Asia Uniting: Many Tiers, One Goal
By Hitoshi Tanaka

Despite the existence of numerous institutional arrangements that bring together nations with a stake in stability, peace and prosperity in East Asia and provide them with a forum for dialogue and joint action, Japanese academic Hitoshi Tanaka argues that a new security architecture will require further institution-building and a deepening of dialogue among the region’s major players.

HINA’S GROWING influence, the increasing prominence of East Asia and the slow decline in the relative influence of the United States mean that it is time to re-examine our approach to the region. Going forward, we should aim to consolidate a multilayered network of inclusive multilateral institutions with a mandate to address specific issues. At the same time, these institutions must evolve in a manner that is compatible with the existing principles and norms of the international system.

A multilayered and inclusive security architecture in East Asia would have two primary mandates: The first would provide venues to prevent potential threats to regional peace and stability from materializing; the second would engage states in cooperative countermeasures to address these threats should they emerge.

At its core, the architecture would aim to deepen cooperation and community by engaging states in action-oriented and proactive efforts to tackle issues of common concern. It would have three main pillars:

1. Bolstering bilateral security arrangements and “minilateral” strategic links and dialogues between the US and East Asian states, as well as establishing a regular trilateral mechanism for strategic dialogue among Japan, China and the US.

2. Evolving the framework of the Six-Party talks into a permanent sub-regional forum to address security issues in Northeast Asia beyond just North Korea’s nuclear program.

3. Establishing an East Asia Security Forum as a region-wide, inclusive mechanism for joint operations to combat transnational and non-traditional security issues.

In terms of major security issues, Northeast Asia will undoubtedly dominate concerns for the foreseeable future. In particular, the North
Korean nuclear issue poses a direct threat to regional peace and stability. Uncertainties about China’s future course will also remain a long-term security concern. Given that any major security incident in Northeast Asia would directly impact the interests of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Australia, New Zealand and India, it is important that these issues be considered in an East Asian context.

**JAPAN-CHINA-US STRATEGIC DIALOGUE**

Although Japan should actively engage its neighbors in establishing and consolidating multilateral security institutions and jointly cooperating on functional issues, current realities require a strong hedge against future uncertainties in the region. Although there has been no open conflict between East Asian states for many years, a number of potential flashpoints continue to threaten regional stability. In light of this, robust security arrangements between the US and its friends and allies in the region (in particular, the US-Japan alliance) should remain in place for the foreseeable future as a security guarantee. Existing bilateral ties should be supplemented by deepening strategic ties among states via existing “minilateral” institutions, such as the trilateral forum for strategic dialogue among Japan, South Korea, and the US.

It is no secret that the new government in Tokyo wants to develop a more “equal” relationship with the US and to review several sensitive bilateral issues, in particular, the US-Japan alliance) should remain in place for the foreseeable future as a security guarantee. Existing bilateral ties should be supplemented by deepening strategic ties among states via existing “minilateral” institutions, such as the trilateral forum for strategic dialogue among Japan, South Korea, and the US.

At the same time as Japan seeks to strengthen existing security arrangements as a hedge against uncertainty, it must also pursue new and inclusive frameworks for cooperation. For example, one integral issue is the state of relations among the great powers in the region. In light of the essential role that Japan, China and the US play in the region at all levels, Japan must also lead the effort to strengthen trilateral security relations and reduce mistrust. The three states should immediately institutionalize a tripartite strategic dialogue as a complement to ongoing bilateral discussions. This would serve as a confidence-building measure and promote further military and strategic transparency.

**PUTTING TEETH INTO THE FIVE PARTIES**

North Korea’s nuclear weapons program has posed a clear danger to peace and stability in East Asia for two decades. Pyongyang’s recent provocations — the July 2006 missile tests, October 2006 and May 2009 nuclear tests, and April 2009 “satellite launch” — are egregious violations of its past commitments. To have any hope of success, the international community’s approach to this issue must adhere to the following five principles.

1. North Korea must never be recognized as a nuclear state. Recognizing it as such would seriously damage the credibility of the United Nations Security Council, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Six-Party talks. Some observers have suggested that the US is now chiefly concerned with counter-proliferation — preventing Pyongyang from selling nuclear technology — rather than denuclearization. President Barack Obama’s administration must unequivocally debunk these rumors and make clear to North Korea and the international community that Washington will never accept North Korea as a nuclear state. Failure to do so will raise doubts in Japan about the credibility of the US nuclear umbrella, which in turn will have a deleterious effect on peace and stability in East Asia.

2. Policy consistency: Over the past six years, Pyongyang has very effectively exploited policy inconsistencies resulting from leadership turnover in Japan, the US and South Korea and the absence of a united front among the five nations, minus North Korea, in the Six-Party talks. The five — China, Russia, the US, Japan and South Korea — must learn from past mistakes. Going
forward, more extensive collaboration will be imperative. Faithful implementation of the pertinent UN Security Council resolutions by all five, particularly China and Russia, will also be essential. Further North Korean provocations will undoubtedly exacerbate existing tensions among these countries. Nevertheless, it is imperative that these resolutions — Nos. 1518, 1877 and 1874 — be fully enforced, particularly Resolution 1874, which allows interceptions of North Korean ships suspected of carrying banned weapons and technology. In the event of a future provocation, the response must be swift, including high-level five-party talks without North Korean participation.

3. Contingency planning. The five parties must always guard against open conflict. Japan, the US and South Korea must engage in discreet contingency planning to discuss not only military tactics but also how to evacuate noncombatants and respond to a massive refugee crisis. Despite the fact that the 1994 nuclear crisis pushed Washington and Pyongyang to the brink of war, efforts to engage in trilateral contingency planning at the time were unsuccessful. Instead, bilateral discussions were held between the US and its alliance partners. This time, trilateral contingency planning, together with frequent dialogue with China and Russia concerning these plans, is imperative.

4. A comprehensive, negotiated settlement. At the same time as the five parties must show that they are willing to reach a comprehensive settlement that addresses North Korea’s concerns, they must also decisively and jointly respond to any North Korean provocations. This is the only way to create an environment in which a negotiated settlement will be possible. If North Korea agrees to verifiable denuclearization and makes a clear commitment to significantly reform its approach to the international community, the five parties should offer a number of carrots, of which normalization of relations between North Korea and the US and Japan, and the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, will be most important.

5. The Six-Party process must continue, even informally. It is unlikely that North Korea will
abruptly decide to resume its participation in the Six-Party talks. In order to set the stage for substantive negotiations, it will be necessary for the US to continue to hold informal talks with North Korea concerning its nuclear program and normalization of bilateral diplomatic relations. The two Koreas must also resume meaningful dialogue. For its part, Japan must be prepared to discuss diplomatic normalization in accordance with the 2002 Pyongyang Declaration. With regard to the abductees issue, Tokyo and Pyongyang must negotiate in good faith and establish a fair and verifiable process for determining the truth about the abducted Japanese citizens for whom Pyongyang has yet to account. These informal talks must be held at a high level and have the full and complete backing of each nation’s leaders.

North Korea’s recent actions have raised serious doubts about whether its leaders have any intention of negotiating in good faith. To ensure a soft landing, the five parties must follow the guiding principles delineated above. After the North Korea nuclear issue is resolved, the Six-Party talks should continue as a sub-regional forum tasked with overseeing the implementation of the comprehensive settlement. This forum could also play a valuable role consolidating more stable and constructive relations among the six nations if its mandate were to expand over time to address other security issues in Northeast Asia.

EAST ASIA SECURITY FORUM
East Asia faces a growing number of emerging transnational and non-traditional security challenges that threaten to destabilize the region. Japan should work with the US, China, and other partners to establish an East Asia Security Forum (EASF) as the core component of a new multilateral security architecture focused on inclusive, action-oriented and functional cooperation.

The EASF would have two major objectives. First, it would engage East Asian states in proactive operations to address transnational and non-traditional security issues such as environmental degradation, natural disasters, energy security, infectious diseases, the proliferation of
criteria, participation should be based on the specific functions that a particular operation would address and the resources that a given country brings to the table. For example, US participation in regional security cooperation would be imperative in light of its vast resources and military assets. Economic integration, on the other hand, could begin as a mainly EAS endeavor. in time, it could expand to also involve close coordination with APEC. in contrast to regional financial and economic cooperation, which will be largely market-driven, security cooperation in East Asia will require strong political leadership and vision. Fortunately, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) already exists as a viable entity for security policy coordination. The EASF should be established promptly to engage states in voluntary, joint operations to address emerging threats.

Lastly, specific issues such as North Korea’s nuclear weapons program should continue to be addressed through the Six-Party talks. As discussed above, after the nuclear issue has been resolved, this dialogue mechanism could evolve into a permanent security forum in Northeast Asia.

CHALLENGES FOR JAPAN
Now that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has taken over from the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and his cabinet will move to reshape Japanese foreign policy. A key aspect of Hatoyama’s view has been to reinvigorate Japan’s policy toward East Asia and promote regional cooperation. As the DPJ consolidates its vision for the region, it must ask itself the following questions: Is the concept of a broad East Asian community viable, or would it be more feasible to limit cooperation to Northeast Asia? Which nations should be included in this community? Must new institutions be established or are existing organizations ready to take up the gauntlet?

No matter what decisions the government makes, it is a foregone conclusion that any vision for enhanced regionalism must embrace the concept of functional and multi-layered cooperation. As for membership, instead of strict geographical

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