

Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Study Group Proposal

General Information

Title:	Study Group on Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation	
Date of Submission:	June 2019	
Applicant:	CSCAP-Korea	
Co-Chairs:	CSCAP-Korea, CSCAP-China, CSCAP-Japan, and CSCAP-US	
Number of Meetings:	Four (4)	
Timeframe:	Start of Mandate	End of Mandate
	September 1, 2019	August 31, 2021

Introduction and Significance of the Study

CSCAP-Korea recognizes that current security situation in Northeast Asia presents not only promises but also uncertainties and thus calls for concrete actions to promote peace and stability. Since former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Korea, Sung Joo Han proposed 'Mini-CSCE' in Northeast Asia, there have been numerous attempts to set up multilateral regional cooperation institutions in Northeast and/or East Asia without tangible results. In a sense, this lack of success stories despite efforts made by prominent leaders is not unusual considering lingering historical territorial issues, power transition situation, as well as imminent security threats.

Paradoxically enough, however, the stronger the negative effects of those obstacles, the more the regional cooperation becomes necessary for the security and prosperity of the countries of the region. Simply because there are too many real and/or potential threats and risks in the region which could not be handled successfully by any one country alone, the regional cooperation becomes imperative. The lack of success stories of regional cooperation must not discourage member countries, NGOs, individual scholars from trying it again. Repeated attempts will build up momentum, so that, at one moment in the future, the accumulated momentum will prevail over the obstacles and will bring us solid foundation for regional cooperation tough enough to withstand all the imaginable obstacles.

Against this backdrop, CSCAP-Korea presents a proposal to the CSCAP Steering Committee for consideration to establish a 'Study Group on Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation,' with a view to exploring ways to reduce uncertainties in this region and to facilitate regional cooperation. By organizing a study group for regional cooperation in Northeast Asia, we would like to discuss possible regional security cooperation framework as well as functional issues that could be addressed or discussed in the regional framework.

Objectives of the Study

First, the regional security cooperation framework should be 'Open' to any issues in which countries in the region might have interests ranging from trust building measures in the Korean Peninsula, reducing tensions in various bilateral relationships, environmental protection, fighting transnational crimes and other nontraditional cooperation to hardcore military security issues. Particularly, we would like to make attempts to take a fair look at those issues that blocked the development of regional cooperation in the region. We would like to lower our expectation and see how far we can go to overcome those divisive issues.

Second, the regional security cooperation framework should be 'Plus' in the sense that our discussion will be open to countries outside the Northeast Asia region. What makes regional cooperation more multilateral in nature is the existence of neutral, impartial observers. We would like to actively invite participants from outside the region. In particular, considering that the improvement of Korean Peninsula situation is one of the most important elements of the regional security, we believe a new attempt to look at the issue in regional cooperation context is in order.

The study group will meet four times for two years for discussions and drafting recommendations. The recommendations will be submitted to member countries and circulated. The format will be flexible to accommodate different ideas, approaches and participants. Depending on the progress of discussion or dialogue, sub-groups could be made to develop individual, specific idea or agendas as a component of the regional cooperation framework.

- (a) To evaluate current sources of insecurity in Northeast Asia.

- (b) To analyze ways to remedy current strategic uncertainty in Northeast Asia.
- (c) To articulate and promote consensus on ways to achieve security cooperation across the region and beyond.
- (d) To examine the feasibility of follow-on study group projects.

Anticipated Output

CSCAP has made significant contributions to 'Confidence Building,' 'Preventive Diplomacy,' and 'Conflict Resolution.' Based on those past achievements, we would like to move forward along with ARF missions by finding more specific and practical ways and means to build up peace and security for countries in the region.

The Study Group will produce specific policy recommendations based upon detailed diagnosis of current strategic environment of Northeast Asia. Expected outcome includes specific policy recommendations to facilitate multilateral dialogue and cooperation. Holding an intellectual venue in which leading practitioners and scholars get together to discuss the most pressing issues for regional cooperation will also contribute to trust-building in the region. CSCAP-Korea plans to hold the first meeting in Seoul in October 2019. China, Japan and the US will pursue hosting the other three meetings.

How does this proposed Study Group differ from previous studies undertaken by CSCAP in the past?

Previous CSCAP Study Groups have done substantial works on peace and security issues. Current study groups, however, do not cover hard security issues of Northeast Asia enough. It is time to focus on Northeast Asia and pull efforts together to further increase cooperation in the key issue areas and identify new areas of cooperation. Hence, the 'Study Group on Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation' will seek to address the following specific issues: 1) How are the basic components of security structure in this region different from other regions? 2) What initiatives and mechanisms are possible solutions? 3) What are possible contributions of the Asia-Pacific countries in dealing with these issues?