

Trilateral Workshop on “Bilateral Alliance Politics and Intra-spoke Relations in Asia”

September 15-16, 2011 , Keio University, Tokyo

Co-sponsored by

The Center for Contemporary Korean Studies, Keio University, and
The ANU-MacArthur Asia Security Initiative Partnership, with the collaboration of
The Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University



Program Schedule

Thursday, 15 September, 2011

9:15 Meet in the Lobby of the Celestine Hotel (Australian and Korean participants)

9:30 - 9:45 Registration

9:45 - 10:00 Welcome and Introduction

Yoshihide Soeya, Keio University

William Tow, Australian National University

Cheolhee Park, Seoul National University

10:00 -11:45 Session 1: “Cross-Comparing Existing Bilateral Relationships with the U.S.: Relating Traditional Alliances to New Challenges”

Chair: William Tow

Presenters:

Ken Jimbo (Keio University), “Japan-U.S. Alliance: Adjusting to the Power Shift in Asia”

Beomcheol Shin (KIDA), “ROK-U.S. Alliance: Relating Traditional Alliance to New Challenges”

Hugh White (ANU) on “the Australia-U.S. Alliance”

Discussant: Jeffrey McCausland (U.S. Army War College)

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:15 – 15:00 Session 2: “From Bilateralism to Minilateralism”

Chair: Yoshihide Soeya

Presenters:

Tomohiko Satake (NIDS), “TSD as an Instrument to Provide a Public Good”

Cheolhee Park (SNU), “Minilateralism in East Asia under the U.S. Security Hegemony”

William Tow and David Envall (ANU), “Realising ‘Convergent Security’ Through the Back Door?”

Discussant: Douglas Stuart (Dickinson College)

15:00-15:30 – Tea Break

15:30 – 17:00 Session 3: “Comparing Intra-Spoke Security Relations”

Chair: Cheolhee Park

Yusuke Ishihara (NIDS), “Comparing Japan-Australia-U.S. and Japan-ROK-U.S. Triangles”

Seongho Sheen (SNU), “ROK-Australian Cooperation: Forging a ‘Hot’ Partnership?”

Rikki Kersten (ANU), “Australia-Japan Security Relations: Why US and Why Now”

Discussant: David Lai (U.S. Army War College)

19:00 – Reception at the Residence of the Australian Ambassador

Friday, 16 September, 2011

9:00 Meet in the Lobby of the Celestine Hotel (Australian and Korean participants)

9:15-9:30 – Coffee

9:30-11:15 Session 4: “The China Factor and ‘Middle Power’ Responses: Alliance Management and Regional Security Cooperation”

Chair: John Garofano (U.S. Naval War College)

Yoshihide Soeya (Keio University), “Shifting U.S.-China Relations and Japan’s Response”

Heungkyu Kim (Seongshin Women's University), “Strategic Stability and Middle-Power Cooperation in Northeast Asia: A Korean Perspective”

Brendan Taylor (ANU), “Japan, South Korea, Australia: Partners in Asia?”

Discussant: Russell Trood (ANU)

11:15-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:30: Session 5: Concluding Discussions and Future Agenda

Co-Chairs: Yoshihide Soeya and William Tow

12:30-13:30: Lunch and farewell

List of Participants

Australia and the USA

- 1 Prof. William Tow (The Australian National University)
- 2 Prof. Rikki Kersten (The Australian National University)
- 3 Prof. Hugh White (The Australian National University)
- 4 Dr. Brendan Taylor (The Australian National University)
- 5 Dr. David Envall (The Australian National University)
- 6 Dr. Russell Trood (The Australian National University, Former Senator)
- 7 Prof. Douglas Stuart (Dickinson College)
- 8 Dr. David Lai (Strategic Studies Institute, United States, Army War College)
- 9 Prof. Jeffrey McCausland (Strategic Studies Institute, United States, Army War College)
- 10 Dr. John Garofano (U.S. Naval War College)
- 11 Ms. Kana Moy (The Australian National University)

Korea

1. Prof. Cheolhee Park (GSIS, Seoul National University)
2. Prof. Seongho Sheen (GSIS, Seoul National University)
3. Prof. Heungkyu Kim (Seongshin Women's University)
4. Dr. Beomcheol Shin (KIDA, Former assistant to Defense Minister)

Japan

- 1 Prof. Yoshihide Soeya (Keio University)
- 2 Prof. Ken Jimbo (Keio University)
- 3 Dr. Tomohiko Satake (National Institute for Defense Studies)
- 4 Mr. Yusuke Ishihara (National Institute for Defense Studies)

Observers

1. Mr. Richard Andrews (Minister-Counsellor, Australian Embassy)
2. Mr. Peter Roberts (Counsellor, Australian Embassy)
3. Dr. Lori Snowden (First Secretary, Australian Embassy)
4. Mr. Tomm Ben-David (Second Secretary, Australian Embassy)
5. Mr. Osamu Izawa (Director, National Security Policy Division, Foreign Policy Bureau MOFA)
6. Mr. Hitoshi Kozaki (Oceania Division, Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, MOFA)

Rapporteur

- Dr. Seunghyok Lee (University of Toronto)

Summary and Policy Recommendations

Trilateral Workshop on “Bilateral Alliance Politics and Intra-spoke Relations in Asia”

Postwar security politics in the Asia-Pacific region has featured the United States projecting dominant geopolitical influence through its military commitments and diplomatic support for key bilateral allies. In recent years, American security strategists are increasingly concerned with the management of relations with a rising China and North Korean contingencies. Facing these changing circumstances, the three “middle power” states in the Asia-Pacific – Japan, Australia, and South Korea – are moving closer toward achieving security cooperation among themselves while maintaining close alliances with the U.S. The co-existence of bilateral and multilateral security politics in the region is characterized by some as “convergent security” or “variegated patchwork.” This workshop anticipates that the common experience of the three nations working within the U.S. regional security framework will facilitate their direct collaboration in a more complex and demanding contemporary regional security environment.

Session 1: “Cross-Comparing Existing Bilateral Relationships with the U.S.: Relating Traditional Alliances to New Challenges”

Ken Jimbo (Keio University): “Japan-U.S. Alliance: Adjusting to the Power Shift in Asia”

Japan-U.S. alliance, as a “hub-spoke” collaboration, has provided three functions in the post-Cold War period: 1) America’s “extended deterrence” against North Korea and the maintenance of regional status quo against China; 2) Non-traditional security deterrence in anti-terrorism, counter-proliferation measures, WMD, PSI, maritime security, energy, and environment; 3) Promotion of security among other American allies in the region.

These functions are currently being challenged by the rise of China and the WMD of North Korea. North Korea, with its new nuclear capability, has provoked South Korea and Japan to cause the failure in the extended deterrence of the United States, but it has so far succeeded in “escalation control.” Concerning China, its increasing military capability has facilitated concerns in the region that it is pursuing to be a “game changer.”

Under the circumstances, “spoke to spoke” collaborations among American allies, such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia, appear to be tilting toward ensuring continued American engagement in the region. In order to maintain the American presence inside the regional “chain,” coordination among the spokes to enhance their regional supporting functions for the U.S. forces is essential. Moreover, the capability of the Japanese Self

Defense Forces (SDF), with its new “dynamic deterrence” design for projecting its assets abroad to support American operations, must be improved as well.

Beomcheol Shin (KIDA): “ROK-U.S. Alliance: Relating Traditional Alliance to New Challenges”

The Republic of Korea (ROK)-U.S. alliance has contributed to overcoming the catastrophe inflicted during the Korean War and modernizing the war-torn nation, but it has not always been a smooth process. It is because of the changing perception of North Korea’s threats between these two allies and South Korean public demand for a more independent voice in accordance with its increased national power. The bilateral relation, however, never got to the point of undermining the fundamental basis of the alliance, and it greatly improved after President Lee Myong-bak took office in 2008.

While the South Korean government still has to meet both domestic demand that the alliance must be more “equal,” and external pressure from the U.S. that it contribute more in cost-sharing, more fundamental challenge for the alliance is arising from the views about China and North Korean threats. South Korea recognizes the potential threats from China, but it does not address the China issue on its own. Toward the North, South Korea’s recent “proactive deterrence” design is met with caution in the U.S., as it could escalate regional tension. Although there are such areas of disagreements in the bilateral relations, it must be noted that these are not a serious conflict of ideas undermining the solid basis of the alliance.

Hugh White (The Australian National University): “The Australia-U.S. Alliance”

The key issue for the U.S. alliances in the region is to cope with contested U.S. primacy by the rise of China. At present, natural expectation is that it will draw the alliances together into a structure that resembles a NATO-style multilateral alliance against the common threat.

This scenario, however, albeit plausible, is far from inevitable. China is not as threatening to its neighbors as the Soviet Union had been, and the interests of the U.S. and its regional allies are not as aligned as that of the Western allies in the Cold War. Concerning Australia, both its physical distance and economic dependence to China makes it take a lukewarm stance to align itself against China. Australia must avoid making a choice between American primacy against China, or Chinese supremacy with the U.S. leaving Asia. The real choice for Australia is to avoid the emergence of a NATO-type alliance as a “self-fulfilling prophesy,” and to pursue a “third way” that will maximize the U.S. role in the region while minimizing regional competition and the risk of conflict.

Discussion

Discussion started with the nature of the “Chinese threat.” Some panel members asserted that China and the USSR are different, as China has been linked economically with the United States and it has not actively sought to weaken America’s alliances with its neighbors. It is, therefore, necessary for the regional states to concede to China’s new leadership status as a necessary fact. Others voiced their concerns that strategic competition between the two superpowers is already unfolding despite the interdependence, and that we must not overlook the fact that interdependence does not guarantee the avoidance of conflict, although it surely raises the cost and the risk of strategic competition.

The second topic of the discussion concerned the status of Japan and South Korea’s alliances with the United States, and the true motive of the two new “deterrence” strategies recently declared by Japan and South Korea. In Japan, the Okinawa issue (concerning the U.S. bases on the island) is still complicated and deeply rooted, but there has been a growing confidence in the SDF and in the bilateral security relations with the U.S. especially after the Tohoku Earthquake. Japan’s new “dynamic deterrence” positions the role of the SDF at the core. Although Japan will continue to rely on the alliance in large scale contingencies, the new strategic design asserts that the SDF must be sufficient to deter low-level situations, thus complementing the alliance at operational level. In the case of South Korea, the bilateral alliance with the U.S. is also still strong, as more Koreans are raising concerns about China as a future threat. Finally, South Korea’s new “proactive deterrence” is a move from a defensive deterrence by “denial” to the one by “punishment.”

Session 2: “From Bilateralism to Minilateralism”

Tomohiko Satake (NIDS): “TSD as an Instrument to Provide a Public Good”

Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between the U.S., Japan, and Australia has promoted security cooperation between the three countries. The U.S. has called for its regional allies’ greater burden-sharing for America’s provision of credible extended deterrence and continuous military presence in the region – a “public good” for the maintenance of regional security - and TSD has become one of the most successfully institutionalized “mini-lateralism” for both Tokyo and Canberra to answer the U.S. demand.

TSD can work as the best instrument to provide public good in the Asia-Pacific, as neither Japan nor Australia have a will, as well as capacity, to independently confront the rising China due to their normative and material constraints. Also, the two states contributing to the provision of the public good in less controversial low-key issues such as peacekeeping operations and humanitarian aid/disaster relief within the framework of the

TSD can indirectly check or balance China by keeping the U.S. strategic engagement in the region.

Cheolhee Park (Seoul National University): “Minilateralism in East Asia under the U.S. Security Hegemony”

From 2008, the United States has shifted its global strategy focus from particular regional threats (such as China and North Korea) to the maintenance of broader international security. Under this shift, regional security of the Asia-Pacific is also transforming itself into more integrated regional “mini-lateral” ties among the “spokes” while traditional bilateral alliances with the United States (“hub”) are still maintained. Under this American-led “Hub and Spokes System,” South Korea and Japan has worked as a virtual ally without a formal security tie, as the U.S. demand for more burden and responsibility sharing by its allies has grown.

“Mini-lateralism” we are currently developing in the region must not go against already-existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks. And mini-lateral ties must be extended to areas where imminent benefits are not secured, such as in the provision of public goods. Finally, dividing sides as “we versus China” and building a Cold War style containment wall targeting a specific country must be avoided, since it is still too early to tell whether China – a beneficiary of the current U.S.-led liberal global order - is a serious challenger and revisionist to the status quo of the region.

William Tow and Doctor David Envall (The Australian National University): “Realising ‘Convergent Security’ Through the Back Door?”

Regional multilateral frameworks such as ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) are examples of breathing space needed by the states of the Asia-Pacific and the U.S. for pursuing a regional security order predicated on multilateral norms, but temporarily underwritten by a credible, American-led bilateral security network. Such approach has been labeled as “convergent security.” The current situation in the Asia-Pacific is, therefore, characterized by both the U.S. and its allies searching for more judicious approaches to new regional order-building in a subtle process of concurrent bilateral-multilateral coexistence.

At this crucial juncture, what we need is a transparent and an open geopolitical approach – a “front door” approach - for implementing our regional order-building; what we must avoid is “containment through the back door,” in the guise of “convergent security” - as it will be picked up by China soon one way or another.

Discussion

The main topic of the discussion for this session concerned the extent to which the three middle powers in the Asia-Pacific are willing to strengthen their intra-spoke, mini-lateral cooperation. While some panel members suggested that the trilateral relation should focus on ad hoc cooperation rather than formally institutionalizing the structure, others pointed out that the intra-spoke relation is already beyond that stage.

In the end, the consensus of the panel was that although the trilateral, mini-lateralism at this point is largely targeted toward non-traditional, small-scale contingencies without a concrete institutionalization of the intra-spoke relations, it could eventually develop into a structure replacing the bilateral alliances with the U.S. for the management of conventional contingencies. However, the three spokes will first have to agree on coherent topics/themes for their cooperation. For example, they will have to decide whether the mini-lateral cooperation will prioritize the issue of North Korea, or the broader theme of providing regional public good. In the case of the latter, it should be also clear to China that the trilateral mini-lateralism does not necessarily constitute a threat to itself.

Session 3: “Comparing Intra-Spoke Security Relations”

Yusuke Ishihara (NIDS): “Comparing Japan-Australia-U.S. and Japan-ROK-U.S. Triangles”

Japan-US-Australia and Japan-ROK-US triangles share identical strategic rationale in that they support the U.S. strategic engagement in Asia. The two trilateral partnerships also emphasize cooperation in non-traditional security areas. However, we must not overlook the fact that beneath these similarities are also some differing logics at work.

The Japan-Australia-US cooperation is centered on non-traditional security areas as well as conventional defense cooperation. Through them, both Japan and Australia support U.S. strategic engagement in the Asia-Pacific and contribute to the burden-sharing. In addition, for Australia, it is a crucial engagement strategy vis-à-vis Japan, in that it helps to assure Japan of the existence of reliable regional ally (thus preventing its rash remilitarization), and deter China.

Compared to Japan-US-Australia, China factor plays a different role in the Japan-Korea-US trilateralism, mainly because of the ROK’s sensitivity. Moreover, unlike Australia, ROK is also sensitive to Japan taking larger security roles in the region. Therefore, cooperation on agenda other than North Korea, and in non-traditional security areas such as humanitarian aid and disaster relief, and peacekeeping outside the Asia-Pacific, may be of help to achieve greater trust in Japan-Korea-US relations.

Seongho Sheen (Seoul National University): “ROK-Australian Cooperation: Forging a ‘Hot’ Partnership?”

Korea and Australia are genuine middle powers in the Asia-Pacific with a long list of similarities in economy, defense spending, political structure, and the alliance ties with the United States. But since they have not shared any substantial threat perception, the bilateral relations has been long characterized as “economically hot” but “politically cool.” At this point, Korea is expanding its role as a contributor to regional and global peace and security, and Australia figures prominently in Korea’s initiatives.

Close connection between ROK and Australia in economic sphere can surely be replicated in military sector. In contrast to Japan, cooperation between Korea and Australia does not involve any burden of history; for Korea, Australia makes an ideal partner as a former ally during the Korean War. In addition, the two states are free from domestic legal barriers for taking part in global military roles, and they also share a more balanced strategic interest with regard to the rise of China, compared to Japan. The two countries, therefore, could play positive roles in mitigating power rivalry and tension between China and Japan-US alliances.

Rikki Kersten (The Australian National Univeristy): “Australia-Japan Security Relations: Why US and Why Now”

Japan’s decision to take a more proactive security policy is being driven by concerns over “the deterioration of international public goods” by the rise of China. And the combination of this threat perception, along with the view that the U.S. is in relative decline, has provided the momentum to the enhancement of security relations between Japan and Australia.

The bilateral security relationship is considered by many as a joint hedging strategy by the two U.S. allies. They desire to keep the U.S. engaged, while addressing potential gaps in security contingencies that cannot be dealt with in traditional bilateral alliance system. While the two countries emphasize that their partnership is natural as they have “shared values,” it is a shared strategic outlook that is driving them toward a deeper security relationship.

And while the China factor is the main driving force behind the Japan-Australia security relations, it is not, however, in Australia’s national interest to support crude “China containment;” Australia-Japan security relationship should rather serve its primary purpose as a signal to China that its possible challenge to U.S. dominance will not be easy.

Discussion

The main theme of the discussion for this session was the question of whether China actually possesses any alternative regional order to offer to the Asia-Pacific. The panel members agreed that since China does not, it is, therefore, not seeking to change the existing order even if it does not endorse clear U.S. hegemony in the region.

The question then shifted to whether the three middle powers then have any alternative order that could invite China. The consensus of the panel was that the mini-lateral cooperation was not geared toward offering any alternative to the U.S. leadership, but in fact toward reinforcing it. Although the trilateral cooperation does constitute a type of “contingency plan” in case the U.S. cannot provide its allies necessary protection, the primary goal of the mini-lateralism, nevertheless, is to keep the U.S. engaged in the Asia-Pacific, rather than coming up with an alternative grand strategy.

Session 4: “The China Factor and ‘Middle Power’ Responses: Alliance Management and Regional Security Cooperation”

Yoshihide Soeya (Keio University): “Shifting U.S.-China Relations and Japan’s Response”

The current regional momentum caused by the rise of China has created a clash between the U.S.-led liberal international order on one hand, and the increasing self-assertion against these premises by China on the other. Under this trend, two future scenarios are plausible. One is a power transition where the rise of China would lead to the emergence of a China-centered order; another is a power shift in which China attempts to modify the existing rules and institutional arrangement from within. China’s behavior indicates that its rise entails elements of both of these trends.

For Japan, South Korea, and Australia, the challenge is to encourage the future course of China toward the second trend while firmly dealing with its unilateralism backed by its military might in the first scenario. It is crucial that the three “middle-power” countries first consolidate security relations both with the United States and among themselves as part of the hedging strategy in the midst of the Chinese assertiveness. Secondly, they need to build networks of functional regional cooperation that include China as a critical engine of growth as well as complex transformation of the regional order. Finally, in the worst case where deterrence against Chinese unilateralism does not bear fruit, the three middle powers should cooperatively engage in a persistent and patient “civil society strategy” in order to persuade Chinese public to say “no” to a collision course with the rest of the world.

Heungkyu Kim (Sungshin Women’s University): “Strategic Stability and Middle-Power Cooperation in Northeast Asia: A Korean Perspective”

Although the U.S. is currently seeking “strategic stability” with China, we must first question whether the concept of strategic stability is deciphered in a same manner between the two countries. While the American notion of “strategic” is mainly military, the Chinese concept is comprehensive and political. This difference could bring a clash of political objectives between the two superpowers. Although China is not likely to challenge the American strategic stability as long as it pursues a gradual adjustment of its international status vis-à-vis the U.S., the long-term future prospect is uncertain.

What we must avoid at this complex security environment is to establish future strategy without coordinating with China. Regional players must establish institutions to promote issue-based, mini- and multi-lateral dialogues in order to avoid bi-polarization of the regional security. In this regard, the three middle-powers can play a crucial role of helping the U.S. and China reaching a strategic compromise.

Brendan Taylor (The Australian National University): “Japan, South Korea, Australia: Partners in Asia?”

In 1967, the late ANU Professor J.D.B. Miller examined the prospects for partnership between Japan, India, and Australia by laying out his five “conditions for cooperation.” How would the current regional dynamics between Japan, Korea, and Australia measure up to these same conditions?

First, although the three countries share “similarity of cultural background” as democracies, the commonalities do not run deep outside political realm. Second, economic disparities between Japan, South Korea and Australia are not significant, and all three share the similarity of highly depending on the Chinese economy. Third, in the field of “habits of association,” Japan-Australia bilateral cooperation appears to be stronger than the other two sides of the triangle, although the overall security collaboration involving all three is subtly intensifying. Fourth, all three have become increasingly preoccupied with China’s rise in the “sense of common danger,” but it is also apparent that Tokyo, Seoul, and Canberra each view the “threat” in different ways. Finally, the three countries are increasingly getting “power pressure” from the United States, as Washington expects the inter-spoke collaboration between its alliance partners to result in their increasing share of American burden.

The result of the analysis is somewhat mixed, but the contemporary outlook for greater convergence between Japan, South Korea and Australia is still not as dire as it was in the case of Japan, Australia, and India. But the most significant obstacles for developing

deeper security relations at present are the still deep-seated historical tensions between Japan and South Korea, as well as different perceptions regarding the potential threat posed by the rising China.

Discussion

The session returned to the same question that was raised in the beginning of the workshop, that concerning the nature of the “China threat.” Since it is apparent that China is indeed pursuing to change its role within the existing security order of the Asia-Pacific, the question that cannot be avoided is the extent to which the regional players are willing to accept China’s intention. The panel members agreed that although the United States and its regional allies must carefully manage China’s intention of expanding its role within the current system, they must cooperate to send a clear message that but China will not get a “free-hand ticket.”

The participants also agreed that although mini-lateral cooperation at this point is mainly focused on non-traditional domain, it will eventually be linked to traditional security area. In order to prepare for this eventuality, the trilateral cooperation could include drafting an “operating principle” in order to persuade the United States’ continuous engagement.

Session 5: Concluding Discussions and Future Agenda

The first trilateral workshop showed that traditional security issues such as burden-sharing, extended deterrence, etc., are still very relevant in the Asia-Pacific region. The sessions also offered the Asia-Pacific’s viewpoint to the United States on how Washington is perceived by its allies in the new strategic environment. While the main theme of all the sessions was to discuss how Japan, Australia, and South Korea could work together under the United States’ security umbrella in the new regional environment characterized by the rise of China, it was reasonable and prudent that “containment” was not proposed throughout the workshop.

The participants suggested that the following points should be further discussed in the next workshop. First, the true “value” of this workshop must be clarified. In other words, we must be clear of the demand for such mini-lateralism, as it must be the basis of our analytical justification. Second, future discussions must clarify the functional definitions of a number of crucial terminologies such as “order,” “mini-,” and “spoke.” Third, the issue of North Korea - and not only China - must be incorporated in more detail. Finally, the

influence of domestic public opinion and other societal factors in facilitating regional cooperation (or conflict) should be considered.