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# Japan's Foreign Policy and East Asian Regionalism

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## **Introduction**

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the rise of new powers seems to augur the end of the unipolar system that has persisted since the end of the Cold War. Although undoubtedly a global phenomenon, in no region is this change more manifest than East Asia. Brisk economic growth, a steady redistribution of power, and the need for regional cooperation are issues of increasing global importance.

As a leading power in East Asia, Japan's approach toward regionalism has substantial bearing on cooperation and community-building in the region. When the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) defeated the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in August 2009, it marked the dawn of a new era in Japanese politics and foreign policy. This is particularly true with regard to Japan's relations with its neighbors. Japanese prime minister Yukio Hatoyama has called on Japan to reinvigorate its diplomacy toward East Asia and champion regional cooperation.

This paper will present an overview of Japan's past policies toward East Asia, discuss its contributions to regionalism, and delineate Japan's vision for the region's future.

## **Part One: Origins**

In order to appropriately contextualize contemporary policy, it may prove instructive to briefly review the origins of Japan's approach toward East Asia.

After formally joining the United Nations (UN) in 1956, Japan centered its foreign policy on three basic principles: UN-centered diplomacy, cooperation with the free world, and preservation of Japan's identity as an Asian nation. During the first few years of the postwar era, Japan was preoccupied with reconstruction and had limited resources to expend on foreign policy. This reality, coupled with worsening superpower rivalry on the larger world stage, led Japanese leaders to downgrade the first principle, pursue closer security ties with the United States, and firmly align Japan with the West. Although domestic priorities initially prevented Japan from paying sufficient attention to the third principle, throughout the 1950s Japan actively sought war reparations agreements with East Asian nations who had suffered as a result of its past actions. Rapid economic growth throughout this period, together with normalized diplomatic relations with Seoul (1965) and Beijing (1972), set the stage for the beginning of a new era of Japanese engagement with its neighbors.

In 1976, Japan reached a watershed moment in its history. Not only did Japan issue its final war reparations check—thereby effectively severing the direct link between its foreign policy and its actions during World War II—it also became a member of the Group of Seven (G7). Japan's status as the only non-Western member of the G7 strengthened its identity as an Asian nation and reinvigorated its diplomacy toward East Asia.

Soon after, Japan experienced a landmark shift in its relations with its neighbors. Former Japanese prime minister Takeo Fukuda catalyzed the change in 1977, when he delivered a speech articulating what

later became known as the “Fukuda Doctrine.” The speech was given during the prime minister’s tour of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and is best remembered for three principles that have since come to epitomize the core of Japan’s East Asia policy: (1) Japan would never become a military power and would work to promote peace and prosperity in Southeast Asia; (2) Japan would build relationships with governments in the region based on mutual trust; and (3) Japan would work cooperatively with ASEAN through an equal partnership to strengthen regional solidarity. This historic speech was the first clear articulation of Japan’s proactive, yet low-key approach to East Asia. Since then, Japan has played a leading role in East Asia to help combat financial crises, nuclear proliferation, human rights violations, terrorism, environmental degradation, and energy security.

Unfortunately, Japan’s efforts to take on a leadership role in the region are frequently frustrated by the “history issue.” For example, anti-Japanese sentiment emerges in China when Japanese officials visit Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine, which includes the remains of convicted war criminals from World War II. Over the past two decades Japanese leaders have issued a series of formal apologies about Japan’s actions during the 1930s and 1940s, including a [famous statement](#) by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. But the issue continues to complicate Japan’s diplomacy toward the region.

No discussion of Japan’s regional role would be complete without mentioning the U.S.-Japan alliance, which represents a core component of Japan’s policy toward East Asia. Since the 1990s—particularly in wake of the first North Korean nuclear crisis (1993–94) and the Taiwan Straits crisis (1996)—Japan and the United States have expanded the alliance’s mandate beyond mere defense of the Japanese archipelago to also include regional peace and stability. Generally speaking, this public good has been welcomed by other states in the region.

## **Part Two: Regionalism and Japan’s Contributions**

The topic of East Asia regionalism has attracted a considerable amount of attention in recent years. Multilateral dialogue and exchange in the region have expanded at an unprecedented rate since the early 1990s. Joint statements from ASEAN Plus Three meetings (in particular the 2005 [Kuala Lumpur Declaration](#)) and the East Asia Summit have made it clear that countries in the region share the objective of establishing an East Asian community. Subregionally, the [ASEAN Charter](#) came into force in December 2008 and ASEAN leaders have expressed a desire to form an ASEAN Community by 2015. The concept of regionalism has evolved from mere economic ties to include multilateral politics and security as well, including joint initiatives to tackle nuclear proliferation and infectious diseases. This trend illustrates the changing attitudes toward community-building in East Asia.

### *Japan’s Current Role in East Asia*

Although the low-key nature of its approach remains the same, Japan’s diplomacy toward East Asia has

become more active in recent years. Furthermore, the focus of Japan's East Asia policy is no longer limited to financial aid and economic cooperation; rather, it has expanded to include promoting multilateral cooperation on issues like sustainable growth and nuclear nonproliferation. Japanese leaders have expressed a desire to transcend the zero-sum paradigm that characterized interstate relations for much of the Cold War and instead promote multilateralism in the region on positive-sum, or win-win, terms.

Japanese leaders view regionalism as a positive development because a more stable and prosperous region directly serves Japan's security and economic interests. They have long sought to play a leadership role in the region—indeed, Japan undoubtedly has much to offer its neighbors, from technological know-how to logistical support for natural disaster relief—yet understood that historical sensitivities because of Japan's past actions have circumscribed its options. Within the framework of an inclusive and multilateral approach to regionalism, they believe that Japan would be better situated to exercise leadership in a nonthreatening manner.

The only circumstance under which Japan could conceivably withdraw its support for community-building efforts would be if its leaders judged that China was using regionalism as a pretext to surreptitiously acquire regional hegemony. Were this to occur, Japanese policymakers would most likely reexamine their approach to East Asia, possibly pursuing deeper ties with other nations in the region as a hedge against Chinese influence.

#### *Aid/Finance/Economics*

Given Japan's status as the leading economic power in East Asia, the Japanese foreign policy establishment has long considered it Japan's responsibility to promote the region's economic and human development through an influx of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and private-sector investment. As discussed in the previous section, overseas aid was the centerpiece of Japan's approach for the first several decades of the postwar era. Japan continues to support capacity-building in its less developed neighbors, increasing ODA to assist improvements in infrastructure and emphasizing the intellectual component of foreign aid.

Japan has also promoted efforts to shrink the vast economic disparities in the region and help the region's least developed countries achieve the [United Nations' Millennium Development Goals](#). For example, Japan recently initiated a program in the Mekong region—one of the least developed areas in East Asia—aimed at transforming it into a “Region of Hope and Development.” In a related vein, it offered an infusion of \$20 million to facilitate the distribution of goods in the East-West corridor between Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam as part of an effort to connect the landlocked countries of ASEAN with their more prosperous neighbors. Japan has also participated in several successful “intellectual ODA” programs in Vietnam and Laos.

Over the past two decades, Japan has been an active player in regional efforts to deepen financial and economic integration. For example, in order to maintain monetary stability in the region in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Japan's Ministry of Finance (MOF) proposed the creation of an Asian

Monetary Fund (AMF) and volunteered to be its main contributor. The abortive proposal was blocked by Western nations, in particular the United States, who saw it as a challenge to the authority of the International Monetary Fund. Chinese leaders were also unsupportive of the proposal, which they saw as an attempt by Japan to claim regional leadership. Eventually, MOF officials succeeded in convincing their Chinese counterparts to support regional financial cooperation with Japan and endorse the Chiang Mai Initiative (essentially a watered-down version of the original AMF proposal), the centerpiece of which was a multilateral currency swap arrangement. In the years since, Japan has emerged as a leader in the establishment of bilateral swap agreements, concluding them with South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, Indonesia, and Singapore.

In recent years, East Asia has seen a rapid proliferation of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, and intraregional trade levels are soaring. Japan has been a major part of this effort. In addition to being the region's staunchest advocate of a region-wide free trade agreement, it has concluded Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with a number of its neighbors, including Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as ASEAN. Bilateral EPA negotiations with South Korea, India, and Australia are currently underway.

Many of these efforts laid the groundwork for Japan's February 2009 commitment with China and South Korea to provide up to 80 percent of the capital necessary for an emergency currency fund in East Asia. Throughout the region, this commitment was widely seen as an example of growing regional solidarity, which many consider to be a direct outgrowth of regionalism over the past two decades. If past is prologue, the current financial crisis will deepen cooperation in the region in the years ahead, much as the Asian financial crisis did a decade ago.

It should be noted that despite remarkable progress in recent years, further financial and economic integration in East Asia is not inevitable. The process could be derailed by serious political disputes or military conflict. Nevertheless, the number of common interests among East Asian nations—e.g., shared vulnerability to financial contagion, market interdependence, and intraregional investment—does bode well for continued integration.

### *Politics/Security*

Until recently, regionalism in East Asia was essentially a financial and economic endeavor. The region's vast diversity was widely considered to be an insuperable obstacle to multilateral cooperation in sensitive areas, particularly the fields of politics and security. Although it has certainly proven easier to cooperate in financial and economic areas, recent years have also seen a remarkable number of positive developments in the political and security spheres. Two of the most significant political developments in East Asia over the past several years were a modus vivendi between Japan and China and the December 2008 landmark summit with Japan, China, and South Korea.

Beginning in the late 1990s, relations between Japan and China, the two most powerful nations in Asia,

took a dramatic turn for the worse. By the time relations had reached a postwar nadir in spring 2005, it was clear that the situation had become untenable and posed a serious obstacle to East Asian regionalism. But their neighbors began to express increasing levels of concern and Japanese and Chinese leaders came to realize that the dispute was in neither country's best interests, so in October 2006, regular summit meetings were restarted after a five-year hiatus. Significantly, the two sides agreed to establish a "strategic relationship of mutual benefit." Circumstances have improved over the past three years and Sino-Japanese relations are now basically stable. This is a development with positive implications for efforts to promote regionalism.

The reduction of tensions between Beijing and Tokyo created the conditions necessary for a historic summit with Japan, China, and South Korea in December 2008. This occasion marked the first-ever independent summit for East Asia's three largest economies. The meeting's [joint statement](#) called for the summit to "pave the way for a new era of tripartite partnership which will lead to the peace and sustainable development in the region." Needless to say, summit-level trilateral dialogue between these three powers, coupled with improved Sino-Japanese relations, bodes well for deepening cooperation and greater stability in Northeast Asia.

Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has become a regional leader in efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Not only has it twice hosted the Proliferation Security Initiative Maritime Interdiction Exercise, it has also hosted the Asian Senior-level Talks on Nonproliferation (ASTOP) five times since 2003. ASTOP brings together high-ranking officials from twelve Asian nations, Australia, and the United States to discuss nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the field of counter-piracy, Japan has provided financial support for the Information Sharing Center under the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia.

Since passing the International Peace Cooperation Law in 1992, which established a legal framework for Japan to send its Self-Defense Forces abroad to participate in international peacekeeping and relief operations, Japan has been involved in three UN peacekeeping operations in East Asia: Cambodia (1992–93), East Timor (1999–2000; 2002–2005), and Nepal (2007–present). Japan also recently launched a human resource development program to train experts in the field of peace-building, known as the Hiroshima Peacebuilders Center (HPC). The HPC admits thirty professionals—fifteen from Japan and fifteen from elsewhere in Asia—each year. After a two-year pilot phase, the Japanese government recently decided to continue the project and double its size.

In the field of disaster relief, the Japanese government has proposed the creation of a network between existing disaster relief organizations in Asia and the establishment of a mechanism to quickly coordinate multilateral operations in the event of a major crisis in the region, such as the 2004 tsunami and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. For example, former Prime Minister Fukuda recently called for a "Disaster Management and Infectious Disease Control Network in Asia" to tackle disaster relief and infectious disease.

### *The Environment and Sustainable Growth*

Japan has long been a global leader on environmental issues and in recent years has positioned itself to be *the* leader in the fight against global warming. In September 2009, Prime Minister Hatoyama made a [speech](#) to the UN Climate Change summit in which he pledged to cut Japan's greenhouse-gas emissions by 25 percent (from 1990 levels) by 2020 and proposed international mechanisms to provide technological and financial support to developing nations to assist them in the fight against global warming. Japan has also pursued multilateral initiatives like the Environmental Cooperation Initiative, whose objectives include creating an "Asia 3Rs Research and Information Network" to promote reducing, reusing, and recycling. Japan has provided more than \$2 billion to support capacity-building and tackle pollution in the region, and established a team of environmental experts to be dispatched to sites of "serious environmental degradation." Japan has also become increasingly active in efforts to promote sustainable growth, creating the Economic Information Sharing Mechanism of the Asia-Pacific.

### **Part Three: Japan's Vision for East Asia Regionalism**

East Asia is a region of considerable diversity where the legacy of history casts a long shadow. The political relations between its neighbors (particularly in Northeast Asia) are often characterized by tension and distrust. Economic disparities, the absence of a common cultural tradition, widespread domestic governance issues, rising nationalism, and a number of traditional and nontraditional security issues ensure that establishing an East Asian community will be an arduous task. It is imperative that efforts to deepen multilateral cooperation recognize these realities and design a plan for advancing regionalism accordingly.

The ideal approach to regionalism would be rules-based and inclusive. Any discriminatory approach that would exclude certain nations from participation from the outset will not work. Put simply, the region is too diverse and participation from as many nations as possible is too important. The focus of regionalism should be on *functional, action-oriented, and inclusive multilateralism*, an approach that seeks to bring countries in the region together as equal partners to address shared challenges through voluntary and coordinated actions.

The reality is that many of the emerging challenges facing East Asia transcend national borders and must be tackled in a proactive and cooperative manner. No single existing power or coalition of states is capable of addressing the problems by themselves or strong-arming other nations into solving them. In this sense, regionalism is not a lofty ideal; it is a necessity. It is both a means to an end and an end in itself. Closer cooperation among nations both solves problems—making East Asia more stable, secure, and prosperous in the process—and deepens trust, strengthening a sense of community in the region that further consolidates peace and stability.

While the creation of a formal "East Asian Community" (capital "C") remains a long-term goal, it is important to recall that the main objective of regionalism is not the creation of a supranational regional institution per se, but the cooperative process through which community-building is carried out. A



process-oriented, functional, and multilayered approach is the most sensible strategy for overcoming existing barriers and making East Asia more stable, peaceful, and prosperous.

Prime Minister Hatoyama and the new ruling party appear to share this vision of an East Asian community. This is significant, as the DPJ government enjoys a much stronger power base in the Diet than the previous LDP government thanks to its strength in both houses (an overwhelming majority in the Lower House and a plurality in the Upper House). The DPJ's control of the cabinet and legislative agenda will facilitate its efforts to ensure that Japan plays an active role in East Asian regionalism.

### *Looking Forward: Japan's Role in East Asia*

Japanese leaders are aware that China's increasing influence, the growing prominence of East Asia in global affairs, and the slow but sure decline of the United States' relative influence mean that it is time for Japan to reexamine its approach to the region. Going forward, Japan should aim to consolidate a multilayered network of inclusive multilateral institutions with a mandate to address specific issues, or "functions." At the same time, Japan must also ensure that these institutions evolve in a manner that is compatible with the existing principles and norms of the international system.

In the area of economics, Japan should more assertively champion a rules-based economic community. It should continue to pursue bilateral and multilateral economic partnership agreements with its neighbors and set the establishment of a region-wide EPA among members of the East Asia Summit as a long-term goal. Additionally, the creation of an Asian version of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) would help consolidate a rules-based economic system in the region. The existing OECD has designed sensible solutions to many of the same problems that East Asian nations currently face, such as obstacles to financial liberalization, corruption, and energy security. An "Asian OECD" would be tasked with applying those lessons to East Asia.

Japan must dramatically expand its soft-power resources. First, it should reverse recent trends and significantly ramp up its investment in ODA toward East Asia. ODA has served as one of the most effective tools in Japan's diplomatic toolbox for more than half a century. Unfortunately, various pledges by Japanese leaders to expand Japan's ODA program have not been realized. Second, Japan must lead the region's fight against global warming by more effectively leveraging its vast technological expertise and energy efficiency know-how.

In the security realm, Japan's basic objective should be to work with regional partners to establish multilayered and inclusive security architecture in East Asia. This architecture would have two primary mandates: providing venues for states to combat threats to regional peace and stability and, when prevention fails, engaging states in proactive and cooperative countermeasures to address these threats. It would consist of three main pillars: (1) bolstering bilateral security arrangements and minilateral strategic links between the United States and East Asian states, as well as establishing a regular trilateral strategic dialogue mechanism between Japan, China, and the United States; (2) evolving the Six Party Talks into a

permanent subregional forum tasked with addressing security issues in Northeast Asia beyond North Korea's nuclear program; and (3) establishing an East Asia Security Forum as a region-wide, inclusive mechanism for joint operations to combat transnational and nontraditional security issues. At its core, the architecture would aim to deepen cooperation and community through a functional approach to security that engages states in action-oriented and proactive efforts to tackle issues of common concern.

As far as major security issues in East Asia are concerned, the region's primary focus will undoubtedly be on Northeast Asia for the foreseeable future. In particular, the North Korean nuclear issue poses a direct threat to regional peace and stability. Additionally, widespread apprehension in the region about China's future ensures that China's rise will remain a long-term security concern. Given that any major security incident in Northeast Asia would directly influence the interests of ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand, and India, it is important for these issues be considered in an East Asian context.

#### *Pillar 1: Reinforcing U.S. Security Arrangements and Japan-China-U.S Strategic Dialogue*

Although Japan should engage its neighbors in efforts to establish and consolidate multilateral security institutions and cooperate in addressing functional issues, contemporary circumstances in East Asia continue to require a strong hedge against uncertainties surrounding the region's future. Although there has been no open conflict between East Asian states for many years, a number of potential flashpoints continue to threaten regional stability. In light of this reality, robust security arrangements between the United States and its friends in the region (in particular the U.S.-Japan alliance) should remain in place for the foreseeable future as a security guarantee. Existing bilateral ties should be supplemented by deepening strategic ties between states via existing multilateral institutions, such as the trilateral forum for strategic dialogue among Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

It is no secret that the new government in Tokyo has expressed a desire to develop a more "equal" relationship with the United States and review several sensitive issues concerning the U.S.-Japan alliance, in particular the realignment of U.S. military bases in Japan and a possible cessation of Japan's contribution to refueling activities in the Indian Ocean. Rather than posing a threat to U.S. interests, the DPJ's call for dialogue over the future of the bilateral relationship provides an opportunity to strengthen, reinvigorate, and expand the alliance. Given a transformed regional security environment and the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 2010, it is only natural that the new governments in Washington and Tokyo sit down together and jointly explore ways to do so.

As Japan seeks to strengthen existing security arrangements in the region as a hedge against uncertainty, it must also pursue new and inclusive frameworks for cooperation. For example, one issue of integral importance to East Asia's peace and prosperity is the state of relations among the great powers in the region. In light of the essential role that Japan, China, and the United States play as guarantors of regional peace and stability, Japan must lead the effort to strengthen trilateral security relations and reduce mistrust. The three states should immediately institutionalize tripartite strategic dialogue as a complement to

ongoing bilateral discussions. This would serve as a confidence-building measure and promote further military and strategic transparency.

*Pillar 2: North Korea and the Six Party Talks*

North Korea's nuclear weapons program has posed a clear danger to peace and stability in East Asia for two decades. Pyongyang's recent provocations, including its July 2006 missile tests, October 2006 and May 2009 nuclear tests, and April 2009 "satellite launch," represent egregious violations of its past commitments to the international community. In order to have any hope of success, the international community's approach to this issue must henceforth obey the following five guiding principles:

1. *North Korea must never be recognized as a nuclear state.* Recognizing North Korea as a nuclear power would seriously damage the credibility of the United Nations Security Council, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and the Six Party Talks. Some observers have suggested that the United States is now chiefly concerned with nonproliferation—i.e., preventing Pyongyang from selling nuclear technology—rather than denuclearization. The Obama administration must unequivocally debunk these rumors and make clear to North Korea and the international community that Washington will never accept North Korea as a nuclear state. Failure to do so will raise doubts in Japan about the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella, which in turn will have a deleterious effect on peace and stability in East Asia.
2. *Policy consistency among and within the five nations is essential.* Over the past six years, Pyongyang has effectively exploited policy inconsistencies resulting from both leadership turnover in Japan, the United States, and South Korea and the absence of a united front by the five nations involved in the Six Party Talks. The five parties must learn from past mistakes. Going forward, more extensive collaboration will be imperative. Faithful implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions [1518](#), [1874](#), and [1877](#) by all five parties—in particular China and Russia—will also be essential. Further North Korean provocations will undoubtedly exacerbate tension among these countries. Nevertheless, it is crucial that these resolutions are fully enforced, particularly Resolution 1874's mandate to intercept North Korean ships suspected of carrying banned weapons and technology. In the event of a future provocation, the response must be swift, including high-level five-party talks without North Korean participation.
3. *Contingency planning is imperative.* The five parties must always be on guard for the possibility of open conflict. In order to be fully prepared, Japan, the United States, and South Korea must engage in discrete trilateral contingency planning. The three nations must discuss not only military tactics but also how they will evacuate noncombatants and respond in the event of a massive refugee crisis.

Despite the fact that the 1994 nuclear crisis pushed Washington and Pyongyang to the brink of war, efforts to engage in trilateral contingency planning at the time were unsuccessful. Instead, bilateral discussions were held between the United States and its alliance partners. This time, trilateral contingency planning—together with frequent dialogue with China and Russia concerning these plans—is critical.

4. *A comprehensive, negotiated settlement is the only practical way forward.* While the five parties must show that they are willing to reach a comprehensive settlement that addresses North Korea's concerns, they must also demonstrate a commitment to a united front and jointly respond to any North Korean provocations. This is the only way to create an environment in which a negotiated settlement will be possible. If North Korea agrees to verifiable denuclearization and makes a clear commitment to significantly reform the nature of its interactions with the international community, the five parties should offer a number of carrots, of which normalization of relations between North Korea and the United States and Japan and the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula will be most important.
5. *The Six Party process must continue with informal negotiations before the talks resume.* Although North Korea has not engaged in any further provocations in recent weeks, it is unlikely that North Korea will abruptly decide to resume its participation in the Six Party Talks. In order to set the stage for the resumption of substantive multilateral negotiations, it will be necessary for the United States to hold informal talks with North Korea concerning its nuclear program and normalization of bilateral diplomatic relations. The two Koreas must also resume meaningful dialogue. For its part, Japan must also be prepared to engage in negotiations over diplomatic normalization in accordance with the [2002 Pyongyang Declaration](#). With regard to abductees, Tokyo and Pyongyang must negotiate in good faith and establish a fair and verifiable process for determining the truth about the abducted Japanese citizens for whom Pyongyang has yet to account. These informal talks must be held at a high level and have the full and complete backing of each nation's leaders.

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

### *Pillar Three: East Asia Security Forum*

East Asia faces a growing number of emerging transnational and nontraditional security challenges that threaten to destabilize the region and reverse regionalism's recent accomplishments. Japan should work with the United States, China, and other partners in the region to establish an East Asia Security Forum (EASF) as the core component of a new multilateral security architecture focused on inclusive, action-oriented, and functional cooperation. The EASF would have two major objectives.

First, the EASF would be tasked with engaging East Asian states in proactive operations to address transnational and nontraditional security issues such as environmental degradation, natural disasters, energy security, infectious disease, WMD proliferation, maritime piracy, and human and drug trafficking. Second, the EASF would contribute to the larger goal of building inclusive multilateral frameworks in East Asia and gradually establishing a norm of addressing shared challenges in a voluntary and cooperative manner. In short, the EASF would foster a more stable environment in the region for continued economic growth and—by engaging states in collective action on issues of common concern—deepen cooperation and advance regionalism. Since the EASF's primary mandate deals with transnational and nontraditional security issues, it would complement more traditional security frameworks in the region, in particular the “hub and spoke” system of bilateral security arrangements with the United States.

As far as membership is concerned, the EASF would be most effective if membership were limited to the members of ASEAN Plus Six (i.e., the nations of ASEAN plus China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and India) and the United States. The U.S. accession to the [Treaty of Amity and Cooperation](#) this past summer is a first step toward U.S. membership in the East Asia Summit and its eventual involvement in the EASF.

### **Conclusion**

Now that the DPJ has taken the reigns of power, Prime Minister Hatoyama and his cabinet will move to reshape Japanese foreign policy in accordance with their campaign promises. An important aspect of this move, of which Hatoyama has been a staunch advocate, will be to reinvigorate Japan's policy toward East Asia and promote regional cooperation and community-building. As the DPJ consolidates its vision for the region, it must ask itself the following questions: Is the concept of an East Asian community viable or would it be more feasible to limit cooperation to the Northeast Asian subregion? Which nations should be included in this community? Must new institutions be established or are existing organizations such as APEC, ASEAN Plus Three/ARF, and the EAS ready to take up the gauntlet?

No matter what specific decisions the government makes, it is a foregone conclusion that any vision for enhanced regionalism in East Asia must embrace the concept of functional and multilayered cooperation. As for regional membership, instead of strict geographical determinism, participation in cooperative efforts should be decided based on the specific functions that a particular operation would address and the resources that a given candidate is able to bring to the table. For example, U.S. participation in regional

security cooperation would be imperative in light of its vast resources and the military assets it already has in East Asia. Economic integration, on the other hand, could begin as a mainly EAS endeavor; in time it could expand in scope to also involve close coordination with APEC.

Financial and economic cooperation in the region will be largely market-driven, but security cooperation in East Asia will require strong political leadership. Fortunately, the ARF already exists as a viable entity for security policy coordination. The EASF should be established promptly to engage states in voluntary, joint operations to address emerging nontraditional and transnational security threats. Lastly, specific issues such as North Korea's nuclear weapons program should continue to be addressed through the Six Party Talks. After the nuclear issue has been resolved, this dialogue mechanism could evolve into a permanent security forum in Northeast Asia.