

# Multilateral Confidence Building Measures in Northeast Asia: Receding or Emerging?

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## INTRODUCTION

This essay addresses three key terms, namely Northeast Asia, confidence-building measures (CBMs), and multilateralism, all of which are relatively new in their use in sub-region and somewhat ambiguous in their definitions.<sup>1</sup> These key terms are part of a growing lexicon to describe security issues in the Asia–Pacific region.

Northeast Asia describes the area inhabited by Japan and its neighbors, as do the Far East and North Pacific. While the term Far East is less used today, the terms Northeast Asia or North Pacific are used almost interchangeably without a specific definition of their geographic footprint. Both refer to overlapping but not identical geographic areas, one which includes the Pacific, and one which does not. Whatever label one use, the focus of attention is on the Asia–Pacific with the United States as the conspicuous player of the subregion.

The term Northeast Asia has been in use since the Korean War and has gained more prominence in light of the activities of its geographical counterpart, Southeast Asia. The activities of regional institutions in Southeast Asia during the 1990s, particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), have gathered momentum, accentuating the lack of similar sub-regional endeavors at institutions in the Northeast.

CBM is also a relatively new term in Northeast Asia. The concept of CBMs was first put forward in January 1973 at the preparatory consultations in Helsinki to establish an agenda for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). After prolonged discussions and much disagreement, CBM was defined as follows; “In order to strengthen confidence and to increase stability and security...appropriate proposals on confidence-building measures such as the prior notification of major military maneuvers on a basis to be specified by the Conference, and the exchange of observers by invitation at military maneuvers under mutually

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<sup>1</sup>The author refers to the Asia–Pacific region as “the region,” and Northeast Asia as “sub-region.”

acceptable condition.”<sup>1</sup> Although the term was not used in Asia during the Cold War, it has become a part of diplomatic parlance in the region following the end of the Cold War. Some in Asia, however, have voiced resistance to applying European-style CBMS in an Asian context, claiming that the security environment in Europe during the Cold War, when the concept was conceived, was completely different from Asia since Europe had clearly identified adversaries. In line with this thinking, the government of Japan proposed implementing measures to increase mutual reassurance or Mutual Reassurance Measures (MRMs) in its preliminary paper to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>2</sup> Satoh Yukio has argued in favor of MRMs for East Asia where “the complex feelings and concerns which Asians hold toward each other are more ambiguous”<sup>3</sup> than was the conspicuous East West divide during Cold War Europe. In a similar vein, an Australian scholar Paul Dibb has suggested trust building measures (TBMs) as a practical alternative to CBMS in Asia.<sup>4</sup> Although a number of alternative terms to CBMS have been proposed for Asia in the 1990s, Asia at the end of the decade seems to use CBMS in its own security context because the term has become established in security and political discourse.

CBMS today, in Asia and in Europe, include a broad scope of measures varying from military to non-military measures. In prior Stimson Center publications, CBMS are defined as “diverse national security tools—such as hot-lines, people-to-people exchange, prior notification of military exercises, and cross-border economic projects—that can help defuse tension, resolve misunderstandings, and promote cooperation to address security concerns.”<sup>5</sup>

In Northeast Asia, relations among nation states were more the bilateral, rather than multilateral, during the Cold War. Thus, the multilateral approach is a relatively new mode of regional relations in this region. Unlike Europe, where multilateral CBMS were embraced during the Cold War, Northeast Asia only began entertaining the notion of multilateral CBMS after the demise of East-West confrontation, albeit with limited tangible results so far.

For Japan as well, the three key terms, both alone and in combination, are relatively new in its diplomatic vocabulary. It has only been since the 1990s that Japan has shifted from a reluctant to proactive player in multilateral CBMS in Northeast Asia.

This essay examines the geopolitical quilt being sewn by the threads of three relatively new factors, namely Northeast Asia, multilateral approaches, and CBMS. The functions of these threads will be examined independently, as well as in combination. This essay attempts to

review the CBMs with a particular focus on their multilateral aspect in the sub-region of Northeast Asia, their effectiveness, and the incentives for each of the potential parties to warm their relations with each other. What current issues might hinder new CBMs? What factors, aside from the broadest of CBMs will help impel the actors to reach some agreement? What lessons can we learn from past examples of CBM agreements? What kinds of agreements are most likely to succeed or fail?

## **EMERGING MULTILATERAL CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES IN NORTHEAST ASIA**

### **Northeast Asia: Foreign soil for regional cooperation**

Northeast Asia today embraces four major powers including the United States, China, Russia, and Japan. These four powers, plus a divided Korea, have developed a complex web of bilateral relationships but have failed to aggregate them into partial or complete multilateral structures. For example, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have maintained their respective bilateral alliances with the United States for the past five decades. Yet no trilateral alliance has developed among the three. During the Cold War, countries in Northeast Asia fabricated their relations along the lines of bilateralism—bilateral alliances and bilateral diplomatic arrangements—and not along the lines of multilateralism. Northeast Asia lacks any collective defense mechanism like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Has the sub-region developed any European-style multilateral CBMs short of such collective defense mechanism?

As mentioned above, numerous definitions of CBMS varies leads to the application of a variety of measures. In the context of Northeast Asia, threat perceptions are not distinct. Each country is concerned over a threat posed by other countries in the sub-region to themselves, unless the country is engaged in some type of bilateral alliance such as the ROK and the United States or Japan and the United States. M. Susan Pederson and Stanley Weeks have identified three broad categories of Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs); namely “declaratory measures—statements of intent including broad commitments such as non-attack or no-first use agreements; transparency measures—including information, communication, notification, and observation/inspection measures; and constraint measures—including risk reduction regimes and exclusion/separation zones, as well as more traditional constraints on personnel, equipment, and operational activities.”<sup>6</sup> During the Cold War, amongst these three

categories, some in the sub-region have adapted unilateral or bilateral declaratory measures and transparency measures, though in a very limited way, but not much in the form of constraint measures. Even with the end of the Cold War, the sub-regional players have implemented more transparency measures on a larger scale than those during the Cold War. They have not entered yet the arena of constraint measures.

Behind the relative void of multilateral CBMS in Northeast Asia compared to the rest of the world, lies the security climate of the sub-region. During the Cold War, the Soviet threat loomed large on Northeast Asia. With a closed communist China and a divided Korea, the security outlook simply did not lend itself to confidence building of any sort. While the end of the Cold War has brought a sea of change to other regions, it has only brought about relatively limited changes to Northeast Asia. The end of the Cold War also meant the collapse of the Soviet Union in the sub-region as the Soviet was no longer a threat. Some in Japan advocated a smaller budget for defense and a reduction of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) as the need to defend Japan against possible Soviet aggression became less threatening. Witnessing the changes in the European security climate following the Soviet withdrawal from the Eastern bloc, the reunification of the two Germanys along with the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, some in the early 1990s embraced hope for a more peaceful globe with a peace dividend in the sub-region as well. Such euphoria was short-lived in Northeast Asia. After a brief interlude of rejoicing with the end of the Cold War, observers have become sober, recognizing that the two Koreas are still divided and that Cold War remnants still exist in the sub-region. These remnants are unresolved issues, including tensions between mainland China and Taiwan as well as maritime territorial disputes such as the Tokdo/Takeshima dispute between the Republic of Korea and Japan, the Senkaku/Daiyou Islands dispute between Japan and China, and the Northern Territories issue between Japan and Russia. These issues loom over Northeast Asia, not leaving much optimism for regional stability. While Europe has been remolding and developing its post-Cold War security architecture, such as changes to NATO, and the development of the European Union (EU), Northeast Asia still does not have any multilateral security institution of its own ten years after the Cold War ended. A multilateral security institution need not be a formal physical organization; even a loose arrangement with common rules and norms abided by its members could be a valuable first step. However, the sub-region does not have any inter-governmental, sub-regional multilateral institution of any sort, for security or economics. The Four Party Talks and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which represent the furthest Northeast Asia has come in terms of multilateral cooperation, will be elaborated upon below.

The security outlook of Northeast Asia in the 1990s has swung like a pendulum, going from one extreme to the next. It is pulled by single events, from failed visits to successful heads-of-state visits in the sub-region. In the early 1990s, the sub-region was engulfed by post-Cold War euphoria. This was followed by the successful completion of the Sino-Russian border demarcation process in 1991–92, which increased the sense of stability in the region. In the second half of the 1990s, particularly from 1996 through 1998, the sub-region witnessed a series of high-level contacts, starting with the Sino–Russian summit of April 1996 that led to a border agreement, representing an important bilateral CBM. According to one calculation, there have been more bilateral summits among the leaders of Northeast Asia in the past few years than there have been in the preceding half century. Bilateral contacts have been arranged not only through official visits but also at the fringes of multilateral meetings, particularly around the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meetings. During this period Russia, China and the United States have concluded “strategic partnerships,” including some with the adjective “constructive.” Some have dubbed this bilateral contact “concerted bilateralism.” This has improved the security outlook in the sub-region and has stirred momentum for multilateral security cooperation. Nevertheless, the bilateral dyads have been developing at different rates and have not led to sub-regional CBMs. Improved bilateral relations are probably necessary for promoting regional cooperation, but they are not sufficient.

Furthermore the improvements in bilateral dyads remain fragile if not integrated into a multilateral web. In point of fact, they have recently soured one after another, starting with the failed visit of Jiang Zemin to Tokyo in November 1998. Growing tensions between the United States and China, particularly on the question of human rights, cast a dark cloud over U.S.–China relations from summer 1998 to spring 1999. NATO’s Kosovo air campaign damaged the relations between the United States and both Russia and China in spring 1999. The test launch of a Taepodong missile in the summer of 1998 thwarted efforts at stabilizing the security climate in the sub-region.

In spite of strained relations over the aforementioned events, some relaxation of tensions were observed during Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo’s visit to China in July 1999, as well as the bilateral summit talks between the United States and China in September 1999 in Auckland at the fringe of the APEC Leaders Meeting. Relations improved further as a result of an agreement between the United States and China in November paving the way for China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1999. It seems that the pendulum has swayed somewhat from poor to good in the sub-region’s overall political security environment.

Standing at the threshold of the twenty-first century, many in the sub-region paint a gloomy picture of the area's future security outlook. The sub-region is still viewed as a dangerous and volatile place beset by suspicion and distrust. Alarmists go so far as to say that the first bullet or missile will be fired in Northeast Asia when a third world war breaks out.

The challenges for CBMs in Northeast Asia, thus, are different from other regions, particularly from Europe. Since the end of World War II, Europe has experienced the cooperative spirit of NATO to meet a common threat and build confidence with the Eastern Bloc through the Helsinki process and CSCE. Behind this spirit of security cooperation in the 1990s was economic integration and cross-border commerce in the European Community that served as a foundation for regional cooperation. In Northeast Asia, the security scene after the end of World War II did not leave room for such region-wide cooperation in any functional form. Even in the realm of economic cooperation, the sub-region does not espouse any institution comparable to the EU nor anything of lesser magnitude for that matter. Unresolved border disputes, confrontations on the Korean peninsula, fears of an arms race, lingering historical animosities, weak intra-regional trade linkages, sharp inequalities and a difference in economic systems have rendered the sub-region foreign soil to CBMs or any sort of regional cooperation.

### **A Review of Emerging Multilateral CBMs in Northeast Asia in the 1990s: Emerging Multilateral CBMs in Northeast Asia?**

Nonetheless, the end of the Cold War seems to have created a new environment and condition for the sub-region to be more hopeful for regional cooperation. Once the onerous weight of U.S.–Soviet rivalry was lifted, a new era dawned where each country began to search for some complex and effective security mechanism. Despite mutual suspicions, perceived threats and historical tensions, countries in Northeast Asia in the 1990s have endorsed the momentum towards regionalism in a way not seen in preceding decades. The movement towards regional cooperation gathered steam in the Asia–Pacific from 1989 to the early 1990s. We have witnessed the birth of two regional institutions, namely, APEC in 1989 on the economic front and ARF in 1994, which is composed of most Northeast Asian countries except for a few countries such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Although Northeast Asia at the end of the 1990s is still bereft of a regional institution, the sub-region has discussed numerous ideas for multilateral measures including an Association

of Northeast Asian Nations (ANEAN), a nuclear free zone, a regional development bank, an economic development zone, an energy and environmental cooperation as well as a political security dialogue. Although most ideas have remained in the realm of proposals, the sub-region at the formal governmental level espouses the Four Party Talks involving China, the DPRK, ROK and the United States. Their progress, however, has been slow and it is uncertain whether or not the scope of activities from these talks will include a broad exchange on regional affairs or concrete action to replace the current armistice system on the Korean peninsula.

Another offspring of the official multilateral process is the aforementioned KEDO. This institution was created to implement the Agreed Framework between the United States and the DPRK, under which the DPRK agreed to freeze and ultimately dismantle its existing nuclear program. KEDO has the fairly limited technical mission of financing and constructing two light water reactors in the DPRK, based on the Korean Standard Nuclear Power Plant model, and providing the DPRK with an alternative source of energy (heavy oil) for heating and electricity production, until the first of those reactors is completed. KEDO offers an interesting functional approach to multilateral CBMs. It is a hybrid of the bilateral and multilateral approach, involving four sub-regional countries more than a dozen financial supporters. KEDO's development has been slow, with technical and political problems delaying the implementation of the plan. Nevertheless, it has been singularly successful in working with North Korea and in fulfilling its objective of preventing North Korea from going nuclear and of providing alternative fuel. Although it may face difficulties in future, KEDO is an important multilateral CBM fitting into the third category of typology, constraint measures, by preventing the DPRK from producing nuclear fissile materials.<sup>7</sup>

Among multilateral CBMs, the sub-region has been home to the second type, transparency measures, through information and communication measures of numerous multilateral political and security dialogues.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the sub-regional players, though, were dubious if not hostile to multilateral security dialogues in the beginning of the 1990s. Proposals for multilateral security covering a broader region of the Asia-Pacific came first from the former Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev proposed a Pacific Ocean Conference along the lines of the Helsinki Conference in his Vladivostok speech in July 1986 and a region-wide security consultative community with a seven-point proposal in his Krasnoyarsk speech in 1988.<sup>9</sup> Countries in the Asia-Pacific region regarded the proposal as mere propaganda. Japan and the United States perceived the Soviet move as a way to drive apart the U.S.-Japan alliance, since the Soviet proposals included a

freeze on naval forces in the western Pacific, limitations on air and naval forces around the Korean peninsula, and nuclear free zones for Korea and the Indian Ocean.

Regional skepticism on multilateral security cooperation was not limited to proposals from the Soviet Union. In 1990 Canadian and Australian Foreign Ministers proposed multilateral CBMs for the Asia Pacific. On July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1990, Senator Gareth Evans, then Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, proposed an Asian version of CSCE, a Conference on Security Cooperation in Asia (CSCA), to address security issues that in Asia. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1990, Canadian foreign minister Joe Clark gave a speech at the Foreign Press Club in Tokyo and suggested that it was time to create an Asia–Pacific security organization. The region, however, received the proposals coldly. ASEAN was concerned that the creation of a sister CSCE in Asia might lead to a weakened Asian identity in the region and might force ASEAN to adopt European-style human rights, one of the central themes of the Helsinki Act.

All Northeast Asian powers, except Russia, were skeptical of multilateral security cooperations of any sort during, and even after, the end of the Cold War. An approach to multilateral CBMs like that of the CSCE succeeded neither in the Asia Pacific nor in Northeast Asia. The United States was concerned that a CSCA, if it emulated CSCE, would possibly focus on arms control as one of its central themes, which might be dominated by the Russian proposal to reduce the level of naval forces in the Pacific. Moreover, the United States, after the failure of its South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), simply regarded the concept of a multilateral security approach in the Asia Pacific as a way to create problems, not solve them.

China, another key player in the sub-region, had traditionally relied on the unilateral or bilateral approach and had been skeptical of multilateral approaches to security. China disliked discussing issues like the Spratly Islands in a multilateral arena. Japan was also very skeptical of security multilateralism until the early 1990s, as will be described later.

Although the region rejected proposals on instituting CSCA-type multilateral CBMs, these proposals slowly influenced thinking about security architecture. Moreover, the successful evolution of APEC paved the way for sub-regional players to be more receptive to multilateral security dialogues in a less institutionalized form. The first change in attitude came from ASEAN. The Institutes of Strategic and International Studies in ASEAN countries (ASEAN-ISIS) held a conference in Jakarta in June 1991 to discuss their recommendations to the fourth ASEAN summit in Singapore the following year. Directors of ISIS proposed to consider

creating a multilateral security framework using the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) as the base with additional members aiming “at enhancing stability and securing a richer peace in the region.”<sup>10</sup> Behind this shift was the growing perception among ASEAN members that the region might be in transition from the Cold War era bipolarity to multipolarity and thereby require multilateral security cooperation. Moreover, with the U.S. decision to close the Clark Airfield base and the Subic Bay naval facility in the Philippines in 1991-92, ASEAN members were alarmed that the United States might reduce its presence in the Pacific as a consequence of the Cold War’s end. ASEAN, thus, turned to a multilateral security framework in the Asia Pacific as an insurance policy to prepare for a possible withdrawal of the U.S. forward deployed forces from the region. Present also was a concern over China’s military buildup. ASEAN has been apprehensive of its giant neighbor and has come to desire China’s involvement in multilateral cooperation. They believe this will compel China to play by common rules and norms. Some ASEAN scholars offered Japan as a reason for creating a multilateral institution in the Asia Pacific. They argued that “if there is a rupture in the U.S.–Japan military alliance or if the United States reduces its military operations, Japan might be left with the feeling that it has to undertake its own defense.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet another factor cited by ASEAN and other regional governments was the disintegration of the Soviet Union. ASEAN had been reluctant concerning multilateral security cooperation since the original proposal came from the former Soviet Union where many were skeptical of the intentions behind the proposal. The perception that the new Russia shared common values with its neighbors regarding market economy and democracy eased ASEAN’s reluctance to support multilateral security cooperation.

The Northeast Asian powers also began shifting from their skeptical and resistant stance towards multilateral security dialogues. In the winter of 1991, high ranking U.S. officials began attending some of the track two gatherings. American intellectuals and officials gradually came to support a regional dialogue process, stating that “Asian security increasingly is derived from a flexible, ad hoc set of political and defense interactions. Multilateral approaches to security are emerging.”<sup>12</sup> In July 1993, President Clinton during his visit to South Korea proposed a “New Pacific Community” and a new East Asian security policy.<sup>13</sup> His policy included the maintenance of military engagement in East Asia such as the U.S.–Japan and U.S.–Korea bilateral alliances, strengthening the commitment to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the promotion of regional security dialogues, and encouraging the spread of democracy in East Asia. This signaled a clear shift in the U.S. position on security multilateralism in Asia, expanding upon the traditional hub-and-spoke security architecture

based on bilateral alliances. The Clinton administration has taken a more receptive position towards regional security cooperation, in contrast to the Bush administration, which was negative to such multilateral security frameworks since they undermined bilateral alliances and weakened U.S. influence in the region. The Clinton administration began to see multilateral security cooperation as a path to develop frameworks for burden sharing and a way to supplement bilateral alliances. Joseph Nye endorsed regional institutions as a form of confidence-building measure for the region, designed to complement American leading role in alliance.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the United States shifted its position on multilateral security cooperation in the region to a more favorable position, but at a much looser level which was meant to supplement its traditional bilateral alliances with the regional players, not to replace them.

The South Korean government has generally been more forthcoming on the issue of regional multilateral security cooperation. As early as October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1988, President Roh Tae Woo proposed a Northeast Asia multilateral security cooperation at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, stating “I take this opportunity to propose a consultative conference for peace among the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Japan as well as North and South Korea in order to lay a solid foundation for durable peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia.”<sup>15</sup> On May 31<sup>st</sup> 1993, the South Korean foreign minister Han Sung-Joo gave a speech at a luncheon hosted by the Korean Council on Foreign Relations. In his speech entitled “Fundamentals of Korea’s New Diplomacy: New Korea’s Diplomacy toward the World and the Future,” he proposed creating a dialogue and promoting cooperation concerning regional security issues.<sup>16</sup>

As for Russia, it maintains the former Soviet Union’s progressive position on security multilateralism in the sub-region and the broader Asia Pacific region. Russia has become more interested in associating itself with Asia, including Northeast Asia, and has consequently reduced its traditional focus on Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the question of Russian identity—whether it belongs to Europe or Asia—emerged again as an active debate. Witnessing the disintegration of the Warsaw Treaty Organization with the end of the Cold War and the subsequent expansion of NATO eastward, Russians felt excluded and threatened. Russia thus has turned to Asia to build a political presence and become a regional partner. Russia turned its eyes to Asia after experiencing the internal confusion from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the creation of the CIS and separatism within Russia in the second half of the 1990s. It has participated in both ARF since 1994 and APEC since 1998. Moreover, Russia wanted to maintain a closer association with Asia during the 1990s to check the trend of U.S. dominance in the region. President Yeltsin in his speech to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 1998 stated that “the time for a certain illusion and excessive expectations of the United States

is over,” claiming that the world is in fact multipolar, not unipolar with the United States at the apex.<sup>17</sup>

Russia does have a number of incentives to engage in multilateral security dialogues, namely securing a seat at the Asia–Pacific political discourse table, bolstering its pride as a Eurasian major power, and to check U.S. behavior in international forums. For Russia, there is presently no significant disincentive to engaging in security cooperation under various multilateral frameworks. In spite of this, however, Russia in the past decade has not been an active player in security multilateralism in the Asia–Pacific or Northeast Asia. Faced with the difficulty and complexity of domestic issues, Russia simply has not been able to spare further energy to promote multilateral CBMS in Northeast Asia, which, despite their merits, certainly are not essential for the maintenance of its security in the sub-region. An enticing agenda is needed to deepen Russian engagement in sub-regional multilateral security cooperation.

While other players in the sub-region had shifted their position on security cooperation with the establishment of the ARF in 1993, one major power in the sub-region, China, has remained hesitant and defensive about joining a multilateral security institution. Although China recognized the political costs of non-participation in the ARF, it has been cautious concerning multilateral security dialogues, being acutely sensitive to possible intrusions into Chinese sovereignty. It does not want regional security institutions to intervene into its internal affairs, like Taiwan and Tibet, as well as territorial issues like the Spratly Islands. When Foreign Minister Qian Qichen attended the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting as a guest in July 1993 and agreed to establish ARF, he asserted that “it (ARF) should not make decisions nor take common action on a certain country, a certain region or a certain question.”<sup>18</sup>

However, China has gradually shifted its position on security dialogues. It has since served as co-chair of an Inter-sessional Support Group (ISG) on CBMS in Beijing in 1996. At a press conference in 1996, Qian acknowledged the value of ARF and said that ARF is a new attempt at regional security cooperation and represents a new concept of security.<sup>19</sup> Professor Takagi Seiichiro attributes this change in China’s position on regional security dialogue to two factors. First, in November 1995, the U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry proposed that APEC include security dialogue and confidence-building measures in its agenda, which China strongly resisted.<sup>20</sup> China was against the idea of including security in the APEC agenda because Taiwan’s membership in APEC. China maneuvered to halt this redefinition of APEC’s role in the region by participating aggressively in the process of initiating confidence-building

measures in ARF. Secondly, Takagi notes, China was alarmed by the Joint Declaration issued by Japan and the United States reaffirming their bilateral security alliance. This was seen as a move against China. In order to counter this move, China wanted to stress that common security in the region be ensured by multilateral security cooperation.<sup>21</sup> In addition China, in the second half of the 1990s, has stressed the multipolar structure of power distribution and has appealed to the virtue of multilateralism, partly because it perceives multilateral security cooperation as a means to check American unipolarity and to check its alliances in the sub-region. China has condemned the U.S.–Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation and the U.S.–Japan joint development of a Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system, arguing that strengthening the bilateral security alliance counters the trend of multilateral security cooperation in the region. Multilateral security cooperation at a less institutionalized level seems to have an appeal for China, although it does not want to see such forums under U.S. leadership or pushing a human rights agenda. China remains acutely sensitive to discussion of human rights, which might open the door for interference into its internal matters, as reflected in its strong resistance to ARF graduating to the preventive diplomacy phase from confidence building.<sup>22</sup>

South Korea has taken further steps to propose sub-regional dialogues. At the ARF Senior Officials Meeting (ARF-SOM) held in Bangkok on May 23–25, 1994, the South Korean government submitted a document entitled “Northeast Asia Security Cooperation,” stating that “a multilateral framework is needed to further improve the security environment and consolidate peace in Northeast Asia.” The document proposed to initiate efforts on transparency measures, such as the exchange and discussion of defense white papers, provision of data to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, regular meetings of defense officials and exchange of visits of military personnel in addition to port visits. The ROK proposed creating a Northeast Asia Security Dialogue (NEASED) at the intergovernmental level and to maintain cooperative consultative relations with ARF.<sup>23</sup> At the third ARF meeting in July 1996 held in Jakarta, South Korean Foreign Minister Gong stated that the Republic of Korea hopes to step up its efforts to develop the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), currently a track-two security dialogue, an informal process involving government officials in their private capacities, academics, journalists, and others, into a track-one intergovernmental dialogue.<sup>24</sup>

With these shifts in position by the sub-regional players on multilateral security cooperation, Northeast Asia has been engaging in the region-wide process of ARF at the track one inter-governmental level. The momentum for some form of security cooperation surged in the sub-region in the late 1990s, leading to the vigorous growth of security dialogue enterprises in the region. At the track one level, however, both China and North Korea have rejected

creating such a process, arguing that it is too early to form such a framework. China does wish to have a seat at the table of CBM-type meetings but does not wish to have a multilateral institution built in the sub-region, fearing that such a process might ultimately lead to constraint measures that would force China to adhere rules and norms beyond the UN Charter, in which it finds a sufficient comfort level. China's traditional caution on security multilateralism still looms large when it is placed in the context of the sub-region. Also, for North Korea, it seems that regional or global dialogues are easier to participate in compared to sub-regional dialogues where North Korea is likely to receive considerable negative attention. Not surprisingly, North Korea has been absent from most of the sub-regional dialogues since the sub-region includes countries with which the DPRK does not have diplomatic ties.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the DPRK's foreign office has recently confirmed its stance that it is too premature to set up a multi-party security cooperation system in Northeast Asia.

Nevertheless, the sub-region at the threshold of the new millennium embraces two official multilateral processes that, though limited in membership and agenda, work to build confidence. One is the aforementioned Four Party Talks involving China, the DPRK, ROK and the United States concerning the Korean peninsula. While progress has been slow in the Four Party Talks, but that they are held at all is encouraging as a possible first step toward peaceful resolution of the security problems in Korea.

The other official multilateral security process in Northeast Asia is KEDO. It is ostensibly a bilateral agreement between the United States and North Korea that also operates as a multilateral institution with four international players who are working towards providing the DPRK with nuclear power plants. Although KEDO has suffered setbacks such as U.S. Congressional opposition and the temporary suspension of Japanese financing in reaction to North Korean missile tests, KEDO represents the one successful overture to the North Koreans. It has succeeded in fulfilling its objective of defusing the nuclear weapons proliferation issue and providing Pyongyang with alternative energy supplies. Moreover, KEDO is touted by some as a prototype for international cooperation in dealing with North Korea, providing food aid and agricultural technical assistance. KEDO represents a multilateral CBM effort for a specific technical issue in the DPRK but has broader ramifications in terms of its impact.

The momentum for security cooperation in the sub-region has found a more congenial home at the track two level. Both China and North Korea are more comfortable participating in track two security dialogues. Sub-regional countries participate in broader regional

dialogues, track two processes like the Katmandu process and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), which links regional security-oriented institutes. CSCAP members include organizations in Australia, Canada, China, the European Community, Indonesia, Japan, North and South Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, the United States and Vietnam. An Indian institute has joined as an associate member and several UN organizations enjoy affiliate/observer status. In addition, individual Taiwanese scholars and security specialists participate in working group meetings in their private capacities. The Katmandu process, sponsored by the UN Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in the Asia and Pacific, was created to discuss various regional and global disarmament issues. Both the DPRK and the ROK participate in this process.

At the track two level, the 1990s has been an active decade with a flourishing of security dialogues in Northeast Asia. The first sub-regional security dialogue, the North Pacific Cooperative Security Dialogue (NPCSD), was created by a Canadian initiative in September 1990. The NPCSD held seven meetings and workshops between April 1991 and March 1993 on topics such as unconventional security issues, regional confidence building measures and the connections between history, culture and the prospects for security cooperation. Participants in NPCSD included academics and officials in their private capacities from eight countries: Canada, China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, Russia and the United States.

In turn, the U.S. initiated the process to establish NEACD which is currently underway. NEACD is organized by the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) whose director attended the final meeting of the NPCSD. Since October 1993, NEACD has been meeting regularly with participants from ministries of foreign affairs, defense establishments (including uniformed personnel), and academic institutions in the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Russia and China. NEACD has been unique in pioneering the involvement of uniformed military personnel in the security dialogue process of a multilateral forum. The DPRK attended the preparatory session in July 1993 but has been consistently absent from plenary meetings, despite repeated overtures toward Pyongyang by members of NEACD. Since October 1993, NEACD has held meetings continuously, rotating the venue among the six participating countries. Its agenda includes security issues as well as non-traditional security issues, such as economic and environmental issues; the latter issues have been included from the start. In addition to its plenary meeting, NEACD created two study projects, on principles governing interstate relations in Northeast Asia and on mutual reassurance measures as well as defense information sharing.

Another example of sub-regional security dialogue exists within the aforementioned CSCAP. The North Pacific Working Group of CSCAP is the only working group with a geographical focus on the North Pacific—with more inclusive membership than either NPCSD or NEACD—and which even includes non-regional players. Other working groups of CSCAP are on thematic issues like CBMs. China and the DPRK were absent from the first meeting held in April 1995 in Tokyo which addressed the theme of the development of a framework for stability on the Korean peninsula. China was not a member of CSCAP then and wanted to wait until it became a full member. Although the DPRK's Institute of Disarmament and Peace had joined CSCAP, it chose not to come to the first meeting, expressing discomfort over attending multilateral meetings focusing on the Korean peninsula. The January 1997 North Pacific Working Group in Vancouver was attended by all the Northeast Asian countries, including North Korea and China, as well as non-regional members from Southeast Asia and the EU due to its much broader theme focusing on generalized frameworks for Northeast Asian security. The third meeting in December 1997 and the fourth in November 1998 in Beijing both enjoyed full representation from the sub-region. The DPRK was absent from the fifth meeting in Tokyo in September 1999 due to worsening bilateral relations between Pyongyang and Tokyo.

The sub-region has also housed more exclusive “mini-lateral” meetings in the 1990s, such as the Trilateral Forum on North Pacific Security Problems, launched in early 1994 by three non-governmental think tanks from Japan, the United States and Russia: the Japan Institute of International Affairs, the Carnegie Foundation of the United States, and the Institute of World Economics and International Relations of Russia. The forum's host rotates among these three countries. It was originally established to enhance security dialogue between Japan and Russia, which remained weak bilaterally due to the Northern Territories issue. By bringing the United States into the process, an attempt was to bring in a non-partisan participant to mend the rift between Japan and Russia. Although academics participated and led the proceedings, the Trilateral Forum was a “track one and a half” level meeting since it involved participants from foreign and defense ministries, including uniformed personnel. The processes have contributed to lowering the psychological fence between Japan and Russia. This effect has been demonstrated recently with an increase of defense exchanges, including reciprocal visits by the Russian defense minister and the Japanese minister of Defense Agency, port visits of naval ships as well as joint training for search and rescue operations.

In the summer of 1998, another trilateral track two process, this time involving only Japanese, American and Chinese private experts, was launched in Tokyo. Its first meeting was

held in January 1999 in the United States and its second meeting in September 1999 in Tokyo. This trilateral framework aims at developing three sets of bilateral relations in a balanced manner to remove any misunderstanding or miscalculations. According to the media accounts, “although Japan and the United States wanted to launch this framework as a track one forum, China rejected the idea, insisting it was premature to let government officials participate in such a forum.”<sup>26</sup>

The sub-region in the 1990s has also witnessed a surge in momentum in economic cooperation which is also a part of CBMS or a conduit for enhancing confidence among regional players. The most notable example was the Tumen River Area Development Plan (1992–94) and its successor, the Tumen River Economic Development Area (1994). With the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), this is directed by a secretariat now based in Beijing and overseen by the Development Coordination Committee and Consultative Commission, each composed of representatives from member countries. Economic zones encompassing the Sea of Japan/East Sea were actively proposed in the early 1990s, although final results have yet to materialize. At the track two level the Northeast Asia Economic Forum (NEAEF) was created as a regional non-governmental organization in 1991 to sponsor and facilitate research, networking, and dialogue relevant to the economic development and integration of Northeast Asia. Membership, however, is extended to interested individuals and institutions both within the sub-region and internationally. The Forum’s Secretariat is located at the East-West Center located in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Forum has served as a vehicle for the exchange of information and ideas concerning Northeast Asia economic development and integration.<sup>27</sup>

The last decade of this century has proved to be a turning point for Northeast Asia with its attempts to establish CBMS, mostly in the form of transparency measures—an endeavor which would have been thought unimaginable in preceding decades.

## **JAPAN’S ENGAGEMENT IN MULTILATERAL CBMS: FROM NEGATION TO SUPPORTER AND INITIATOR**

During the Cold War, bilateralism—or more specifically a bilateral alliance with the United States—was at the core of Japan’s security policy, leaving little room for multilateral CBMS. This is an inevitable consequence from the dearth of multilateral security institutions in the Asia–Pacific as well as the bitter taste left in Japan’s mouth from experiences during the period prior to World War II.

When the former Soviet Union proposed a regional security forum in Asia, Japan, like the United States, viewed the proposal as propaganda aimed at naval disarmament. Any naval disarmament would give an advantage to the Soviet Union which had inferior naval capabilities and superior ground power vis-à-vis the United States. Japan also saw the Soviet proposals as an attempt to drive a wedge in the U.S.–Japan security alliance.

In 1990, Japan rejected the CSCA ideas, proposed by Australia and Canada, on the grounds that security imperatives are different in the Asia–Pacific region from those in Europe and would therefore, require different mechanisms to maintain security. Specifically, Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki stated in July 1990 that it was too early for the establishment of an Asian CSCE.<sup>28</sup> In August 1990, Japan’s Foreign Ministry rejected both the Canadian and Australian proposals by saying that “Japan doubts if such a grouping could produce fruitful results... Conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region would be better settled through meetings of the concerned parties rather than at an international security forum.”<sup>29</sup> Japan argued that Asia needed Asian solutions for its security needs, tantamount to a web of bilateral alliances. It was still very skeptical of the virtue of security multilateralism that might undermine its bilateral alliance with the United States. Japan, however, has shifted its position on multilateral security cooperation in Asia from negation to approval as it saw signs of the Cold War dissipate in the 1990s.

Japan conspicuously reversed its position on regional security multilateralism after Gorbachev’s visit to Tokyo in April 1991, marking the first visit by the head of the Soviet Union to Japan. During his visit to Japan, Gorbachev emphasized that the Soviet Union no longer opposed the U.S.-Japan alliance.<sup>30</sup> This new stance by the Soviet Union, which was initially announced during Japanese foreign minister Uno’s visit to Moscow in May 1989 helped remove Japan’s concern about the Soviet’s secretly attempt to drive a wedge into the U.S.–Japan alliance with multilateral security proposals. It signaled a shift in Japan’s foreign policy towards the Soviet Union, from disengagement to engagement. As a manifestation of this shift, Japan announced during Gorbachev’s visit that it welcomed Soviet participation in Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), which Japan had long opposed in the preceding decade.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, when Japan saw a new Russia, the successor of the traditional advocate of security multilateralism in the region, sharing the same values with other players in the region like democracy, Japan’s perception of Russia was altered, leading to a change in the Japanese position on regional security cooperation.

A more conspicuous manifestation of Japan’s shift in policy was its proposal for a regional security forum. Japanese foreign minister Nakayama Taro proposed in a speech at the

ASEAN-PMC in July 1991 the creation of a multilateral security dialogue within the ASEAN-PMC framework. This initiative represented Japan's first regional security initiative since the end of World War II. However, Nakayama's proposal did not get much support in the meeting. Prior to this proposal, ASEAN-ISIS met in Jakarta in June 1991 to discuss its recommendations to the fourth ASEAN summit held in Singapore the following year. The meeting adopted the memorandum entitled "An ASEAN Initiative for an Asia-Pacific Political Dialogue," which proposed looking into the creation of CSPAP, using an existing institution, namely the ASEAN-PMC. The meeting declared as follows: "[ASEAN] should be a creative initiator as well as an active participant... for maintaining peace in the region... We propose that at the end of each PMC an ASEAN-PMC initiated conference be held at a suitable retreat which will offer the appropriate ambiance for constructive discussions on Asia-Pacific stability and peace."<sup>32</sup>

Immediately following the ASEAN-ISIS meeting in Jakarta, the Foreign Office of the Philippines hosted the Conference on ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Region: Prospects for Security Cooperation in the 1990s. This conference made similar proposals to enhance and expand the function of ASEAN-PMC for a security dialogue.<sup>33</sup> This new ASEAN position on regional security cooperation was said to have stemmed from its concern over a possible withdrawal of the U.S. military from Asia. Regional security cooperation was designed to be an insurance policy in the event of an American departure.

Ambassador Satoh Yukio, then Director-General of the Japanese foreign ministry's Intelligence and Analysis Bureau, was invited to the Jakarta and Manila meetings held in June 1991. He agreed with the ASEAN participants that the time was ripe for establishing an Asia Pacific regional security dialogue, which led him to recommend the proposal to then Japanese foreign minister Nakayama Taro. Nakayama's proposal was in line with the recommendation of the ASEAN-ISIS conference held in Jakarta.

Nonetheless, neither the ASEAN-PMC dialogue partners nor even the ASEAN members received this proposal warmly, resulting in its rejection at the 1991 ASEAN-PMC meeting. Various explanations were given as to why the proposal was not accepted. Some observers strongly underscored the lack of prior consultation with ASEAN-PMC member states before submitting the official proposal. The fear of Japan's increased leadership role in regional security was also a key factor in its rejection. To some scholars, the Nakayama proposal surfaced too soon in an official setting. They have pointed out that ASEAN, while wanting to expand the membership of a new security forum beyond ASEAN-PMC members by including

China, Russia, and the DPRK, was uncomfortable with Nakayama's idea of limiting membership to ASEAN-PMC. Moreover, ASEAN members were uneasy with Nakayama's proposal to create a SOM as a new security forum. ASEAN did not want to be perceived as a security forum rather than an economic forum.

Despite this rather unsuccessful experience, Japan remained supportive of the idea of a regional security dialogue. Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi made several speeches promoting security multilateralism. In his July 1992 address to the National Press Club in Washington, he noted that Japan would like to create and engage in political dialogues using ASEAN-PMC as a forum to enhance mutual reassurance. Miyazawa also alluded to a security dialogue in his address to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Councilors meeting in Tokyo in October 1992 and in a major policy address in Bangkok in January 1993.

Two years after Nakayama's proposal in July 1993, the ASEAN-PMC in Singapore did agree to create ARF along the lines that Nakayama had proposed. By this time, others in the region had also shifted their positions about participating in multilateral security dialogues and ARF held its first ministerial and PMC meetings in July 1994. Since the creation of ARF, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japanese Defense Agency have been strong supporters of the process including ISG meetings. In the fall of 1999, Japan co-chaired the ISG on CBMS with Singapore, discussing regional security outlook, overlaps between phase one confidence-building and phase two preventive diplomacy as well as the definitions and mechanisms of the latter.

While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the lead in engaging itself in ARF, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) has also subsequently joined ARF's efforts along with other defense colleagues from member countries. In addition, the JDA has taken its own initiatives in hosting track one dialogues. It created an International Policy Planning Division in the Bureau of Defense Policy to promote these dialogues in January 1997. This activism is a reflection of the change in the Asian security landscape as reflected in the 1995 National Defense Program Outline (NDPO).

The forerunner of this new policy can be found in the 1994 findings of Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro's Special Advisory Committee on Defense Issues, which produced a report calling for new defense capabilities, the maintenance of the U.S.–Japan security relationship, and utilization of multilateral security forums.<sup>34</sup> The NDPO adopted by the Murayama Cabinet

in 1995 was based on this report and alludes to the intensified interdependence of nations and recognizes the future roles of defense capability. Included in it are contributions toward creating a more stable security environment. This role embraces promoting security dialogues and exchange of visits by defense officials.<sup>35</sup> Since 1997, the JDA's annual white paper, *Defense of Japan*, has included a separate section devoted to this role entitled "Contributions to the Creation of a More Stable Security Environment." The section acknowledges the importance of a stable security environment as one of the roles of defense capabilities and notes that this can be achieved by increasing the transparency of each country's armaments and defense policy, and by deepening mutually trustful relations through dialogues and exchanges among defense authorities."<sup>36</sup> The JDA and its affiliated organizations have taken initiatives in hosting multilateral security forums to promote exchanges in the greater Asia-Pacific region. For example, the JDA has hosted a forum for defense authorities in the Asia-Pacific region since 1996 by inviting mid-level military officers from neighboring countries to the Asia-Pacific Security seminar.

At the track two level of security dialogues in Northeast Asia, Japan has not only participated in the NPCSD and been an active supporter of the NEACD, but also has been engaged in numerous dialogues which that did not exist ten years ago.<sup>37</sup> Japan has also taken initiatives in creating the Trilateral Forum on North Pacific Security Issues among Japan, the United States, and Russia, as well as holding a conference among Japan, the United States, and China. These are "mini-laterals," assembling less than the full complement of sub-regional states, but with the specific objectives of improving confidence and assuaging any misunderstandings among participants.

Thus, Japan, which was once reluctant in engaging in multilateral CBMs in Northeast Asia a decade ago, has reversed its position and has been an active participant by taking initiatives to launch multilateral security dialogues in the sub-region. At the track one level, former Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, in his General Policy Speech to the Diet on 16 February 1998, stated that the "peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region hinges on Japan, the United States, and the Russian Federation building mutual ties based on confidence and cooperation."<sup>38</sup> Then Foreign Minister Obuchi Keizo, in his foreign policy speech on the same day, further stated that "in the Asia-Pacific region to which Japan belongs, it is essential to ensure cooperation among Japan, the United States, China and Russia towards the establishment of a framework for peace and stability in the region. As these quadripartite relations evolve, we should be aware of the possibility of the four nations meeting together in the future to continue discussions on various matters of mutual concern."

In November 1999, Obuchi, now Prime Minister of Japan, proposed holding a breakfast meeting among the leaders of China, the ROK and Japan on the occasion of the ASEAN plus three Summit meeting held in Manila. Although the agenda was limited to economic issues, and although the leaders could not agree on annualizing the event, the three key players in Northeast Asia met for the first time at the head-of-state level. Taking initiative to hold such high level dialogues at every opportunity may create a path for more substantive multilateral CBMs in the sub-region.

### **WHY DOES JAPAN ENGAGE IN MULTILATERAL CBMs IN NORTHEAST ASIA?**

As the twentieth century drew to a close, uncertainty is the term that characterizes Northeast Asia today. The DPRK has shaken the regional security outlook. In 1992 the Japanese media discovered that North Korean commandos had kidnapped close to a dozen Japanese citizens from a coastal area in Japan to teach Japanese language to North Korean spies. Japan's anxiety over North Korea was further exacerbated in 1993 when North Korea conducted its first Nodong missile test, and by the 1994 confrontation over North Korea's nuclear weapons development program and its announcement to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Just as these ending, two events rocked the Japanese people: the August 1998 launch of a long-range Taepo Dong missile by North Korea and, the breach of two North Korean special vessels into Japanese waters in May 1999.

Northeast Asia is a less dangerous place than it was during the Cold War, when two superpowers were diametrically opposed to each other. Nevertheless, the security outlook of the sub-region in terms of perception is not as bright as it was at the beginning of the decade. The sub-region is still beset by suspicion and hostility. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is very much a concern. Even after a decade following the end of the Cold War, the sub region still lacks a security order. This perception seems to have motivated Japan to grapple with Japanese internal security, including that of its neighbors more proactively. These events also prompted Japan to reaffirm its security alliance with the United States.

At the same time, Japan noted that the United States, after the end of the Cold War, asked for more burden sharing and support concerning its efforts to maintain regional and

international peace and security, implying that it is no longer in a position to defend global peace itself. This sent a message to Japan that it ought to make efforts of its own to enhance CBMS in the region, while maintaining and reaffirming its bilateral alliance with the United States. This position was reflected in a new Joint Security Declaration announced by Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Clinton in April 1996, which reaffirmed the continuing importance of the U.S.–Japan alliance and the maintenance of U.S. forces in Japan. The two heads of state also embraced multilateral security dialogues and cooperation by stating that “the Prime Minister and the President reaffirmed that the two governments will continue working jointly and with other countries in the region to further develop multilateral regional security dialogues and cooperation mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and eventually security dialogues regarding Northeast Asia.”<sup>39</sup> The Japanese government has taken numerous initiatives in developing a variety of security exchanges with countries other than its ally in the form of port visits, mutual visits between defense ministers, and high ranking uniformed and civilian officers with other countries in Northeast Asia, exchanges which were heretofore unprecedented.

What are the incentives for Japan to engage in this type of multilateral security cooperation, albeit to a lesser degree than those found in Europe? Why has Japan reversed its position on multilateral CBMS from that of skeptic to forerunner?

Japanese policy makers give the demise of the Cold War divide as the most compelling reason. The disappearance of the stark confrontation between two superpowers that the sub-region housed has finally paved the way for multilateral CBMS in Northeast Asia. During the Cold War, Japan and other countries in the region did not have any other choice but to establish relations with either the Soviet Union or the United States. The obvious choice for Japan was a security alliance with the United States. The end of the Cold War has broadened Japan’s choices on how to ensure its security. Yet, in post-Cold War Northeast Asia, the United States remains a superpower constructing a unipolar world in the sub-region and beyond. Some regional players like China and Russia view the security structure as more multipolar, while others view it as one superpower, plus several major powers, forming a multipolar world to establish peace and security.

It must be noted, however, that Japan does not view multilateral security cooperation or frameworks as a substitute for a bilateral alliance, but rather as a supplement. This is in contrast to Southeast Asian countries who regard regional institutions like ARF as an insurance premium against an eventual withdrawal of U.S. forward deployed forces from Asia.

During and after the 1990–91 Gulf War, Japan was harshly criticized for its slow financial contributions, despite providing over thirteen billion dollars to the allied operation. Although U.S. demands for Japan to play a more assertive and proactive role has decreased toward the end of the decade, these demands are now being picked up by Asia, which expects more from Japan particularly after the Asian currency crisis in 1997 and the East Timor conflict in 1999. However, Japan's history in the region makes it difficult for it to take solo initiatives, especially in the realm of security, because there still remains a possibility of evoking concerns among other Asian nations about Japan's remilitarization or the memory of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Since its historical legacy is still strong in Northeast Asia, Japan has been cautious in taking initiatives in the security domain. Instead, Japan has found multilateral approaches more constructive to promote confidence in the sub-region.

Meanwhile in Southeast Asia, ASEAN, has expanded its role during the 1990s, leading the region-wide security dialogue through ARF. Some Southeast Asian colleagues have expressed their hope to see an ARF counterpart in Northeast Asia. Uneasiness over the competitive nature between the four major powers in Northeast Asia, rather than cooperation, has been voiced as another concern. In light of occasional tension among the four major powers in the sub-region and the lack of any formal security institution in the sub-region, Japan finds multilateral security dialogues essential for confidence-building, despite criticisms that such dialogues are mere "talk shops" with no tangible results. These dialogues however, may evolve into more established institutions in the future as the CSCE's evolution to Organization into Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the 1990s. The OSCE has been also criticized for being a mere "talk shop" when it first began as CSCE. Today, the OSCE is more of a regional security cooperation organization, and dispatches many field missions to prevent and solve conflicts in its member countries.

In playing a proactive role in security initiatives, Japan feels more comfortable with a multiplexed, multi-tiered structure of security cooperation, with a bilateral alliance at its base and enhanced with a variety of security dialogues and transparency measures. Japan no longer considers multilateral CBMs as a threat to its bilateral alliance as it did during the Cold War. This new perception has led Japan to take proactive initiatives where it launched a variety of security dialogues and exchanges in Northeast Asia.

## **MULTILATERAL CBMs IN NORTHEAST ASIA: RECEDING OR EMERGING?**

For a decade following the end of the Cold War, Northeast Asia has turned a hopeful eye to multilateral security: a functional and technical cooperation in KEDO and a dialogue in the Four Party Talks at the track one level, in addition to a variety of political and security dialogues at the track two level such as the NEACD.

Despite a near-surfeit of proposals for regional cooperation addressing issues ranging from economic to disarmament as mentioned in the preceding section, few have been translated into reality. Almost all of the projects have encountered difficulties particularly towards the end of the decade due to strengthened nationalism, increased cross-border tensions, and the region-wide economic downturn. Frustrations and failures have outweighed successes. Gilbert Rozman notes that “the goal of regionalism in Northeast Asia seemed within reach early in the 1990s but plans clashed and territories failed in their objectives.”<sup>40</sup> He points out that each sub-regional player has several dreams of regional cooperation, not just one. “Each was flawed by its narrow, local or national self-interest, and together the weak fit among different dreams caused initial steps to become counterproductive. Impulsive regionalism flailed against entrenched nationalism, distorted reform programs, unbalanced decentralization, conflicting ideals for the future division of labor, and distrusting personal relations. These forces did not completely stop regionalism, but they seriously slowed and skewed its evolution.”<sup>41</sup>

The sub-region has been buoyed by the numerous multilateral dialogues held in the 1990s. Some questions have arisen from them: How effective are these dialogues? Are they places to merely “talk shop”? Have they really contributed to confidence building? Are we not mixing the ends and the means of security dialogues? Are security dialogues means to an ends? What are the ends? Are we striving for CBMS or a creation of a multilateral security institution of some sort? These reservations are reflected in the declining number of dialogues held in the sub-region after 1997.

The situation in the sub-region induces further questions. Will the sub-region expand its multilateral CBMS in the future beyond security dialogues? Will they include military CBMS as well? Multilateral CBMS in the sub-region have been limited to transparency measures and have not evolved to constraint measures like disarmament, arms control, or a nuclear free zone. Would the sub-region be ready and able to engage in disarmament and arms control?

The table below shows the international arms control-related treaties of which the sub-regional countries are members. Although it is difficult to embark upon regional arms control

and disarmament, the table suggests ample room for future multilateral CBMs in arms control. Since proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms are evident in the sub-region, particularly after the Kosovo air strike in 1999, the table below suggests that further efforts are in order.

Engagement of Northeast Asia in International Arms Control Related Treaties (as of January 1998)<sup>42</sup>

	US	Canada	Russia	Mon-golia	DPRK	ROK	China	Tai-wan	Japan
NPT	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Safe-guard Agreement	•	•	•	•	•	•	×	×	•
BTWC	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	×	•
CCW	•	•	•	•	×	×	•	×	•
CWC	•	•	•	•	×	•	•	×	•
CTBT signed	•	•	•	•	×	•	•	×	•
ratified	×	×	×	•	×	×	×	×	•
MTCR	•	•	•	×	×	×	×	×	•
APL signed	×	•	×	×	×	×	×	×	•
ratified	×	•	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
UN Arms Register	•	•	•	•	×	•	•	×	•

NPT: Non-Proliferation Treaty

BTWC: Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

• : Accession

× : Non-accession

CCW: Certain Conventional Weapons

CWC: Chemical Weapons Convention

CTBT: Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty

MTCR: Missile Technology Control Regime

APL: Anti-personnel Landmines Treaty

UN Arms Register

\* Japan has ratified the APL on September 30 1998.

What kind of security framework will the sub-region build in the next millennium? It is hard to find advocates for the creation of a NATO- like arrangement in the sub-region, although some predict that a new alliance between Russia and China is now feasible in the form of collective defense. Some propose a collective security regime to be built from multilateral dialogues, diplomacy and arms reduction. This will perhaps occur with the improvement of inter-Korean relations. If such a regime is successfully established, would there still be a persuasive need for American forward deployment in the Asia–Pacific?

Mainstream debate in Japan recognizes that the future security order in Northeast Asia will likely be multi-layered, involving elements of unilateral military preparedness, alliance structures, bilateral diplomatic instruments, and new multilateral institutions, ranging from devices for dialogue and consultations, to a possible forum for functional cooperation on issues like marine pollution and energy.

Obstacles to promoting multilateral CBMS in Northeast Asia remain, including major stumbling blocks such as the divided Korean peninsula. The DPRK will not move toward building better relations with countries before establishing diplomatic ties. So until bilateral relationships with North Korea are improved, there is not much room for implementing multilateral CBMS in the region. The chronic absence of the DPRK has lessened the value of the process, since the Korean Peninsula is the major concern of Northeast Asia. The DPRK does attend track two meetings with larger geographical footprints, like CSCAP and its North Pacific Working Group (NPWG), and conspicuously absent from the last NPWG held in Tokyo in September 1999. The DPRK does not attend sub-regional processes like the NEACD out of fear of being negatively singled out in the discourse.

Secondly, some sub-regional players including China and North Korea have expressed their reluctance in engaging in track one security dialogues. While track two meetings can enhance transparency and build confidence amongst participants, they cannot translate ideas

into policies. Track two dialogues are easy to create but maintaining the momentum is difficult unless there is a certain *raison d'être*.

Numerous forces are involved in the division of the region, including nationalism, political systems, level of economic development, and its unwillingness to leave the past where it belongs. Those that bind the sub-region, such as a regional identity or consciousness, a common language, transnational civil society, or a shared sense of the past and future destiny, are unfortunately weak. Northeast Asia has no prospect of economic and political integration along European lines and little prospect for the creation of regional institutions and interactions along Southeast Asian lines.

However limited their effectiveness may be and however insurmountable the obstacles are, Japan sees multilateral CBMS in Northeast Asia as one of the avenues it can take to alleviate hostility and distrust that pervades the region, particularly among the four major players. Multilateral CBMS cannot control armed conflicts once they break out, but can decrease the likelihood of a single event erupting into an armed conflict. Although multilateral CBMS cannot supplant bilateral alliances, they can ease bilateral strains as exemplified at the APEC Leaders Meetings and ARF meetings by having holding bilateral talks at the fringe of multilateral talks. Benjamin Self wrote, "CBMS can be a practical tool for reducing tensions and stabilizing the security environment, while conforming to Japanese ideals of cooperation and conflict avoidance."<sup>43</sup>

## **A NEW PATH FOR THE FUTURE: BEYOND SECURITY DIALOGUES**

The current security climate in Northeast Asia demands bilateral alliances to play a major role in securing peace and stability in the sub-region. This, however, does not mean that the nurturing of multilateral CBMS will be excluded, nor does it mean that the potential for future cooperative security approaches will be ignored in the coming years. Multilateral CBMS will no doubt pave the way for sub-regional security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Among multilateral CBMS, Northeast Asia at the track one level has only embarked upon measures such as KEDO, which is a functional cooperation with a narrowly focused objective, and the Four Party Talks whose future role is still uncertain. What flourished most as multilateral CBMS in the sub-region in the 1990s are security dialogues at the track two level,

ranging from the North Pacific Working Group of CSCAP and NEACD, to “mini-laterals.” Northeast Asia has far to go in expanding its horizon of multilateral CBMS to include other measures such as constraint measures including arms control, disarmament and others. The participation of regional players in arms control arrangements is still limited, as mentioned in the preceding section. Their participation in the UN Conventional Arms Register (UNCAR) is also vital.

In upgrading track two security dialogues to track one, Japan proposed creating a Six Party Talk as well as a trilateral Japan–U.S.–China forum at the track one level. China resisted the latter proposal, asserting that it was too early to organize such an institute at the intergovernmental level. It did not object, though, to creating such a forum at the track two level and participating in the process of the Japan–U.S.–China Conference.

Meanwhile in East Asia, two distress signals, the Asian currency crisis in 1997 and the turmoil in East Timor in 1999, made clear the need for region-wide institutional cooperation to cover issues which run across national borders. In the economic arena, East Asia is revisiting the creation of an institution along the lines of an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) to prevent a similar crisis in the future. A renewed momentum is gathering for creating or strengthening regional institutions. This is manifest in the proposal to institutionalize the ASEAN ten plus three (Japan, China and ROK) meeting as an East Asia Economic Forum. It also proposed to institutionalize the ten plus three meeting to discuss not only economic issues, but also political and security issues. It has been meeting since 1997 at the same period as the ASEAN Summit with the heads-of-states from Japan, China, and the Republic of Korea. The Hanoi meeting of December 1998, they agreed to meet annually when an ASEAN Summit was held. The latest meeting held in the Philippines this past November proposed to institutionalize the meeting and to include a security agenda.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Northeast Asian leaders from Japan, China, and South Korea have met separately over breakfast upon the initiative of Prime Minister Obuchi to discuss economic cooperation and other matters of common interest during the ASEAN ten plus three meeting in Manila in November 1999.<sup>45</sup> Northeast Asian countries have started to meet bilaterally at the fringes of other multilateral meetings in the region such as APEC and ARF meetings. At the APEC Leaders Meeting in Auckland, Japan, the United States, and the Republic of Korea met and issued a communiqué on the DPRK's Taepo Dong II. This meeting represented the first trilateral meeting held at the fringes of a multilateral meeting, although countries have organized a variety of bilateral summits. Such “fringe diplomacy” exercised by heads of state, ministers and senior officials at multilateral meetings has spawned new opportunities for Northeast Asian powers to consult in a multilateral fashion and may offer an

opportunity for political leaders of the sub-region to build confidence multilaterally and to pave the way for the implementation of formal sub-regional multilateral CBMs.

After World War II, Northeast Asian countries maintained peace and security with the presence of American forces in their theater. With the end of the Cold War, sub-regional players have made a long journey from a complete void of regional CBMs to a transparency measure of information sharing on security outlook and security dialogues. However, the divided Korean peninsula, particularly the position of North Korea's ostracism from the international community, has been a major obstacle for promoting multilateral CBMs and security dialogues. While North Korea maintains its current position on multilateral sub-regional security dialogues, Northeast Asia has to be creative in promoting multilateral CBMs from the sidelines, in the form of functional cooperation represented in KEDO and other economic, maritime, energy, and environment cooperation.

Meanwhile on security dialogues, which spearhead multilateral CBMs in the sub-region, skepticism still remains over their effectiveness. Serial dialogue sessions can allow dialogue partners to appreciate each other's respective threat perceptions and can ease the danger of confrontation triggered by misunderstanding, leading to an eventual prevention of armed conflicts. Such dialogues may also help transparency but do not produce any tangible results on the security order of Northeast Asia. These dialogues have not improved the situation over the divided Korean Peninsula. Some even argue that they have produced little during the 1990s and that the window for multilateral cooperation is closing fast.

Big power relations in the sub-region, after almost a decade of improvement through the vehicle of concerted bilateralism and great power summitry, appear to be regressing into confrontation in a post-Kosovo world. Frustrations and failures have far outnumbered successes. Northeast Asia, despite a more optimistic tone in the beginning of the 1990s, has encountered severe difficulties in promoting security dialogues in spite of the enthusiastic support of academics, officials and commercial entrepreneurs for a decade. Northeast Asia remains unfertile soil for nurturing transnational cooperation even in its weakest form. One leading American scholar identifies four main impediments to sub-regional cooperation: nationalists jockeying for geopolitical advantage; abortive or dysfunctional decentralization which intensifies struggles between centers and local areas; civilizational divisions that failed to attenuate as the Cold War receded; and the slow pace of multilateralism that could draw the international community deeply into the region.<sup>46</sup>

The picture is not entirely bleak. Security dialogues, even at the track two level, have nurtured an esprit de corps among the players. This is in a sharp contrast to the state of affairs in Northeast Asia a decade ago, when no security dialogues or defense exchanges were held at all. Such dialogues have surely contributed to the maintenance and improvement of the security environment of Northeast Asia. Multilateral security dialogues like NEACD have paved the way for exchanges among uniformed officers between countries who were foes during the Cold War. By continuing sincere political and security dialogues, the countries who share a history of confrontation and war and suffer from deep-rooted mutual distrust such as Japan, China and Korea, can ameliorate their suspicions although historical wounds are difficult to heal. Moreover, a cooperative security institution will be less threatening to those who are not ready to join the institute in its initial stages but can provide a forum for partners to share their military information, such as sharing norms and rules for military exercises, discussing arms control of conventional and weapons of mass destruction, and the concept of revolution in military affairs (RMA).

KEDO is providing a valuable venue for dialogue and cooperation among the concerned parties through negotiations and actual construction.

Troubling signs in Northeast Asia ought to be an incentive for cooperation. The sub-regional players have learned that a currency crisis can travel beyond national and regional borders demanding multilateral cooperation to prevent and to take emergency actions together. Energy supply and demand, environmental preservation and maritime safety represent other functional issues which transcend national borders and provide additional opportunities for regional cooperation. For these reasons and more, it is in Northeast Asia's best interest to seek a cooperative security structure to promote its multilateral CBMs. Unlike alliances or collective defense institutions, a cooperative security institution is not premised on a specific enemy or threat, making such an institution suitable for the current security climate in Northeast Asia. Though limited in the kind of measures available for immediate implementation, modest steps taken now by sub-regional players can nurture informal gatherings at the track two level. It is optimistic that such gatherings may evolve into an institution which yields precedent-setting policies for peace and security in the next millennium.

## ENDNOTES

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