

JOINT U.S.-KOREA ACADEMIC STUDIES

Towards Sustainable
Economic & Security
Relations in East Asia:

U.S. AND ROK POLICY OPTIONS



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TURNING THE SIX-PARTY TALKS INTO A MULTILATERAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK FOR NORTHEAST ASIA

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I. Introduction

The Cold War in Northeast Asia became irreversible with the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950. Over the decades partial steps were taken to end it: rapprochement with Beijing in 1971–72 and then with Moscow in 1989–92; the Agreed Framework of 1994 and the Sunshine Policy of 1998–2002 that in response to Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and missile brinkmanship set the direction for engagement; and, recently, in the six-party talks the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 and the Joint Agreement of 13 February 2007. Without idealistically assuming that more intense engagement will necessarily bring cooperation by North Korea to abandon its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threat capacity, we nonetheless may take advantage of the momentum achieved not only in bilateral U.S.-North Korean talks but also in the multilateral six-party setting to consider what may be necessary for a lasting framework of regional security cooperation. In June 2010, at the end of the customary 60-year East Asian cycle counting from the outbreak of the Korean War, participants in the six-party talks (on the basis of six minus one, as the North gradually earned its place in areas where it is still far from prepared) could strive to have in place a three-part framework: (1) a peace regime for the Korean peninsula, (2) the embryo for regionalism in which the Northeast Asian Community became a unit of the planned, greater East Asian Community, and (3) a new multilateral security institution.

In this paper I review strategic thinking toward Northeast Asia in each of the five states with emphasis on what might make feasible its accession to such a framework in 2010. Then, I focus, one by one, on the above components of the regional framework.

II. U.S. Strategic Thinking and a Multilateral Framework

While the United States actively steered the Cold War to its end in Europe, it showed little interest in guiding change in Asia apart from insisting on the removal of Soviet missiles and watching as the Soviet military machine crumbled. Tokyo was discouraged from discussing security matters with Moscow even as it found some encouragement to reach a deal on the disputed four islands and to provide economic assistance as Soviet troubles mounted, but by 1993 these issues no longer aroused much attention (Togo 2007). The Sino-Soviet normalization occurred with the United States a bystander, and by 1992 it seemed quite harmless in serving stability along the border (Garnett 2000). North Korea was left to collapse or, in desperation, to launch reforms and hope that fraternal feelings in South Korea would bring support. If Tokyo had ambitions to gain regional leadership and to assume the pivot in the triangle with Washington and Beijing after it had changed with the Tiananmen massacre, and Seoul hoped to ride its *nordpolitik* to regional diplomacy likely to diminish its dependence

on Washington, neither capital was making much progress toward its goals (Rozman 2004). Only the 1993 decision by Pyongyang to expel the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and develop nuclear bombs made U.S. leaders switch course and begin to take seriously the region's unfinished agenda.

Under President Bill Clinton there was no regional security strategy even if events brought a series of responses. The Agreed Framework was followed by the Nye Report pledging to maintain 100,000 U.S. troops in the region and, later, U.S.-Japan defense guidelines extending the scope of the alliance. The Taiwan missile crisis of 1996 led to two summits between Clinton and President Jiang Zemin of China, summits that even explored a possible strategic partnership. The North's Taepo-dong missile launch in 1998 produced the Perry Process and a decision to support Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy along with more U.S. negotiations with the North and more interest in the South in trilateral defense coordination including Japan.

With Republicans more assertive in Congress against Clinton's handling of China and North Korea and Japanese leaders nervous about these policies, linking various strands of Northeast Asian policy or even pursuing them vigorously was beyond the capacity of the Clinton administration. Yet, by not opposing either the Sunshine Policy or the establishment of ASEAN + 3 as a group excluding the United States, Clinton tolerated some sprouts of regionalism.

President George W. Bush also found it difficult to tie the various strands of his intended regional policy together. The masterminds of his foreign policy, notably Vice President Dick Cheney, sought regime change in North Korea with rejection of the Sunshine Policy, prevention of China's emergence as a serious rival accompanied by more backing for Taiwan, and strong support for Japan as the indispensable ally in the region with moves to press South Korea to forge a full-fledged triangular alliance. Yet, pragmatists in the State Department and the realities in the region kept getting in the way. Japan boosters under Richard Armitage and Michael Green gave open-ended support to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi; a different group later led by Robert Zoellick stressed strategic understanding with China as its support in the Korean nuclear crisis became essential, and this group gave rise to an offshoot under Christopher Hill that valued the six-party talks as a forum for solving the crisis through multilateralism. In 2005 U.S. skepticism about the new East Asian summit and pursuit of an East Asian community came into the open (Rozman 2007a). In the first rounds of the six-party talks and again in a backlash after the Joint Statement, unilateral U.S. moves, such as imposing financial sanctions on a Macao bank that handled the North's accounts, brought criticism from China, Russia, and South Korea that the United States was not serious about multilateralism. Only from the end of 2006, after the North tested a nuclear weapon, on the Korean issue at least was there a clear shift in that direction (Rozman 2007d).

Phase 2 of the Joint Agreement required a more coherent regional approach. The five working groups began to be synchronized in order for North Korea to visualize the full range of incentives available as well as the potential for pressure should it not meet its commitments. The working group led by Moscow for establishing a multilateral security framework demands strategic foresight by Washington as well as the other four parties. With Beijing and Washington coordinating more closely, which was critical to moving from outrage over the North's nuclear test to mutual reassurance about how to use carrots first but hold sticks in reserve, and Tokyo nervous and requiring close consultations and timely assurances, this venue has produced triangular calculations long missing in U.S. policy (Rozman 2007e). Although President Roh Moo-hyun's ties with Bush have been strained, the inauguration of a successor in February 2008 will put a premium on working together in a regional framework. This is especially important because South Korean economic linkages to the North are seen as a critical source of funds that may lower the pressure for its cooperation, especially in the aftermath of Roh's extravagant agreements during the inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang early in October 2007.

With a chain of leadership from Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill managing the six-party talks, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte strategizing about Northeast Asian regional policy, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice offering a channel to Bush that bypasses the old roadblocks (notably Dick Cheney), the foundations for a multilateral system may be laid before Bush leaves office. Even if the United States cannot expect agreement on the values that Bush has repeatedly expounded as part of a charter listing norms and principles to guide the quest for a multilateral framework, the United States undoubtedly will insist on a positive reference to the stabilizing influence of the U.S. bilateral alliances. This would lead to a duality of a new framework for the region atop the foundation of existing alliances. Yet, it is doubtful that North Korea with its excessive demands before it might fully denuclearize or Russia with its heady revival of Soviet-era thinking would agree to ideas acceptable to Bush, while China may find it hard to accept the weight given to the United States as the hub in alliances. At the end of 2007 the divide centered on Roh's eagerness to start talks on a peace regime as soon as the North declared its nuclear materials in phase 2 while Bush insisted that full denuclearization is a prerequisite for such a regime to replace the armistice, presumably at the end of phase 3.

III. Japanese Strategic Thinking and a Multilateral Framework

When the Cold War ended, Japan had exaggerated expectations of its rise to leadership in Asia (Rozman 1992). It contemplated gaining equality with the United States based on its increasingly superior economic power, becoming the bridge between the United States and China as after 4 June 1989 human rights and sanctions troubled their

relations, and converting economic to political power as it became indispensable for the reintegration of the Korean peninsula and the revival of the Russian Far East as well as the continued ascent of Southeast Asia. Even in the establishment of ASEAN + 3 and the proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund in 1997, Japan's leading role was assumed. Yet, economic stagnation, China's rapid rise, continued dependence on U.S. military and political power, and uncertainties on the Korean peninsula left Japan's aspirations in tatters (Rozman, Togo, and Ferguson 2006). Japan is isolated in Northeast Asia, and only in late 2007 under the new leadership of Yasuo Fukuda did it seem inclined to give priority to vigorous diplomacy to resume an active role beyond the U.S. alliance.

Each period brought benefits from one strategic approach but no cohesion with others and little continuity with the previous period. The late 1980s to early 1990s saw some success in relations with China, culminating in the emperor's visit there in 1992. Yet, failure to address the history issue and excessive expectations for success in steering Sino-U.S. relations left Japan's hopes shattered as China achieved double-digit economic growth and emphasized patriotic education targeted against Japan's historic misdeeds (Gries 2004). The years when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was out of power or yielded the prime minister's post saw more success on the history issue, paving the way after the LDP reclaimed power for Kim Dae-jung to pledge to stop using the history card if Japan would avoid provocations.

Ties with Russia had reached an impasse, however, in the mid-90s after Japan refused to explore an outcome other than the return of four islands (Rozman 2000). In the second half of the 1990s the most success in strategic thinking occurred: the breakthrough with South Korea, regionalism with China and South Korea through ASEAN + 3, and intense talks with Russia in response to Japan's Eurasian diplomacy. Yet, distrust of U.S. efforts to work with China on strategic partnership and with South Korea on the Sunshine Policy cast a pall on what was achieved. Finally, under Koizumi success in increasing coordination with the United States on regional issues carried the price of ignoring the sentiments of neighboring states and reviving the Cold War situation of one-sided dependence on a single ally.

After attempting to compartmentalize its bilateral relations in Asia, Japan found itself in the six-party talks where linkages were being made. In 2003–04 it kept options alive: three-way coordination in the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) with South Korea and the United States as well as a tighter alliance with the United States and new shuttle diplomacy with the South; continuation of bilateral diplomacy with the North on the basis of the Pyongyang Declaration of September 2002; and Koizumi's initiative with Putin to shift the construction of the oil pipeline starting in western Siberia from Daqing China to the Pacific coast with implications for geopolitics as well as energy security.

Yet, when the six-party talks grew most active around the prospect of a broad compromise that would likely lead to some sort of multilateral framework, Japan isolated itself. In the summer of 2005, in preparations that led to the Joint Statement, its worsened ties with South Korea and China as well as North Korea and Russia left it on the margins, clinging to the United States. Even more serious, in early 2007 its leaders were visibly perturbed by the turnabout in U.S. policy with the result that in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* of 14 February 2007 the Joint Agreement was called the “Bush shock” as if it was similarly explosive as the Nixon decision in 1971 to change course on China, but this time with no inclination to follow the U.S. lead. Preoccupied with the abduction issue, Japan seemed disassociated from the security maneuvering in the background of the talks as it lacked a strategic approach to Asia. Perhaps its concern over the multilateralism that could ensue made abductions a convenient pretext.

Phase 1 of the Joint Agreement ended in July 2007 with Japan alienated. Although the United States showed sympathy over the abductions issue, it would not let Japan exercise a veto over U.S. normalization with North Korea and progress in the six-party talks as it worked increasingly with China in this setting. South Korean-Japanese relations seemed to trail even Sino-Japanese relations after Premier Wen Jiabao made a successful April 2007 visit to Tokyo while Roh Moo-hyun did not return Abe’s October 2006 visit to Seoul amidst continued mutual accusations about irresponsible handling of relations with North Korea. Yet, right-wing charges against the talks as a win for North Korea and defeat for the United States and Japan and calls for lessening reliance on the United States were not winning a broad appeal even when they were coupled with warnings to keep the focus directly on closer Sino-U.S. ties (Terashima 2007, 322–31). Abe could hold aloof from the agreement jointly to provide heavy fuel oil in phase 2, but relegating Japan to the margins of the six-party talks did not help his fading popularity or give the Japanese people confidence that his stubborn priority on abductions would serve the national interest. The *Asahi Shimbun* of 28 June 2007 reported that talk of a new strategy was intensifying within the political center even before Abe and the LDP reeled from their August 2007 setback in elections for the Upper House, and Abe’s visit to India in late August mixed exaggerated expectations for a new partner with recollections of wartime anti-British voices who leaned to Japan as if this could confirm the wisdom of the Indian judge who alone voted against the verdicts of the Tokyo Tribunal.

In late 2007 Fukuda faced the daunting challenge of maneuvering Japan back into the search for multilateralism in Northeast Asia. His first visit in November was planned for the United States in order to quiet doubts about divergence in regional strategies. Barely a month later he would be anxious to reenergize ties with South Korea as a new president prepared to take office. Back-to-back visits were being arranged for him to go to Beijing in January and then in April to host Hu Jintao, who would have just

entered his second term as president. Against this background, Fukuda started in October to explore renewed normalization talks with North Korea. Inclined to refrain from remarks and actions that might inflame history disputes, Fukuda could diminish Japan's isolation. What was less clear was whether he could turn Japanese attention toward a multilateral framework after much insistence that this would damage its status and after trust had fallen in U.S. initiatives.

IV. South Korean Strategic Thinking and a Multilateral Framework

Roh Tae-woo's *nordpolitik* that followed the Seoul Olympics of 1988 diversified South Korea's relations with the great powers. Seoul loosened Moscow and Beijing's backing for Pyongyang and lessened dependence on Washington, which expected total support for its global strategy such as a commitment of large numbers of troops to the Vietnam War, and on Tokyo, which felt that its economic clout allowed it to ignore protests over rising historical revisionism and to make uncoordinated overtures to Pyongyang. In Japan's new strategizing about regionalism in the early 1990s, South Korea was taken for granted, and in the U.S. response to the first nuclear crisis, the South failed to secure a veto on critical policy choices, whether to prepare for a preemptive attack on the Yongbyon nuclear reactor or to sign the Agreed Framework that left South Korea with most of the bill for construction of new reactors in the North. With increased inclination to engage the North and unmistakable awareness that this required assurances from multiple actors, the South naturally gravitated toward a multilateral strategy. Not only did this offer greater hope of convincing the North, but it also seemed to be the only way to change U.S. thinking. In 1998–99 Kim Dae-jung launched his Sunshine Policy in a tour of Washington, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow, enlisting support in each capital for multisided engagement in which Seoul would take the lead. Simultaneously, he seized on the new ASEAN + 3 grouping to gain an intermediate position between China and Japan and take charge of drafting the East Asian Vision Group's statement on regionalism. Strategic thinking was increasingly centered on active diplomacy working with multiple powers (Rozman, Hyun, and Lee 2008).

Without undermining the alliance with the United States, South Korea turned to multilateralism for various purposes: as a strategy for engaging the North; as a means for a middle power to find some balance in the midst of four assertive great powers; as a way of managing the intensifying rivalry between China and Japan; and as a response to national identity focused on the importance of overcoming successive historical periods marked by dependency on one great power at a time (Rozman 2007c). The inter-Korean summit of 2000 gave a strong boost to this thinking, confirming that Seoul could become the central actor in the reunification process and

boost nationalism at the same time as it furthered a process of regionalism. In contrast, the limbo in which the Sunshine Policy was left after George W. Bush took office as well as the disappointment from Japan's shift toward a revisionist view of history during the same years left Korean leaders pining for more sustained multilateralism. In the first stage of the nuclear crisis in 2002–03, support was sought from China, Japan, and Russia to check Bush's unilateral responses. Finally with establishment of the six-party talks from August 2003 Roh Moo-hyun had found a venue to proceed.

Frustrated by the U.S. strategy in the nuclear crisis and by Japan's obsession with past abductions by North Korea, Roh looked for ways to boost multilateralism. Agreeing with China's approach to the six-party talks, he treaded carefully for fear of alienating the United States, still an indispensable ally. Despite an upbeat September 2004 meeting with Putin at his dacha, there was little to gain from joining forces as Russian foreign policy grew more critical of the United States and assertive. The only recourse was to continue to straddle the divide between the United States and North Korea (Rozman 2007d), finding some success in the summer of 2005 when Bush, at the urging of Christopher Hill and Condoleezza Rice, gave the go-ahead for a round of talks that led to the Joint Statement, and then, following a year of frustration, taking satisfaction at the U.S. about-face after the North's nuclear test. At last in 2007, despite little popularity at home as a lame duck president in his final year and no prospect of repairing damaged ties to leaders in the United States and Japan, Roh was emboldened by the fact that multilateral engagement with the North was proceeding. He was impatient to boost bilateral ties, including in October a second summit in Pyongyang by a South Korean president, and he risked moving out of step with the United States with rewards beyond those synchronized in accord with the balanced plan for keeping pressure on the North.

In his final months Roh was in a hurry to realize a peace regime for the peninsula, raising the prospect that Kim Jong-il could count on the South to put peninsular matters first on the agenda even as he kept concentrating on ties with Bush in a triangular context. For the South, multilateralism mattered, but it would be supplementary. Yet, China did not countenance being excluded by the hint that the talks over a peace regime could be three-sided rather than four-sided, especially after it had worked with both the United States and South Korea to steer the six-party talks to this point, and Japan might be pushed to the side by the two Koreas, but its ties with the United States were too important to be ignored. Tensions between Roh's rush to start peace regime talks with the two Koreas in the forefront and U.S. warnings that the nuclear issue would have to be fully resolved left the likelihood that the combined weight of the multilateral forum and its various working groups would be primary considerations for the next president of Korea to move forward.

V. Chinese Strategic Thinking and a Multilateral Framework

For a long time China was too suspicious of the international system—established in the shadow of imperialism that had victimized their state—to entertain any notion of forming a new interdependent grouping. It had been excluded from the United Nations while a rump regime in Taiwan enjoyed China’s seat in the Security Council. Under the guise of proletarian internationalism, the Soviet Union had tried to exercise hegemonic control over China as it did over other socialist countries. Even assumption of the UN seat with veto power in the Security Council and rapprochement with the United States and then Japan did not lessen its suspicions that the constraints of a multilateral organization, particularly one concerned with security, would erode China’s sovereignty. The collapse of international communism and then the Soviet Union reinforced alarm that bourgeois peaceful evolution strategy was targeted at undermining a nation’s psychological defense and embedding it in a multilateral framework that would squeeze out its distinctiveness.

Beginning in the middle of the 1990s China gradually changed course in accepting some limited multilateralism in Asia. The ASEAN Regional Forum proved to be useful training grounds, and the Asian monetary crisis coalesced thinking in the region, albeit too late to endorse Japan’s proposed Asian monetary fund, around the need for new institutions independent of the International Monetary Fund. Long before U.S. officials challenged China to prove that it was a “responsible stakeholder” in the international community, it was demonstrating to its neighbors (apart from suspicious Japan) that it was increasingly responsible within the regional system (Sutter 2005). Yet, its biggest test came in 2003 when, after the Bush administration unilaterally branded North Korea part of the “axis of evil” and then hyped its secret highly enriched uranium program as reason to discard the Agreed Framework, Secretary of State Colin Powell appealed for China’s help in pressuring the North to yield to U.S. demands (complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization as the entry point for negotiations) or at least to bring the North to talks. China agreed to serve as a facilitator and gradually succeeded in steering the process toward a compromise (Funabashi 2006).

China’s willingness to facilitate three-way talks with the two adversaries in the crisis proved a stepping stone to becoming the host and moderator for six-party talks with a different dynamic. In the first rounds of the talks, the gap between Washington and Pyongyang was insurmountable, but Beijing’s shuttle diplomacy showed its earnestness about narrowing the difference. In September 2005 all of its diplomatic skills were tested as it bridged the gap with the Agreed Statement that proved to be the first breakthrough. Then in 2006 in the wake of the North’s barrage of missiles its reaction won the trust of the United States, leading to a new level of consensus after the October nuclear test that steered the United States away from enforcement of the UN sanctions resolutions and toward new bilateral talks with the North, aware that

should the North reject reasonable compromises China would back the United States in intensified pressure. For its efforts, China occupied the central post in carrying forward the Joint Agreement and was in charge of the working group on denuclearization and of the overall progress of new rounds in the six-party talks.

China demonstrated its growing interest in multilateralism in various ways. In April 2007 Premier Wen Jiabao visited Tokyo and reinforced the image that, after years of strained relations under Koizumi, China was determined to treat Japan as a partner in building regional institutions. In July it hosted the second session of the sixth round of the six-party talks in an upbeat atmosphere aimed at moving ahead not only on the crisis but also toward establishing a peace regime on the peninsula and later a multilateral security system in Northeast Asia. Meanwhile, relations with the United States pivoted on joint commitment to a strategy of engagement of North Korea in phases that would test the North's willingness to denuclearize and keep open the possibility of applying pressure if that were found wanting.

Despite its apparent interest in multilateralism, China's ambivalence about basic tenets of globalization left its true objectives in doubt. As a communist-run state short on transparency, it had little success in reassuring other great powers on its future motives. In August 2007 the Shanghai Cooperation Organization brought Hu Jintao together with the autocrats of Central Asia, a newly assertive Vladimir Putin appealing for a tough posture against the West, and even the demonized President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, which had observer status in the organization. Given SCO saber-rattling military exercises in Russia, China's "peaceful rise" did not seem obvious to all, even if it was known not to share some of Russia's objectives (*Straits Times* 2007). Secretive preparations for the 17th Party Congress in the fall amidst tightened censorship reinforced an image of China's politics and values at odds with what is expected for building regional trust. It would not be easy to avoid alienating either the United States or Russia over Iranian nuclear ambitions or even North Korean reluctance to denuclearize as it made demands. At the end of 2007 China was not a champion of a multilateral security framework that would accept the U.S.-Japanese alliance as a stabilizing force, given its uncertain role in any crisis over the Taiwan Strait, but it also was not averse to building on the six-party talks with immediate priority for keeping pressure on the North to denuclearize.

VI. Russian Strategic Thinking and a Multilateral Framework

Since the Brezhnev era, leaders in Moscow have repeatedly proposed that a multilateral structure be established in Northeast Asia to stabilize security. Moscow's position was weak in the region after the collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance, and it sought a means to revive it. Overextended in its military buildup to gain an edge over the United States, to pressure China, and to teach Japan a lesson, the Soviet Union under

Gorbachev finally unilaterally reduced its presence. This did not lead to any agreements on a new system except that Sino-Russian confidence-building measures and cooperation through arms sales and SCO military exercises became the closest thing there was to the U.S. alliance system centering on Japan and South Korea. In August 2007 Putin pressed to make this into a more full-fledged alliance with which the outside world must reckon.

Overlooked in the first crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Russia changed direction in search of a different path to regional influence. Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov led the way in establishing a strategic partnership with China and rebuilding ties with North Korea even before Vladimir Putin took office and siphoned off the profits of an oil and gas bonanza to the state's coffers in order to reestablish Russia as a power again focused on building up its military and opposing U.S. hegemony.

In Putin's first years, personal relations with Kim Jong-il seemed to open the door to regional influence. When the nuclear crisis began, he failed to capitalize on these relations with a bold diplomatic initiative to find a quick answer, but in the summer at Kim's request Russia became part of multilateral talks. This was considered a major success. Knowing that South Korea's new president, Roh Moo-hyun, had similar reservations about the U.S. strategy, Putin hoped for an early summit and alignment of the two countries' positions, but Roh was too busy reassuring the United States and Japan and did not go to Moscow until September 2004, by which time Putin's interest in making common cause was waning (Rozman 2007b). Instead he coordinated with China and awaited the North's next step as the only way to shock the United States into a change of course. In the talks Putin seems to have been the least concerned of all of the leaders with the nuclear test, taking satisfaction from the abrupt shift to multilateralism that followed. With Russia the chair of the working group to establish a multilateral security framework in Northeast Asia, it was positioned to press for its long-held objective. Yet, this group would have to await progress in other working groups, and an emboldened Russia could flex its energy power even without a new framework.

When the working group on multilateral security met in Moscow on 20–21 August 2007, Russia recognized that progress would necessarily be slow. Yet, its enthusiasm for regaining a leading role in Northeast Asian affairs could not be concealed. Putin is known to advocate a more assertive Russian role in Asia (Luzianin 2007). His policies may have relied heavily on China, but along with growing confidence in confronting U.S. power have come new moves to balance Chinese power and prevent dependence on it from rising rapidly, as in energy exports and industrial imports. Yet, newfound energy clout wielded aggressively stands in sharp contrast with the troubled conditions that still prevail in the Russian Far East. Putin's new challenge to the existing world order offers little basis for multilateralism beyond a tenuous balance of antagonistic

forces, notably including North Korea. Yet, in a new political context after the Russian and U.S. presidential elections of 2008, Putin may again be guiding Russian foreign policy toward deals with global leaders.

VII. A Peace Regime for the Korean Peninsula

As three working groups moved into the forefront in the Joint Agreement's phase 2, the search was begun for a four-sided process for replacing the armistice that ended the Korean War with a plan for peace on the peninsula. This gained momentum through the ministerial consultations between the two sides of the peninsula and, especially, the fall summit in 2007. How will these five pieces in a puzzle fit together? What makes them different from the six-party talks under way since 2003? Why is the peace regime an indispensable part of this process and a likely centerpiece once phase 2 is concluded?

Unlike the working groups for normalization between Japan and North Korea and for realization of a multilateral security framework, these five bodies either exclude Japan and Russia or accentuate their marginality. At the same time, at least three of them put U.S.-North Korean relations in the forefront. Yet, South Korea's leadership impatiently sought to become the driving force for progress. Having played a secondary role while ministerial consultations persisted with ups and downs after the summit of 2000, the South grew more active in 2007. In his summit with Kim Jong-il, Roh was intent on upgrading the level of inter-Korean contacts and putting them at the center in the quest for a peace regime. He also made extensive economic commitments to make these inter-Korean ties even more important than the working group led by South Korea concerned with economic and energy assistance to the North.

For Washington the primary focus is the working group led by China in which all six states participate that is concerned with denuclearization. The central dynamic was for Washington to press Pyongyang to declare all of its nuclear assets, including how many nuclear bombs it has and what the state of its uranium enrichment program is, and also to agree to disabling them in a manner as close to irreversible as possible, but Pyongyang held back in some respects, at least until it found satisfaction in demands of its own. Foremost among these were insistence that it be excised from the list of states supporting terrorism and that it retain its nuclear weapons and already extracted plutonium to, at least, use as a bargaining chip in phase 3 of the talks. If, as anticipated, Pyongyang's security concerns take precedence over its economic ones, then those would be raised in the two other forums where relations with the United States become clarified. Even as the United States gives priority to denuclearization, it will have to attend to the bilateral working group on normalization of relations and the new four-party group on a peace regime in order to make decisive progress on its preferred agenda.

The bilateral U.S.-North Korean talks are bound to focus on normalization in the area of politics and security before they deal with the U.S. interest in human rights or with economic issues of more interest to the North. An urgent concern for the North is to be removed from the State Department's list of states that sponsor or abet terror. In this context we can also expect the North Korean regime to insist on respectful treatment with all the markings of normalcy, including high-level meetings that Bush has been loath to provide. At issue is not only regime survival, but also regime face after years of offensive rhetoric. Instead of the long-standing Bush strategy of complete verifiable and irreversible dismantlement as the entry point for two-way talks and as the signal to stop the name-calling, those talks are going to have to forge an atmosphere of respectful normalcy before the nuclear issue becomes the focus. They will also have to overcome Japan's efforts to restrain U.S. compromise moves until its abduction charges have been satisfied.

An even bigger test for U.S.-North Korean understanding is likely to come from the talks on a peace regime. At issue for the North is the extent of continued deployment of U.S. armed forces in South Korea and for the United States the degree of demilitarization of North Korea. These are difficult issues of vital significance to the South, which will insist not only on the closest possible consultations with the United States but also on veto power in the four-way talks. It is unlikely that any quick agreement would be reached. The price for the North's denuclearization may seem too high if the prospects for security on the peninsula are cast in doubt without certainty that there would actually be an end to the North's nuclear programs. China's interest in the removal of U.S. troops at some point may lead to a different approach to what the peace regime should be. With U.S.-North Korean exchanges of views leading the way, the search for a peace regime could well become the most important activity through the remainder of the Bush administration in U.S. policy toward Northeast Asia. Instead of the State Department with Christopher Hill in the lead, the U.S. Defense Department could emerge as the center of U.S. deliberations on how far to proceed. If this seemed unimaginable in the Office of the Secretary of Defense under the former secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, it no longer is so under a much revamped office run by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

VIII. The Northeast Asian Community

Competing visions for regionalism in Asia have struggled over the range and functions of a new organization as well as over the meaning of community. The political left in Japan and South Korea has been content to welcome an idealistic union that would bring states together, including a resurgent China, without trying to solve urgent security questions or reconcile sharp differences over values. This is a community-first approach in the hope that belonging builds trust. It excludes the United States not only because

the left has long stressed the importance of reaching beyond the one-sided dependency of the alliance system, but also owing to the desire to find an accommodation by Asians for Asians. After rejecting Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad's proposal at the start of the 1990s for an East Asian economic caucus, the Japanese were reconsidering their stance, and in the Asian financial crisis moved closer to the idealist option, but at first only for economic objectives with ASEAN + 3. As China grew more enthusiastic after South Korea had already shown its interest in visions of an East Asian community, Japanese leaders beginning in 2004 noticeably cooled on the idea. They lobbied for a narrow functional approach while successfully orchestrating an expansion to include Australia, New Zealand, and India that diluted the new East Asian summit. Operating in parallel to ASEAN + 3 minus these three members, the new entity held its first two summits without any sign that it could take the reins of community building or that the old entity would do it. The idealist version that turned to ASEAN as facilitator for Northeast Asia and economic regionalism found its plans at an impasse.

Another vision for regionalism arose in 2005–07 as part of the effort to forge a security community taking the U.S. alliance system as its core. In the late 1990s as the United States and Japan strengthened their alliance around new guidelines and persuaded South Korea to broaden three-way cooperation as symbolized by the TCOG, the focus was on Northeast Asia. With the attack on the United States in 2001, awareness of terrorist activities and support in Southeast Asia added a new focus. Increasingly, the U.S. pursuit of India as a strategic partner and a counterweight to China led to interest in formalizing relations through cooperation in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, Japan had become involved in maritime support for the war in Afghanistan and showed keen interest in the Strait of Malacca for the security of its oil imports and other shipping.

These developments coalesced into Japanese proposals for an “arc of freedom and prosperity” exclusive of China and growing interest by some in the Bush administration or just departed from it in a similar notion dubbed “NATO of the East.” With Roh Moo-hyun refusing to join the proliferation security initiative—a core idea of this plan—or any new grouping without China, some in Washington placed their hopes on a conservative winning the fall presidential election and rethinking the policy direction dating back to *nordpolitik*. In fact, only Australia was on board, the U.S. notion was attributed to a Japan-leaning group that was losing ground in 2006–07 with personnel changes, and the Japan notion was regarded as an effort to put the onus on China for lack of freedom and take the onus off of Japan for historical revisionism. After Abe and his foreign minister Aso Taro left office, the “arc” theme slipped from sight. Given India's reticence, this notion of security regionalism linked to universal values lacks immediate prospects.

A third option for regionalism is less a vision than an extension of the six-party talks into which the countries of Northeast Asia might stumble. After all, they had agreed in February 2007 to form a working group on establishing a multilateral security framework. With North Korea kept apart until it committed itself to reform as well as regional stability, the remaining states could begin the arduous process of establishing a community within Northeast Asia. Arguably, Russia, emboldened by its energy revenue, would respond hesitantly. Yet, in comparison with its west, where tensions with NATO are now intense as sharper dividing lines are drawn, and to its south, where the foment of the Middle East is not drawing Russia closer to the United States and its coalition of the willing, Russia's east holds some promise of cooperation. Russia's position is weakest here, and the balance of great powers suggests that it can expect the most equal terms of entry.

If Russia should keep its distance for a time, the pursuit of a regional community could occur without it. The United States also may be reluctant, viewing a Northeast Asia community as similar to an East Asian community—exclusive, subject to China's domination, idealist about a regional identity that would conflict with a global identity, and bound to undercut the alliance system based on the U.S. hub and various spokes. It may take recognition of the irreversible changes under way in the region and the potential for inclusive, compact regionalism to arouse U.S. interest and only if security issues are resolved simultaneously.

The core of the East Asian region remains China, Japan, and South Korea. If they agree on the value of regionalism focused on each other, they can make it happen. They all share the Confucian tradition even if value differences have become exacerbated and now stand in the way of regionalism (Rozman 2006). In the 1890s–1940s period their modernizing reforms and colonial experiences became intertwined. Since the 1970s their economic miracles have fed off each other, as they generally moved closer to regional economic integration and some form of economic regionalism. Talk has begun of a free trade area encompassing all three. Yet, as it has become clearer that China's rise is so rapid and its ambitions so vast that it is bound to dominate, Japan has grown wary and South Korea has no appetite to proceed without confidence in a balance of power. The Northeast Asian community is unlikely to advance without an active role for the United States, at least in matters of security and politics. A complex, multilayered notion of community might place at the core China, Japan, and South Korea, then form a layer for the United States to become deeply involved even to the point that the defining elements of community would be as much global as regional, and finally reach to Russia and eventually to North Korea. As in the case of ASEAN with its ten members, all six states active in Northeast Asia would have a place at the table, but unlike ASEAN the stakes are so high and the members so assertive that only a layered approach where three, four, or five countries would gain

decision-making authority in separate arenas could lead to a meaningful process of addressing urgent problems.

IX. A Multilateral Security Framework for Northeast Asia

The six-party talks may succeed in reaching a compromise between the United States and North Korea as each working group makes its contribution and, finally, the group led by Russia assigned to develop a multilateral security framework begins to do its job. They also may hit an impasse if North Korea insists on keeping its nuclear weapons and the United States and others withhold many of the rewards the North is seeking. Even with this outcome, we can expect continuing efforts on a multilateral basis inclusive of China and Russia to control the North's nuclear activities.

The process may lead to mixed results, as in the case of the Agreed Framework, whereby the threat potential is reduced in return for some rewards and an interim arrangement is extended without resolving the basic issue. In the face of difficult negotiations in which the North stalls and ups its demands, there will be further need for a mechanism that coordinates the responses of the other five states. The United States will be eager to keep China engaged in this endeavor, will see Japan as the indispensable ally, and will no doubt strive to raise the level of coordination with South Korea under its new president. If Russia is amenable, its presence would be much welcomed in a cordon of containment of the North mixed with a display of enticements.

The working group on multilateral security represents an optimistic means for building on the achievements of the six-party talks. It also can operate as a fallback mechanism for preventing a breakdown that would put an end to the talks. Much depends on whether the understanding reached between Washington and Beijing in the fall of 2006 that led to the new overtures toward Pyongyang carries a backup approach in case the talks reach an impasse that both sides blame on Pyongyang's determination to retain a nuclear threat. If so, will bilateral ties be sufficiently sound to make good on this understanding? As an ally of the United States and the country most concerned about the North's military threat, would Japan be prepared to do its part not only by squeezing the North (which it already is doing) but also by agreeing to the mix of carrots and sticks?

Perhaps the biggest question mark is South Korea, which since 2003 has insisted that only carrots can work. Would it join in multilateral pressure should the North insist on nuclear weapons? A multilateral security group has to be able to draw red lines against actions that threaten the group's security. This will be the critical test of whether such a group has a future in Northeast Asia as the nuclear crisis enters its decisive stages. If the peace regime flounders and regionalism in Northeast Asia remains an idealistic

mirage, then we can expect that Russia's new assertiveness on behalf of a kind of continental framework and Japan's on behalf of a new maritime framework will doom such multilateral security. Only with a consensus on how to proceed with denuclearization, then close coordination on a peace regime, and finally with the start of limited cooperation toward a Northeast Asian community would we have reasons for confidence that a multilateral security framework will go forward.

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