

MINI-MULTILATERALISM IN NORTHEAST ASIA: IMPLICATIONS FROM EUROPE AND ITS ROLE IN RESOLVING KOREAN PENINSULA ISSUES

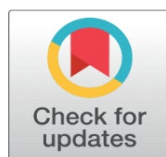
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ABSTRACT

Northeast Asian nations, including the critical historical fulcrum of the Korean Peninsula, must prioritize regional cooperation and trust-building to achieve their maximum regional and global potential. Through the study of four stages of regional growth, a roadmap towards integration that's contextualized within the unique socio-political dynamics of Northeast Asia is provided. Mini-multilateralism has historical relevance for the Korean Peninsula whose complexities and sensibilities arising from the peninsula's divided past underscore the need for a strategy that supports smaller, more focused multilateral engagements. These engagements could provide a platform for resolving ongoing tensions while fostering regional cooperation, ultimately contributing to the construction of a secure Northeast Asia. The examination of historical incidents, particularly those related to the Korean Peninsula, shows the immense potential of mini-multilateralism as a strategy for advancing regional stability, building trust, and promoting cooperation. As such, the implications drawn from European experiences serve as lessons for Northeast Asia and particularly for resolving issues related to Korean history and its future.

Keywords: Cultural Community, Historical Incidents, Security Regime, Trilateral Cooperative Secretariat

1. INTRODUCTION

Northeast Asia has been undergoing historical evolution, with its relationship structure constantly changing even amidst the general backdrop of the Cold War. Notably, in the 1960s, Japan and South Korea resumed diplomatic relations, and subsequently, Japan and the United States established diplomatic relations with China in 1972 and 1979, respectively. In 1991, China and USSR signed the China-Soviet Border Agreement for resolving territorial disputes. South Korea normalized

with Russia and China in 1990 and 1992, respectively. These adjustments and changes have added new factors and provided new operating space for the relationship and order in Northeast Asia; in particular, China's implementation of the policy of reform and opening-up has promoted the further development of China-Japan relations and brought the economic ties between the two countries closer.

In recent years, the United States has defensively headed for national security to absorb investment and trade policies competing with China, which is a new notion of national security integrating political interests emerging with the ideological, technological, and economic, leading a trans-formative change of the global economic architecture.¹ At the same time, the need of envisioning Northeast Asian present constraints and future framework from a broader perspective is becoming more imperative.

However, Northeast Asia still needs to eliminate the situation of division and confrontation. In particular, the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea has complicated regional relations, increasing the risk of accidents. Although the interactions between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), the United States (US), and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) have seen some changes since the ROK-DPRK Panmunjom Summit in April 2018 and the U.S.-DPRK Singapore Summit in June 2018, there are many uncertain factors including historical legacies, territorial disputes, exclusive nationalism, and digitalization alliance.²

Northeast Asia has many challenges but also great potential at so many levels. To reach regional and global maximal potential, regional cooperation, and trust-building should be a priority for Northeast Asian countries. The hypothesis is that a comprehensible approach for desirable mini-multilateralism should be developed, involving ideology, security, economy, culture, and strategic dialogues by learning lessons from European experiences. Hence, the purpose of studying this topic is twofold. First, it examines existing mini-multilateralism in Northeast Asia in terms of ideology (China-Russia-North Korea relations), security (US-Japan-Korea), economy (China-Japan-Korea). In addition, this study explores an ideal mini-multilateralism in the region in terms of the circular economy coping with biodiversity challenges and climate change (China-Japan-South Korea), the five-country cultural relations (China-Japan-the Two Koreas-US), and the four-country strategic talks (China- the Two Koreas-US talks).

Therefore, the following two research questions are investigated in this study. What lessons can be drawn from history, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to resolve the constraints in Northeast Asia? How can mini-multilateralism enrich the cooperative and friendly relations in the region to develop a desirable mini-multilateralism framework highlighting the circular economic and counter-disaster relief task force, cultural community, and quad-strategic talks on Taiwan and Korean issues?

To answer these research questions, various methods are used, such as historical review, literature review, issue diagnosis, and future design. The literature review will be used to define the key concepts and discuss the theoretical framework to establish a desirable future regional framework, while the case of OSCE is studied to learn its strengths and weaknesses to develop implications for

¹ Joel Slawotsky, "The Fusion of Ideology, Technology, and Economic Power: Implications of the Emerging New United States National Security Conceptualization," *Chinese Journal of International Law* 20, no. 1 (2021): 3-62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/chinesejil/jmab007> (Accessed Mar 23, 2023).

² Yun-Ling Zhang, "On a New Starting Point of Historical Transformation - A Reflection on the Northeast Asian Community of Destiny." *World Economy and Politics* 34, no. 6 (2020): 156.

Northeast Asia. Lastly, three mini-multilateralism models are discussed to enrich the cooperative and friendly relations in the region after existing mini-multilateralism is investigated.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. MINI-MULTILATERALISM AND MULTILATERALISM

In Western sphere, the current international stage is said to act under the interdependent rule of neo-liberalism, globalization, and multilateralism. Nonetheless, this generalization does not apply to all regions. Northeast Asia somewhat escapes the neoliberal rule, and multilateralism is not the only way countries can interact.

There are four types of interaction: unilateralism, bilateralism, multilateralism, and unilateralism (or mini-multilateralism). Unilateralism and bilateralism were the dominant types of interaction between entities before the emergence of the Westphalian international system (1648),³ but continue to be used in hegemonic systems, respectively bipolar and multipolar systems, where alliances and balancing power are needed. Unilateralism and bilateralism are similar in that both are preferential types of interaction and pose the danger of being discriminatory, favoring the interests of one state, respectively two. On the other hand, if bilateralism is combined with multilateralism and unilateralism, it can help boost cooperation and complex interdependence.⁴

Multilateralism gained momentum after the collapse of the Soviet Union, together with the Cold War and the bipolar international system,⁵ and “has played a significant role in international cooperation,”⁶ being a neoliberal instrument of maintaining peace. Through multilateralism, countries choose to give up the endless neorealist distrust. Robert Keohane, the key figure of neoliberal institutionalism, portrayed 1990 multilateralism as “the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states.”⁷ The common objective is to formally “build trust and avoid conflict by identifying, institutionalizing and observing rules and norms for a shared vision of regional or international order.”⁸ Multilateral agreements can theoretically enjoy broad spread effects due to a larger number of participants, strengthen global governance, and help address complex long-term issues. On the other hand, the decision-making process can be prolonged, impeding any immediate actions.

However, Europe started from a while already to show signs of exhaustion at the multilateral level through institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Europe is one of many places where multilateralism needs to be revised, while in Northeast Asia multilateral meetings never even merged into a significant security regime or even a regional economy-based institution.⁹ For Europeans, the alternative was found in ‘mini-lateral’ cooperation agreements that actually “stem from the practice of

³ Ove Bring. “The Westphalian Peace Tradition in International Law: From Jus ad Bellum to Jus contra Bellum.” *International Law Studies* 75, no. 1 (2000): 22.

⁴ Robert O. Keohane and Julia C. Morse. “Counter-multilateralism.” In Novotná, Tereza, Mario Telò, Jean-Frédéric Morin, and Mr. Frederik Ponjaert, eds. *The Politics of Transatlantic Trade Negotiations: TTIP in a Globalized World*. Ashgate Publishing (2015): 44–52.

⁵ Kyung-young Chung. “Building a Military Security Cooperation Regime in Northeast Asia: Feasibility and Design.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park (2005): 23.

⁶ Alice Pannier. « Le « Minilatéralisme »: une Nouvelle Forme de Coopération de Défense », *Politique étrangère* no. 1 (2015): 38.

⁷ Robert O. Keohane. “Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research.” *International Journal* 45 (Autumn 1990): 731.

⁸ William T. Tow, “Minilateral Security’s Relevance to US Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges and Prospects,” *The Pacific Review* 32 (2019): 235.

⁹ Fabrizio Hochschild, Special Advisor to UN Secretary-General, called this phenomenon ‘multilateralism fatigue’ in Toby Burns. “Top Official Reflects on Great Power Rivalries as UN Turns 75.” *NHK*. December 1, 2020. <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/backstories/1392/> (Accessed February 25, 2023).

multilateralism.”¹⁰ Mini-multilateralism is an ideological and conceptual choice in the context of globalization, a political framework and strategic choice in the process of multi-polarization, and even a multilateral diplomatic and institutional choice in the democratization of international relations.¹¹ The main advantage is that minilateralism can assist decision-making and alleviate coordination on essential focus field with only the actors concerned involved. This type works best at a regional level, which means it is a precious instrument to be used by countries in Northeast Asia too, in combination with multilateralism. These meetings are more limited in number and scope, addressing ad-hoc more minor issues that only concern the countries involved. Mini-multilateralism or minilateralism is seen as the hope for those areas where multilateralism has failed, being “likely to offer a promising dynamic even within Europe, despite the many difficulties they face.”¹² And, while the possible value of multilateralism has been widely proponent by international relations theorists as a preferable code of behaviour in Northeast Asia without adequately explaining the causal route to multilateralism by commanding the emergent possession of multilateralism.¹³

2.2. OFFENSIVE REALISM AND NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM

Because of the continuing division of the Korean Peninsula, the Northeast Asian region is seen as a “bastion of Cold War realism.”¹⁴ While the region is indeed haunted by realist political and security decisions, the international system has changed from bipolar to multipolar, with two superpowers (the US and China) and three great regional powers (Japan, Russia, and South Korea). These players’ politics affect the order not only in the region but also at a global level.

The strategic competition between China and US is manifested globally but at the same time, from a security point of view, also regionally strengthens the region’s inclination towards offensive realism. According to this theory, countries act in an anarchic international system with the objective of survival. And, as John Mearsheimer suggested in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, even great powers that are security-seeking will have no other choice but to compete and engage in conflict with each other, thus “The Tragedy of International Politics.”¹⁵ Fruitful multilateral meetings in Northeast Asia are made difficult by the anarchical structure of the system which constrains states to seek alliances and maximization of power, hence the difficulty to reach a security regime or go forward towards regional integration. Henry Kissinger has compared Northeast Asia with post-Napoleonic wars Europe, “in the sense that great power politics (...) are still competitive while struggling for a way to forge an effective multilateral mechanism for cooperation.”¹⁶ This has been reflected by the practice of the balance of power.

Nonetheless, following the security and economic dimensions, Northeast Asia is balancing offensive realism at the security level with neoliberalism at the

¹⁰ Angaindrankumar Gnanasagaran. “Is Minilateralism the Way Forward?,” *The ASEAN Post*. May 27, 2018. <https://theaseanpost.com/article/minilateralism-way-forward> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

¹¹ Robert O. Keohane. “Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research.” *International Journal* 45 (Autumn 1990): 731.

¹² Alice Pannier. « Le « Minilatéralisme »: une Nouvelle Forme de Coopération de Défense », *Politique étrangère* no. 1 (2015): 38.

¹³ Ki-joon Hong. “Institutional Multilateralism in Northeast Asia: A Path Emergence Theory Perspective.” *North Korean Review* (2015): 24–41.

¹⁴ Morgan Potts. “The Koreas, Bastion of Cold War Realism.” *The Diplomat*. June 25, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-koreas-bastion-of-cold-war-realism/> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

¹⁵ John Ikenberry. “Review of John Mearsheimer’s ‘The Tragedy of Great Power Politics.’” *Foreign Affairs*. January 28, 2009. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2001-11-01/tragedy-great-power-politics> (Accessed March 3, 2023).

¹⁶ Chae-sung Chun. “A Theoretical Explanation of the Evolving Northeast Asian Architecture: The “Incompleteness” of Sovereignty.” *The Asan Forum*. October 20, 2015. <https://theasanforum.org/a-theoretical-explanation-of-the-evolving-northeast-asian-architecture-the-incompleteness-of-sovereignty/> (Accessed February 21, 2023).

economic level. When states choose to cooperate under the theory of neoliberal institutions, they admit that cooperation is possible under the anarchic system, with wealth maximization for all the actors involved. The nations in Northeast Asia are interconnected through trade and economic ties, forming patterns of cooperation.¹⁷ Economic interdependence is often used as a political “weapon” to fulfill their respective national security interests. While offensive realism is the reality of today’s Northeast Asia, neoliberal institutionalism is the desirable perspective to reach for. Northeast Asia already has the potential to overcome security dilemmas and ideology incompatibilities. Before building a framework in that sense, in the next chapter, lessons from the European experience will be addressed and implications to Northeast Asia drawn. The opportunities arising in the region and the existing challenges will be shown in more detail at the end.

3. EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

The OSCE is an international conference mechanism and process established by East and West Europe during the Cold War to ease tensions in the military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in Europe. The OSCE mainly maintains security through communication and dialogues. During and after the Cold War, the establishment of trust and security mechanisms, arms control, and disarmament agreements stabilized the situation on the European continent, effectively prevented the outbreak of large-scale wars in Europe, and added to the political steadiness and economic evolution of European countries.¹⁸ The OSCE provided an essential framework for pan-European multilateral security dialogue, negotiation, and cooperation, forming a new concept of comprehensive security and common security, which is concerned with other aspects of security as well as political and military ones. It includes arms control, trust and security-building measures, human rights, democracy, minority issues, counter-terrorism, etc. The comprehensive security concept shifted people’s vision from focusing on hard power and security to other fields and factors for the first time. It began to consider security issues in an all-around way. Thus, the development of OSCE reflects the concept of cooperative security and is a breakthrough beyond collective security.¹⁹ Along with the EU, OSCE has been a pillar for peacekeeping and harmonizing potential conflicting national interests.

3.1. IMPLICATIONS OF OSCE TO NORTHEAST ASIA

Northeast Asia can learn from the development process of the OSCE, which has established the world’s most complete arms control mechanism, trust, and security measures through negotiations. Under the framework of security cooperation in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, countries in Northeast Asia have made many efforts to carry out cooperation, enhance mutual trust, and promote multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia. Under such a premise, the Six-Party talks emerged at a historic moment. Although it is still in its infancy, governments of all the involved countries have reached a profound consensus on accelerating the development of the security cooperation system in Northeast

¹⁷ Robert O Keohane. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984.

¹⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. “SIPRI Yearbook 1987: Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security,” *SIPRI Yearbook*, 1988: 349.

¹⁹ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. “Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Final Act.” *Helsinki: [CSCE]*, 1975.

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf> (Accessed on February 21, 2023).

Asia.²⁰ However, the Six-Party Talks were frozen due to the failure of the September 19, 2005 Agreement.

Nowadays, Northeast Asian countries' understanding of multilateral security cooperation has been transformed into a positive one as due to the escalating biodiversity challenges and climate change, regional arms competition, the North Korean nuclear issue, and international counter-terrorism, countries are beginning to have a shared sense of crisis. At present, all Northeast Asian countries have actively participated in various multilateral security cooperation organizations. With the accumulation of experience, all countries have realized the importance of cooperative security and accumulated experiences in security cooperation in various aspects in the form of "mini-multilateralism."²¹

OSCE advocates comprehensive security, common security, cooperative security, and the corresponding principle of multilateralism, positive practice preventive diplomacy, as reflected in its security theory and relatively mature institutional organization management experience, for complicated geographic structure. Power distribution is not balanced, and the severe contradiction between great powers in Northeast Asia can borrow from these mature experiences. At the same time, it will help promote establishing a security regime in the Asia-Pacific region and create a stable regional environment conducive to Northeast Asia.

3.2. IMPLICATIONS OF EU TO NORTHEAST ASIA

The purpose of the European Union was to restore the European economy after the trauma of World War II. The establishment of the European Union was a political, economic, and military alliance of European countries to cope with the unpredictable world situation after the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.²² And while the supranational organization structure of the EU might be unsuitable for developing mini-multilateralism in Northeast Asia, some of its approaches are worth learning, as the countries of Northeast Asia still need to overcome the tragic past.

Despite the difficulties in the early postwar period, European countries have all gone through the industrial revolution, laid a solid economic foundation, and become developed capitalist regions.²³ The economic and technological foundation is solid, most countries have high-level scientific and technological personnel and labor force with good cultural quality, have experience in managing the economy, as well as the extensive external economic relations established in history, these conditions are the main reasons for the rapid economic recovery of Western Europe.

Nonetheless, because of its nature, the EU faces constant predicaments. The recent outbreak of the Eurozone crisis has brought huge losses to the government's finances, structural imbalances, and institutional deficiencies. The development of countries within the Eurozone is unequal. Transferring funds from member states with good fiscal positions to those with poor ones is problematic.²⁴ Drawing lessons from the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone and its causes, Northeast Asian monetary cooperation should further expand the scale of mutual funds, steadily promote assistance tools in those areas, establish a financial supervision system and rescue withdrawal mechanism in the region to effectively prevent countries

²⁰ Edward A. Kolodziej. "The Multilateralization of Regional Security in Southeast and Northeast Asia: The Role of the Soviet Union." *Pacific Focus* 6, no. 1 (2008): 5–37.

²¹ Wang Qi, Ting-ting Xu, and Xiao-li Guo. "Analysis on the Risk of Northeast Asia Regional Energy Security Cooperation." *Energy Procedia* 16 (2012): 341–345.

²² Brian Wicker. "The Church, War and the European Union." *New Blackfriars* 96, no. 1064 (2015): 481–488.

²³ Nathalie Schlenzka. *Traumatized Refugees in the European Union*. Berlin: Edition Parabolis, 2006.

²⁴ Christian H. Fahrholz. "New Political Economy of Exchange Rate Policies and the Enlargement of the Eurozone." *Springer Science & Business Media*, 2006.

financial and fiscal risks. It seems essential to strengthen political dialogue and economic cooperation and steadily promote the development of regional currency cooperation based on market choices.²⁵

The EU has vast funds, has participated extensively in various forms and levels of dialogue, has established strategic partnerships, and its influence in the United Nations has continued to increase, the two forming a partnership dedicated to multilateralism.²⁶ Mini-multilateralism in Northeast Asia can also use its advantages to extensively cooperate with the international community to promote more cooperation and development.

4. MINI-MULTILATERALISM MODELS

4.1. STATUS QUO OF NORTHEAST ASIA

Ideologically, the countries in Northeast Asia subscribe to different sets of values such as communism ideology, social democracy, liberal democracy ideology, and nationalism, which may decrease efficient cooperation. Led by common frustration with recognized western restrictions on their geopolitical desire, China and Russia have ceaselessly coincided in their positions on critical regional strategic issues.²⁷ The outside world sees China, Russia, and North Korea under the same umbrella of communism. Although all three countries are similar in the fact that they have strong identities, they cannot be equaled because of important differences. To these variances, nationalist sentiments of high intensity are added in the case of China, Japan, and the two Koreas. This is, in some ways, the natural consequence of the Westphalian international relations based on sovereign states and of the growth in great power nationalism, which climaxed with the two world wars.²⁸

The Japan-Republic of Korea-U.S. mini-multilateralism is often discussed in terms of the cooperation among nations against North Korea. The Six-Party Talks was an effort of the six main actors involved in the region to reach a peaceful solution concerning the nuclearization issue and the rogue behavior of North Korea after its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003. In 2019, the importance of the U.S.-Japan-Korea Trilateral Defense Cooperation was emphasized, through the Trilateral National Security Advisors' Press Statement, the three countries agreeing to keep up pressure on North Korea.²⁹ The US White House has more frequently authorized employing strategic assets in South Korea. The announcement came as Pyongyang, Seoul, and Washington conducted unprecedented aerial war games with further Joint Statements made by the US, Japan, and ROK to condemn NK ballistic missile launches on May 28, 2022.³⁰

China, Japan, and South Korea's mini-multilateralism should focus mainly on several common dimensions from various fields. First, to create an economy and trade community, Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations should continue and concentrate on the two-track approach to tripartite agreements, the flexible labor market, and the labor market security sectors in the region. Secondly, direct investment and financial cohesion are and should be an important emphasis as

²⁵ Sung-jo Park. *Economic Cooperation and Integration in Northeast Asia*. LIT Verlag Münster, 2006.

²⁶ General Secretariat of the Council. "UN - EU Cooperation in Military Crisis Management Operations. Elements of Implementation of the EU - UN Joint Declaration." October 8, 2004.

²⁷ Jae-woo Choo, Young-jun Kim, Artyom Lukin, and Elizabeth Wishnick. "The China-Russia Entente and the Korean Peninsula." *The National Bureau of Asian Research* (2019): 14.

²⁸ Christopher D. Johnston and Trent Ollerenshaw. "How Different are Cultural and Economic Ideology?" *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34 (2020): 94.

²⁹ White House. "United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral National Security Advisors' Press Statement." April 2, 2021. [united-states-japan-republic-of-korea-trilateral-national-security-advisors-press-statement/](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2021/04/02/20210402-us-japan-rok-trilateral-national-security-advisors-statement/) (Accessed on February 27, 2023).

³⁰ MOFA ROK. "Joint Statement by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa, and Republic of Korea Minister of Foreign Affairs Park Jin." May 28, 2022. https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5476/view.do?seq=319611&page=1 (Accessed on February 26, 2023).

continuing cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea based on the signed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) of 1st of January 2022,³¹ which could push the fulfilment of the trilateral FTA among the three countries to stress matters not veiled in RCEP. For example, with the rising pressure to execute the net-zero government target, both public and private banks will need to commit to their newest opportunity on overseas renewable energy finance, which requires the overseas joint energy financing strategies of these states. Thirdly, in the field of research and development (R & D), the rise of the semiconductor industry in the Asia Pacific region involves a broad market and increasing R & D expenditure, including mainland China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. A linkage strategy needs to be established among those major players to work together to transform Northeast Asia into the engine of the world economy in the new digital era.³²

4.2. DESIRABLE MINI-MULTILATERAL MODELS

Ideology, economy, and security might intertwine in some cases. However, requirements for inevitability and safety are more powerfully linked to cultural ideology than economic ideology standards.³³ A desirable mini-multilateralism in Northeast Asia requires a balance among ideology, economy, and security, emphasizing the circular economy coping with biodiversity challenges and climate change, quadrilateral Northeast Asian Cultural Community, and quadrilateral strategic talks among U.S, China, and the Two Koreas on Taiwan and Korean issues.

4.2.1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND COUNTER-DISASTER RELIEF

To reduce and reverse biodiversity loss, the approaches of making, using, and consuming products and food ought to be eventually updated to lessen waste and pollution, recycle products and materials, and regenerate nature so that biodiversity can thrive. These are critical to developing society and the modern economy by generating substantial economic values.³⁴ Natural resources and the pre-production developed from them, establish the physical foundation for the economic system, triggering attention from policymakers on a more resource-efficient and circular economy.³⁵ The circular economy is being rapidly introduced as a resilient framework to reach this significant upgrading because of the values that rebuild biodiversity by supplying other society-wide benefits.³⁶ Circular business models develop tangible benefits to cope with global problems such as climate change, social conditions, and challenges to biodiversity³⁷ through rethinking the ways of producing, consuming, and managing natural resources, which reduces the pressure on environmental biodiversity. Upgrading a circular economy and a zero-emission society will involve ever-changing consumption and production design beyond climate action exclusively. The circular approach needs to link homes, business offices, schools, industrial plants, marketplace, city corridors, national

³¹ ASEAN Secretariat. "Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement to Enter into Force on January 1, 2022." November 3, 2021.

<https://asean.org/regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership-rcep-to-enter-into-force-on-1-january-2022/> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

³² Fei Li. "An Approach to Economic Growth and Environment Effects in Northeast Asia." *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 381, no 1 (2019).

³³ Christopher D. Johnston and Trent Ollerenshaw. "How Different are Cultural and Economic Ideology?" *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34 (2020): 94.

³⁴ Torsten Kurth, Gerd Wübbels, and Adrien Portafaix. "The Biodiversity Crisis Is a Business Crisis." March 2, 2021.

<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2021/biodiversity-loss-business-implications-responses> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

³⁵ OECD. "Business Models for the Circular Economy: Opportunities and Challenges from a Policy Perspective (Highlights)." October 2018.

<https://www.oecd.org/environment/business-models-for-the-circular-economy-g2g9dd62-en.htm> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

³⁶ Ellen MacArthur Foundation. "The Nature Imperative: How Circular Economy Tackles Biodiversity Loss." September 7, 2021. Biodiversity Report.

<https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/biodiversity-report> (Accessed February 26, 2023).

³⁷ Leontine Schijf, Hanna Taya, and Yuka Manabe et al. "An Investor's Guide to the Circular Economy." *ISS ESG*. July 14, 2022.

<https://www.issgovernance.com/library/an-investors-guide-to-the-circular-economy/>. (Accessed March 7, 2023).

organizations, and farms at the local level, whose content engrossment refers to the need for individual citizens and the broader profession to be involved, endowed, and comprehend local value and welfare in following zero waste and circular activities.

China, Japan, and South Korea have already got national strategies for enabling the circular economy. In 2008, China authorized its law to decrease, reprocess and re-utilize domestic waste and industrial by-products, which has endowed billions of yuan in objection projects, deployed tax motivator, and issued licenses that accept the business to engage in actions that were previously prohibited, such as marketing comparatively fresh wastewater ('grey water').³⁸ A worldwide linkage strategy for the circular economy must consider the following five steps: a international database and initial funding, a worldwide platform, transnational alliances, regulation for operations, structures to modulate disputes, and sanctions on a international scale.³⁹ Although coordinate system and worldwide conceptions are positioning epoch-making objection to the effectiveness of a circular economy, there are possibilities to transformation from a linear framework of material and energy flows, regarding innovations in technology and policy capabilities. Disregarding numerous economic, environmental, and social disputes, the harmonization and sympathy of corrections with plans of action in Northeast Asia are required in the circular economy policy so that the changes and editing of circular economy execution in China, Japan, and South Korea can be achieved without delay.⁴⁰ For example, bridging the carbon market of China, Japan, and South Korea will drive them into more valuable diplomatic relations from economic, environmental, and strategical perspectives through linking strategies.⁴¹

Moreover, according to the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, disasters like intensive floods, storms, and earthquakes have been occurring during the past 30 years (1990-2019) on average in the Asian region.⁴² China, Japan, and South Korea have accepted a cooperative statement on disaster reaction for the sustainable enforcement of the Sendai Framework measures to improve reaction to natural disasters, educational exchange of endangerment reduction, and response measures.⁴³ Measures to reduce vulnerability and administration at the national, local, and community levels have been already kicked off for discussion.⁴⁴ In addition, Northeast Asian Counter-Disaster Relief Task Force comprising response forces, medical corps, and NGOs could be institutionalized to cope with earthquakes, typhoons, and ferry sinking.

4.2.2. CULTURAL COMMUNITY

Despite the unresolved historical issues in Northeast Asia, the disorder in the region today is not a reaction of hostility like the Hobbesian perspective but a response of competition like the Lockean one, which proves that the war, nuclear explosion, and security spirals may be preventable with appropriate sympathy to

³⁸ Yong Geng, Joseph Sarkis, and Raimund Bleischwitz. "How to Globalize the Circular Economy." *Nature*. January 9, 2019.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00017-z> (Accessed Mar 7, 2023).

³⁹ Yong Geng, Joseph Sarkis, and Raimund Bleischwitz. "How to Globalize the Circular Economy." *Nature*. January 9, 2019.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00017-z> (Accessed Mar 7, 2023).

⁴⁰ Xianlai Zeng, Oladele A. Ogunseitan, Shinichiro Nakamura, Sangwon Suh, Ulrich Kral, Jinhui Li, and Yong Geng. "Reshaping Global Policies for Circular Economy." *Circular Economy* 1, no.1 (2022).

⁴¹ Jackson Ewing. "Roadmap to a Northeast Asian Carbon Market." *Asia Society Policy Institute*, September 2016.

⁴² Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC). "Natural Disaster Databook 2020. An Analytical Overview." *Asian Disaster Reduction Center: 7*.

https://www.adrc.asia/publications/databook/DB2020_e.php (Accessed March 7, 2023).

⁴³ Kye Seung-hyun. "ROK, China, and Japan Adopt a Joint Statement to Strengthen Disaster Management Cooperation." July 14, 2022. *Yonhap News*.

<https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20220714074000530>. (Accessed March 7, 2023)

⁴⁴ MOFA Japan. "Trilateral Joint Announcement on Disaster Management Cooperation." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. December 13, 2008. summit 08 12/disaster.html (Accessed March 7, 2023).

the matters such as historical criticisms, doubts over China's upsurge and the US's role in Northeast Asia, the North Korean nuclear problem and others.⁴⁵ From a normative perspective, three methods of territorial rights can specify the issue entitled to them, including the functional view from Hobbesian and Lockean ideas of state, or the culturalist tactic based on the synergetic relations industrialized between cultural clusters and region in a procedure of substantial and figurative value gaining, as well as the nationalist view that distinguishes the position of culture as part of the creative development of the rights, weighting the implication of a dogmatic individuality definition as in nations.⁴⁶ For example, over the past two decades, Japan's prevalent culture were tremendously spread and exhausted throughout Northeast and Southeast Asia through a broad range of artistic commodities such as music songs, animation works, comics, television shows, fashion publications, and films recognized by resident prevalent culture markets and now establish a fundamental part of the cultural lives of numerous young generations in this region and have a determining factor on the manner young municipal customers visualize and reflect about Japan.⁴⁷ For another example, the accomplishment of Korean cultural goods around the world tracks from diverse distribution stories as an Asia, Korean TV dramas and K-pop demonstrate a composed advance between Asian traditional values and modernity, and this strengthens and combines the cultural distinctiveness of Asians as Asians.⁴⁸ Looking back over the last 30 years, culture as a defining aspect of international relations in Asia has been in retreat. The standard International Relations (IR) analytic framework highlights the authority, state interests, and the balance of power. However, non-Western International Relations see culture as a distinguished conceptualization.⁴⁹

Based on the chief and subordinate historical data, many projecting theorists in Japan and China used nationalist rational division to shape original viewpoints for example, modern Japanese philosophers who definite homegrown reasonableness, epistemology, and judgment as aesthetical, spiritual, expressive, and designated native ontology in terms of emptiness, as well as contemporary Chinese scholars who theorized indigenous logicalness, philosophy, and logic in ethical-practical support and branded native ontology as this-worldly and doctrine.⁵⁰ Cultivating the dyadic cultures, including China-Japan-South Korea-North Korea, encompassing the region's interactive culture, either Lockean or Kantian, creates conceivable and superior regional cooperation.

Moreover, boosting religious collaboration can help to develop a cultural foundation for communication and unabridged flows of cultural values, which can bring people closer. Of great importance is the solid basis of Buddhist connections between China, Japan, the two Koreas, and the United States.⁵¹ As current studies on Korean Buddhism showed, the cultural flow was not unidirectional from the periphery to the center but there were cases of Korea influencing China too.⁵² The US saw its first Buddhist temple in 1853 when the Sze Yap Company – a Chinese

⁴⁵ Gregory J. Moore. "Constructing Cooperation in Northeast Asia: Historical Northeast Asian Dyadic Cultures and the Potential for Greater Regional Cooperation." *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no.83 (2013): 887-904.

⁴⁶ Gloria Maria Vargas. "Quem Tem Direito Ao Território?" *Boletim Goiano de Geografia* 37, no.1 (2017): 74-90.

⁴⁷ Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin. "Japan Imagined: Popular Culture, Soft Power, and Japan's Changing Image in Northeast and Southeast Asia." *Contemporary Japan* 24, no 1 (2012): 1-19.

⁴⁸ Sang-yeon Cheon. "The Global Impact of South Korean Popular Culture: Hallyu Unbound." *Korean Studies* 39 (2015): 113-114.

⁴⁹ Anthony Milner. "Culture and the International Relations of Asia." *Pacific Review* 30, no.6 (2017): 857-869.

⁵⁰ Matthew M. Chew. "Rethinking the Relationship between Intellectuals and Nationalism: A Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Philosophers' Construction of National Cultural Identities in modern Japan and China." *Current Sociology* 62, no.3 (2014): 314-333.

⁵¹ Robert E. Buswell Jr. "Korean Buddhist Journeys to Lands Worldly and Otherworldly." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no.4 (2009): 1055-1075.

⁵² Sem Vermeersch. "How the Dharma Ended Up in the 'Eastern Country': Korean Monks in the Chinese Buddhist Imaginaire during the Tang and Early Song." *Buddhist Encounters and Identities Across East Asia*, Brill, 2018: 253-282.

Buddhist fraternal group – built one in San Francisco, with the second one coming through a common effort of Asian (Chinese and Japanese) immigrants who came for work in America.⁵³ Harmony as a compulsory stipulation for territorial incorporation could help catalyse the deteriorated debates about the profitable accumulation and encompasses its inter-lacing constructive function for intra-regional operation.⁵⁴

Leadership success is diverse across cultures despite China, Japan, and Korea being measured as the Confucian Asia cluster, and their cultural value transformation can be principally explicated by diverse financial stimuli in these three countries.⁵⁵ Confucian values intrinsic in the Northeast Asian countries have been obliged as the ethical code for the speedy economic evolution of this domain since the 1960s and will shape the groundwork of Northeast Asian values in the future with their contribution to established economic integration.⁵⁶ However, the US plays a vital role in Asia though American cultural spacing from Asia shows little public reinforcement and apprehension of its demand on American foreign strategies in Northeast Asia. Therefore, the US needs to overcome the limitation of the ominous US budget shortfall, which reduces the support essential to invest offshore harmonizing⁵⁷ for recalling strong penta-cultural relations in Northeast Asia to resolve regional disorders.

4.2.3. QUADRILATERAL STRATEGIC TALKS ON TAIWAN AND KOREAN ISSUES

The United States and China are inseparably sealed in the Pacific Rim's structure of international trade, which might make war less possible. However, others voiced concern over the inevitability of a world war due to the issues of Taiwan, and North Korea, disputes in the East and South China Seas as well as potential conflict with India along the Tibetan border.⁵⁸

The quadrilateral strategic talks on security involving China and the United States, along with the Two Koreas, for better security cooperation need to be institutionalized. One sensitive issue should be highlighted and resolved regarding how the divided nations can become unified again peacefully. Any step in this direction should be made in such a manner that not only leaders but also the two countries' people and institutions could contribute to it.⁵⁹ When it comes to the Taiwan question, as countries including the US excavate bonds with the self-governing island, Beijing is using armed and other resources to declare its territorial entitlements since China requests the world to distinguish it is 'not going to get pushed around' on Taiwan' on October 20, 2021. Notably, the progression of integration will have to be kept flexible to be realistic. For example, the distance from the present two states of both South and North Korea to a future possible one-state formula must be viewed as a continuum, not a sudden jump.⁶⁰ Therefore, quadrilateral strategic talks on security are urgent and important in the region, stressing procedural,

⁵³ J. Gordo Melton, and James A. Beverley. *Melton's Encyclopedia of American Religions*. Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009.

⁵⁴ Hee-ho Kim and Byeong-hae Sohn. "Economic Integration vs. Conflicts in Northeast Asia-A Role of Confucianism." *Asian Social Science* 10(13) (2014): 155.

⁵⁵ Young-sam Cho, Mann-soo Shin, Masakazu Sugiura, Masa Ota, and Myeong-Cheol Choi. "A Comparison of Leadership Effectiveness among China, Japan, and Korea: Crossvergence Perspective." *Academy of Management Proceedings* 1 (2016): 1.

⁵⁶ Hee-ho Kim and Byeong-hae Sohn. "Economic Integration vs. Conflicts in Northeast Asia-A Role of Confucianism." *Asian Social Science* 10(13) (2014): 155.

⁵⁷ Robert E. Kelly. "The 'Pivot' and its Problems: American Foreign Policy in Northeast Asia." *The Pacific Review* 27(3) (2014): 479-503.

⁵⁸ Robert E. Kelly. "The 'Pivot' and its Problems: American Foreign Policy in Northeast Asia." *The Pacific Review* 27(3) (2014): 479-503.

⁵⁹ Johan Galtung. "Divided Nations as a Process: One State, Two States, and In-between: The case of Korea." *Journal of Peace Research* 9, no.4 (1972): 345-360.

⁶⁰ Jennifer Jett. "China Wants the World to Know It's 'Not Going to Get Pushed Around' on Taiwan." *NBC News*. October 20, 2021.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/china-wants-world-know-it-s-not-going-get-pushed-n1281947> (Accessed on March 9, 2023).

material, and ideational resolutions learned from the three stages of reconciliation after a violent conflict between Japan and Korea, also Europe after the war.⁶¹

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The case of the European Union has shown that the road to integration is not an easy one, but not impossible either, and should start with minilateralism. There are implications to be learned from the EU's experiences, from both negative and positive outcomes. For that, four stages of regional growth toward integration have been investigated. Stage One comprises the creation of economic, non-security, and political mini-lateral agreements, partially achieved through the Trilateral Cooperative Secretariat and RCEP. Stage Two represents building upon minilateralism to create broader multilateral partnerships and, ultimately, more permanent institutions. This will naturally lead to Stage Three - the existence of a shared vision and goals. Lastly, Stage Four would mean countries in Northeast Asia have strong regional cooperation on multiple levels and can act outside the region as a common block.

It is worth pointing out that there is no need to struggle with finding new collaboration methods. The existing agreements can be successfully used to build something bigger gradually, like the RCEP in the economic sector and the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral cooperation on the security level.

Considering all the above, the visualization of the future desirable mini-multilateralism should emphasize ideology, security, circular economy and counter-disaster relief task force, cultural community, and quad-strategic talks. Moreover, a regional organization for security cooperation in Northeast Asia needs to be established as the end state of mini-multilateralism involving six or more parties since China's upsurge has shaped "three paradoxes of security, institution and power" in the region forming the geopolitical and geo-economics scenery of Northeast Asia in the post-Cold War period and implicating regional order in the future, divergent to concepts advocated by the theory of economic interdependence and peace.⁶²

To solve the Northeast Asia safety dilemma, respective paths need to be seized to lessen territorial tensions, but improving U.S.- China connections is the most important and critical: first, the nations participating ought to forthright encounter their histories, even as they anticipate the future; secondly, a Cold War mentality must be dispensed and seek mutually secure security; thirdly, it is crucial to strengthen multi-level conversations and to reduce the endangerment of misestimation; finally, China-U.S. relations must be reinforced, with greater practice of collaboration.⁶³ A comprehensible approach for desirable mini-multilateralism needs to be developed as Northeast Asia security regime architecture involving strategic economic dialogues.⁶⁴

For international organizations, Structural Industry, and Innovation Policy (SIIP) need to be emphasized. In industrialized countries, routing technological revolution in a track that is a friendlier to the environment and social welfare ought to be a crucial component of innovative industrial plans of action and in rising

⁶¹ Nany Hur. "Bilateral Treaty Relations between Korea, China and Japan: Precursors of Trilateral Economic Relations in Northeast Asia." *Manchester J. Int'l Econ. L.* 11 (2014): 215-258.

⁶² Tony Tai-Ting Liu. "China Rising and Northeast Asia: Paradoxes amidst the New Cold War." *Social Transformations in Chinese Societies* 16, no. 2 (2020): 99-109.

⁶³ Jimin Chen. "Solving the Northeast Asia Security Dilemma." *The Diplomat*. May 10, 2013. <https://thediplomat.com/2013/05/solving-the-northeast-asia-security-dilemma/> (Accessed March 7, 2023).

⁶⁴ Kyung-young Chung. "Building a Military Security Cooperation Regime in Northeast Asia: Feasibility and Design." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park (2005): 347.

economies, industrial policy impressively fit to their possess stages of development such as assisting defenseless groups, gender equality, concentrated relic energy usage or the circular technologies for novel categories of agriculture, housing, and transport.⁶⁵

Global accomplishment of urbanization and farming improvement in the past years has significantly environmental impacts on the proportional business sectors, considering Northeast Asia and China-Russia Economic Corridor.⁶⁶ Policies on global and regional corridors for development need to be established continuously because of the economic and cultural recovery during and after the post-pandemic period, based on the new RCEP in force connecting the previous Transit Trade Corridors (TTCs).⁶⁷

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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⁶⁵ Karl Aiginger, and Dani Rodrik. "Rebirth of Industrial Policy and an Agenda for the Twenty-first Century." *Journal of Industry, Competition, and Trade* 20, no. 2 (2020): 189-207.

⁶⁶ Li, Fei. Fei Li. "An Approach to Economic Growth and Environment Effects in Northeast Asia." *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 381, no 1 (2019).

⁶⁷ Sang-Won Lim, Kamonchanok Suthiwartnarueput, Ahmad Abareshi, Paul Tae-woo Lee, and Yann Duval. "Key Factors in Developing Transit Trade Corridors in Northeast Asia." *Journal of Korea Trade* 21, no. 3 (2017): 191-207.

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