

## International Environment for a Northeast Asian Community

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### I. Introduction

As globalization and regionalization intensify around the world, there have been hopes and talks concerning the establishment of a regional community in Northeast Asia. Discussions on such a community in East Asia or Northeast Asia, patterned after the European Union or the North American Free Trade Agreement, have gone on for some time, and multinational meetings have been conducted in order to realize it. The idea is for a regional community on the principle of open regionalization and for a free trade area on bilateral or multilateral levels. In East Asia, the Asian Economic Crisis has triggered calls for the establishment of a regional community or an economic cooperation organization. The ASEAN+3 is an example. Multilateral economic cooperation in Northeast Asia is yet to materialize, however, as there is lack of agreement between Korea, China, and Japan concerning it.

As the rest of the world moves on with the tide of globalization and toward the post-Cold War and post-nationalistic era, Northeast Asia still remains at a deadlock with the legacy of nationalism. It is because the countries in the region experienced wars, colonization, and division during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century throughout the 20<sup>th</sup>, when others were building modern states, thus missing opportunities to establish norms and institutional structures that regulate interdependent cooperation between countries.

China of early 21<sup>st</sup> century has emerged as an international powerhouse, seeking to build upon economic growth, international clout, and military prowess. Japan is also seeking to achieve a normal state with the appropriate diplomatic and military power to match its economic status. The competition for regional hegemony and military spending between China and Japan for bragging rights in Northeast Asia is creating tension in the region and becoming a threat in regional cooperation. In addition, the North Korean nuclear threat has worked as a serious dent in the hopes for regional stability and cooperation. The Six-Party Talks that has been created to resolve the tensions has served as an important forum for discussions on peace and security in Northeast Asia, but there remain considerable disagreements among the parties.

There is a lack of sufficient institutional mechanism and procedures in Northeast Asia

that can arbitrate the different positions and claims among the countries and issues. The unique historical experiences of Northeast Asia have resulted in a curious mix of certain 19<sup>th</sup> century pre-modern national aspects, 20<sup>th</sup> century balance-of-power conflicts, and 21<sup>st</sup> century post-modern, multilateral international order. This peculiarity will make it more difficult for Northeast Asia to form a common regional community like Europe has. Therefore, the goal for such a community must take a more comprehensive perspective. In Northeast Asia, a more feasible form for a regional community will be a civil society model that will overcome the sovereign nationalistic borders to democratize both domestic societies and the regional society that will be the basis for political and economic cooperation.

Meanwhile, continued discussions concerning multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia have not generated specific agreements among Korea, China, and Japan. It may have to wait until an arrangement such as the Six-Party Talks on North Korean nuclear problem evolves into a more broad multilateral institution dealing with economic cooperation along with security cooperation.

In the context of this international environment, this paper will analyze the international conditions concerning the establishment of a Northeast Asian community. It will consider theoretic framework on regional cooperation, review the positions of the three countries in Northeast Asia – Korea, China, and Japan – and discuss the conditions and issues concerning the regional cooperation among them. The interdependence of security cooperation and economic cooperation will be discussed. Main focus will be on the effects of the establishment and development of security cooperation on economic cooperation, and vice versa, and on the current phase of Northeast Asian security cooperation and its prospects. Also, it will discuss the Korea-China-Japan Summit and the Six-Party Talks as examples of institutionalization of the regional cooperation, and conclude with some suggestions on how to establish regional cooperative organizations.

## II. Theoretical Explanations for Regional Integration<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Regionalism and Hegemony

In the perspective of realism, regionalism is considered a form of alliance and the tendency to regionalize as a reaction to ward off external challenges. No distinction is made between economic regionalization and political regionalization. In fact, the

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<sup>1</sup> Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective," 1995.

influence of the US has exerted continuous pressure for Europe to integrate. And economic aspects of regional integration are closely related to the dynamics between economic wealth and political clout of the countries involved, which are sensitive to relative gain and loss among them. That is the reason that economic regionalization is often regarded as a new form mercantilism. The presence of a hegemonic power in the region can discourage efforts for comprehensive regional agreements.

Hegemony can trigger regionalization. First, collectivization of smaller units has always sprung up in reaction to the real or potential existence of a hegemonic power. Smaller states in many regions of the world seek collective action in order to set the balance of power against the hegemonic state in the region or a potential threat. For example, the European Community to the Soviet Union, the ASEAN to Vietnam, SADC (Southern African Development Community) to South Africa, and Mercosur to the US can all be considered as such collectivization of smaller states against a larger power. Second, regionalism can be considered as an effort to deter a hegemony by limiting its powers within an institution of a regional organization. The role of Germany in the EU is an example. Third, regionalization can be seen as an effort by a weaker state to jump on the bandwagon with the hegemonic power. Smaller states usually tend to be more willing to accept regional hegemony, but the more persistent the powerful country is in pressing for a hegemonic order, the more the smaller states will adopt a bandwagon strategy. Fourth, hegemony in itself activates the establishment of a regional organization. Initiation of international cooperation and the establishment of international regimes are closely related to the rise of a hegemonic power. On the other hand, a declining hegemonic power seeks a collective organization in order to obtain its own self-interests, to shoulder burdens collectively, to resolve international issues, and to gain international support and legitimacy.

Therefore, the existence of the US as a hegemonic power can unite Northeast Asian countries, and these countries can form a collective organization in order to deter the rise of China as a regional hegemony. Or the intention may be that the smaller states in Northeast Asia want to get on the bandwagon with the US or China. Either way, it is clear that the existence of the US and China as hegemonic powers play a crucial role in the regional cooperation of Northeast Asian countries.

## 2. Regionalism and Interdependence

Globalization has accelerated the scope and depth of economic interdependence in the world. Revolutions in information technology have been crucial in transmitting

knowledge, ideas, and technology. These changes have created the need for physical infrastructure for deepening social interdependence as well. These phenomena have raised the awareness for issues and problems on global scale and a sense of a universal human community. Moreover, as economic interdependence grew, issues have emerged that attracted passionate reactions around the world, such as environmental deterioration, refugees, and humanitarian crises, which have activated strong demands for their resolution. Spread of economic, political, security cooperation in organizations such as the OECD have been based not necessarily within the goals of strengthening regional cooperation but with the intentions of solving global issues.

Globalization stimulates regionalization. Advanced integration also necessitates collective management, which causes problems. Management and regulation of many issues in the international system requires domestic undertaking and state sovereignty. In this globalized world, many global problems are being resolved on regional scale, for the sake of realistic management. Globalization emphasizes the market, but regionalization emphasizes inequality and distribution. A global integration has served as a stimulus for economic regionalization by changing mercantilistic economic system and concentrating on interdependence. Globalization and the advance in information technology expands interdependence of Northeast Asian countries and deepens regional cooperation.

As for the theories for regional cooperation and integration, first, there is neo-functionalism. Neo-functionalists call for a high degree of interdependence in the world. International organizations are considered the most effective means to resolve global problems.

Second, there is neo-liberal institutionalism. It provides a useful theoretical framework in studies of international cooperation and in understanding the rise of regionalism. Institutionalists believe that rising interdependence creates demands for international cooperation. Institutions are a form of resolution for various kinds of collective action issues. Neo-liberal institutionalists are interested in methods that can induce states as rational actors to cooperate with each other. Whereas neo-functionalists emphasize a pluralistic network, institutionalists emphasize the State as a gatekeeper between the national and the international issues. Whereas neo-functionalists seek a system where various actors freely conduct political and economic interdependence, neo-liberal institutionalists emphasize political and economic cooperation of the States as rational actors. Institutions are crucial because they affect the States in their rational methods and calculations to determine their national interests.

Third is constructivism. It focuses on the concept of being affiliated with the same

regional community, and focuses on the regional mentality and identity. Constructivists emphasize the level of the States' commitment to the regional community based on the context of social constructs such as responsibilities, trust, and interdependence.

Analyses of Northeast Asian cooperation in the perspectives of functionalism, institutionalism, and constructivism will reveal that Korea, China, and Japan have differing interests and positions concerning regional cooperation.

### III. Positions of Korea, China, and Japan concerning Northeast Asian Cooperation<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Korea

Korea has much potential for Northeast Asian regional cooperation due to its geopolitical position in the region. The country borders China and Russia on the Asian continent, and Japan and the US in the Pacific. Its geographical position offers an opportunity to use its potential as a bridge in the regional cooperation.

In the economic aspect, Korea is becoming more important to the countries in the Northeast Asian region due to its export-focused industrial structure. Moreover, Korean companies have been expanding its foreign direct investments in Northeast Asia. Now Korean economy is closely related to the economic cooperation in the region, especially in the regional division of labor. It is expected that Korea will become ever more important in the regional economic cooperation by investing more capital and technologies in the regional economic cooperation and realigning its domestic industrial structure along with it.

In the security aspects, the stability of the Korean Peninsula depends on the Korea-US military alliance. However, Korea considers it crucial to establish a Northeast Asian multilateral security cooperation initiative for establishing a peaceful Korean Peninsula, establishing a stable security order in Northeast Asia, and reducing the intensity in the competition for hegemony between China and the US. The country believes that appropriate changes in the Korea-US alliance, strengthening bilateral security cooperation between Korea and other countries in the region, improvements in the South and North Korean relations, establishing a peaceful security order in the Korean Peninsula will assist in the multilateral security cooperation in the region.

In the social aspects, Korea has sufficient common characteristics in traditional

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<sup>2</sup> Park, Je Hoon, "Toward a Northeast Asian Regional Community," 2004; Park, Jong Chul, *Current Infrastructure for Northeast Asian Cooperation*, 2005.

values, norms, and cultural heritage to share with other countries in the region that can serve as basis for establishing a regional community. In addition, Korea has accepted cultures of the West and successfully grafted their elements into its own to create a unique blend of culture of its own. The result, “Korean Wave” phenomenon, is awakening a craving for a common cultural identity in Northeast Asia.

On the surface, Korea is the most enthusiastic of the countries in Northeast Asia for regional integration. Its intellectuals talk of the state and the market, and the role of civil society. The country is striving to take upon itself a role of the balancer or the mediator in a regional integration body like the Northeast Asian Regional Community. There will always exist political barriers to economic cooperation, but utilizing a more immediate form of practical process such as economic cooperation is necessary in order to achieve a goal such as regional stability.

There have also been discussions of Northeast Asian Regional Community as a non-economic concept of a new discovery of Northeast Asia. It has been viewed as an attempt to preserve the region’s unique cultural heritage. Korea’s own experiences with China’s dominance, Japan’s colonial occupation, and the West’s administration have been the backdrop in Korea’s quest for its own cultural identity. And these interpretations have slowed down the drive for a regional cooperation. The concept of “discovery of Northeast Asia” has also sprung up as a defense of Asian values against the Western civilization. Incidents such as the historical distortions in Japan’s school textbooks show that main barriers to a true regional cooperation in Northeast Asia are based on cultural and historical contexts. That is all the more reason that the Korean Wave is an interesting and surprising phenomenon in the relations of the countries in the region, and increases the hopes for finding a common ground among the countries and a role for Korea in the process. It is suggested that Northeast Asian countries consult an international organization such as UNESCO and work with each other on the highest level of the government in order to resolve disputes such as the Japanese textbook problems. The countries must work together to author an authoritative history of Northeast Asia. That will require joint research among the countries, and it is hoped that a common understanding of history and tolerance will be spread among the countries.

In the area of diplomacy and international politics, it is unlikely that a regional cooperation organization will be formed in the near future, because of the deep disagreements among the countries on subjects such as North Korean nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, there have been considerable advances in the theoretical framework in international political science for a regional cooperation, especially with the example of

the European Union and the possibilities of its application to Northeast Asia. Recent developments such as the emergence of the Asia-Europe Meeting and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the regular meetings of the Korea-China-Japan Summit have made way for a new phase of more intensified talks on the government level for Northeast Asian Regional Community. A common regional threat such as the North Korean nuclear problem has united countries to take on an institution such as the Six-Party Talks. And if the North Korean nuclear problem does actually get resolved through the Six-Party Talks, there will be a great support for institutionalizing it and expanding it to initiate a Northeast Asian security cooperation body.

## 2. China

China supports more for a wider East Asian regional cooperation rather than Northeast Asian regional cooperation. “Northeast Asia” in the minds of China covers the Chinese Northeast, the Russian Far East, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan in the practical, workable sense, and also Mongolia, and the Chinese Huabei and Huadong regions, which include the entire eastern coastal regions and Taiwan. On the other hand, “East Asia” means to China all of Northeast Asia plus the Chinese eastern inland, Russian eastern regions, Hong Kong, and also Southeast Asia. Northeast Asia to China, at least in the geographical sense, is only a portion of greater East Asia.

The reason that China puts priority on East Asia rather than Northeast Asian cooperation is closely related to China’s economic development strategy. China considers Northeast Asia a more contentious area in the international political perspective, where differing political, military, and security issues clash. The wider East Asia, on the other hand, is more logical for China to take advantage of the international division of labor with Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. Therefore, Northeast Asia to China is a region where the memories of Cold War still remain, with the division along with the old Cold War line of Korea-the US-Japan and North Korea-China-Russia. China is taking a more timid stance about the region because of all the negative international exposure the region is getting with North Korean nuclear problems. China seems to want to focus more on establishing an environment in Northeast Asia that may assist in China’s own economic development. The pattern seems to be that China is active in working to expand economic cooperation into political and military cooperation in East Asia, but it is more inclined to limit its involvements in Northeast Asia to economic cooperation, leaving political and military cooperation to a more gradual and long-term strategy.

China's stance on economic cooperation in Northeast Asia is relatively aggressive in the field of economic cooperation. China recently announced its plans for a Northeast Regional Promotion and Development Plan to undertake economic reforms of its three northeastern provinces, and is planning for further work with both South and North Korea, Japan, and Russia. This strategy is based on the region's understandable potential, its wealth of natural resources and high-skill manpower, and the economic complementarities among the countries. It is also based on China's confidence in its rapid economic growth, its potential as a regional hegemony, and belief in the benefits of a stable and peaceful region. However, the existence of a global superpower in the US and another potential regional hegemony of Japan make China shy away from a more aggressive agenda concerning political and military cooperation in the region. Yet China continues to remain keenly interested regional economic cooperation, which can only help its domestic economy, and security arrangements, for in no way is it China's intention to be excluded from any political or military arrangements in the region.

In general, China takes a practical view, and emphasizes the role of the States and the government in regional integration. As for the sectors, it puts priority in economic and security issues. China has proposed an FTA with ASEAN, which is turning out to be a more willing partner than previously expected, and also proposed an FTA with Korea. China is hoping for the WTO accession, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai to serve as opportunities to open the country onto the international stage and to accelerate its globalization. China is pushing for a dual-track strategy for foreign economic cooperation. It includes getting involved in the global economic order under the auspices of the WTO, reforming its domestic economic structure up to par with the global standards, and re-positioning itself in the regional economy by playing an active role in the process of its integration.

China sets the following six points for its guiding principles and direction in its cooperation with the rest of Asia: First, China considers the ASEAN+3 format as the appropriate form of cooperation in East Asia. Second, China emphasizes consistency in negotiations, stable progress, and distinct role of each member state as principles of cooperation. These principles call for recognition of diversity of interests, consistent negotiations, flexibility, and open and liberal cooperation, and support the ASEAN to play an important role in the process of establishing an East Asian cooperation order.

Third, China supports the acceptance of many methods for cooperation. Either ASEAN + 3, the format of ASEAN countries on one side and the tripartite of Korea, China, Japan on the other, or ASEAN+1, which has the ASEAN countries set up



arrangements with each of Korea, China, or Japan, may be appropriate. In East Asia, not only is there a variety of forms of economic cooperation, but there are continuing efforts to find new forms of economic cooperation. These different forms of cooperation will start to overlap and complement each other.

Fourth, China pursues cooperation in the financial sector. China and Southeast Asian countries have signed bilateral swap arrangements, and China is diversifying its currency swap network based on the suggestions of Chiang Mai Initiative. The understanding is that the ASEAN+3 format will be expanded gradually to eventually form a pan-Asian stock market. Fifth, China takes a great priority on economic and technological cooperation, for economic and technological cooperation and trade and investment liberalization are closely related. Sixth, China wants to expand social and cultural cooperation. A mutual progress between two countries can only occur with support and understanding from the people. China and East Asian countries had cooperated, for example, in the public sanitation sector in order to prevent and contain the outbreak of the SARS virus.

There are views that Korea-China FTA will have to be signed before Korea-China-Japan FTA. Some Chinese intellectuals have also argued for a new role of Japan, in which Japan must transform itself and its attitudes by finding an identity in Asia, learning lessons from history, and taking on a more responsible role in Asia. They also want to consider the US as an important public resource in Northeast Asia and not as a hindrance to regional cooperation. China also emphasizes the importance of security cooperation in the establishment of Northeast Asian community. Differences between Northeast Asia and Europe are frequently pointed out, but so is the importance of economic integration for the purpose of security cooperation. China claims that the Six-Party Talks, if successful in resolving the Korean problem, can serve as the basis for a Northeast Asian security cooperation organization.

### 3. Japan

Japan considers it equally important to strengthen East Asian cooperation along with the Northeast Asian cooperation. Northeast Asia according to Japan is the Greater East Asia including Mongolia, Manchuria, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan, and the eastern regions of China and Russia. In a broad context, it may also include the US. East Asia adds Southeast Asia. The reason that Japan puts priority on East Asian cooperation is closely related to its economic development strategy. Japan considers Northeast Asia a more contentious area where differing political, military, and security

interests clash. The wider East Asia, on the other hand, is more logical for Japan to take advantage of the international division of labor and to create a role for itself as the leader in the region.

Northeast Asia is a region where Japan must compete with Korea, China, Russia, and North Korea. Especially with the recent troubles with the North Korean nuclear weapons, Japan is taking a more timid stance about the region. By contrast, it is taking more interest in economic cooperation with the ASEAN in East Asia. Japan wants to be active in working to expand economic cooperation with East Asia, but it is more inclined to limit its involvements in Northeast Asia beyond economic spheres since it considers the region a competition.

All in all, Japan's position on the economic cooperation in Northeast Asia is relatively timid. Japan has started FTA negotiations with Singapore and the ASEAN and is in talks for one with Korea, but is reluctant about doing the same with China. Meanwhile, Japan's trade with China is rapidly increasing, to the point that Chinese economic growth is crucial to Japan's economic recovery. The increasing bilateral trade is based on the understanding that the economies of the two countries complement each other.

In the security aspects, Japan is in the position to compete with China for regional hegemony, and is strengthening its alliance with the US in order to do so. This situation is not positive for the hopes of increasing security cooperation in Northeast Asia. Japan has not been as active in the Six-Party Talks as expected; still, it does not want to be left out of the talks and is striving to keep up with the US in the efforts. Japan needs a vibrant regional economic cooperation. And considering that it has always regarded security a top priority in the region, Japan is certain not to want to be left out of the political, economic, and security cooperation in the region.

Japan seeks to take on many approaches concerning the establishment of Northeast Asian Regional Community, and supports the role of civil society in particular. Social and cultural issues seem to be on high agenda for Japan. Japan is also active in promoting a Korea-Japan FTA. Japan also called for its membership in the ASEAN when it signed the Tokyo Declaration in December 2002 with ASEAN leaders. As Japan tries to catch up with China for influence over the ASEAN, it will invariably intensify competition with China.

There are views in Japan that emphasize the role of NGOs in the establishment of the Northeast Asian community. One of the lessons to be learned from the experiences of Asian regional integration such as the ASEAN is the problems that are caused when such integration is driven by the few political elite. Participation of provincial

governments or NGOs is claimed to be important for forming international civic forum from below. These fora must be multilateral and multi-level in order to allow participation from various social groups and organizations. Governments, corporations, NPOs, and NGOs can participate in these international efforts. The public sphere that these organizations work in includes the family as the basic unit. A Northeast Asian civic forum has been suggested to stimulate and oversee the various actors in the framework.

#### IV. Factors and Problems of Northeast Asian Community

##### 1. Factors in Northeast Asian Cooperation

The international issues that are relevant to the establishment of a Northeast Asian regional community are many. An important variable is whether China will continue its stable economic growth. Another is whether there will be problems caused by political or economic phenomena in China, or whether the domestic political or economic system in China will collapse and the country disintegrates. The relationship and competition between China and Japan may cause conflicts and endanger cooperation between them. Current bilateral conflicts include territorial disputes, energy disputes, water area disputes, the Taiwan question, and historical interpretations of past events. There are various views on the participation of the US in the Northeast Asian regional cooperation. The US may hinder regional cooperation according to its own Northeast Asian strategy, or the US may try to establish a multilateral system in the region. Also, the rise of India in the international political and economic arena may influence the dominance of China and its economic growth and serve as another important regional variable.

Politics and economy sometimes interconnect and sometimes divert from each other. It is with the interconnection mechanism of politics and economy that the multilateral interdependence in Northeast Asia is formed. That format may also include security issues to form economic security format. As for the globalization, nationalism, and regionalism aspects, the way that nationalism and regionalism develop in Northeast Asia will affect the regional cooperation. Globalization and the development of information technologies influence the level of liberalism in regionalism. Industrial technologies, especially in the information technology sector, will play a crucial role in the level of economic cooperation in the region. In turn, interest groups and political parties in each country will be affected by the different positions of various social

groups concerning the regional economic cooperation.

As for the possibilities for a Northeast Asian regional cooperation, the optimistic scenario assumes that such an economic cooperation will eventually be formed. Cooperation will intensify among Korea, China, and Japan, and gradually include other countries in the Asia Pacific in that cooperation. Or Korea, China, Japan, and Russia will connect with the US to form a regional cooperation organization, which will eventually expand to the ASEAN and Australia.

The pessimistic scenario assumes the case where a regional cooperation organization is not established in Northeast Asia. Conflicts between China and Japan may lead to non-cooperation, the US may exert strong pressure to oppose a regional organization of cooperation, new disputes may arise in energy or territorial issues, or globalization and regionalism may digress and nationalism may emerge as the new trend in world politics.

A more moderate scenario assumes international cooperation in specific sectors. If a region-wide community is not feasible, there may be forms of bilateral or multilateral cooperation by specific sectors. Free trade agreements may form bilaterally. More cooperation may occur in sectors such as energy, natural resources, environment, finances, and foreign exchange. A field such as information technology may attract multilateral or community-wide cooperation.

## 2. Problems in Northeast Asian Cooperation<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the post-World War II Europe, Northeast Asian countries have diverse national systems, income levels, and cultural histories that make economic integration more complex. However, the fact that such an economic integration is not even being discussed on any significant inter-government level is worrisome, for the possible conflicts and disputes that may arise as regional economic activities expand. Such a lack of systematic arena of discussions may limit the potential of the region's economies.

The rapid economic growth rates and the large percentage of regional trade in the national economic activities are counted as positive components that can accelerate the establishment of a regional economic community in Northeast Asia. It means that Northeast Asian economy is taking a bigger share in the world economy. Moreover, there has been a consensus in the region since the Asian economic crisis in the late 1990's, that there needs to be a regional economic cooperation mechanism. Especially with other regional organizations such as the EU and the NAFTA ever expanding, there arose awareness that this region also needs a formal economic integration in order to be

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<sup>3</sup> Park, Jong Chul, *Current Infrastructure for Northeast Asian Cooperation*, 2005.

more competitive.

Nevertheless, many barriers and challenges abound in the way of establishing an economic cooperation organization. There still remain possibilities of face-offs in military and security fields. In the economic arena, competition is rising among the players, and the historical interpretation issues remain a keen focus for problems in social and cultural arena. These issues may very well play hindrance to the efforts to establish a regional economic cooperation organization.

In the military and security sector, there is still the legacy of the Cold War in the Korean Peninsula, with the North Korea nuclear problem, when the rest of the world has seen the collapse of the Cold War and moved on to a new global political order. China, which has emerged as the potential new hegemony in Northeast Asia, is starting to make its move to realize its potentials as a powerful diplomatic and economic player, thus threatening the positions of the U.S. and Japan in the region. In addition, Japan is revealing more of its ambitions to become a military powerhouse, and making other countries in the region nervous about its plans. The ever-present struggle between China and Taiwan on Taiwan's independence issues is still looming, as is the territorial dispute between Korea and Japan about the Dokdo island, and other territorial disputes between Japan and China and Japan and Russia.

In the economic aspect, there has been intense economic integration among players in Korea, China, and Japan, as China continues its rapid economic ascent. At the same time, nobody has stepped up to take the focal point or a leader's position for a formal regional economic integration. The reason is the fear of the countries in the region for historic domination of the few and their lack of trust in such a regional cooperation format, and the absence of a driving force such as Germany was in the formation of the European Union.

Also in the social and cultural fields, there remain both opportunities and challenges. Recently, China's economic growth has opened up the country's cultural sector, and there are many cultural exchanges among the various countries, which provide hopes for further such exchanges. On the other hand, there is a history of cultural ignorance in the region and possible clashes between the different cultures. There have been worrying trends in the recent years in various countries of the rise of nationalism, such as the Chinese nationalism, Japan's emphasis on being a normal state, and the move of national elites to conservatism in many countries. Also there have been concerns that the increasing exchanges of cultural products among the countries can only intensify competition among them.

Another aspect that makes the establishment of a Northeast Asian regional

community difficult is the difficulty facing the US in participating directly in the community. As the US still plays an important part in the political and economic activities of the region, its active participation is a pre-requisite in making a regional community a success. However, it seems difficult to generate agreement and cooperation from the US for such a regional cooperation organization, which works as an indirect and invisible limitation in creating such an organization.

### 3. Causes That Stagnate Northeast Asian Cooperation<sup>4</sup>

There are several reasons according to the international political perspective why regionalism has not thrived in Northeast Asia. First, there has not formed a regional identity in Northeast Asia. Second, countries have not been aware of the need to cooperate in the region and there was a lack of trust in the matters of security in the region. Third, the expanding interdependence in the region has not developed into trade between industries that have economies of scale.

There is still considerable fear for security in the region. The division of the Korean Peninsula, the dependent sovereignty of Japan on the US, and the fact that security cooperation with the US has not been in a multilateral format like the NATO but bilateral format of Korea-US and Japan-US alliances all account for that fear. Since the end of the Second World War, Korea, China, Japan, North Korea, and Taiwan have not enjoyed the normal state of total sovereignty, because of the Cold War competition between the US and the USSR. The extreme examples are the division of the Korean Peninsula and the loss of military regimes in various countries.

This imperfect sovereignty was born out of the structure of conflict and competition between the US and the USSR, and that system had managed the division and the imperfect sovereignty according to the understanding and interests of the US-USSR relations. Therefore, it can be said that the main reason, or the main factor that has worked against forming regional cooperation in Northeast Asia, has been the relations between the US and the USSR, or currently, the relations of the US to the region. In other words, a Northeast Asian regionalism may prove extremely difficult unless the US takes a central role in untangling the imperfect sovereignty relationships of the countries in the region. If the US interests and the Northeast Asian regionalism run into conflict of interests with each other, a regional community in Northeast Asia will be unlikely to occur.

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<sup>4</sup> Lee, Keun, "Possibilities for Northeast Asian Economic Integration from Security Perspective," 2003.

Bilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia offer several problems. First, bilateral security mechanisms maintain relatively stable relationships with the US for those countries that have such an agreement with the US, but they do not offer a framework of cooperation among the countries with each other. In other words, Korea and Japan can each have stable relationships with the US on bilateral terms, but not with each other. In addition, the relationship between Korea and Japan is hampered by the historical enmity between them. Second, those bilateral frameworks with the US were initiated by the US in the first place, so the US has enormous power in the decision-making processes, in some cases almost unilaterally. Third, bilateral mechanisms are less flexible than multilateral mechanisms in absorbing changing shifts in the countries' international power. For example, a bilateral mechanism with China or Japan does not take into effect the rising prominence of these countries, and tends to deal with it as an insecure balance of power rather than as a factor in the regional security.<sup>5</sup>

## V. Relationship between Security Cooperation and Economic Cooperation in Northeast Asia

Economic cooperation in Northeast Asia is gathering force into expanding security cooperation. In turn, if security cooperation develops into a regional mechanism, it may encourage further economic cooperation in the region. If the meetings among the heads of Korea, China, and Japan turn into a regular summit, and the Six-Party Talks resume to resolve the North Korean nuclear problem, regional security format will develop more formally. A resolution of security instability will contribute to further economic cooperation. This section of the paper will review the state of regional security mechanism, look to establishment of security cooperation organization, and speculate the economic cooperation in the region.

### 1. Current Status of Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia

Multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia is still lagging in the discussion stage. In Northeast Asia, bilateralism ruled the day, not only in economic, social, and cultural arena, but also in security and military arena, and multilateralism could not take root. Nevertheless, the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue, or NEACD, which started in 1993, is serving as multilateral track 1.5 dialogue forum in security.

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<sup>5</sup> Yoon, Young Kwan, "Interdependence of Economic and Military Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific," 2002.

Northeast Asian countries are participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum(ARF) since 1994. However, because of the remnants of the Cold War and the bilateral military alliances in the region, Northeast Asia is faced with more barriers for multilateral security cooperation than Southeast Asia is.<sup>6</sup>

In the perspective of East Asia, a security cooperation organization in East Asia is still far way off. Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia are seeking security cooperation in very different perspectives. Southeast Asia is trying to deal with security issues on the basis of political, economic, cultural, and social cooperation. However, Northeast Asia is trying to separate the security issues from economic, social, and cultural issues, working in bilateral framework for the former and in multilateral framework for the latter. The Six-Party Talks was formed in order to resolve the North Korean nuclear problems, but its mandate is limited to the North Korean nuclear problems only and does not include any other military issues. Therefore, there should be long-term and multi-perspective efforts to establish multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

In East Asia, especially in Northeast Asia, there are various multilateral security dialogues and organizations already in place. These dialogues and organizations are not sufficient to be called formally organizations or mechanisms; rather, they should be called forum or arrangements to deal with specific situations and objectives.<sup>7</sup>

The NEACD, in particular, holds significance in that it is a semi-governmental forum for government officials to participate in individual capacities. Another achievement of the NEACD was the accumulation of dialogues among small countries in Northeast Asia. The criticism against the NEACD is that it is another dialogue format that has no implementation powers, just like other regional security formats. There have been many good suggestions and ideas explored under the auspices of the NEACD concerning various methods of establishing security cooperation bodies and the need for mutual understanding among the countries, but practically none has been put into action.<sup>8</sup>

There are other security cooperation formats in Northeast Asia, such as the Six-Party

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<sup>6</sup> Han, Yong Sup, "Necessity for Establishing an East Asian Security Community," 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Lee, Seo Hang, "Multilateral Security Cooperation Organization in East Asia," 2005.

<sup>8</sup> The NEACD has three objectives: 1) Each country's participation should be institutionalized, including that of North Korea; 2) The NEACD pursues track 1.5 strategy, and includes participation of officials in both foreign policy and defense. However, some member countries such as Russia withdrew from participating in the defense talks. These talks must be institutionalized as well. In the case of North Korea, all its representatives are made up of foreign policy officials. There must be changes made to this type of representation; 3) Most multilateral security talks in Northeast Asia concentrate on the Korean Peninsula problems. Without a well-planned agenda, the NEACD could also become one of the talks. Thorough preparations must be made to expand its agenda.



Talks, regular seminars and symposia and other private or semi-governmental security cooperation formats such as the UN-ESCAP center on reduction of armaments in the Asia Pacific. However, it is difficult to refer to these organizations as formal regional security mechanisms. One of these, the Six-Party Talks, was formed to resolve a specific problem, that is the North Korean nuclear crisis, but it is significant that all six countries gathered together in Northeast Asia on the issue of security and formed a regular mechanism to work together. This format has provided some hope that should the Six-Party Talks succeed in its immediate objective, it can be expanded to include other security issues and other member states to make it a truly regional security make-up.

An important variable in the economic cooperation and security cooperation in the region is the direction that will be taken by China. China is taking its rapid economic growth and its plan for stable and peaceful growth, and is implementing its plans to participate more actively in the development of the new international economic, political, and military order. The US thus sees China as a potential threat in economic, security, and international political arena, and is now counting deterrence of China as one of the more important objectives in its alliance with the western Pacific countries.<sup>9</sup>

The main concern of the US in regard to China's economic growth is its rapidity and imbalance. It is logical to believe that in case its national interests are threatened, China may try to unify the country internally on the basis of nationalistic mentality and ideology and externally seek regional hegemony. Such strategy will provide a potential threat to the US's East Asian strategies. Also, the current transitional systematic structure of China contains various unstable factors in political, economic, and social sectors. It is uncertain whether the Chinese leadership has the clout or capacity to manage such a transformation without creating major disruptions. On the other hand, from the perspective of China, China is interpreting the US's intentions as one that is attempting to block the growth of China's powers as a part of the US strategies in the region. Particularly, China is regarding economics and security as the two sides of the same coin, two aspects that must go hand in hand in the goal of economic growth and accumulation of national interests.

East Asia needs a new kind of security cooperation mechanism in the region that will help the countries to focus on raising economic competitiveness and maintaining the momentum for growth. This kind of new, positive, and active mechanism is what the Korean Peninsula needs. It needs a specific institutional mechanism to resolve the

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<sup>9</sup> Oh, Seung Ryul, "Relationship between Economic and Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia," 2005.

North Korean problems and to seek stable growth. Expansion of economic exchanges, improvements in the domestic political situations of both Koreas, and interdependence of the two countries must work together in synthesis.

In sum, the goals that should be sought by the Northeast Asian regional security community can be the following. First, the military alliance between the US and Japan after the Cold War must be conducted in a way not to hinder in the relations with other countries in the region, and there must be a mechanism to keep a check on it. For example, there must be mechanisms to secure stability in the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan issue. Second, there must be a mechanism to limit excessive control of China over Southeast Asia and the Chinese economic zone, so that the influence of China will not cause instability in the security of the region. Third, there must be a cooperative body in the region that will control the influence of politicization of energy, food, and other natural resources. There has been recent global trend in making weapons these resources and commodities for political purposes, and it may cause economic crises if it is abused. Security of sea-lanes for transportation of goods and agreements on prevention of political use of strategic commodities are some of the issues that must be resolved. Fourth, there needs to be an economic security cooperation mechanism that can minimize political and social effects from crises such as the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990's and other macroeconomic instabilities. Fifth, there needs to be a mechanism that can minimize the military and political fear factors in the region by conducting long-term development projects in North Korea and other less developed countries in Southeast Asia. Sixth, a mechanism should be established to cooperate on issues including terrorism, drugs, counterfeiting, and other crimes and social issues such as human rights protection in order to prevent excessive intervention of domestic politics for the sake of international causes such as war against terrorism. Seventh, the countries in the region should cooperate with the US in the program for preventing the development and location of weapons of mass destruction, in order to minimize possibilities of potential security conflicts.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Institutionalization of Northeast Asian Security Cooperation<sup>11</sup>

The summit talks among Korea, China, and Japan will include security issues, and there are possibilities of expanding the talks. And the Six-Party Talks is a multilateral

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<sup>10</sup> Oh, Seung Ryul, "Relationship between Economic and Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia," 2005, pp. 307-308.

<sup>11</sup> Park, Jong Chul, *Current Infrastructure for Northeast Asian Cooperation*, 2005.

format for security resolution. On the basis of formats such as these, there should be talks for institutionalization of a Northeast Asian security community.

#### (1) Korea-China-Japan Summit

The summit was first gathered on the occasion of the ASEAN+3 summit in November 1999 upon the suggestion of Japan for an informal breakfast meeting among the leaders of the three countries. The second meeting was held in November 2000, and Korea proposed to make it a formal gathering among the three countries. China, who was reluctant in the beginning, accommodated, and the meeting was institutionalized. In November 2002, the fourth meeting was held among the three countries, and for the first time, it was held as a regular Summit gathering.

The Korea-China-Japan summit holds much significance in the fact that the three countries that have deep historical legacy and angst have finally established a forum and an opportunity to have discussions on important political issues that have great bearing on each of the three countries. Although China wanted to separate the political issues from economic issues, and to limit summit discussions on economic matters, the summit has served a good occasion for the three countries to reconcile and to relieve misunderstandings.

The first summit concentrated on economic issues. The subsequent summits expanded discussions to environment, IT, tourism, and culture. The fourth summit became an official summit gathering, rather than a breakfast meeting between the heads of states. The fifth summit in 2003 produced a joint declaration among the three countries to establish a basic framework of cooperation in foreign policy, security, economics, and culture. The three heads of states agreed that deepening cooperation will contribute not only to the stable bilateral relationships of the three countries but to the peace, stability, and prosperity of East Asia. The cooperation among the three countries aims at international cooperation in East Asia, and peace and prosperity in the world. At the sixth summit in 2004, the three heads of states discussed methods to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis.

#### (2) Six-Party Talks on North Korean Nuclear Problem

Korea, North Korea, the US, China, Japan, and Russia are discussing the resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem, and the talks are institutionalized in the Six-Party Talks. The talks on the North Korean nuclear problem are a part of wider international

talks for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993-1994 was resolved through the signing of the Agreed Framework in October 1994 in Geneva. In late 2002, as the relationship between the two Koreas thawed and a summit between North Korea and Japan was held, the US dispatched James Kelly, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, to Pyongyang as a special envoy in October, for the first official bilateral talks since the George W. Bush administration took power. Kelly mentioned the concerns of the US on security and military state of North Korea such as nuclear weapons, missiles, biochemical weapons, and conventional military arsenal, and also the state of human rights in North Korea. The US and neighboring countries were urging North Korea to disband its nuclear program, but North Korea chose to lift the restriction on the freezing of its nuclear facilities, as was agreed in the Agreed Framework, and re-operate those nuclear facilities to generate electricity. Then in January, 2003, it withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, thus launching the second North Korean nuclear crisis.

After the attack on Iraq, the US sought for dialogues with North Korea with the mediation of China. As a result, the US, China, and North Korea met in Beijing in April of 2003. The US let it be known to North Korea that if North Korea abandons its nuclear program first, the US will take corresponding measures to seek resolutions in relevant issues concerning North Korea, such as missiles and conventional weaponry, with the goal of normalizing diplomatic relations with North Korea. North Korea, on the other hand, demanded that the security concerns of North Korea be resolved at the same time as the country's nuclear program is disbanded, focusing on the simultaneous method of resolution. Neither the US nor North Korea budged in their positions, and the three-party talks did not achieve anything.

In May 2003, the US proposed a new initiative, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), that would form a new international coalition against the dealings of weapons of mass destruction among the so-called rogue states. In July 2003, the US relayed to China through the visiting Ministry of Foreign Affairs official that the US is willing to discuss the North Korean issue in a multilateral format and that it is willing to officially guarantee the security of North Korea, if North Korea abandons its nuclear program. In response, North Korea confirmed its willingness to negotiate in a format of six-party talks including itself, Korea, the US, China, Japan, and Russia. The first Six-Party Talks was held in a series of four meetings in Beijing.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The six countries announced a joint declaration on September 19, 2005, as the following: 1) The Korean Peninsula should be nuclear-free zone, North Korea must abandon all its nuclear

The Six-Party Talks is settling to be a multilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia, and it is certain to contribute to security cooperation in the region. With the institutionalization of a security cooperation mechanism, it can be hoped that an economic cooperation mechanism may also be possible in the near future. Then a regional cooperation mechanism in both the security and economic fields will have a more likely chance of occurring with the participation of the U.S.

### 3. Tasks and Prospects for Northeast Asian Security Cooperation

There still remain many problems and barriers to the establishment of a Northeast Asian security cooperation mechanism. Nevertheless, the establishment of such a mechanism may consider the following aspects. First, there needs to be a security cooperation mechanism that will acknowledge the individual sovereignty and uniqueness of Korea, Japan, and the new power China, and also that will seek a new balance between all these countries and their bilateral relations with the US. Second, for the consistent and continuous economic growth of Northeast Asia, there needs to be a mechanism that can go a step further from the old historical settlement among the countries and establishing a new regional order, to one that can create Northeast Asian security cooperation in a more active and aggressive sense. The conventional post-Cold War regional order that is led by the US must be transformed into a new, comprehensive institution of cooperation. For that purpose, there need to be fresh, creative, logical, and legitimate methods that can achieve such cooperation.<sup>13</sup>

What is important above all is the change in the mentality of the Northeast Asian countries concerning Northeast Asian regional cooperation. Comprehensive regional security cooperation in Northeast Asia includes collective security and cooperation security, and is utilized to strengthen security among nations. The institutional success that was achieved with economic cooperation in East Asia must be applied to the field

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weapons and nuclear plans, re-join the NPT and IAEA, the US has no plans to attack North Korea and does not intend to do so, the 1992 Korean non-proliferation agreement should be complied, peaceful use of nuclear powers by North Korea is recognized, provision of light water reactors will be discussed at appropriate time; 2) normalization of US-North Korea relations, Japan-North Korea relations to be discussed; 3) bilateral, multilateral economic cooperation to expand, the five countries will provide energy to North Korea, Korea will provide 2 million kilowatt to North Korea; 4) separate forum to be held on peaceful system in Korea Peninsula, will seek security cooperation in Northeast Asia; 5) issues will be discussed according to the principle of commitment-for-commitment, action-for-action; 6) fifth Six-Party Talks planned to be held in Beijing in November.

<sup>13</sup> Oh, Seung Ryul, "Relationship between Economic and Security Cooperation in Northeast Asia," 2005.

of security cooperation, and to establishing a multilateral, multi-sector cooperation mechanism in the region.<sup>14</sup>

The military stand-off between South and North Korea, the inequality, and the imbalance between the two sides can only hinder the possible multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia. Moreover, the dynamics of conflict among the four neighboring countries, and mixture of those conflicts with that of the Korean Peninsula all add to the gloomy prospects for multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia. The strengthening of the US-Japan alliance and the US-Korea alliance also add to the instability and the uncertainties in the region. Nevertheless, despite all the struggles, stand-offs, and deadlocks in the region, Northeast Asian countries are increasingly taking on more talks, dialogues, and cooperation concerning economic and security issues. With the institutionalization of the Korea-China-Japan summit and the Six-Party Talks, there is likely to engender multilateral regional cooperation mechanism and more active revitalization of economic and security cooperation.

## VI. Conclusion

In Northeast Asia, lingering security threat and struggle for hegemony are hindering the countries in the region to build stronger relationships of trust, which in turn is affecting the economic relationship of the countries as well. Therefore, although the desire for peace and deterrence of war in Northeast Asia is as strong as in any other region, there is a relative lack of awareness and understanding of the essentiality of institutionalizing such intentions. The countries in the region must concentrate on increasing interdependent cooperation for the mutual prosperity of Northeast Asia. There is a need to emphasize the necessity of multilateral security order in the region by highlighting the threat posed by North Korean nuclear problem. Northeast Asia has been divided by different perceptions of enemies. Plus, there is a sense of competition among the countries in the region that makes cooperation seemingly more difficult. Therefore, countries need to dispel that sense of competition and hostilities toward each other and seek more cooperation in various areas, including not only political, economic, and cultural sectors, but in more immediate and specific areas such as the North Korean nuclear problem and collective security.

Since the US considers China as a potential rival, it will not tolerate a regional integration format that does not include it. The US is favorable to multilateral economic cooperation in the region, such as free trade and market opening, considering

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<sup>14</sup> Han, Yong Sup, "Necessity for Establishing an East Asian Security Community," 2005.

that it will play a major role in it. In the political and security arena, however, the US prefers a hub-and-spokes system, with which it can exert the maximum level of authority and influence on all of the countries in the region. Therefore, the countries will have to expand the level of institutionalization among Korea, China, and Japan, in economic cooperation, with the basis of the comprehensive cooperation with the US in full consideration. That way, the countries will be able to gradually establish more formal institution of economic cooperation with all the countries involved. The US's economic interests will figure prominently in the economic integration of Northeast Asia.

In regard to the security sector, the institutions which include the participation of the US such as the Six-Party Talks will need to be expanded so that they can embrace both bilateral arrangements and multilateral arrangements in complementary way on the multi-level format. There has never been much experience in Northeast Asia in multilateral regional cooperation, and the expectations of the peoples are not high either. The countries in the region should make efforts to cooperate in matters with less potential conflicts in order to build trust and to accumulate experience of cooperation. Then the cooperation should expand to matters of historical conflicts. For example, cooperation must be expanded from economic matters to political and security matters. Or an international regime may be formed by sectors or by issues, and it can be expanded to include collective interests and collective norms.

Economic cooperation should be considered as the driving force in regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. Cooperation in security should be conducted gradually as economic cooperation gains success and momentum. The inevitable link between security and economics is increasingly relevant in Northeast Asia. In this region, the relative lack of trust and cooperation among the countries leaves no country to take charge in taking the steps to exchange security interests and economic interests with others. For the time being, regional economic cooperation and expanding it will have to serve as the means to minimize diplomatic and security conflicts. A peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem may offer means to link security and economic issues and to exchange between the two sectors.

There also exist potential conflicts for hegemony in Northeast Asia, with unsettled historical interpretations. Between China and Japan, the two regional powers, there is still lack of sufficient enthusiasm for reconciliation and cooperation. It is unlikely that either China or Japan will give up its quest for hegemony any time soon, so it is better to reduce potential instability caused by the competition for hegemony by diverting the focus of the countries to economic interests.

In Northeast Asia, the role of the state is relative bigger in the international affairs. Especially in countries such as China and Russia, the role of the state is significant. The countries in the region should form an international regime in the short-term that would facilitate the flow of capital and technologies necessary for regional cooperation activities. Then, the role of the market should be expanded in each country upon that basis.

Since the 1990's, it has been difficult to consider regional competition as an important component for Northeast Asian economic integration. Regional competition has not disappeared, of course, but the global economy post-Cold War is showing trends to transcend regional frameworks. The global norms take precedence over regional norms. APEC and ASEM are being managed as means to strengthen the global economy rather than to strengthen regional integration. International norms in finances and free trade must be actively utilized in order to activate economic cooperation in Northeast Asia. International norms should be applied in order to form regional norms. Until such regional norms are formed, the countries in the region should take into account the interests of the US in the calculations. APEC and ASEM should be used to establish the identity of the Northeast Asian regional market.

Whereas the EU was based upon the similarities in national systems and social structures of the member countries, Northeast Asia has no such basis. A country like China is still politically socialist, with its economic and social structure still bearing the remnants of that system. Such differences in ideologies and national systems sometimes make honest discussions uncomfortable within the elites of the countries of Northeast Asia. Nevertheless, it is expected that Northeast Asia will gradually come to terms with its own identity and the countries in the region will emerge and integrate into more similar and compatible national systems.

Accordingly, the political elites of each country should have a clear vision and cooperate with others in specific issues in order to expand the depth and scope of understanding of each other. In these efforts, diplomacy on the highest level is needed. In short term, harmonization of economic norms should be a focus that would facilitate economic cooperation and trade. In the mid- and longer term, collective norms should be expanded to cover political and security areas, and there should be various forms of exchanges among the political and security elites of each country.

When free market economy and democracy expand throughout the region, so will the integrated similarities of the national systems. Northeast Asian countries share the same cultural roots in Buddhism and Confucianism. However, the different routes of modernization that the countries went through created different political, social, and



cultural levels and developments. That is why cultural exchange and cooperation is essential, especially targeting the youth, the hope for the future. And these exchanges should include not only the traditional forms of culture, but the contemporary modern culture that would enable the countries to find similarities and common grounds.

Since the end of the Cold War, people in Northeast Asia began to form a regional identity as opportunities increased for exchanges and communication. The legacy of ideologies and systems from the Cold War era and the newly emerging problems of settling histories and territories are hindering the countries of the region to cooperate. Instead of fighting over histories and territories, the countries in the region should emphasize peace and prosperity and the benefits that can be gained from them, thus expanding opportunities to integrate and harmonize within the region. The various NGOs and intellectuals from each country need a common understanding for a regional community. The current efforts to write a common history textbook by a team of authors from Korea, China, and Japan will serve as a meaningful development toward that goal.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Park, Jong Chul, *Current Infrastructure for Northeast Asian Cooperation*, 2005.

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