off (or re-soaring) Russia, failing North Korea, and advancing South Korea presents today's Northeast Asia. The peace and stability of Northeast Asia will be influenced by the interaction and dynamics of these unfolding trends.

The U.S. remains and will be, to sometime into the future, the one and only superpower. While there is no country, which can challenge or replace the U.S. at regional as well as global level, the U.S. cannot maintain the superpower status indefinitely. Over the past several years, the U.S. has experienced the limits of its capability in solving or coping with the challenges and its credibility as the global leader has been seriously damaged. Militarily, despite its unmatched capability, the U.S. has not been able to accomplish its objectives in war on terror and counter-proliferation. The U.S. has not been successful, if not failure, in coping with irregular challenges² in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The Bush administration's emphasis on military response in war on terrorism has brought about rather counterproductive results and damaged the U.S. leadership and integrity. Democratic peace theory and its approach have failed to accomplish what they intended to in practice. On the contrary, irregular challenges have become more intense and complicated so that the state of art weapons cannot meet those challenges effectively. In handling catastrophic challenges such as North Korea and Iran, the U.S. has shown its limits. Actually, the situation over both North Korea and Iran has deteriorated and prospect for the resolution is not that optimistic in the near future. Both countries have improved their nuclear capabilities over the years. And, despite diplomatic efforts of the concerned parties, North Korea has staged two nuclear tests (one in October 2006 and the other in May 2009) and nowadays it claims itself "nuclear power." Furthermore, proliferation threat has become more serious due to North Korean-Syrian and North Korean-Myanmar nuclear cooperation.³ And, finally, the U.S. cannot be sure about its military superiority in the future over the possible competitors such as China and Russia.⁴

In a word, the U.S. has not been successful in meeting the challenges it has identified as the major concerns or threats to its national security as well as peace and stability of the world, except the conventional challenge. Someone argues that the Pax-Americana period from the early 1990s to the present has witnessed more conflicts and challenges than the Cold-War era. And the U.S. accountability to meet those has become less

² The U.S. has identified four challenges in QDR 2006 (Quadrennial Defense Review) and NSS 2006 (National Security Strategy): conventional; irregular; disruptive; and catastrophic

³ In recent days, in addition to the North Korean-Syrian nuclear cooperation, the suspicion was raised over North Korean-Myanmar nuclear cooperation.

⁴ For detail about military balance and challenges in the future, see Andrew F. Krepinervich, Jr., "The Pentagon's Wasting Assets: The Ending Foundations of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2009), pp. 18-33.

effective and more limited. Consequently, theory of hegemonic stability, along with democratic theory of peace, is seriously in question.⁵

The financial and economic crisis of 2008, which started with the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, has also seriously damaged the U.S. leadership and neo-liberalism both morally and physically. The U.S. cannot find ways and measures to overcome the current crisis alone. It should rely on and cooperate with other major powers and developing countries in establishing a new world economic order and finding a new engine for growth.

At regional level, the U.S., during the Bush administration, has not been so much interested in regional affairs and multilateral dialogues. Despite all its political and diplomatic support for multilateral cooperation, the United States has rarely been serious about the multilateral framework. During the Clinton Administration, the United States appeared to be very much enthusiastic about multilateral cooperation. Upon his visit to Tokyo and Seoul in July 1993, President Clinton announced “New Pacific Community Initiative” which contained four tasks. One of them was participation in multilateral security regime.⁶ Such position was reaffirmed several times. In *East Asian Strategy Initiative* (EASI) of 1995 and *East Asian Strategy Report* (EASR) of 1998⁷, the United States, as a way to complement the existing bilateral security alliances—the U.S.-ROK and the U.S.-Japan, announced that it would actively seek a “new multilateral security initiative.”⁸ Despite such political support, the United States did not press multilateral security cooperation initiative actively. And also it has shown lukewarm, or ambivalent, attitude toward other countries’ initiative of multilateral security cooperation.⁹ The Bush Administration, especially just right after the 9.11 attack, seemed primarily relying on bi-lateral security framework and rather passive toward multilateral security framework or dialogue.

The Obama administration looks different from the previous Bush administration. First of all, the Obama administration will be trying to involve actively in regional affairs and to be more concerned with regional issues. Second, instead of adhering to balance of

⁵ See Terrence Edward Paupp, *The Future of Global Relations: Crumbling Walls, Rising Regions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

⁶ Other tasks are: reaffirmation of the existing bi-lateral security cooperation relations; deterrence of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons; and support for the spread of democracy in the region. *The Korea Herald*, July 11, 1993.

⁷ “The United States engages in a variety of official and unofficial multilateral security dialogues to enhance mutual cooperation and trust in Asia, ----. The United States also participates regularly in regional conferences on practical security cooperation, as well as other multilateral fora designed to address specific regional problems, ----.” *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*, November 23, 1998, pp. 43-44.

⁸ This position was also reflected in the Clinton-Hashimoto Declaration of 1996.

⁹ But the United States has supported NEACD (Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue), where scholars, experts, and government officials participate in their private capacity, since the beginning of that forum. Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California-San Diego, has been carrying out the NEACD.

power (hard power) perspective, the U.S. under President Obama's leadership is very much likely to pursue power of balance (hard, soft, and smart power).¹⁰ Third, the U.S. is expected to be more forthcoming on regional multilateralism fora such as ASEAN Regional Forum (hereafter ARF) and East Asian Summit (hereafter EAS).¹¹ Whether these U.S. efforts and orientation will be effectively realized is unpredictable since the U.S. is under-represented and less engaged than China in most regional affairs.

Unlike the U.S., China, who has reached the 60th anniversary, has become more influential and far-reaching than ever before. Nowadays, at regional level, China can be regarded as the champion of multilateral dialogue and security cooperation. Under the theme of 'peaceful rise or development,' China is very active in promoting multilateral framework in East Asia. China, along with Russia, is playing the leading role in strengthening the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (hereafter SCO) and expanding the membership and functions. China is one of the strong proponents for EAS.

Until the mid-90s, China maintained the position of "first bi-lateral, then multilateral." And it perceived the multilateral framework as a plot of encirclement of China, where thorny issues would be raised against China¹² and informal anti-China coalition could be formed. Paradoxically, China recognized the possibility that without the Chinese presence the issues related to China's national interests could be raised and common position among the concerned parties in the region would be formed vis-à-vis China. The absence appeared to be much more damaging and counterproductive than the participation. And China was in need to have a very stable and peaceful external environment for sustaining its economic growth. It seemed that multilateral framework could be a venue to promote peace-loving and cooperative image of China. In addition, to check the U.S. strategic dominance at least at regional level, multilateral security framework could be utilized—"offensive defense." Thus China began to be supportive and active in promoting multilateral dialogue framework or institutions.¹³

Since then China has been very active and successful in launching various multilateral fora such as Boao Forum, Asian Security Conference, and Asian Cooperation Dialogue, in where the main theme is multilateral cooperation. At the sub-regional level, China has played very significant role in the Six-Party Talks as the host country. Further into the

¹⁰ For detail on the concept and idea of power of balance, see Kurt Campbell, Nirav Patel, and Vikram J. Singh, *The Power of Balance: America in Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Center for New American Security, 2008).

¹¹ President Obama argued for the establishment of 'effective institution' beyond the existing bilateral relations and the 6-Party Talks during the campaign. However, it is still unclear the meaning of 'effective institution.'

¹² In April 1992, China announced 'five principles for strengthening regional cooperation': mutual respect, mutual openness, mutual negotiation, mutual benefit, and co-prosperity. This implies that China saw the multilateral dialogue or cooperation as other countries' means to intervene into internal affairs of China

¹³ Another factor, which contributed to the change of Chinese attitude toward multilateral security framework, was the agreement on the territorial issues with Southeast Asian countries.

future, in conjunction with its strategic partnership with Russia, China is very likely to utilize and keep working on multilateral framework to offset, or at least balance, the US-Japan pillar.

Not only in security dimension but also in economy and trade, Chinese influence has become more substantial and important. To almost every country in the region, China is the number one trading partner. For the past 30 years, Chinese economy has recorded almost double digit annual growth. China has become the world factory and no. 4 market in the world. And China is catching in high-tech area as well. While it is suffering from the current economic crisis, China may be the one country, who can record positive economic growth in 2009. Furthermore, in overcoming the global economic crisis and searching for a new world economic order, Chinese voice and role cannot be underestimated. China has well gone beyond East Asia. In recent years, China has been very active in Latin America, Africa, and Central Asia. China has established or is establishing its own global network by using its economic power very effectively and by using its own soft power or 'charm' diplomacy. In other words, while the U.S. has been preoccupied with the war on terror in the "arc of instability," China has expanded its global reach gearing toward multi-polar world by using non-military power and assets.

Interaction and dynamics between declining American dominance (or America's efforts to retain it) and rising Chinese influence will influence the future strategic landscape in Northeast Asia as well as in East Asia in general. It is uncertain what kind of security architecture, uni-polar, G2 or multilateral framework, will emerge. Thus, for the time being, the fluidity and uncertainty will be the most distinctive character of the region.

The proliferation of strategic dialogue and minilateralism in the region is also another important trend of the 21st century in Northeast Asia. The U.S. has strengthened its bilateral alliance and introduced new dialogue mechanisms such as Strategic Consultation for Allied Partner (SCAP) and Big 4 (or 2+2, foreign and defense) Meeting for its regional allies. Along with that, the U.S. has introduced a new trilateral consultation, or cooperation, mechanism among the U.S., Japan and Australia. Among the U.S. allies in the region, pol-mil dialogues such as South Korea-Australia and Japan-Australia have become more active. It might be possible to see that such bilateral dialogue can be transformed into trilateral, or quad-lateral, dialogue.

In parallel, South Korea, Japan, and China have launched trilateral dialogues among themselves at both ministerial and summit level. Before that, these three countries used to have the meetings at the sideline of ASEAN + 3 and ASEAN + 6.¹⁴ Now these three Northeast Asian countries have finally their own forum, where they can discuss common concerns and find ways to enhance cooperation and exchange among themselves. Since these meetings are at the early stage, neither sensitive political nor controversial security

¹⁴ ASEAN+3 includes ten ASEAN countries, South Korea, Japan, and China. And ASEAN+6 includes ten ASEAN countries, South Korea, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

issues will be the agenda for discussion. For the time being, they will primarily focus on economic and social issues for practical interests.¹⁵ However, these meetings will be functioning to broaden and deepen the cooperation and to nurture the habit of multilateral dialogue.

Last, but not least, in August 2003, six regional countries introduced the Six-Party Talks to resolve North Korean nuclear problem peacefully through diplomatic dialogue. At the conclusion of the second round of the fourth meeting of the Six-Party Talks, six participating countries agreed on “the exploration of ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.”¹⁶ For the first time, all six countries in the region officially agreed to seek multilateral cooperation. At the 6th round of the Six-Party Talks, the six countries were able to produce ‘the 2.13 agreement,’ which contains initial phase implementation measures. And five working groups were established. One of them is the working group on Northeast Asia Peace and Security.¹⁷ There is still long way to go in realizing the goal. But the introduction of the working group itself can be regarded as an important step.

In sum, in Northeast Asia, it is possible to say that we will see lots of diplomatic activities and dialogues at different levels in different areas. How these dynamics and forces will settle into the future is to be seen with great concern.

B. Contextual Changes

Throughout the post-Cold War era, Northeast Asia has observed the increase of defense spending and arms build-up. In 2008, China’s defense budget was \$84.9 billion, just next to the U.S., whose defense budget was \$607.3 billion. Japan spent \$46.3 billion and South Korea spent \$24.2 billion. And Russia’s defense budget was \$58.6 billion.¹⁸ Over the past ten years, China has doubled its defense spending. As its economy continues to grow, China is expected to consistently increase its defense spending faster than any other major

¹⁵ At the first trilateral meeting, which was held in Jeju Island, June 2007, three ministers agreed on nine practical cooperation programs: investment agreement; FTA; energy security; Kimpo-Haneda-Shanghai shuttle; environment; climate change; common culture history; exchange of journalist; and exchange among foreign affairs and national security research institute. Up to now, tripartite foreign ministers’ meeting has been held three times: June 2007 in Jeju; June 2008 in Tokyo; and September 2009 in Shanghai. The first South Korea-Japan-China summit took place on December 13, 2008 in Kukuoka, Japan. And, at that meeting, President LEE Myung-bak, Premier Wen Jiabao, and Prime Minister Taro Aso adopted “Joint Statement for Tripartite Partnership,” “Action Plan for Promoting Trilateral Cooperation among the Republic of Korea, the People’s Republic of China, and Japan,” “Trilateral Joint Announcement on Disaster Management Cooperation,” and “Joint Statement on the International Finance and Economy.”

¹⁶ *The Korea Herald*, September 20, 2005.

¹⁷ The working group on Northeast Asian Peace and Security is chaired by Russia. This working group has held three meetings up to now. It is reported that this working group is working on the principles or guidelines. The other four working groups are: working group on US-DPRK normalization; working group on Japan-DPRK normalization; working group on denuclearization; and working group on economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance.

¹⁸ *Dong-A Ilbo*, September 29, 2009.

powers. Whether the others will increase their defense spending is uncertain due to economic conditions and changes in their respective defense policy orientation.

Military Balance in Northeast Asia

	ROK	DPRK	U.S	China	Japan(SDF)	Russia
Total troops	687,000	1,106,000	1,539,587	2,185,000	230,300	1,027,000
Army	560,000	950,000	632,245	1,600,000	138,400	360,000
Navy	68,000	46,000	339,453	255,000	44,100	142,000
Air Force	64,000	110,000	340,530	300,000-330,000	45,600	160,000

Source: Military Balance 2009, IISS

What is more important than the increase of defense spending is where and how they spend: that is the contents of force build-up. Each country is transforming its armed forces to be more ready and capable to carry out various missions and operations. The key words we can see in this transformation trend are as follow: power-projection, precision, mobility, multi-purpose, elite force, and integration centered upon the utilization of information, communication, and computer technologies.¹⁹ And the main area of force build-up is navy, air force and missile, while downsizing the army and turning it into elite force. Every country in the region has been and will be trying to acquire advanced modern aircraft including UAV, airborne re-fueling system, sea-lift capability ships, submarines, modern cruisers with AEGIS capability, and longer range missile.²⁰ This trend of force build-up in offensive manner has not been accompanied by either confidence-building measures or higher transparency. Thus this could result in the misunderstanding and misjudgement. Furthermore, this could end up in vicious circle of arms race in Northeast Asia. And, in even worse case, it could be possible to have accidental clash or low intensity of conflict since each country in the region would have military options available, or perception of having military options, as a result of force build-up and confidence in it.

¹⁹ Network-centric warfare is the concept to capture these characteristics.

²⁰ For details, see Ministry of National Defense, ROK, *Defense White Paper 2008* (Seoul: MND, 2008), pp. 15-40; and Gyooyeol Lee, *Dongbuka Gunsaryuk 2008-2009* (Northeast Asian Military Power (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, 2009). In the parade to celebrate the 60th anniversary, China has revealed 52 new weapon systems.

Second contextual change in Northeast Asia is that Northeast Asia is faced with almost every NTS challenges, maybe except terrorism, nowadays and, as time goes by, the magnitude and scope of those challenges could become even bigger and wider. Most serious and threatening challenge is North Korean nuclear problem. Over the past 18 years, despite a series of agreements such as the Geneva Agreed Framework of 1994, the September 19 Joint Statement of 2005, the Feb 13 Agreement of 2006, and the October 3 Agreement of 2007, the North Korean nuclear problem has become worse. North Korea has staged two nuclear tests: one in October 2006, and the other in May 2009 and claims itself as a nuclear power. It seems that North Korea has made its strategic choice to become and remain as a nuclear power. Unlike South Africa or Ukraine, North Korea is believed to pursue either Indian or Pakistan model, being recognized as a nuclear state and having normal diplomatic relationship with the U.S. However, the international community cannot allow North Korea to be recognized and accepted as a nuclear power, which will undermine the foundation of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). Nowadays, the international community is enforcing sanctions against North Korea under the auspices of UN Security Council Resolution 1874. The U.S. has clearly stated that it will not lift up the sanctions unless North Korea takes ‘bold steps’ in denuclearization.²¹ On the other hand, North Korea has argued that it will not return to the Six-Party Talks and will strengthen its own nuclear deterrent capability so long as the U.S. maintains hostile policy vis-à-vis North Korea.²² Due to these contrasting positions, despite all diplomatic efforts, it is unlikely to solve the North Korean nuclear problem soon. Consequently, Northeast Asia will be faced with the nuclear proliferation challenges vertical as well as horizontal.

It is believed that, over the years, North Korea has improved its nuclear capability by running two nuclear programs—uranium and plutonium. North Korea has extracted about 40 to 50 kg of weapon-grade plutonium. If they reprocessed all spent fuel rods in their possession,²³ North Korea could get additional plutonium about 33kg. If they completed 50 MWe and 200 MWe reactors, North Korea’s production capabilities would be increased tremendously. Furthermore, if they run UEP (uranium enrichment program) successfully, North Korea would be able to export nuclear material to other countries. Based upon the fact and suspicion on North Korea’s nuclear cooperation with Syria,

²¹ James Steinberg, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, said “We’re not going to, as in the past in some cases, give sanctions relief for talks. The sanctions will remain in place until North Korean take concrete, irreversible steps to eliminate nuclear weapons.” *JoongAng Daily*, October 1, 2009.

²² On September 3, 2009, Mr. Sin Son Ho, North Korean Ambassador to UN sent a letter to Ms. Susan E. Rice, President of the Security Council, United Nations, which reads “Reprocessing of spent fuel rods is at its final phase and extracted plutonium is being weaponized. Experimental uranium enrichment has successfully been conducted to enter into completion phase. We are prepared for both dialogue and sanction.” *Yonhap News*, September 4, 2009.

²³ It is estimated that North Korea has 8,000 spent fuel rods and 14,000 fuel rods. *Aju Gyungjei*, May 16, 2009.

Myanmar, and Iran, it is possible to argue that North Korea could become even more serious horizontal as well as vertical proliferation threat.

North Korean Plutonium Inventories

Before 1994 (IRT reactors and 5 MWe reactor)	~ 8.4 kg (1+ weapons worth)
2003 (5 MWe reactor)	~25 kg (4-6 weapons worth)
2005 (5 MWe reactor)	~10-14 kg(~2 weapons worth)
As of November 2006	~4-8 kg in reactor now (not separated)

Source: Report on North Korean Nuclear Program by Siegfried S. Hecker. For more details, see Siegfried S. Hecker, *Report on North Korean Nuclear Program* available on <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/hecker1106.pdf>.

North Korean Production Capacity

5 MWe reactor capacity	~ 6 kg/yr (1 weapon worth/yr)
Future 50 MWe reactor	~ 60 kg/yr(~10 weapons worth/yr)
Future 200 MWe reactor	~ 200 kg/yr

Source: Report on North Korean Nuclear Program by Siegfried S. Hecker

There are other unprecedented NTS challenges in Northeast Asia. The frequency, scope, and magnitude of other NTS challenges in the region have also increased in recent days. And these are accompanied by huge economic and social cost. First of all, we have witnessed huge natural disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, typhoon and flood, forest fire, and etc. Second, climate change, desertification and its consequences have brought about environment issues such as air and water (including ocean) pollution and yellow dust issue, which greatly affect all countries in the region. Third, public health is threatened by pandemic diseases such as SARS, Avian flu, and most recently H1N1. With the increase of people’s movement, we have become more vulnerable to these pandemic diseases. Fourth, along with organized crime, human and drug trafficking have become serious issue. All these issues require multilateral cooperation among all concerned parties in the region. Of course, on some issues, Northeast Asian countries are cooperating each other at working level. But the cooperation has not been well institutionalized, systematic, and region-wide. For example, information sharing²⁴ is one of the key factors in coping with these challenges. But it is difficult in practice.

²⁴ Especially, in handling human security issues, information disclosure and sharing is very critical. However, some country is reluctant to reveal the critical information in many cases.

North Korean Nuclear Capability

Facility (Location)	Announced by North Korea	Estimated by South Korea	Current Status
IRT-2000 Research Reactor (Yongbyon)	2 MW output	8 MW output	Began operation in 1965
The 1 st Nuclear Reactor (Yongbyon)	5MWe nuclear power plant	25MWt Pu nuclear production plant	Began operation in 1975
The 2 nd Nuclear Reactor (Yongbyon)	50MWe nuclear power plant	200MWt nuclear production plant	Suspension of construction (freeze)
The 3 rd Nuclear Reactor (Taechon)	200 MWe nuclear power plant	200 MWe nuclear power plant	Suspension of construction (freeze)
3 Nuclear Power Plants (Sinpo)	635 MWx3	Nuclear power plant	Transferred to the KEDO project
Radiochemical Laboratory (Yongbyon)	Laboratory	Reprocessing facility	SF200t/y capability
Radiochemical Research Center (Yongbyon)	Institute	Plutonium extraction experiment	Nuclear fuel processing
Isotope Production Laboratory (Yongbyon)	Separation processing b/w U and Pu	Plutonium production	Possession of 7 Hot cells
Uranium Core Concentration Plant (Pyongsan)	Manufacturing nuclear fuel	LWR nuclear fuel	Began operation in 1990
Nuclear Fuel Rod Plant (Yonbyon)		200-300 t/y facility	Operation b/w 1985-1986
Uranium Refinery Plant (Pyongsan)		200,000 ton Ore/y	Began construction in 1985 and operation in 1990
Uranium Refinery Plant (Pakch'on)		210 ton UO ₂ production	Operation b/w 1982-1992
Uranium Fabrication/Refinery Plant (Kusong)		Mine	.
Uranium Mines (Hungnam, Pyongsan, Unggi, Sunchon)		26,000,000 ton reserves	Uranium Ore standards
Nuclear Energy Scientific Research Center (Yongbyon)		2,000 staff	Established in 1962 and expanded in 1982
Pyongsong Atomic Energy Research Center (Pyongsong)		5,000-6,000 staff	Established in 1982
Pakch'on Atomic Energy Research Center (Pakch'on)		About 8,000 staff	.

This table is based on the information from Korean Institute of Defense Analyses, *Military Power in Northeast Asia 2008-2009 (Dongbukah Gunsaryeok 2008-2009 in Korean)* (KIDA Press, 2009) and the Global Security website (www.globalsecurity.org).

Recent Major Natural Disasters in Asia

Date	Event	Location	Estimated fatalities (Death toll)
2002-2003	SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)	Mostly in East Asia and a few in Europe, Canada and the U.S.	755
2003	Indian heat wave	India	1,900
2003-present	AI (Avian Influenza)	Mostly in Asia	256 (as of 2007)
Dec 26, 2004	Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami	Indian Ocean, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Maldives	229, 866
Oct 8, 2005	Kashmir Earthquake	Pakistan	86,000
May 2, 2008	Nargis Cyclone	Myanmar	~146,000
May 12, 2008	Sichuan Earthquake	China	69,181~
Aug 2, 2009	Morakot Typhoon	Japan, Philippines, Taiwan, China	640 ~
Sep 27 - Oct 3, 2009	Katsana Typhoon	Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos	488 ~
Sep 1-3, 2009	Monsoon Rain	Southern India	227 ~
Sep 2, 2009	Java Earthquake	Java, Indonesia	79 ~
Sep 29, 2009	Samoa Island Earthquake	Samoa Islands	189 ~
Sep 30, 2009	Sumatra Earthquake	Southern Sumatra, Indonesia	715 ~

Several major events are selected from the list of natural disaster in Wikipedia website (www.wikipedia.org) and Associated Press website (www.ap.org).

We have witnessed the growth of multilateral, or minilateral, cooperation and dialogues over some specific issues. And the contextual changes of Northeast Asian security environment have made the multilateral cooperation more necessary. Furthermore, Northeast Asian countries have become more aware of human security concept. To a certain degree, the concept of security has begun to change from absolute security to common and comprehensive security. However, there are some obstacles to overcome in pursuing the realization of multilateral security cooperation.

Constraints on Multilateral Security Cooperation

There are constraints in realizing multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia: absence of common threat, absence of commonly shared vision on strategic landscape and modality of regional peace and stability; slow process of normalization of bi-lateral relations, lingering past history issues, territorial disputes, and rising nationalistic sentiment and lack of community spirit or identity.

Unlike Europe during the Cold War era, in Northeast Asia, there is no common threat or fear, which makes the regional states to self constrain and to cooperate regardless of their ideological differences. Nuclear element, which forced European states to cooperate,

is very weak, or virtually absent in the region and, thus, there is no fear of holocaust or mutual destruction. While the U.S. still maintains its security commitment to the defense of its allies—South Korea and Japan using nuclear umbrella, the nuclear component is quite weak and less visible than in Europe. Rather the U.S. relies on conventional weapons. Russia is same. China can be an exception. Furthermore, there is no direct flash point between the nuclear powers.²⁵ On the other hand, the use of force for attaining political as well as military objectives seems still valid, maybe more valid, since physical conflict could be contained and controlled under a certain level as a result of Revolution in Military Affairs (hereafter RMA) and defense transformation.²⁶ Readily available means and perception of it can allow the countries to do what they were not able to do in the past.

The second, which is closely related to the first, is the absence of common-shared vision on desirable strategic structure for peace and stability as a result of the lack of frank and in-depth strategic dialogue. Of course, there are fora such as ARF, ASC, EAS, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, APEC. But those are not relevant places to engage in strategic dialogue among the directly concerned parties with long-term implication. And topics in those meetings are rather ad-hoc or current issue-relevant ones. Furthermore, except APEC and ARF, the U.S. is not present. The absence of the U.S. in regional and sub-regional dialogues cannot guarantee the positive outcomes. Rather than engaging in dialogue, countries tend to project their own version of strategic vision upon the others. That frequently invites misunderstanding of real intent and weakens the ground for multilateral cooperation.

In recent years, we have seen the growth of minilateralism (Korea-Japan-China, Korea-US-Japan, US-Japan-Australia) and bilateral strategic dialogue. The problem is that while they can contribute to enhancing cooperation among the participating countries, they may raise some concerns among non-participating countries. Especially, what is discussed in bilateral strategic dialogue cannot be shared with some countries. And, sometimes, they try to avoid sensitive but important issues and stay at where they feel comfortable. Thus there could be a danger of honoring formality rather than substance. While they agree on peace and security in principle, Northeast Asian states have rarely discussed about the conditions for peace and security. Rather finger-pointing tendency has been observed.

The third is the establishment of normal, or full diplomatic, relations among the countries. The normalization of relations means the recognition of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity and the creation of status quo among the countries. And multilateral security cooperation could be seen as a way to ensure or further

²⁵ The Taiwan Strait can be the area where the U.S. and China might collide with possibility of nuclear exchange.

²⁶ Force modernization and weapons acquisition are empowered by the growing economic power of the countries in the region. All countries in the region have launched their own version of RMA.

strengthen such normal relations. North Korea has not normalized its relations with the United States and Japan. Unless it has normal relations with those two, North Korea will remain negative toward multilateral security framework being seen as another scheme of containment or encirclement. However, the prospect for normalizing the relations among these countries looks not so optimistic due to nuclear stalemate and other issues such as human rights, abductee issue, and other security concerns coming from North Korea.²⁷ In pursuing comprehensive multilateral security cooperation dialogue in Northeast Asia, decision should be made on the founding membership.

In conjunction with the third element, the settlement of territorial disputes is necessary and required. There are several territorial disputes: Dokdo issue between South Korea and Japan, Northern Islands issue between Russia and Japan, Senkaku islands issue between Japan and China. These issues and disputes have been chronically raised, but no mutually satisfactory resolution has been reached. Ever increasing importance of maritime resources and expanding, deepening, nationalistic sentiment would impede the resolution process. Of course, as we have seen in South China Sea case, where China and Southeast Asian countries were involved in resolving the territorial issues, multilateral fora can be used. But the prospect for such formula isn't that positive.

Last, but not least, lingering past history issue and the rise of nationalistic sentiment is a great concern for us to overcome. In recent years, we have seen the rise of nationalistic sentiment in almost every country in the region. Such phenomenon seems to be tied up with domestic politics and changes in political configuration.²⁸ It seems that we are living in an era of clash of nationalism, neither ideologies nor civilization. The dispute over the history has rather strengthened nationalistic sentiment in recent days²⁹. For example, cyber-space is used for raising nationalistic sentiment and we can easily see cyber-war among netizens. Ironically, the globalization is paralleled by rise of nationalistic sentiment. Such trend is likely to breed more disputes and to impede the development of "community spirit."

²⁷ Other issues or concerns the U.S. and Japan have are human rights, conventional threat and military tension, illegal activities, and peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, due to its special relationship with North Korea, China, maybe Russia too, is reluctant to the five party consultation, which was proposed by South Korea. It may see such format might bring about further isolation and negative response of North Korea.

²⁸ For example, in recent election, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan has emerged as the majority party and the issue of amendment of the Constitution has begun to suffice just right after the election. In Korea, Yeolin Woori Party appears to be progressive in policy line and, on the other hand, nationalistic sentiment is used to secure public support. And new Chinese leadership is also utilizing nationalistic sentiment to consolidate its power position.

²⁹ Dispute between Japan and South Korea and between Japan and China over modern history and dispute between China and South Korea over Koguryo are the examples.

Ways to Utilize the Six-Party Talks as a Platform

If the Six-Party Talks proceeds successfully, we will become closer to multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia and/or the Six-Party Talks itself can become an institution for security cooperation in the region for the following reasons.

First and foremost, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be done in multilateral framework, where the Six-Party would cooperate for a common goal. With closer cooperation with International Atomic Energy Agency, the six countries can establish Peninsula-wise regional monitoring, verification, and inspection regime, which is entitled to carry out all the process of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This regime can also carry out dismantlement process. Furthermore, this mechanism can be further developed into regional nuclear cooperation agency or organization which would control the fuel cycle and nuclear facilities/programs, while guaranteeing the right of peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Second, the issue of energy assistance to North Korea is another area of multilateral cooperation. South Korea has announced and reaffirmed its plan to provide 2 million kilowatts electric power to North Korea. But it will take time to complete the project. To manage the transitional period, we can think of some temporary measures such as provision of energy sources such as coal, petroleum (or Heavy Fuel Oil), and repair of the power plant and power grid.³⁰ Russia, who has assisted in building power plants in North Korea, and is an oil-exporting country, can also make contribution to these areas.³¹ In conjunction with the first issue, later stage, if successful, it could be possible to combine these two in a regional energy cooperation mechanism—Northeast Asia Energy Cooperation Agency.

Third, trade, investment, and transportation are the area where multilateral cooperation could be realized. With regard the trade issues, we can start or expand joint venture of the intermediate processed goods in light industry, agriculture and forestry. The Gaesung Industrial Complex can be open to joint venture³². Goods and products produced in the Gaesung can be exported to Russia, China, and other countries through ground routes which would be connected by TKR (Trans-Korea Railway)-TSK (Trans-Siberia Railway). In addition, the development and construction of natural gas and pipeline, which connect Russia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan, could also be beneficial to

³⁰ In the 2.13 agreement, the five countries agreed to provide 1 million metric ton of heavy fuel oil equivalent economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance to North Korea in disabling period and further.

³¹ It was reported that Russia is interested in supplying electricity to North Korea by using its surplus electricity in Far Eastern region. But there are various technical issues and extra cost of building power grid to connect the supply line..

³² During the Kim Dae-jung administration, the development of Gaesung industrial complex was designed not only to South Korea companies but also to foreign companies in joint investment form. In the Roh Muhyun administration, the combination of North Korean labor, South Korean Capital, and Chinese/Russian market was the ideal format in developing the Gaesung Industrial Complex.

all. Through such joint venture, it would be possible to further stabilize the situation on the Korean Peninsula by encouraging North Korea to change its policies. This could lead to gradual and peaceful transformation of North Korean regime.

Fourth, the Six-Party Talks would facilitate the normalization process between North Korea and Japan and between North Korea and the United States. In the Joint Statement, these countries have agreed to take steps to normalize their relations. The normalization process between the United States and North Korea wouldn't be that easy due to the outstanding issues such as human right and other WMD issues³³. But the U.S.-North Korea talks for normalization itself could start and gradual engagement between the two countries would be followed. In parallel, Japan and North Korea could complete the normalization process if there were a complete resolution of abductee issue.³⁴ If both bilateral relations were normalized, we would be in a better position to forge multilateral cooperation mechanism since in the process thorny issues would be resolved and we could turn our attention to regional issues.

Fifth, according to the Joint Statement, the issue of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula shall be discussed in a separate mechanism. It could be similar to the Four-Party Talks, where the United States, South and North Korea, and China took part in³⁵. Since this matter³⁶ is directly related to the security and military matters ranging from confidence-building, arms limitation, and reduction, technical expertise and experience of the U.S., China, and Russia could be utilized. Based upon their contribution and participation, it would be possible to go beyond the Korean Peninsula. Thus the establishment of a durable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and the process itself will greatly contribute to the stabilization not only of Korean Peninsula but also Northeast Asia by replacing more than five decades old Armistice Arrangement and bringing in a new strategic landscape upon which all regional powers can cooperate.

Sixth, hopefully, the Six-Party process can contribute to "normalizing of North Korea." Political/diplomatic, economic, and social engagement toward North Korea in the process of solving nuclear problem can constrain North Korea's abnormal behavior and encourage reform and opening of North Korea. Consequently, there would be more common agenda to be discussed and cooperation will be expanded and enriched.

Finally, but most importantly, multilateral security cooperation has become an agenda for discussion among the states in the region at official level. Among the six countries, there has been no formal dialogue to discuss security cooperation. With the Joint

³³ Ambassador Hill said, "While the United States wants to normalize relations with North Korea, to normalize relations with North Korea, other important issues such as human rights, chemical and biological weapons, terrorism support and other illegal activities should be discussed." *The Chosun Ilbo*, October 10, 2005.

³⁴ Some people expect the normalization between North Korea and Japan may take place prior to that of North Korea and the United States, once the abductees issue is resolved.

³⁵ In realizing peace regime, South Korea government favors 'the so-called 2 (South and North Korea) + 2 (the United States and China) + 2 (Russia and Japan)' formula.

³⁶ What constitutes a peace regime is still controversial among the concerned parties.

Statement of September, we are geared to press forward multilateral security dialogue and cooperation by introducing Working Group on Northeast Asia Peace and Security.³⁷ At the present stage and maybe up to the near future, it is unrealistic to expect the action-oriented security cooperation. However, it would be possible to have security dialogue where each party can present its own strategic security outlook. Through this, it will be possible to identify common elements as well as differences. And it could foster mutual understanding of each other and prevent, or reduce, misjudgment of the others. Based upon the accumulation of experience and strategic dialogue, we shall be able to share the vision for the future. And shared vision will enable us to identify how and where we could and should cooperate. And in the meantime, dialogue itself without concrete result or outcome has some significant since it is a mutual learning process. Given the divergent views and strategic outlook, it shall take rather long time to see institutionalized security cooperation mechanism. Thus, while we are aiming for noble goal, patience is necessary.

While we are working on multilateral security cooperation, in parallel we can and should work on the following two issues, mostly bilateral in nature, to consolidate the ground for multilateral security cooperation.

First, we should try to eliminate psychological barriers, mostly found in bilateral relations. Distortion, or different interpretation, of history is causing so many troubles and impedes the development of future-oriented cooperative relations among the countries in the region. The so-called Northeast Region Project of China is one of sources of dispute between South Korea and China and aggravates South Korean understanding of and feeling toward China. Japanese distortion of and glorifying of modern history, centered upon Japanese occupation of Korea in the first half of the 20th century, has ignited very strong anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea and China. Whole-hearted joint efforts to establish a common understanding of the history are very essential and immediately required. It is not desirable for governments to be directly involved. Instead, governments can perform assisting roles, whereas the private sectors can take the leading roles.

Second, exclusive nationalistic sentiment tends to be abused for domestic political purpose—i.e. consolidating domestic political base of political leaders. Such approach has brought about unnecessary and undesirable consequences on the relations among the countries. While it is not possible to dissect clearly domestic politics and international politics, we should try to refrain from domestic politics-oriented approach in dealing with external affairs. In conjunction with, we should work hard to breed ‘identity’ and ‘community spirit’ among the countries in the region.

³⁷ This WG has met three times. And it is reported that this working group is working on the principles and guidelines.

Conclusion

We are in a better position to realize multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia. There are more dialogues either bilateral or trilateral and practical cooperation over specific issues and concerns has deepened. On the other hand, there are still obstacles to overcome as being mentioned.

With the introduction of the Six-Party talks, we have for the first time the venue for discussion of regional issues. But, we still have a long way to go. Denuclearization process may take long time and it might be slowed down and stalled due to various factors and events. However, as being pointed out already, the process itself is institution or norm building process among the countries in the region.

Ironically the North Korean nuclear challenge has brought the other five countries closer than ever. Of course, while there are some differences in mixing policy options among the five parties, there is an underlying consensus and determination to make the Korean Peninsula nuclear and WMD free. Such coalition of the willing will survive the North Korean nuclear crisis and can become a stepping stone for resolving other security concerns.

First thing is first. We should keep focused on the realization of the denuclearization of North Korea and in that process we should work hard to make North Korea to become a responsible member of the international community. As a consequence, confidence, trust, and norms and habits of cooperation will be established and enhanced among the countries in the region. While we are in a better position in realizing multilateral cooperation and regional institution building than any other period in modern history, patience is required.

Second, we should think and work hard to establish mutually reinforcing and complementary relationship between the existing bilateral relations and multilateral regional cooperation mechanisms. Multilateral regional cooperation mechanism(s) should not be considered and pursued as a replacement of the existing bilateral relations. Each one has its own merits and shortcomings so that multilateral cooperation mechanism(s) should be pursued as a way to overcome the shortcomings and limits of bilateral relations. In addition, instead of pursuing a comprehensive multilateral regional cooperation mechanism from the beginning, it may be desirable to introduce several mini-lateral cooperation mechanisms in specific issue areas. In essence, multilayered and multifaceted approach is very necessary and required.

Third, we should try to improve bilateral relations among the countries in the region. As being aforementioned, there are some thorny issues which impede the development of genuine cooperation. Sincere efforts should be poured in overcoming such issues and limits, which are mostly the product of unfortunate history. We should really put the past behind us and walk forward, not back sliding. Common understanding of the history and

shared vision for the future must be regarded as one of the key elements in realizing regional cooperation institution building.

Fourth, while respecting characteristics of region, we should avoid exclusive regionalism. Rather we should find the linkage between sub-regional, regional and global institutions. There are various regional and global institutions with sub-regional manifestations. If we are able to establish cooperative relations between them, it would be very much reinforcing each other. So not only intra-region but also inter-region cooperation should be pursued. There should be a balance between universality and particularity and mutually reinforcing relations cross various levels and issues.