

(Report to the CSCAP Steering Committee, January 22 2009, Bangkok)

**The CSCAP's Multilateral Security Governance in Northeast Asia/North Pacific: From the Six Party Talks to More Enduring Northeast Asian/North Pacific Security Multilateralism**

**1, What are we doing? :Brief Introduction of the Study Group' Research Design**

The Six Party Talks is a long process that requires patient and skillful diplomacy. However, the Talks is promising not only for resolving(or containing) North Korea's nuclear threat, but also for establishing a more enduring multilateral security architecture in Northeast Asia/North Pacific that could address a variety of economic, political and security issues facing the region. Given the fact that all the major players of international politics are involved in the Six Party Talks processes, the future developments of the Six Party Talks will have enormous implications not just for Northeast Asia but the entire world. Furthermore, the Six Party Talks may serve a regional framework for security multilateralism in Northeast Asia/North Pacific.

How should we conceive security multilateralism in Northeast Asia/North Pacific? We usually assume the establishment of a single multilateral security institution that regulates security issues collectively. Indeed, there have been many proposals to construct multilateral security institutions in Northeast Asia, for example in the style of the Conference of Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). And the so-called "2+4 formula" on Korean affairs has been proposed since the 1970s. It is assumed in these ideas that a single multilateral security institution could address a variety of security-related issues.

Our arguments are based upon a different conception of security multilateralism. We would argue that how to link institutions (whether bilateral, multi-lateral, regional or global) is critical for developing a security multilateralism, rather than establishing a single multilateral institution. Mutually coordinated or interlinked institutions create *de facto* security multilateralism.

There are several reasons for this argument. Our initial focus of discussions is the Korean Peninsula. First, there are a variety of security issues to be addressed in the Korean peninsula — issues that are closely connected with each other. A piece-meal approach is not effective. The nuclear issue, for example, cannot

be dealt with in isolation from the larger security issue of the Korean peninsula itself; it is closely linked with US–Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) relations, North-South relations, Japan-DPRK relations, China-DPRK relations, relations with global institutions such as the United Nation and Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT)/International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the armistice regime, peace-regime building, economic cooperation and so forth. Those issues must be addressed simultaneously to resolve the nuclear crisis. A comprehensive approach is critical to resolve conflicts, which must be dealt with as a whole.

Second, although we must address a variety of security issues simultaneously, each issue needs a different composition of participating countries and different commitments from each. Some issues would be handled more appropriately on a bilateral basis, while other issues may be best addressed by a group of three or four countries. Some issues need to be addressed by six countries. For example, the transition from the armistice regime to a peace regime needs a group of countries different from the group of countries that would address the missile and nuclear issue. A single multilateral institution cannot address all of these issues, so some division of labor among different institutions is necessary.

Third, because of this multiple nature of Northeast Asian security, we will have a variety of institutions to address security issues, whether bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral or otherwise. We will have bilateral institutions between, for example, the US and DPRK, North Korea and South Korea, Japan and the DPRK, China and the DPRK, and so forth, reflecting different agenda and commitments. We may have a trilateral institution addressing military confidence-building across the DMZ (US, South Korea and North Korea). We may have a quadrilateral institution among North Korea, South Korea, the US and China that deals with the transition from the armistice to peace regimes.

Fourth, because of the need for a comprehensive approach, an issue of critical importance is how to coordinate these different institutions, thereby strengthening an overall security structure. Put differently, how one institution links with others and what institutional relations are developed between the institutions are critical for the overall regional security structure. The establishment of mutually reinforcing institutional relations is important in this regard; we must produce synergistic effects by linking institutions effectively.

Fifth, not a single multilateral institution but instead well-coordinated and mutually connected institutional relationships will form *de facto* security multilateralism in the Korean peninsula. *De facto* security multilateralism will emerge as a result of the coordination of various different institutions through institutional linkages.

Sixth, therefore, institutional linkage(how one institution is linked with others) is key when we talk about security multilateralism. As far as institutional linkages are concerned, a certain type of institutional linkage is conducive to security and order. On the other hand, institutions may conflict with each other, thereby weakening overall security.

Institutions may be linked in various ways: sometimes these linkages will strengthen regional structures for stability or weaken them. Individual institutions can operate independently only as long as they do not affect each other. But the institutions will amalgamate into larger bodies to cope with problems that are beyond the scope of any single institution. Depending on the type of institutional linkage, we can expect both positive and negative effects on the operation of the respective institutions. We would argue that a stable regional security order could be established through institutional linkages/coordination even in conflict-ridden Northeast Asia. *De facto* multilateral coordination could be possible by adequately linking a variety of institutions.

Seventh, although most security-related issues in the region will be addressed by different groups of countries, we need some comprehensive multilateral forum or umbrella framework where institutional relations could be coordinated to enhance an overall security structure. An umbrella framework is quite important, given that resolving pressing security concerns such as the North Korea nuclear issue will take a long time (probably more than a decade) and that various institutions will have to be coordinated during this long transition period. Without institutional coordination under a common umbrella institution, the final goal (a peaceful, prosperous and nuclear-free Korean peninsula) will not be achieved.

If we look back at the past from the above-mentioned perspective, we can find some quite interesting developments. There are already a variety of institutions on the Korean peninsula that would address security issues. A serious concern for Northeast Asian regional security order is not the lack of multilateral security institutions, but the lack of coordination and linkage between existing institutions. There already exist many useful institutions covering Northeast Asia —bilateral, sub-regional, regional and global — that

could contribute to regional peace and stability if they were interlinked and integrated in an appropriate way. For example, we have many institutions between South Korea and North Korea, such as the 1992 Basic Agreement and the Agreement on Non-Nuclearization. There also was the Agreed Framework between the US and the DPRK, and a bilateral institution between Japan and the DPRK underlined by the 2002 Pyongyang Declaration.

However, these institutions have not functioned well. Overall security institutions previously developed in Northeast Asia were weak, not binding the relevant parties strongly. Even when agreements were concluded, serious difficulties in implementing them quickly arose. One reason is that the various institutions operated independently, not linked with other institutions. Mutually coordinated institutional linkages that would generate a synergistic effect on regional stability have been blocked by one or more of the parties concerned.

So, the most serious problem is the lack of institutional linkage and coordination. Institutional linkage has been prevented and/or limited and, as a result, no synergistic effect by institutional linkages has been generated. For example, the 1992 North-South Basic Agreement has not been well linked with other institutions such as the South Korea–US, South Korea–China, South Korea–Japan, DPRK–US or DPRK–Japan bilateral institutions. Because of the lack of institutional linkages and coordination, one party could easily sabotage the implementation of an agreement.

How can we assess the Six Party Talks underway to address the North Korean nuclear crisis from the viewpoint of these arguments on institutional linkages? The Six Party Talks provide an excellent laboratory when we discuss the possibility of creating a multilateral security framework in the region. In our view, the success of the Six Party Talks depends to a large extent on whether we can successfully link and coordinate various institutions with each other, and then amalgamate them into *de facto* multilateralism. This means that the Six Party Talks are not a venue where we can address security issues directly, but they are important in coordinating a variety of institutions that will be developed to address different security-related issues among different groups of countries.

The Joint Statement of the fourth round of the Six Party Talks, in September 2005, suggests how institutional relations are crucial. The Six Party Talks were established to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. However, the Statement clearly demonstrates that a comprehensive approach is critical to resolve the

nuclear impasse; it refers not only to North Korea's pledge to dismantle its nuclear weapon and existing nuclear programs, but also to a variety of other issues including security assurance, US–DPRK normalization, Japan–DPRK normalization, energy and food assistance, economic cooperation, peace-regime building on the peninsula and so forth. The Statement also refers the 1992 North–South Basic Accord, the 2002 Japan–Pyongyang Declaration, normalization between the US and DPRK, multilateral security reassurance, the transformation of the armistice regime to a peace regime, provision of energy, economic cooperation, the NPT, the IAEA and so forth. Almost all security issues on the Korean peninsula will have to be addressed to resolve the nuclear crisis.

It is almost certain that resolving the North Korean nuclear issue will be a long process. As was seen in the 1994 US–DPRK Agreed Framework, it may take more than a decade to finally destroy the DPRK's nuclear development programme and establish a permanent structure of peace, even if the six countries agree with some formula to dismantle the nuclear programmes soon.

If the Joint Statement is implemented, various institutions will be created in this long process, and existing institutions will need to be *revitalised*. As I have mentioned, different issues will involve different specific commitments and obligations of the parties concerned; therefore, various types of institutional arrangements with different memberships will be created in the process. For example, the Four Party Talks that were aborted in the late 1990s may be *revitalised* to tackle with the transformation of the armistice regime to a peace regime. Other sub-regional, trilateral or bilateral institutions focusing on such issues as conventional arms reduction, missiles, biochemical weapons, bbilateral relations (US–DPRK, South Korea–North Korea, China–DPRK, Japan–DPRK, US–China, Japan–China, etc.) as well as regional institutions to address different issues will be established.

The Third Session of the Fifth Round of the Six Party Talks held in February 2007 agreed to set up working groups in order to carry out the initial actions and for full implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement. The respective working groups are requested to discuss and formulate specific action plans for the implementation of the Joint Statement. They are also requested to report to the Six Party Heads of Delegation Meeting on the progress of their works. These arrangements indicate that, based upon the working groups, a variety of institutions with different membership composition will be established under

the umbrella of the Six Party Talks. The Six Party Talks will serve as an institution coordinating various other institutions, whatever bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral ones.

The role of the Six Party Talks will be, rather than directly addressing specific security issues, a loosely organised multilateral umbrella forum under which the existing and newly established institutions are mutually coordinated. Under the Six Party Talks umbrella, decoupled institutions must be amalgamated into an integrated institutional package, thereby enhancing the regional security structure.

Institutional linkages and coordination under the Six Party Talks are quite important, given the fact that individual institutions in Northeast Asia are generally weak in their respective institutional shapes and, therefore, vulnerable to the changes of policies and attitudes of even one of the parties concerned.

Therefore, institutions will need some supporting mechanisms for the implementation of the agreements. By linking institutions, we can strengthen the institutions and, therefore, implementation

Thus, we would argue that there exists a possibility for Northeast Asia to develop multilayered interlinked institutional mechanisms based on existing and newly established institutions. Mutually reinforcing relations between various institutions could be established through institutional linkages, even if individual institutions are still weak in their respective institutional shapes and limited in their scope.

Security multilateralism in Northeast Asia/North Pacific should not be monopolized by the six parties, given the fact that other parties have huge stakes in peace and stability of the region. The processes of constructing security multilateralism require active engagements of the all relevant parties. The constructive roles to be played by other parties also must be explored in this study group. We should explore such possibilities of expanding Six Party Talks to include other parties or of expanding membership of the existing working groups (established under the Six Party Talks) to include other constructive parties in the years to come.