

COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY AND REGIONAL COOPERATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA

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INTRODUCTION

On the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia there are still many unresolved and until now unresolvable issues concerning peace, stability and security.

Mostly military-related attempts to achieve these aims have thus far failed, indeed the relations between and among the key players are becoming increasingly difficult. The focus continues to be primarily on one issue, denuclearization, thus precluding a comprehensive approach to achieving security and stability.

Comprehensive security encompasses both traditional and non-traditional security in the military/security, economic/environmental and human dimensions. A comprehensive approach, while more complex, can proceed more cooperatively and effectively; there are more opportunities for trade-offs and compromise.

Another facilitating factor would be a cooperative framework within which unconditional dialogue, discussions and negotiations can take place. Such a framework can be provided by a regional multilateral security cooperation mechanism, based on the interests of the participating states and utilizing relevant experience of the world's largest regional security organization, the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**.

Key principles and aims of the **Helsinki Final Act (HFA)**, the basis for the OSCE, correspond in many cases to those in the 1992 Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between South and North Korea, the so-called **Inter-Korean Basic Agreement**. Finding common ground to move forward may thus be more effectively achieved through diplomacy and cooperation, rather than through deterrence and confrontation.

MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN THE SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The post-World War II order saw the creation of a number of international regimes, which have functioned with varying degrees of effectiveness, efficiency and equity. It could be argued that at the present time the perceived need and tendency is towards regional multilateral security mechanisms which complement these international regimes, helping them to achieve their goals both regionally and globally. This has been reflected in policy statements and proposals of key countries in the region, such as Russia¹, China² and the Republic of Korea³.

Regional organizations were created based on cooperation in the political, economic and/or security areas. Important examples of this are: the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**, the **European Union**, the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, the **Asia Cooperation Dialogue** and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**, as well as regional nuclear weapons free zones.⁴

CRITERIA FOR PURSUING REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY

In determining whether a regional process for achieving comprehensive security should be pursued, a key question needs to be addressed: can certain national interests be served better—or at all—by solely national approaches, or are there common interests and issues that can only be pursued by

1 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in April 2021 reiterated the proposal for a "Concept of Collective Security in the Persian Gulf." He also referred to the increasing importance of regional security cooperation in his address to the UNGA in September 2021.

2 In a January 2017 policy paper of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China called for a regional framework for common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

3 The Defense Minister of the Republic of Korea stated in 2013 that Asian nations should develop multilateral security cooperation, reflecting then-President Park's "Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation initiative."

4 Nuclear Weapons Free Zones are in the following regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, Central Asia.

multilateral cooperation. This applies not only to security issues but also to the financial and economic crises, environmental issues as well as non-traditional security and transborder issues and threats.

A regional cooperation mechanism provides a neutral and supportive framework for both informal dialogue and formal talks on a wide range of issues, and can support dispute resolution. Multilateral cooperation can thus support moving beyond the status quo while preserving stability and security.

The success of regional multilateral cooperation mechanisms such as OSCE and ASEAN depend on the awareness that effective cooperation on multilateral security is not and cannot be a zero-sum game: what increases the security of one country should increase the security of others. Multilateral regional security cooperation must be inclusive, and should not be directed against or exclude any country in the region.

In Northeast Asia, such a mechanism should aim to include all countries in the region as well as those with essential regional security interests. It is necessary to take into account the differing and complex histories, cultures, interests and security threats and arrangements of the various states which would be involved in a regional security mechanism, including the Republic of Korea, the DPRK, China, Japan, the US and Russia. With time, other East Asian countries, such as the members of ASEAN, could also be included.

CREATION AND RELEVANCE OF THE OSCE: A UNIQUE EXAMPLE OF HOW ADVERSARIES CAN COOPERATE

The CSCE/OSCE was negotiated and set up during the Cold War between military blocs led by the US and the former Soviet Union (FSU). In fact, the FSU proposed the creation of the CSCE, and after suitable negotiations, this was agreed to by the US.

The Cold War political and security situation,

which prevailed at the time, did not prevent agreement on the HFA nor on the CSCE. This is relevant to certain aspects of the prevailing political and security environment in Northeast Asia, as is the fact that agreeing to create the CSCE/OSCE also proves that existing military alliances should be no obstacle if there is political will on the part of the countries involved.

It is important to realize that the OSCE (CSCE until 1995) was created to achieve and enhance political stability and security. The early phases of the OSCE, during the Cold War, were concerned with ways and means to foster peaceful co-existence and diminish/eliminate threats and threat perceptions through a wide-range of confidence- and security-building measures. Each state, in particular the US and FSU, saw the CSCE as serving its respective interests and aims.

The key reasons for creating a regional multilateral cooperation mechanism in Europe included: (1) nation states gain by evolving, under certain circumstances, towards effective regional cooperation which can better deal with crises, achieve stability and security and thus peace and prosperity; (2) such mechanisms serve the interests of the participating states, providing options that no individual state could have on its own; and (3) regional mechanisms, individually and together, can contribute to achieving a more robust and equitable global equilibrium and order.

THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT, THE HELSINKI PROCESS AND THE START OF THE OSCE

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization and has 57 Participating States. Its Guiding Principles are the 10 principles of the HFA. The HFA also included and adopted a set of confidence-building measures on a voluntary and political basis.

The CSCE, predecessor to the OSCE, began meeting in Helsinki in 1973, as the outcome of a compromise between NATO and Warsaw Pact states. NATO countries favoured

open negotiations on concrete measures of conventional arms control in Europe, while Warsaw Pact states wanted to begin negotiations on a set of general principles to govern security relations in Europe while resolving outstanding post-World War II issues. The preparatory phases leading up to the HFA involved informal dialogue and working-level conferences over a number of years.

The Helsinki Final Act was negotiated in the midst of the Cold War, creating a framework for security and cooperation that embraced among its participants the rival military blocs in the Cold War conflict: NATO led by the US and the Warsaw Pact led by the former Soviet Union. It was signed on 31 July 1975 by 35 heads of state from Europe and North America, establishing 10 normative principles to govern relations among these states:

- I. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty
- II. Refraining from the threat or use of force
- III. Inviolability of frontiers
- IV. Territorial integrity of states
- V. Peaceful settlement of disputes
- VI. Non-intervention in internal affairs
- VII. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief
- VIII. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples
- IX. Co-operation among states
- X. Fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law

CONFIDENCE- AND SECURITY-BUILDING MEASURES: BUILDING TRUST AND REDUCING RISKS

The HFA also included and adopted a set of confidence-building measures (CBMs) on a voluntary and political basis that involved advance notification of military maneuvers and invitation of observers to notifiable activities throughout the European continent.

These CBMs were unique and important steps to increase transparency, predictability, confidence and stability, and thus to reduce risks due to miscalculation or lack of information.

The OSCE's Confidence and Security Building Measures regime was developed further after the HFA and became a set of codes of conduct regulating certain types of military activities, ensuring the reduction of risks and greater transparency.

The 1986 CSCE Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament defined and agreed on a unique and wide range of CSBMs that significantly expanded those contained in the HFA and largely made them obligatory as well.

These measures included: exchanges of an agreed list of military activities requiring notification (notifiable military activities); prior notification of certain military activities; observation by OSCE Participating States of certain military activities; addressing significant increases in quality/quantity of weapons and other military capabilities.

More specifically, the CSBMs involve:

- **DECLARATORY** measures such as jointly designating means for the peaceful settlement of disputes; refraining from the use or threat of force, and other unilateral declarations.
- **TRANSPARENCY**, e.g., via advance notification of military exercises and troop movements; mutual observation.
- **COMMUNICATION**, e.g., hot lines for crisis communication for leaders and command centers. Expanded dialogue channels.
- **RISK-REDUCTION AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES** addressing specific political/military situations and disputes.
- **EXCHANGES OF AGREED/NOTIFIABLE MILITARY INFORMATION**: prior notification and observation of certain military activities; significant increases in quality/quantity of weapons and other

- military capabilities.
- **REGULAR CONSULTATIONS OF SENIOR MILITARY PERSONNEL.**
- **AGREED LIMITS ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF CERTAIN TYPES OF WEAPONS.**
- **MUTUALLY AGREED MONITORING** of adherence to commitments and transparency.

These CSBMs cover all of Europe and the adjoining sea area and air space. They are militarily significant and politically binding.

OSCE AIMS, PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES RELEVANT TO REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA

AIMS

- Establishing, increasing and maintaining the security of one or more states in the region must not decrease the security of others in the region.
- Acknowledging and dealing with threats and threat perceptions of each state involved.
- Enhancing through cooperative measures the stability, security and prosperity of the countries in the region.

PRINCIPLES

- Agreed guiding principles such as those in the HFA -- and the obligation to act according to these principles
- Peaceful resolution of disputes; conflict management.
- Permanent framework to support debate, engagement and political dialogue without preconditions.
- Acknowledging and accounting for core security interests of the regional countries involved.
- Dialogue based on the principles of inclusiveness, equality and the free exchange of views.
- Decisions based on consensus, with few exceptions that are rarely applied.

- A multilayered approach that also accommodates existing bilateral security agreements as well as multilateral arrangements.
- CSBMs for building trust, achieving transparency and predictability, and risk reduction.
- A CSBM regime backed by trust and political will.
- Parties to the CSBM regime are on an equal basis and agree to review, improve and negotiate CSBMs.

PROCESSES

- Establish a permanent open forum or dialogue mechanism available without preconditions, also in times of crisis and conflict.
- Gradual or evolutionary process. Step-by-step approach.
- Start with realistic and do-able objectives, from the easier and less sensitive to the more difficult.
- Agreement on how CSBMs would be initiated and implemented including agreement on the sequence and timing of CSBMs.

ACTIVITIES OF THE OSCE RELEVANT TO REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA

The OSCE adopts politically binding commitments that are not legally enforceable, since it has no founding treaty or legal personality which, while desirable, is not essential as OSCE experience has shown.⁵ This means that the OSCE relies on the goodwill of its Participating States to respect and take forward a body of shared values and commitments.

The OSCE is based on the principle of comprehensive and cooperative security, that is, cooperation on activities in the so-called three "baskets" comprising the military/

⁵ In order for the OSCE to conclude a Headquarters Agreement with the Republic of Austria, the Austrian Parliament passed a law in 1993 which gave the OSCE the legal personality of an international organization within Austria.

security, economic/environmental and human dimensions, and on the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Comprehensive security requires for its implementation both agreed principles and actions, i.e., mechanisms for implementing them. Principles alone are insufficient--a cooperative security mechanism must also have an agreed range of capabilities (a so-called "tool box") to take appropriate action when necessary in order to deal with actual and potential conflicts and disputes. Some of the of the main on-going OSCE activities include: the unique and extensive set of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) covering all of Europe; **the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine**; **the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre**; OSCE participation in the **Minsk Process** aimed at the peaceful resolution of the **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict**; as well as **OSCE Mediation and Dialogue Facilitation** activities.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE HFA AND THE "INTER-KOREAN BASIC AGREEMENT"

Many similarities in goals, form and substance have been noted between the HFA and the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation between South and North Korea, the so-called "Inter-Korean Basic Agreement" , which came into effect in February 1992. In fact, most of the items in the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement either correspond to HFA principles or fall into one of the three "baskets" or categories of the OSCE's comprehensive security, namely the military/political, the economic/ technological, and the human dimension.

The items of correspondence or similarity include:

- Non-interference in internal affairs.
- Avoiding armed aggression.
- Removing political and military confrontation. Reducing tension.
- Measures to ensure implementation and observance of accords on nonaggression and to remove military confrontation.

- Ensuring peace.
- Joint efforts to achieve peaceful unification.
- Achieving national reconciliation.
- Cooperation to advance national interests and prosperity.
- Development of the national economies including trade and joint development of resources.
- Exchanges and cooperation in science, technology, education, environment, arts, media.
- Free correspondence, reunions, visits.
- Establishing a South-North Exchanges and Cooperation Commission to ensure implementation and observance of accords on South-North exchanges and cooperation.

Thus, the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement provides a solid basis for dialogue on a process to achieve comprehensive security through regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. In turn, such a cooperation mechanism could serve as a framework for the implementation of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement, including the negotiation of a peace regime for the Korean Peninsula.

NUCLEAR-RELATED ISSUES

Nuclear sharing (NS), nuclear extended deterrence and the possession of nuclear weapons by other states in Europe did not prevent the creation of the OSCE (CSCE) during the Cold War. Similarly, nuclear-related issues can and should not be a hindrance to starting the process for dialogue on a comprehensive security for the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, to create a multilateral security cooperation mechanism for the region.

NS refers to bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements with the United States. These issues are being actively debated in Japan, the Republic of Korea and other countries that rely on US extended nuclear deterrence⁶. In keeping with the principles of the HFA

⁶ Dr. Frances Mautner Markhof, "Nuclear Sharing in Europe and the NPT: Relevance for the Korean Peninsula," Research Institute for National Security Affairs of the Korea National Defense University -RINSA Forum, Vol. 72, 28. 2.2021, 5-8.

and of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement, the arguments for nuclear deterrence and in particular the assumed necessity for nuclear sharing must be critically re-evaluated.

Extended deterrence can be provided without deploying US nuclear weapons on the territories of certain European NATO allies. Extended nuclear deterrence for US allies ROK and Japan is now provided without basing US nuclear weapons on the territories of these allies, where no US nuclear weapons have been based since 1991.

Furthermore, it can be shown that NS violates the NPT obligations under Articles I, II and VI of both the nuclear-weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states involved.

The issues associated with nuclear sharing reinforce the benefits and need for security cooperation.

GOING FORWARD

Starting a process for comprehensive security on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia will require political will and commitment of all sides, as well as building up a necessary amount of trust in the political and military spheres. Recalling that the preparatory phase leading to the conclusion of the HFA lasted many years, patience and a positive approach are essential requirements for achieving an effective multilateral mechanism for comprehensive security in the region.

A feasible approach for Northeast Asia could start with informal dialogue and working-level meetings to agree on step-by-step measures to set up an open, unconditional dialogue forum and implement CSBMs. This approach requires agreed principles such as respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, on which other multilateral organizations such as ASEAN are based. Also necessary are the willingness to engage and compromise, pragmatism and flexibility, and an understanding of the perspectives, interests and threat perceptions of the other sides.

Understanding the political process leading to agreement on the HFA and CSCE/OSCE would be of special relevance for starting an effective and equitable comprehensive and cooperative security mechanism in the Northeast Asian region. The three key areas or baskets of the HFA could find counterparts in such a mechanism.

One key area could address important traditional and non-traditional security-related issues including transborder issues and threats; a second key area could focus on intensive and extensive cooperation, which already exists between some countries in the region, in economic areas such as trade, investment and finance, as well as cooperation on energy and environmental issues; and a third key issue area could focus on identifying fundamental principles, common interests and bridge-building. The content of these three key areas could develop in time and in parallel.

Cross-cutting issues would include all measures which contribute to trust, transparency, stability, security and development, such as effective and timely channels for communication and information exchanges; peaceful settlement of disputes; crisis and conflict anticipation, prevention and management; and joint risk and threat assessment.

CONCLUSION

The realities, increasing complexity and unpredictability of issues, systems and their environments require new approaches and capabilities for the negotiation and management of crises, organizations and systems. This will include the development of new options, balanced by agreed constraints. With this in mind, it is important to look beyond military solutions and to think outside the box on how to deal with the challenges on the Korean Peninsula and in the Northeast Asia region, to achieve peace, stability and prosperity.

Creating a mechanism for comprehensive security and regional cooperation

requires political will and a certain level of respect among the parties involved in the negotiations. While elements of the Cold War still exist in Northeast Asia, negotiations to explore the possibility and benefits of a mechanism for stability, security and development in the region should be pursued.

Starting a process for comprehensive and cooperative security mechanisms to deal with issues related to the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia will require building up the necessary level of trust and transparency in the political and military spheres. Experience has shown these goals can be achieved even when divisive topics have yet to be resolved – indeed they can and should contribute to enhancing cooperation, diminishing divisions and resolving conflicts.

This approach permitted the creation of the CSCE/OSCE and could also serve as an effective model for achieving comprehensive security through regional cooperation in Northeast Asia.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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She is a recognized expert on North Korea, multilateral security cooperation, and nuclear non-proliferation. Before joining ACIS she was an official of the International Atomic Energy Agency. She has led research projects at the Brookings Institution, the German Foreign Policy Institute (DGAP), and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Austria, and has cooperated with the OSCE on joint projects/activities. She has lectured at the Harvard Kennedy School; the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; the OSCE; the Institute of Political Science, University of Vienna, as well as in the Republic of Korea, China, Japan and the Russian Federation.

ABOUT APLN

The Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN) is a network of political, military, and diplomatic leaders from countries across the Asia-Pacific tackling security and defence challenges with a particular focus on addressing and eliminating nuclear weapon risks.



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