



**2nd Meeting of the Council for
Security Cooperation in
the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)
Study Group on
Multilateral Security Governance in
Northeast Asia/North Pacific**

Seoul, May 3, 2011

Co-Chairs' Report

The Second meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on Multilateral Security Governance in Northeast Asia/North Pacific was convened in Seoul (at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS)) on May 3, 2011. Over 20 representatives from 8 member committees and other participants attended. This was the second meeting of this study group.

This meeting was intended to assess the security situation in Northeast Asia at this juncture and identify the challenges and issues of security in Northeast Asia. The meeting also sought to build consensus among participants on the suitability and direction of multilateral security frameworks in Northeast Asia/North Pacific.

1) The Security Situation and Major Challenges in Northeast Asia/North Pacific

A ROK participant observed that one of the major characteristics of the current security environment in Northeast Asia/North Pacific and the broader Asia-Pacific region is power transition, in which the power of the United States is in relative decline while that of China is rising. A representative from India stated that although the US is still the dominant power, leadership competition would lead to unstable balance of power in Asia. The dynamics of the ongoing power transition make Northeast Asia/North Pacific a fragile, uncertain sub-region. One example that illustrates uncertainty of the subregion, a participant from China raised, is the sinking of the naval ship Cheonan in March 2010 and the gun fire over Yeonpyeong Island in November 2010, which escalated tension on the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, however, there have been some positive developments to ameliorate the tension, such as the continued meetings between both sides and restoration of humanitarian aid to the North. The Chinese participant pointed to the importance of building mutual trust, exercising self-restraint, and displaying good-will and patience by all parties concerned. Other participants argued for the importance of transparency to reduce mutual distrust and suspicion lingering in the

region.

2) Role of bilateral alliances in the changing security environment

In light of a changing security environment, an important question is the role of Republic of Korea (ROK)-US alliance and Japan-US alliance. After reviewing the historical development of the ROK-US alliance, the ROK representative discussed that the ROK-US alliance exists today in the environment where a number of changes have occurred after the end of the Cold War, including the ROK which gained an improved status in the international community and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) whose economy is deteriorating. Although the US power is declining, especially after the 2008 global financial crisis, it still maintains its position as a hegemon. Thus, there are rising imbalances between the expected degree of threat that the ROK-US alliance—which comprises a declining hegemon and a rising middle power—is prepared to counter and the actual degree of threat that a declining power (DPRK) poses.

The argument that has long maintained the alliance to date, the DPRK nuclear weapons capability and the China threat theory, may no longer be able to sustain the alliance. The challenge that the ROK may face in the future is a simultaneous entrapment and abandonment risk; that is, with an anticipated shift in the focus of the alliance from the Korean defense to global security, globalization of the ROK-US alliance increases demands for the ROK to engage more in addressing global problems (entrapment), and the less commitment of the alliance to the Korean defense leaves the ROK with greater burden to defend the Korean Peninsula (“Koreanization” of the Korean defense) (abandonment).

3) The DPRK, the Six-Party Talks, and the stability of the Korean Peninsula

A representative from Japan argued that there are two forms of security assurance provided to the DPRK: negative security assurance plus (no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with either nuclear or conventional weapons) and the 1953 armistice treaty. But the former given by the US became void after DPRK's nuclear testing. It was argued that building a peace regime by concerned parties is most important in maintaining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. Although the modality of such a regime remains unresolved, an appropriate forum would be established principally by the two Koreas, guaranteed by the US and China.

The dismantlement of DPRK's nuclear weapons program is a prerequisite for peace and stability on the Peninsula. The Japanese participant also gave consideration to the implications of Global Zero for Korea. Pyongyang's position is that denuclearized

Korean Peninsula is part of Global Zero. This amounts to say that the DPRK would not dismantle its nuclear weapons until the US does so. Other representatives asserted that while the Six-Party Talks is in stalemate, its significance should not be underestimated given the fact that it is the only existing mechanism that seeks to resolve North Korea's nuclear issue. One of the major obstacles for the Six-Party Talks is mutual distrust and suspicion. A representative from China expressed a view that the concerned parties should move away from the Cold War-type, old security thinking to adopt new security thinking. From the North Korean perspective, a participant from New Zealand suggested that institutional trust is a problem. Because policy changes in democratic countries when administrations change, Pyongyang remains skeptical of the continuity of US policy.

A representative from Russia argued that North Korea's nuclear weapons issue will not be solved any time soon, policy recommendations should be made based on this fact. A Chinese participant added to this view that one of the major achievements of the Six-Party Talks is the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005. In order to resume the process of denuclearization in Korea, this joint statement must be implemented. The Russian participant also called for creation of a separate mechanism which focuses on peace and security of Northeast Asia/North Pacific since the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and other ASEAN-based institutions do not give sufficient attention to issues in Northeast Asia. The Six-Party Talks naturally provides the base for such an institution.

4) Regional Institutions and Multilateralism in Northeast Asia/North Pacific

A participant from Japan drew attention to the role of existing regional institutions in the Asia-Pacific. Given the growth in the number of institutions in this part of the world, the problem is not lack of institutions but that of coordination or linkages among them. The Six-Party Talks could serve as an umbrella institution around which many regional institutions can be coalesced. Developing the institutional linkage is key to resolving the DPRK's nuclear weapons program.

A participant from ROK expressed the views that there were three main factors that would make regionalism in Northeast Asia difficult. First is great power divide. After the Yeonpyeong Island incident, division became apparent between the ROK, the US, and Japan on the one hand and the DPRK, China, and Russia on the other. Such division militates against multilateral/regional cooperation. Second, countries in Northeast Asia and East Asia lack experience in multilateralism. Multilateralism has not yet taken root in the region. Third, competition between Asia-Pacific regionalism and East Asian regionalism may accelerate from this year on. The East Asia Summit, which represents the former, will be joined by the US and Russia, and it competes against the ASEAN Plus Three, a representative form of the latter regionalism, which has China at its core.

Competition between China and the US for leadership in these fora can be expected.

To ameliorate, if not resolve, these stumbling blocks, the ROK participant noted the utility of minilateralism, such as US-Japan-ROK cooperation and China-Japan-Korea cooperation. Since in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, minilateralism may have the potential to bridge between bilateralism and multilateralism. The participants at this meeting have reached a broad consensus on the importance of developing institutional linkages and minilateralism.

5) Cooperation on Non-Traditional Security Issues in Northeast Asia/North Pacific

The utility of minilateralism is also found in energy cooperation, which is presented by a US representative. The prevailing explanation for failure to implement an international energy initiative (IEI) and form a Northeast Asian mechanism focuses on historical legacies, different political systems, and domestic politics, leading to the existence of a number of “Zombie initiatives,” which is an initiative that neither dies nor achieves its objectives. However, the US representative argued that such Zombie initiatives may have other unstated functions that perpetuate their existence. For example, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) led to the creation of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) among Japan, South Korea, and the US. It also created the Four-Party Talks and eventually the Six-Party Talks. The American participant observed that there were several three-country minilateral mechanisms for energy cooperation that are emerging and functioning. The existing Japan-ROK-US, China-Japan-ROK, and Russia-ROK-DPRK minilateral regimes can be building blocks for a Northeast Asian energy regime. Despite problems and obstacles, energy is an area in which multilateral cooperation in the form of minilateral cooperation has been successful in Northeast Asia.

Other participants noted that cooperation in non-traditional security issues is instrumental in building trust. A South Korean representative stressed that trust can be built by action and not by words, and cooperation through action can begin in issues of non-traditional security. In this regard, denuclearization should not be the only issue at the Six-Party Talks and non-traditional security issues such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief should be on the agenda.

The importance of norms has also been pointed out by many participants. An Indian participant referred to the necessity of norm-building to increase transparency, while a ROK participant argued for the creation of common norms/principles of multilateral governance in Northeast Asia, which are designed to reduce tension, prevent conflict, and promote cooperation.

6) Next meeting

CSCAP China, one of the co-chairs of this SG, promised to take the responsibility to organize the group's next meeting no matter where it would be held, possibly in the latter half of the year 2011.