

The Case for an Alternative Strategy for Japan: Beyond the “A9A” Regime

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Introduction

Will China rise peacefully? For major external actors such as the United States and Europe, the rise of China, if achieved peacefully, would entail acquiescence in Chinese power and/or peaceful coexistence with China on the global stage. Would this, however, be the same for its Asian neighbors, even if China rises peacefully? A Southeast Asian official attending the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore in May-June 2014 expressed the region’s sentiment eloquently: “We do not think China wants to rule the world. China just wants to rule us.”² Indeed, what China wants on the global stage, on the one hand, and in Asia, on the other, may not be the same.

At present, the Japanese government, naturally and understandably, places a rising China at the center of its strategy. In a way, this is true of almost all the countries in China’s neighborhood as well as the United States, which are all struggling to find an optimal strategy to cope with the shifting balance of power where the rise of China is the most critical factor. The current Japanese strategy, however, appears to be driven by a somewhat excessive sense of “threat” vis-à-vis China, and as a result tends to gravitate toward the alliance with the United States at the expense of another critical aspect of Japan’s grand strategy, i.e., security cooperation with its Asian neighbors, including South Korea, Australia, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

This paper argues for the case of substantiating security cooperation with these three East Asian actors as an alternative strategy of Japan, which as its backbone is to be sustained by the alliance with the United States. The analytical frame of reference, with which these arguments are made, is the postwar framework of Japanese security policy premised on the Article 9 of the postwar constitution (A9) and the U.S.-Japan security treaty (Alliance), which I dub the Article 9-Alliance regime, or “A9A.” I will argue that in order to fully substantiate security cooperation with Japan’s Asian neighbors, Japan would need to go beyond the A9A regime, and that this would require a revision of Article 9 on the basis of liberal internationalism.³

A brief examination of the concept of “a new model of major power relations” with the United States, for which the current leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Xi Jinping appears to be aspiring as a long-term goal, is first in order.

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² Daniel Twining, “Is the ‘Chinese Dream’ Asia’s Nightmare?” *Nikkei Asia Review*, June 11, 2014, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Geopolitico/Daniel-Twining-Is-the-Chinese-Dream-Asia-s-nightmare>, accessed September 10, 2014.

³ For a comprehensive analysis of this thesis in Japanese, see Yoshihide Soeya, *Anzen-hosho wo Toi-naosu: “Kyujō-Anpo Taisei” wo Koete* [Rethinking Security: Going beyond the “Article 9-Alliance Regime”] (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2016).

The rise of China and U.S.-China relations

A new model of major power relations

In order to understand the Chinese leadership's strong urge for "a new model of major power relations," it is useful to divide modern Chinese nationalism into two critical sentiments dominant among the Chinese people. One is strong awareness of victimization and humiliation during the modern history of China since the 1840-42 Opium War, when Hong Kong became a colony of Great Britain. The other is a growing sense of confidence and pride, emanating from China's recent spectacular rise to great power status.

These sentiments combine to make up unique nationalism among the Chinese people.⁴ As a result, many Chinese believe today that Asia with China as its strong center is the natural order for Asia, and that the time has come to bring Asia back to such "normalcy." For many Chinese, a strong China "reclaiming" its core interests in Asia is still compatible with the country engaging in the liberal international order at the global level.

This unique role and status of a strong China is amply demonstrated by the idea of a "new model of major power relations" between the United States and China. The concept was proposed by then Vice President Xi Jinping in Washington, D.C. in February 2012.⁵ Xi said that such a relationship would be characterized by (1) "mutual understanding and strategic trust"; (2) "respecting each other's core interests"; (3) "mutually beneficial cooperation"; and (4) "enhancing cooperation and coordination in international affairs and on global issues."⁶ In June 2013, Xi Jinping, now General Secretary of the CCP, reaffirmed the same four key elements at the summit meeting with President Barack Obama in California.

The four elements in Xi Jinping's formula of "a new model of major power relations" could be grouped into two categories: (1) strategic trust and (2) "core interests" are more relevant in the Asia-Pacific context, whereas (3) mutual benefits and (4) coordination on global issues are important for the U.S.-China relationship at the global level. Simply put, China wants to coexist with the United States peacefully in the Asia-Pacific as well as at the global level, but one critical condition is for the United States to respect an Asian order with China as the primary architect. This message is explicit in the words of Xi Jinping that "the Pacific Ocean is wide enough to incorporate [the interests of] both China and the U.S."⁷

⁴ Zhao Suisheng, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁵ Xi Jinping, "Luncheon in Honor of Vice President Xi Jinping" (video transcript, National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, Washington, D.C., February 15, 2012), <http://www.ncusr.org/programs/luncheon-honor-vice-president-xi-jinping>.

⁶ David M. Lampton, "A New Type of Major-Power Relationship: Seeking a Durable Foundation for U.S.-China Ties," *Asia Policy* 16 (July 2013), <http://www.nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=650>.

⁷ Willy Lam, "Beijing's Aggressive New Foreign Policy and Implications for the South China Sea," *China Brief* 13, no. 13 (June 21, 2013), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41056#.VAw6IcJ_vTo.

Implications for the Asian neighbors

Hugh White recently presented a prescription to avoid an ultimate strategic clash between the United States and China, arguing for a power-sharing arrangement between the two great powers across the Pacific.⁸ The premise of the argument points at the heart of the Chinese nationalism: China no longer accepts U.S. primacy as the basis of the Asian order, and alternatively views its own desire to have its dominant status accepted and respected as legitimate and necessary for stability in the Asia Pacific. A huge puzzle about this thesis, however, particularly for China's immediate neighbors, is whether a strong China that rejects the U.S. primacy would be a benign hegemon in Asia. Many Chinese appear to believe or at least argue so. Yet China's behavior, particularly in its territorial disputes over the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands, is convincing many of its neighbors otherwise.

In this realist exposition on the strategic relationship between the United States and China, what is often missing is the examination of the place and role of China's neighbors in Asia in the transformation of an Asia order. Obviously, Asian countries bear the direct impact of the behavior of a powerful China. Their coping strategies, or the lack thereof, will affect the reshaping of the Asian order in a significant way.

Such a strategy cannot be effectively constructed by any single country, including Japan. A truly equal partnership is the key to building cooperation among China's neighbors, with a view to consolidating effective infrastructure for a transforming regional order. We call such an approach a "middle power" strategy (to be elaborated below), and argue that applying such a perspective to cooperation between Japan and other Asian countries has become increasingly important at a time when the rise of China has become an organizing principle in the transformation of an Asian order, and the role of the United States is being reexamined.

Pitfalls in Japan's recent approach

Legislation for peace and security

Japan's new security legislation, passed in the national diet on September 19, 2015, consists of revisions of ten existing laws and the drafting of one new law. They could be categorized in three areas of Japanese security and defense policies: (1) situations threatening Japan's survival, (2) situations of important influence, and (3) international peace cooperation. Situations (1) relate to the question of the right to the collective self-defense, which will be discussed below.

Categories (2) and (3) involve important changes from the previous typical Japanese self-restraints in the management of the U.S.-Japan alliance (Guidelines of Defense Cooperation between Japan and the United States), and participation in international peacekeeping operations. It can generally and reasonably be argued that options for the role of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in both of these areas are still quite modest compared to a normal international

⁸ Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

standard, falling far short of those of Canada or Australia, for instance. The changes achieved in these areas by the new legislation for peace and security, therefore, are more than welcome.

Category (1), pertaining to the issue of the right to the collective self-defense, gives rise to an interesting question as to the balance between continuity and change in Japanese security policy since the end of the World War II. The evolution has occurred largely within the confines of the postwar framework, i.e., the A9A regime. In a nutshell, somewhat significant changes in Japanese security and defense policies have happened particularly since the end of the Cold War, but without a fundamental modification of the A9A regime per se. The new security legislation is also a case in point.

As a result of the legislation for peace and security, the revised “three conditions for the use of force for self-defense” now states as follows:

- (1) When an armed attack against Japan occurs *or when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan’s survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people’s right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.* (emphasis added)
- (2) When there are no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan’s survival and protects its people.
- (3) Use of force should be limited to the minimum extent.

The section in italics gives room for the exercise of the right to collective self-defense, which successive Japanese governments have previously rejected due to the limitations arising from Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Now, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s administration has come to the new interpretation of Article 9, saying that self-defense allowed by Article 9 consists of both self-defense and collective self-defense. Under condition (1), while the original reference pertains to self-defense in the strict sense of the term, the new addition makes collective self-defense part of self-defense in a broader sense of the term (reflecting the changing security environments, as explained by the government).

While many constitutional experts in Japan are shaking their heads about the new interpretation, as much about the substance of the right of collective self-defense as about the new security policies, the issue is not very straightforward. First of all, the opposition’s argument that it is a “war-making” law is misplaced, and so is the case with neighbors’ concerns about Japan’s military “expansion.” This is so, primarily because the right to collective self-defense is a legitimate one for all sovereign states, which is justified by Article 51 of the UN Charter.

This is even more so, because the revised interpretation in the new law allows the exercise of the right for Japan basically only at 50 percent of what is allowed by the UN Charter, i.e., only in situations where Japan’s survival is directly threatened. In other words, the new legislation would not allow Japan to engage in military operations with the United States and other friendly nations if the case has no direct bearing on Japan’s security. This is what I mean by 50 percent (at most, and perhaps even less in reality) of the stipulation of the UN Charter, which is in principle for the sake of international peace and order rather than a single country’s security.

Legally, this incomplete nature of the new legislation is because of Article 9: as long as the Japanese government has to justify the right to collective self-defense without changing the constitution, this is perhaps the maximum interpretation possible within the confines of Article 9.

A twist, however, is that Prime Minister Abe originally wanted to change Article 9. The right to the collective self-defense was brought up as an extension of Abe's aspiration, but the new interpretation was made in the name of defending Article 9. All this was as if an invisible hand pushed the "Abe agenda" back into the box of the A9A regime, which is nothing other than the "postwar regime" from which he wanted to escape.

The process leading to the new legislation for peace and security and its successful passage also testify to the critical importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance for Japanese defense and security policy. With the new legislation, options for Japanese contributions to international peace cooperation activities and U.S. military missions in "situations threatening Japan's survival" and "situations of important influence" have expanded considerably within the confines of the A9A regime.

Despite the legal changes, an important question remains: Is Japan really ready to use them in a real world? To say that the new legislation would add to deterrence is one thing. Putting it into practice in actual situations is another. Without the preparedness and the determination for the latter, the former may turn out to be a "paper tiger" as Chinese chairman Mao Zedong used to say. Also, if Prime Minister Abe still wants to change Article 9 in the years ahead, this should mean that he would step into the remaining 50 percent of the right to the collective self-defense as stipulated by the UN Charter. Is he ready for this truly internationalist advance?

Déjà vu?

Exploring a few cases in the postwar evolution of Japanese security policy can help highlight similar kinds of pitfalls, almost like *déjà vu*.

Case 1: the establishment of the JSDF in July 1954 and the new interpretation of Article 9 by the Ichiro Hatoyama administration, a strong advocate for revising Article 9, in December 1954.

Before this, it was almost common sense that in order for Japan to have a military, Article 9 would need to be changed. After actually establishing the JSDF, this logic quickly receded in the background and the argument as well as political moves to revise Article 9 subsided.

Case 2: the revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty in 1960 by Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, grandfather of Shinzo Abe.

It was no secret that Prime Minister Kishi wanted to change the constitution if at all possible. However, as a result of the above development in Case 1, supported by the increasing power of the political left as well as a strong culture of anti-militarism among the general public, constitutional revision became a virtually taboo issue in domestic politics. Then, Kishi's

aspiration for Japanese “autonomy” went toward the revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty of 1951, which, in the eyes of Kishi as a nationalist, was too one-sided at the cost of Japan’s self-esteem and “independence.” In the name of achieving an “equal partnership” with the United States, Kishi succeeded in regaining some “autonomy” on the Japanese side to the extent Japan moved toward an “equal” position with the United States in the revised security treaty. The outcome, however, was further institutionalization of the U.S.-Japan security relationship, with Article 9 remaining intact. Thus the A9A regime was further consolidated.

Is what Prime Minister Abe has just achieved with respect to the right to collective self-defense in the new security legislation almost like *déjà vu* of these two cases? The walls are being pushed out further, but the basic framework, i.e., the A9A regime, still remains solid.

The case for going beyond the A9A regime

Prime Minister Abe’s renewed emphasis on Abenomics in the aftermath of domestic turmoil over the security legislation is somewhat reminiscent of Hayato Ikeda’s deliberate focus on economics after the political crisis caused by Kishi’s handling of the revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Still, Prime Minister Abe has not dropped constitutional revision from his agenda; the revision has been an important goal in itself for Abe for many years. An interesting development since the passage of the security legislation, however, is that he has stopped mentioning Article 9, and is now raising constitutional revision as a general issue, saying it needs to be debated nationally for years to come. This confirms the above point that Prime Minister Abe has perhaps achieved what he wanted to within the confines of Article 9.

Still, some frustration or a sense of trauma about the postwar regime still lingers on, and constitutional revision is still regarded as an important tool in order to escape from this framework. The political process over the security legislation as an “Abe agenda” has shown so far that the motive for the right to the collective self-defense originates from his dream of changing the constitution, even if only symbolically, which, however, has been pushed back into the A9A regime as if an invisible hand is at work.

This is in fact what happened with Ichiro Hatoyama and Nobusuke Kishi, the most prominent conservative politicians in the 1950s and the 1960s. My assumption for why this is the case is that, as long as one thinks of escaping from the postwar regime with a sense of trauma about the past, there is simply no way out. Any move in that direction is eventually drawn back into the A9A regime. This may once again breed frustration of one kind or another about the postwar regime, and so the same cycle is repeated.

This is a vicious cycle in the sense that Japanese security policy and its role in regional and global security will continue to be vague, causing misunderstanding and misperception particularly in the neighborhood of Japan, most notably China and Korea. It may not be so vicious as long as the outcome falls within the confines of the A9A regime. My prescription to avoid this vicious cycle is that although Japan eventually needs to change Article 9 and restructure the U.S.-Japan alliance, its cause and motive should be based on forward-looking

liberal internationalism. This way, Japan should be able to move forward beyond the A9A regime.

The current state of this vicious cycle is particularly problematic in Japan's relations with China and South Korea. Chinese concerns about the new security legislation are simply out of touch of reality given the rather "modest" content stated above. Chinese perception and its reaction, however, are part of the complex realities with which Japan, as well as other countries including the United States and South Korea, need to cope. South Korean worries are equally not relevant, but its actual impact makes otherwise logical and reasonable security cooperation between Japan and South Korea quite difficult. These problems point to an alternative strategy of Japan, which should both lessen sources of unnecessary uncertainties in Japan-China relations and consolidate the basis of security cooperation with South Korea.

I still believe that, if Japan succeeds in forming a comfortable consensus domestically about its "middle power" strategy, it would ameliorate both Chinese and Korean suspicions in the direction just described above.⁹ This would eventually make it possible for Japan to address the issue of revising Article 9 and thus to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance toward a more "normal" alliance. This, however, is a loaded concept inviting all kinds of emotionally charged reactions, making rational strategic discussions virtually impossible. For the lack of a better term, however, I would still use this strategic concept in this paper to point out pitfalls in the A9A regime and conceptualize an alternative strategy of Japan.

Conceptualizing an alternative strategy for Japan

Why Japan-South Korea security cooperation is important

Amid the shifting power balance between the United States and China, Japan and South Korea stand out as two countries whose levels of economic and political development, regional and global agendas, and even national interests are comparable.¹⁰ Indeed, Japan and South Korea are similarly situated in the evolving East Asian regional order as important allies of the United States. This, however, does not necessarily mean they are united as a counterbalance against a rising China. Instead, the three countries will constantly adjust their views and agendas amid a shifting East Asian order where the roles of the United States and China are the most important factors shaping the future. Ideally, Japan and South Korea should lead this process of adjustment. In doing this, their standing between the United States and China is conceptually neutral, even if as U.S. allies they are closer to the United States in reality. Japan and South Korea must remain conceptually neutral because they must coexist in the region as close neighbors of China. At the same time, they continue to share concerns about the way China is using its growing power in attempting to consolidate a China-centered Asia that is somewhat reminiscent of traditional Sinocentrism, which is not a reassuring sign for China's neighbors.

⁹ Yoshihide Soeya, "A 'Normal' Middle Power: Interpreting Changes in Japanese Security Policy in the 1990s and After," in Yoshihide Soeya, Masayuki Tadokoro, David Welch, eds, *Japan as a 'Normal Country'?: A Country in Search of its Place in the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Yoshihide Soeya and Geun Lee, "The Middle-Power Challenge in East Asia: An Opportunity for Co-operation between South Korea and Japan," *Global Asia* 9, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 2014).

Given this dynamic, Japan and South Korea need close relations with the United States in order to promote a liberal international order in East Asia and to socialize China into this order. Here there is a paradigm clash between the postwar liberal international order created by advanced democracies led by the United States, of which Japan and South Korea are key members in East Asia, on the one hand, and the Sinocentric order that China might be interested in reviving, on the other. Two basic factors, however, mean this clash is not necessarily preordained: China's spectacular economic rise is a result of the country entering the liberal international order, and there are liberal internationalists in Chinese society and the government. This, however, does not mean that China's liberal internationalists are entirely happy with the institutions and rules of the existing order. Thus, the danger always exists of power politics damaging China's relations with the liberal international order, despite the economic logic of China's participation in it.

Under this broad picture, from a Japanese perspective there are two dimensions in Japan-South Korea security cooperation. One is the domain of traditional security, most notably relating to the North Korea issue, where the United States, as an ally of Japan and South Korea, plays a key role. The other domain involves nontraditional security cooperation, where Japan and South Korea can and should promote substantial cooperation and involve other regional actors such as Australia and the ASEAN countries in efforts to consolidate political and nontraditional security cooperation among East Asian countries.

This paper does not look at the history controversies that often prevail in the domestic politics of both Japan and South Korea, with negative effects on the management of the current bilateral relationship. While I am fully aware of the importance of these issues in reality, the management of the history problem, on the one hand, and the discussion of security cooperation between Japan and South Korea, on the other, should be compartmentalized and proceed side by side, without one interfering with or hindering discussion of the other. This paper is concerned with the latter track. First, I will look into the recent security legislation passed in the Japanese Diet in September 2015 and discuss its implications for trilateral security cooperation.

A new horizon of traditional security cooperation between Japan and South Korea

As stated above, the Legislation for Peace and Security, passed in the National Diet in September 2015, covers three areas of Japanese security and defense policies: (1) situations threatening Japan's survival, (2) situations of important influence, and (3) international peace cooperation. The first category of situations relates to the question of the right to collective self-defense, whereas categories two and three involve important changes from the typical Japanese exercise of self-restraint in the management of the U.S.-Japan alliance (the guidelines of defense cooperation between Japan and the United States) and participation in international peacekeeping operations.

Revision of the existing laws in category two—situations of important influence—has opened up a new horizon for Japan's logistical support in the event of regional contingencies in two dimensions: expanding the activities of the Japan Self-Defense Forces in logistical support

(short of the actual use of force) and enabling the provision of support activities to foreign countries' armed forces (beyond the United States).

This revision is an important change from the previous regional contingency legislation that limited Japan's logistical support to the United States. Now, at least legally and theoretically, Japan is able to work not only with the United States but also with South Korea, Australia, and ASEAN countries. Of most critical importance is logistical cooperation between Japan and South Korea, or even trilaterally involving the United States, in case of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula.

Category one, which pertains to the right to collective self-defense, gives rise to more complex issues. According to the revised "three conditions for the use of force for self-defense," as seen above, the first condition now allows Japan to exercise at most 50% of what is justified by the UN Charter—i.e., situations where Japan's survival is directly threatened. Regarding a Korean Peninsula contingency, such an event would clearly be interpreted as a threat to Japan's survival. With this new legislation, therefore, at least legally speaking, Japan would be able to fight side-by-side with the United States and South Korea in the unwanted event of a military conflict on the peninsula. In reality, politically and otherwise, however, it is hard to imagine that such military cooperation, involving Japan's actual use of force, would be realized even between Japan and the United States, let alone between Japan and South Korea or trilaterally.

It should be clear, therefore, that traditional security cooperation in a trilateral context—one that would involve the actual use of force by the Japan Self-Defense Forces—while now possible legally, will not happen in the foreseeable future. It is important, however, to recognize that in an actual crisis scenario this is an option that exists if indeed South Korea and the United States want assistance.

In reality, therefore, the task of trilateral cooperation involving category two of the new security legislation—situations of important influence—should be given more attention. Examples would include logistical support activities by Japanese Self-Defense Forces for U.S. and South Korean forces such as provision of food, fuel, and communications equipment. The United States and Japan have started to revise the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) on the basis of the new security legislation. Involving South Korea in this arrangement, however, seems politically unrealistic for some time to come, even though this is perfectly logical and rational from an operational perspective in the event of an emergency on the Korean peninsula. One should be aware, however, that in a real crisis situation Japan's unwillingness to use its full potential under the new security legislation would pose a bigger problem, quite contrary to typical South Korean concerns.

Security cooperation between Japan, South Korea, and Australia

Category three of Japan's new security legislation concerns Japan's international peace cooperation activities, such as UN peacekeeping operations. In this area, too, the scope of Japanese activities and the range of cooperation with foreign countries engaging in the same missions are expanded by the new security legislation. In essence, this means that Japan has

come closer to the international standard accepted and implemented by “normal” actors actively engaging in nontraditional security cooperation, such as Canada, Australia, and South Korea.

It then follows that the critical task for Japan now and ahead is to match its strategy explicitly with “middle power internationalism” amply demonstrated by its actual behavior throughout much of the postwar period.¹¹ The virtue of a “middle power” strategy is internationalism, where cooperation with like-minded countries toward strengthening a liberal and open international order is the key to any aspect of strategy. Here, the three critical countries capable of developing such security cooperation are Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

The “Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation,” signed in March 2007, is an embodiment of such nontraditional security cooperation between middle powers. The agreed areas of security cooperation in the declaration are relevant primarily for human security, including law enforcement for combating transnational crime, counter-terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation, peace operations, humanitarian relief operations, and contingency planning for pandemics.¹² On the basis of this joint security declaration, Japan and Australia signed the Japan-Australia Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in May 2010, enabling the militaries of both countries to cooperate by reciprocally providing supplies and services. This was indeed a historic achievement in the postwar history of Japanese security policy, setting the legal framework for the JSDF to cooperate with a foreign country other than the United States for the first time.

South Korea and Australia also signed a similar, but much more comprehensive, agreement in 2009, titled the “Joint Statement on Enhanced Global and Security Cooperation between Australia and the Republic of Korea.” There is no reason to believe that a similar agreement cannot be emulated between Tokyo and Seoul. In fact, at the end of the Lee Myungbak government in the first half of 2012, Tokyo and Seoul actually completed negotiations on the General Security of Military Information Act (GSOMIA), whose signing was postponed for political reasons. At that time, the bilateral ACSA was also almost complete. If Japan and South Korea should be able to revive negotiations over the bilateral ACSA and sign it, let alone the already completed GSOMIA, a new horizon for trilateralizing nontraditional security cooperation among Japan, South Korea, and Australia would be opened up.

Due to the importance of vested interests in the post–World War II liberal international order, as well as the magnitude of uncertainties associated with the rise of China, the choice for Japan, South Korea, and Australia has been and is likely to remain for the foreseeable future how to maintain a strong security relationship with the United States. The three countries, however, share interests in not destabilizing bilateral relations with China for two fundamental reasons.

First, an ultimate strategic clash between the United States and China, if it were to actually happen, would deprive the three countries of freedom of decision as well as action. In such an event, the choice for us should be nothing other than working closely with the United States as its allies. Second, there are many issues and areas where cooperation with China is

¹¹ Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008)

¹² <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0703.html>

important for the national interests of middle powers as well as for regional stability. These include maintaining a prosperous economic order and stable economic relations with China and involving China in regional institutions for trade, investment, financial, and other functional cooperation. In the short to medium term, middle-power cooperation is the three countries' survival strategy, and in the long run it should strengthen the common ground on which Chinese neighbors coexist with a strong (or, alternatively, a disorderly) China.

A natural field for such nontraditional, middle-power cooperation among Japan, South Korea, and Australia should be Southeast Asia.

Working with and involving ASEAN

ASEAN is in the process of finalizing community building efforts in three areas: an economic community, a political-security community, and a social-cultural community. Although the limitations of the "ASEAN way" in constructing multilateral cooperation in East Asia have long been highlighted, the fact remains that ASEAN is still the sole case of successful institution-building for the promotion of multilateral cooperation in the region. In conceptualizing the logic and the way with which to develop cooperation among Japan, South Korea, Australia, and ASEAN, Japan's experiences in developing functional and nontraditional security cooperation would provide rich grounds.

Indeed, ASEAN has marched a long way toward building regional institutions that can promote cooperation and a sense of community. This is all the more remarkable given the region's history of European colonial rule, Japanese military aggression, and a series of crises and conflict among its member states, mostly if not exclusively involving the "CLMV" countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Initially, the process of integration was largely top-down, initiated by the governments and elites of the member states. The process, however, has now reached the stage where further regional integration, to the extent of ASEAN aspiring for a regional community, should and could be conceptualized and led as a bottom-up process with the principle of a people-centered approach.¹³

¹³ Such was the key concept that emerged out of the ASEAN-Japan joint study group, initiated in 2010 and launched in 2012 by ASEAN's secretariat. It was comprised of scholars from ASEAN member states and Japan, who looked into the theme of "ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership in ASEAN Community Building." The study project, funded by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and approved by all the governments of member states of ASEAN, was supervised by Jusuf Wanandi, co-founder of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, and Hitoshi Tanaka, senior fellow of the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) in Tokyo. It was also coordinated by Rizal Sukma of CSIS and myself. The first phase of the study was conducted from September 2012 to July 2013, producing its results in 2013, and the second phase was convened in June 2013 to look into the ASEAN-Japan strategic partnership in East Asia and in global governance, for which the outcome came out in 2015. See Rizal Sukma and Yoshihide Soeya, eds., *Beyond 2015: ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership for Democracy, Peace, and Prosperity in Southeast Asia* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2013), available at <http://www.jcie.org/japan/j/pdf/pub/publst/1451/full%20report.pdf>; Rizal Sukma and Yoshihide Soeya, eds., *Navigating Change: ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership in East Asia and in Global Governance* (Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2015), available at http://www.jcie.or.jp/japan/pub/publst/1461/full_report.pdf.

ASEAN's regional role can be summarized as that of an initiator of regional integration with explicit emphasis on the importance of people-based agenda setting and integration processes. This focus should be important in order to highlight the strength of ASEAN, whose flipside is the inability or unsuitability of the past and present achievements of ASEAN to influence issues in the domain of traditional security and politics, involving shifting power balance between Japan and China in East Asia and between the United States and China in the wider Asia-Indo-Pacific context. Analytically, this means that we should explicitly be aware of differences between these two levels of analysis in assessing ASEAN's regional role and the implications of engagement by Japan, South Korea, and Australia.

As for the political-security community, ASEAN realizes that it cannot be a relevant pole in the traditional balance of power game. In the present context, worries about Chinese aggressive behaviors are increasing, but ASEAN still cannot antagonize China explicitly. There remains some ambivalence among some ASEAN member states as to the roles of the United States and Japan, which could destabilize relations with China and by extension stability in Southeast Asia. The bottom line of Japan's cooperation with ASEAN, therefore, is to consolidate the foundation of a regional security order by strengthening internationally acceptable rules and norms, such as rule of law and non-use of force to settle political differences. A people-centered concept and approach is also critical for promoting human security, democracy and human rights. Nontraditional security is a natural field of cooperation, including disaster relief, transnational crimes, counter-terrorism, cyber security, peacekeeping, and preventive diplomacy. As to maritime security and defense cooperation, cooperation between Japan and ASEAN is evolving in specific cases, but not necessarily in a systematic way. Official dialogues involving between military delegations are also expanding.

In sum, Japan stands in an effective position for engaging ASEAN to promote prosperity and stability in a wider regional context, where eventually cooperation among Japan, South Korea, and Australia should be developed. In the domain of traditional security Japan sustains the military presence of the United States through the alliance framework, which is the ultimate anchor of regional stability. In the recent security legislation, somewhat proactive participation by Japan in U.S. activities have also become at least legally feasible, while calculations of political will remains a separate issue in domestic politics.

Simultaneously, Japanese assistance in capacity-building for ASEAN countries has also been developing rapidly. This aspect of Japanese involvement may be politically motivated in Japanese domestic politics by a sense of rivalry vis-à-vis China, but it is important to recognize that Japanese engagement is more relevant for ASEAN's community building efforts rather than for countering Chinese influence. The same applies to the domains of economic and socio-cultural communities. Ultimately, the goal in ASEAN-Japan cooperation is to strengthen ASEAN's resilience, which, after all, is an important asset in regional stability. There is no reason to believe that South Korea and Australia cannot join Japan in promoting truly region-wide security cooperation, which should help consolidate a robust infrastructure for a new regional order in East Asia.

Conclusion

Japan has had an image problem, particularly in Northeast Asia, that has prevented many observers from appreciating the real strengths of its *de facto* middle power strategy. In fact, Japan has been using its financial and diplomatic resources in many areas. This includes participation in various activities of the United Nations and other global institutions to address nuclear and conventional nonproliferation, economic governance, social welfare and education, poverty reduction, capacity-building, and more recently human security. These are natural and important areas of cooperation among Japan, South Korea, Australia, and ASEAN.

This liberal and internationalist aspect of Japanese strategy is a natural outcome of the A9A framework. This regime constrains Japan's unilateral military options, rendering its regional military role, except in cases of immediate self-defense, relevant only under the framework of its alliance with the United States. At the same time, however, the A9A regime also places somewhat fundamental constraints on Japan's active participation in nontraditional security cooperation, such as international peacekeeping operations. This has been an actual limitation on security cooperation between Japan and Australia for several years. Japan's ability to deliver meaningful security cooperation with Australia has often fallen short of Australian expectations. In the domain of traditional security as well, Japan is likely to underperform relative to its newly allowed potential despite the recent security legislation. For example, this includes cooperation with the United States and South Korea in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula.

All of this makes the case for redefining the issue of revising Article 9 of the Japanese constitution on the grounds of future-oriented liberal internationalism, rather than a sense of trauma about the loss of "autonomy" in the postwar regime. In the A9A regime, Japan's history in the Second World War is closely and inseparably tied with Article 9 as two sides of the same coin. Without facing this history squarely in a way acceptable to the international community, let alone to the United States, changing Article 9 remains impossible. This is not because of the opposition of China or South Korea, nor Japanese liberals. This is an inherent logic of the A9A regime. In order to go beyond the postwar framework, liberal internationalism should therefore provide the key philosophy with which to redefine the issue of constitutional revision. For Japan to do this, an alternative, future-oriented strategy must be conceptualized and debated before anything else.