

# **An Assessment of Prospect for Multilateral Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia**

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## **I. Introduction**

With the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, multilateral security cooperation was revisited as a new, but not really new, security paradigm. Northeast Asia was not an exception. There were several proposals and ideas for multilateral security dialogue or cooperation<sup>2</sup>. While those ideas and proposals were welcome in principle, none of them has been realized at governmental level yet. Rather strategic landscape of Northeast Asia still rests upon several bilateral relations primarily and the mix of Cold-War type confrontations and post-Cold War cooperation is noticeable.

Against such backdrop, two factors, one at global level and the other at sub-regional level, have made us to review the multilateral approach. Those are: the emergence of non-traditional security threats (hereafter NTS) such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (hereafter WMD), organized crimes, human and drug trafficking, counterfeiting and etc; and, from a region-specific perspective, six countries' agreement on "the exploration of ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia" at the conclusion of the second round of the fourth meeting of the Six-Party Talks<sup>3</sup>. For the first time, all six countries in this sub-region have officially agreed to seek multilateral cooperation.

No one, no country, or no region is free from threats of NTS. NTS transcends geographical boundaries instantly and brings about huge damage upon humanity both

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<sup>1</sup> Views and ideas in this paper are exclusively those of the author. They do not represent any official view or position of the ROK government.

<sup>2</sup> The ROK government proposed "NEASeD (Northeast Asian Security Dialogue)" in May 1994. There were many similar proposals made by the U.S., Russia, and Japan during this period. But China did not make any proposal of multilateral security dialogue or cooperation framework. Rather China emphasized the bi-lateral relations over multilateral framework.

<sup>3</sup> *The Korea Herald*, September 20, 2005.

physically and psychologically. To effectively deal with the challenges of NTS, institutionalization, not an ad hoc form, of multilateral cooperation is very necessary. Northeast Asia is not an exception. Over the past several issues, NTS issues with different magnitude have come forward in Northeast Asia as it has done in other regions. Thus there is rationale for multilateral security cooperation among the countries in the region. Unfortunately, such cooperation in the region is rather ad hoc in nature and does not have a strong institutional base at all.

More important and meaningful thing happened in the process of dealing with North Korean nuclear problem. September, 2005. To solve North Korean nuclear problem peacefully through diplomatic negotiation, the six countries—South Korea, the U.S., Japan, China, Russia and North Korea—agreed to establish ‘the Six-Party Talks.’ Since its first meeting in August 2003, the Six-Party Talks has been held seven times up to now.<sup>4</sup> With regard to regional institution-building, two important things have happened in the Six-Party process over the years. At the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks, for the first time, the participating countries officially agreed to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation and to introduce ‘Northeast Asia Peace Forum,’ where countries in Northeast Asia can have talks on security issues.<sup>5</sup> At the 6<sup>th</sup> round of the Six-Party Talks, the six countries were able to produce ‘2.13 agreement,’ which contains initial phase implementation measures. And five working groups were established. One of them is working group on Northeast Asia Peace and Security.<sup>6</sup> Now we have an official forum, in which we can discuss multilateral cooperation among the countries in Northeast Asia.

Despite some turbulence over the past two years<sup>7</sup>, the Six –Party Talks has begun to move slowly and steadily. Now we have entered into the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of denuclearization of North Korea: disablement. Of course, while there could be some turbulence again as it has happened in the past and it would also take time to complete the process, the prospect looks better than before and the process itself will make an important

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<sup>4</sup> The actual number of plenary meeting being held is nine since the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> meeting was divided into two phases.

<sup>5</sup> This is known as ‘September 19 Joint Statement’ which contains the principles for denuclearizing North Korea. Additionally, the issue of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula shall be dealt with in a different venue.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> This includes BDA issue, missile test fire of North Korea in July 4, 2006, and nuclear test in October 9, 2006.

contribution in realizing regional institution and norms building for security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Before we discuss the function of the Six-Party Talks, it would be helpful to review each concerned country's position on multilateral security cooperation and some impediments in realizing it.

## **II. Each Country's Position on Multilateral Cooperation**

### **(1) The United States: supportive in principle, not so serious**

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.<sup>8</sup> Such position was reaffirmed several times. In East Asian Strategy Initiative (EASI) of 1995 and East Asian Strategy Report (EASR) of 1998<sup>9</sup>, 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."<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> "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.

<sup>10</sup> This position was also reflected in the Clinton-Hashimoto Declaration of 1996.

<sup>11</sup> But the United States has supported NEACD (Northeast Asian Cooperation Dialogue), where scholars, experts, and government officials participate in their private capacity,

The first 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. But the problems of and the critiques on the so-called militant, or aggressive, American internationalism found in its campaign on terrorism has made the utility of multilateral security cooperation revisited. Physically, it is neither possible nor desirable to bear all responsibilities alone in fighting terrorism and proliferation of WMD. Morally and diplomatically, it needs to have blessing and support of the international community as a way to reduce criticism on American unilateralism. Proliferation Security Initiative (hereafter PSI), while limited in scope, can be regarded as an example of multilateral security cooperation launched by the U.S. In the process of the Six-Party Talks, the United States has expressed its support for transforming the Six-Party Talks into multilateral security cooperation mechanism.

## **(2) Japan: from active and enthusiastic to neutral**

Until the 9.11 incident, Japan used to be very enthusiastic about multilateral security cooperation under the theme of “comprehensive security.” Since the early 1990s, Japan proposed and reiterated ‘Northeast Asian Six-Party Meeting’<sup>12</sup> at proper occasions. Japan saw some utility in multilateral security cooperation, or dialogue, framework: checking Chinese influence; mobilizing support for the theme of ‘normal’ Japan; and seizing the opportunities for engaging the Korean affairs.

Japan might be concerned with the power vacuum caused by U.S. disengagement from East Asia. The U.S. disengagement might result in Chinese dominance in regional affairs. Actually, China was quite active and aggressive in securing and expanding the access to Southeast Asia. If Japan were left alone, it could not match China. Thus Japan might see the utility of multilateral security cooperation framework as a way to check Chinese increasing influence.

Second, in the post-Cold War era, Japan began to show its intention of becoming a ‘normal state’ with strong political influence and military significance. This might be caused by the Japanese dissatisfaction about the Gulf War. Despite the fact that it made huge financial contribution<sup>13</sup> in the Gulf War, Japan didn’t get sufficient recognition for

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since the beginning of that forum. Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California–San Diego, has been carrying out the NEACD.

<sup>12</sup> This is well reflected in the ‘Miyazawa Doctrine’ of 1992.

<sup>13</sup> Japan contributed about \$13 billion in the Gulf War.

its contribution even from the United States. As a reaction to such non-recognition, Japan began to keep a distance from the United States and search for an alternative: that is, multilateral security cooperation. And multilateral security cooperation could be seen as a way to reduce reservation of its neighbors regarding the issue of “normal state.”

With the emerging concern over and threats of North Korean<sup>14</sup>, Japan did not want to be left out over the Korean issues. With the inauguration of the 4-Party Talks, it seemed that North Korean affairs were to be dealt with the United States, China, and South Korea. Japan wanted its interests and concerns to be reflected in dealing with North Korea. So Japan took part in Korean Energy Development Organization (hereafter KEDO) and argued for the Six-Party framework<sup>15</sup>.

But, after the 9.11 incident, Japan under the Koizumi leadership has changed its position in opposite direction. It seems that Japan has concluded that the U.S. strategic dominance will continue at least for a couple of decades and that it is not probable to realize multilateral security cooperation framework in near future. Consequently, nowadays, Japan is trying to strengthen its bi-lateral security alliance with the U.S., and that is more reliable and realistic. Thus it is possible to say that Japan is pursuing a policy of “Entering into Asia through the United States,” while it does not neglect issue-specific multilateral cooperation in NTS.

### **(3) China: from negative to very active and supportive**

Nowadays, China can be regarded as the champion of multilateral dialogue and security cooperation. China, along with Russia, is playing the leading role in strengthening the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China is one of the strong proponents for East Asian Summit. Under the theme of ‘peaceful rise or development,’ China is very active in promoting multilateral framework in East Asia.

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

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<sup>14</sup> Two types of threats can be identified: one is WMD threat and the other is the consequence(s) of the collapse of North Korea, including mass refugee.

<sup>15</sup> Prime Minister Obuchi put forward “Northeast Asian Six-Party Forum” alone and ASEAN+ 3 in collaboration with President KIM Daejung, where ten ASEAN countries and three Northeast Asian countries annually meet. Initially, the United States expressed some reservation toward this formula.

thorny issues would be raised against China<sup>16</sup> and informal anti-China coalition could be formed.

Paradoxically, China recognized the possibility that without the Chinese presence the issues related to China's interests could be raised and common position would be formed vis-à-vis China. The absence appeared to be much more serious 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 framework.<sup>17</sup>

Since then China has been very active in various multilateral fora such as APEC Forum, Asian Security Conference, and Asian Cooperation Dialogue and sometimes has taken the initiative in launching multilateral cooperation mechanisms such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization and East Asian Summit. At the sub-regional level, China has played very significant role in the Six-Party Talks as the host country. Further into the future, in conjunction with its strategic partnership with Russia, China is very likely to utilize multilateral framework to offset the US-Japan pillar.

#### **(4) Russia: Enthusiastic, but under-represented or unrecognized**

Russia has always been enthusiastic about multilateralism. It actually goes even back to the Soviet era.<sup>18</sup> Russian has proposed multilateral forum whenever North Korean nuclear issue emerged. In 1994, when the first nuclear crisis began to unfold, Russia proposed 8-Party Talks, and then later 10-Party Talks. And also when the second nuclear crisis took place in 2002-2003, Russia put forward similar multilateral formula for the resolution of the issue.

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<sup>16</sup> 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

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> From 1985 to 1991, President Gorbachov proposed various multilateral security cooperation initiatives.

When the 4-Party Talks was held among the United States, China, South Korea and North Korea to discuss the issue of a peace regime and tension reduction, Russia expressed strong dissatisfaction and claimed that Russia has very significant role to play in realizing peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. And it reiterated the modality of the 7-Party Talks including the members of 4-Party Talks, Russia, Japan, and United Nations<sup>19</sup> in dealing with the issues on the Korean Peninsula.

In sum, Russia will be the frontrunner in promoting multilateral security framework as it did in the past. But it is unclear whether Russian proposals or initiatives can be met positively by other regional states. It might depend upon the level and scope of physical contribution and substantive support Russia can provide in dealing the issues of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

#### **(5) North Korea: from negative to positive**

North Korea has always been against multilateral security dialogue or cooperation mechanisms<sup>20</sup>. It sees multilateralism as another form of containment strategy of the West. It has always been emphasized bi-lateral talks and negotiation. And it has also identified the normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States, to a lesser degree with Japan, as the precondition for multilateral security framework.

Even in the process of nuclear negotiations, North Korea has demanded US-North Korean bi-lateral talks. On the other hand, as China did, North Korea has discovered the negative consequences of no presence in multilateral fora. And, to get out of its international isolation, it was necessary to use multilateral dialogue fora. Thus North Korea joined ASEAN Regional Forum and has been active in diplomacy toward European countries. And in the first meeting of the working group on Northeast Asia Peace and Security, North Korea said that it would like to join the international community as a responsible member. However, North Korea seems to be preoccupied with its bi-lateral talks with the U.S. for the time-being.

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<sup>19</sup> To get Russia's support for and understanding of the 4-Party Talks, South Korean government dispatched Foreign Minister Gong Roh-myung to Moscow and explained the two-track approach: 4-Party Talks for peace regime and Northeast Asian Security Dialogue (NEASeD) for peace and stability, where Russia and Japan could take part in.

<sup>20</sup> North Korea rejected all multilateral security frameworks including Pan-Asia Conference, Baker initiative, and regarded them as a plot to suppress North Korea. *Korea Central News Agency*, October 19, 1998 and January 9, 1999.

In sum, North Korea will continue to emphasize bilateralism over multilateralism until it concludes normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States. In the meantime, North Korea is very likely to selectively use some multilateralism in limited sense, but not really committed to it.

#### **(6) South Korea: Enthusiastic**

With the unfolding post-Cold War environment in the late 1980s and early 1990s, South Korea saw the possibilities of overcoming the remains of the Cold War structure on the peninsula. It actively pursued the so-called Northern Policy and concluded normalization of diplomatic relations with Russia and China. And there were on-going dialogues between the two Koreas at various levels and fields. Based on the observation of such parallel development at both levels, South Korea found the utility of multilateral security framework in the post-Cold War era. Thus, in 1994, South Korea proposed Northeast Asian Security Dialogue (NEASeD). But it was still preoccupied with the North Korean issues, mostly nuclear issue. As a consequence, South Korea was able to focus only on limited multilateral cooperation in dealing with North Korean problems as we have seen in KEDO and 4-Party Talks. While it was arguing for multilateral security mechanism(s), it did not go further beyond the peninsula.

Despite all its efforts, South Korea is still jammed between the post-Cold War environment at the regional level and the Cold war environment at the peninsula level. With improving inter-Korean relations since 2000, South Korea has become active and enthusiastic again in promoting multilateral security framework for two reasons: the first is to create stable and peaceful external environment; which is estimated to reduce the possibility of great powers' competition and the second is to manage the process of reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean Peninsula. With the inauguration of the Roh Muhyun administration in 2003, South Korea began to re-emphasize sub-regional cooperation dialogue. Throughout the process of the Six-Party Talks, where six countries gathered to deal with the North Korean nuclear issues, South Korea carefully probed the possibility of converting the Six-Party Talks into a regional security cooperation mechanism.

In sum, it is possible to say that the overall assessment of prospect for multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia is still mixed. There are some limits and constraints to overcome.



### III. Constraints on Multilateral Security Cooperation

In addition the differences and discrepancies among the countries on regional multilateral security cooperation, there are other constraints: absence of common threat, intensifying competition for regional dominance, 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.

Unlike Europe during the Cold War era, in Northeast Asia, there is no common threat or fear, which makes the regional states to cooperate regardless of their ideological differences. Nuclear element, which forced European states to cooperate, is very weak, or virtually absent and, thus, there is no fear of holocaust or mutual destruction. The use of force for attaining political 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.<sup>21</sup>

Despite growing interdependency in various fields, there are signs of competition for regional dominance, or at least check-and-balance among the great powers. As the sole superpower, the United States enjoys strategic dominance at global level as well as regional level and it will try to keep and solidify that dominance. Thus its primary concern is the prevention of competitor, or hegemonic power. The most probable candidate could be China.<sup>22</sup> While it welcomes the rise of a peaceful China, the United States is carefully watching Chinese strategic decisions and behaviors. To further consolidate U.S. dominant strategic structure, the U.S. is strengthening U.S-Japanese security alliance. It is corresponded by Japanese intent and plan to expand its political and security role in regional as well as global arena. Japan is working very closely with the United States. And Japan, under the U.S. dominant strategic landscape, can find its place as No. 2 power at least in regional affairs and check the rise of China.

On the other hand, China and Russia are cooperating and forming “strategic

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<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> Such concern is well reflected in The US Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People's Republic of China* (Washington, D.C.: 2005).

partnership”<sup>23</sup> to check the U. S. dominance. They have been staged the joint military maneuver for the first time in August. Furthermore, not only in their bilateral relations but also in multilateral framework, China and Russia have been quite active to offset the U.S. dominance. While it is far behind in military field at the global level, China has the military power, which has great implications and concerns for regional states in East Asia. Further down the road, in 20 or 30 years from now, China is likely to have global presence with greater power projection capabilities.

It is ironic to see cooperation on one hand and competition on the other among the great powers. And competition is very much likely to become more intense and visible into the future. This could constrain the realization of comprehensive multilateral cooperation, while does not block selective, issue-specific cooperation.

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 in-depth strategic dialogue. Of course, there are fora such as ARF, ASC, those are not relevant places to engage in strategic dialogue with long-term implication. And topics in those meetings are rather ad-hoc or current issue-relevant ones. 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 private or semi-private capacity, there are some mechanisms for dialogue such as NEACD and CSCAP. But the level of enthusiasm isn't that high. What we need is strong political will and determination to set the direction for cooperation in maximizing mutual interests.

The third is the establishment of normal, or full diplomatic, relations among the countries. North Korea has not normalized its relations with the United States and Japan. Unless it has normal relations with those two Koreas, North Korea is believed to remain negative toward multilateral security framework seen as another scheme of containment or encirclement. 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 strengthen such normal relations.

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<sup>23</sup> Most recently, in July Summit between President Putin and President Hu Jintao, the strategic partnership was reaffirmed. See “China–Russia Joint Statement on 21<sup>st</sup> Century World Order,” *BBC*, July 2, 2005

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 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.

Lastly, but not leastly, 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<sup>24</sup>. 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 days<sup>25</sup>. 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."

#### **IV. 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

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<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

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. If so, it could be possible to overcome the issue of LWR since LWR could be under the control of that agency, not in the hand of North Korea.

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.<sup>26</sup> Russia, who has assisted in building power plants in North Korea, and is an oil-exporting country, can also make contribution to these areas.<sup>27</sup> 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 venture<sup>28</sup>. 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

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<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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..

<sup>28</sup> 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.

beneficial to 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 issues<sup>29</sup>. 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 in<sup>31</sup>. Since this matter<sup>32</sup> 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.”

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<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> What constitutes a peace regime is still controversial among the concerned parties.

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 Statement of September, we are geared to press forward multilateral security dialogue and cooperation. At the present stage and maybe up to the near future, it is unrealistic to expect the 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.

## **V. Other Things to Be Done**

While we are working on the North Korean nuclear problems, in parallel we can and should work on other issues, mostly bilateral in nature, to consolidate the ground for multilateral security cooperation.

First, we should work hard to eliminate psychological barriers, mostly found in bilateral relations. Distortion 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 and feeling toward China. Japanese distortion of and glorifying of modern history, centered upon Japanese occupation of Korea in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

Third, we should develop a form and habit of issue-based cooperation. Actually, over the past several years, countries in the region have cooperated in dealing with NTS such as Avian influenza, SARS, Yellow Dust, and marine pollution. But the cooperation over these issues have been rather ad-hoc and less institutionalized. Thus it is necessary to think about ways to institutionalize such cooperation to deal with NTS, or human security issues, effectively.

Fourth, we must promote strategic dialogue among the countries in the region. There are numerous bi-lateral dialogue channels in the region. But one dialogue channel can cause suspicion and concerns on the others. If we are able to combine these dialogues in a mutually reinforcing way, this could greatly contribute to the promotion of confidence among the concerned parties.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Despite the progress we have made in the Six-Party Talks and the potential of the Six-Party Talks becoming a regional institution for security cooperation, 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 multi-faceted 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.

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